

# Suicide Has Hit Our Family

*Sue Bohlin shares her heart in the wake of her and her husband Ray's son taking his life.*

Last week our beloved 44-year-old son Curt took his life.

He had struggled with severe suicidal depression for 26 years, hating almost every day of his adult life and wanting God to take him home to join his sister Rebecca. His depression and anxiety crippled him to the point of moving back in with my husband and me in 2008. He often shared with us his anguish at life in a fallen world, living in a broken body.

Curt eventually lost most of his hearing as the result of serving on the flight line in the Air Force, but when he was honorably discharged he was told it wasn't bad enough to warrant disability benefits. The loss of his hearing meant losing his touch with music, which he loved. It also meant losing touch with his community in online role-playing games, so he lost his sense of belonging and purpose.

His life was very painful. After staying his hand multiple times over two decades, God allowed him to take his life and instantly enter the heaven he had longed for, for so very long.

Some themes have been rolling around in my head since the news of his passing.

First, our grief is mitigated by the relief on Curt's behalf that his suffering is over. When I told my husband the news delivered by a police detective, his first words were, "We've known this day might come for 26 years." We have lived with the darkness of his depression and anxiety for a long time, which included the ever-present threat of suicide because he always thought of it as his ticket out.

Second, God's grace is stronger than I have ever experienced in my entire life. It feels like He has tucked me in the shadow of His wing (Psalm 57:1). I have buried a child before; I know the brutality of grief, but God is holding it back. I winced to realize that a hard, heart-wrenching grief awaits me, but then I reminded myself that He will carry me through those days just as He's carrying me now. And I appreciated my friend who gave me "permission to not be okay" when those days come.

Third, the one attribute of God that comforts me more than any other is His sovereignty. A good and loving God is in control. He chose the day of Curt's birth, and He chose the day of his death. We've been clinging to Psalm 139:16, "All the days ordained for me were written in Your book before one of them came to be." Our son did not die a single day earlier than God had planned for him. And He prevented Curt from following through on all the times he planned to take his life since the first time when he was 17. God ordained for our daughter Rebecca to live for eight days, and He ordained for Curt to live for 44 years.

Fourth, God keeps pouring out His goodness on us every time we turn around. We have been inundated with people wanting to help us with everything we need from money for funeral expenses, to food and paper goods, to willing hands to prepare our home for family coming in for his memorial service. And that includes being willing to clean out his room and haul away all the furniture that reeked of body odor. In case you don't know, severely depressed people usually don't care about personal hygiene, and both our son and his room stank from weeks, sometimes months, of going unwashed. It was a source of sorrow and frustration to us, but we loved him in his mental illness and just lived with it.

Fifth, there is the blessing of *not knowing* so many things. I don't know what he was thinking when something flipped and he went from offering to cook lunch for the family visiting us,

to leaving our home intent on stepping off an overpass. I don't know what he was thinking or feeling on that walk. I don't know what his last seconds were like, and I am most grateful that we didn't have to identify him at the medical examiner's office. I don't know so many things, and I am so glad. I can leave all those questions in the Lord's hands, and I can ask him when I see him again-if it matters at all by then.

And that brings me to the most important idea that has marked these days: HOPE. Hope is future-facing faith. Not wishful thinking, like "I hope it doesn't rain on my picnic." Biblical hope is certainty. Hebrews 6:19 calls biblical hope "an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast." God has used this horrible time to reveal that He has been working in the background to strengthen my future-facing faith. When I say I have hope to be reunited with my son, it's not a wish. I am 1000% certain that he is in heaven and that my husband and I, our other son Kevin, and his wife Lauren will join him there.

I had the privilege of leading Curt to put his trust in Jesus Christ when he was three years old, watching him grow in his faith over the years, watching him bear the spiritual fruit that proved his faith was real. I know he's in heaven, because to be absent from the body is to be at home with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8). Our dear friend Dave commented on my Facebook post, "I am heartbroken for your loss but so grateful for your hope that you will see Curt again." That's when I had the lightbulb moment and I replied, "Thanks for using the word HOPE. Future-facing faith. My hope about seeing Curt is as strong as my view of Ray this very minute. Who is sitting three feet from me."

Curt's first week in heaven: it felt like he was just on the other side of the invisible wall separating earth from heaven. Maybe it's the special bond between a mother and the child she bore, maybe it's something spiritual, I don't know. But the reality of my son's new home makes heaven closer to me than it

has ever been. My husband Ray has said for years that heaven is more real to me than anyone he knows. Part of it is knowing our baby Rebecca is there, part of it is longing for my new body untouched by polio and cancer.

Curt's suicide is not okay. Murder is sin, even the murder of oneself. But Jesus' statement on the cross, "It is finished," meaning "It is paid in full," covered every one of his sins, including taking the life God gave him. With God's begrudging permission, apparently. I trust the Lord with it all.

This blog post originally appeared at [blogs.bible.org/suicide-has-hit-our-family](https://blogs.bible.org/suicide-has-hit-our-family) on July 16, 2024.

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## Two Genders, Two Spectrums

*Sue Bohlin suggests a biblical view of masculinity and femininity that encompasses the variety within two genders as God creates us.*

How do you see the variations of gender in people? Many people automatically think of a single spectrum with masculinity on one end and femininity on the other.

I don't think that's the way it works.



Consider the very first thing we encounter about gender in the creation account of Genesis 1:27—

So God created mankind in his own image,  
in the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them.

Just two genders. No matter how many choices of made-up genders that Facebook used to offer.

We can look at the issue of gender spiritually by reading about how God created us male and female. We can also see the binary nature of gender by looking at biology. Male bodies produce small reproductive sex cells called gametes—sperm—and female bodies produce large gametes, eggs. There are no other options.

In this article we'll be walking through a way of looking at gender that I believe faithfully reflects what God has revealed in His word about His design for us as human beings. Instead of a single spectrum with male and masculinity on one end and female and femininity on the other, I suggest there are two separate spectrums<sup>[1]</sup>: a masculinity spectrum and a femininity spectrum. God makes delightful variations in girls and women, and equally delightful variations in boys and men, all of us made in His image and created for His glory.

I suggest that God chooses where on each gender spectrum a baby comes into the world. It's our starting point, but as we mature we can embrace and grow in the other characteristics of masculinity or femininity. We can take up more "bandwidth" and become a more fully-rounded man or woman.

One end of the masculinity spectrum, I suggest, are the rough-and-tumble boys who are constantly moving, playing sports, making noise, getting dirty, and can easily be emotionally clueless. On the other end of the spectrum are the sensitive, artistic, creative boys. And there's everything in between.

On the femininity spectrum, we see girly-girls on one end, who love frilly clothes, playing with their doll babies, and in American culture are drawn to pink and purple and sparkly. On the other end are the tomboy jockettes who are often gifted athletes and natural leaders, and hate girly clothes. And, as with their brothers, there is everything in between.

Let's explore these different gender spectrums and hopefully gain a fuller understanding of the goodness of God's creation just the way He makes each one of us.

## Masculinity Spectrum 1

I really like the idea that every child, created in his or her own individuality in the image of God, is a gift box that we as parents and care-givers get to open and discover what's inside. Every child is fearfully and wonderfully made, as we read in Psalm 139, and that includes the kind of boy and the kind of girl God chose for them to be. Whoever came up with the philosophy that children are blank slates that we write on, so they become whoever and however the surrounding culture instructs them to be, must have never been around actual children. Real babies come out of the womb and start revealing how God made them.

God shapes some baby boys as rough-and-tumble. They are often considered classically "all boy." They're constantly moving. Ask boys to walk from point A to point B and they may well zig-zag their way across the room. They often have an affinity for fighting and weapons. One mama who said no toy guns in her home because she hated violence, found her young son nibbling his toast into the shape of a pistol, which he pointed at his brother and made shooting sound effects. Her other son would treat the longest French fry from his Happy Meal like a miniature rifle to pretend-shoot his brother.

These rough-and-tumble boys are often emotionally clueless. They don't *mean* to be insensitive, they just don't pay much attention to non-verbal cues from other people. They tend to enjoy rough-housing with their daddies and with other boys. They will chest-bump and jostle each other in their male way of expressing friendship and affection. And these boys are drawn to contact sports, especially anything with balls.

God delights to make other boys, though far fewer of them, as

sensitive, artistic, and creative. They are often gifted in the performing and visual arts, music, dance, drama, and design. They tend to experience life through a magnifying lens attached to their soul; everything is bigger, louder, and more vibrant. They can experience negative communications as more critical than they actually are. A parent's frown may feel as devastating as a spanking.

They constantly scan their environment, sensing when others around them are upset. My husband can spot these sensitive boys at age two in the church nursery. He has seen boys drop whatever toy they had and go over to another toddler asking, "You okay? It's okay."

Many of them don't care for sports, especially contact sports. Often they lack the eye-hand coordination needed for sports that utilize balls, rackets, clubs and other game equipment. They can do better at sports that scratch their competitive itch where they're racing against the clock, like cross-country running.

And of course, there are boys (and men) everywhere in between as well. One of my sons was so sensitive and artistic he graduated with an art degree; the other puts himself square in the middle of the masculinity spectrum.

## **Masculinity Spectrum 2**

We see the two kinds of boys and men in the account of Jacob and Esau in Genesis 25. Esau, the rough-and-tumble man, was a hunter, an outdoorsman. His twin brother Jacob was a mama's boy, more interested in hanging back in the tents with his mother, in all probability the sensitive, artistic, creative type.

Since sensitive boys are in the minority, they often get bullied by the rough-and-tumbles or boys in the middle of the spectrum, and they can easily feel like they don't fit, they

don't belong. They feel different from an early age.

These are the ones who are vulnerable to spiritual attacks of being labeled gay and other ugly words. In recent years, as sensitive, artistic and creative boys feel the pain of not fitting in, they are now being encouraged to label themselves as transgender. It used to be they would think, "I don't fit in the world of boys. There's something wrong with me." Now they are being encouraged to think, "I don't fit in the world of boys because I'm really a girl. Or life would be better and easier if I became a girl." (Which, of course, is impossible.) Then if they accept these false labels and they practice seeing themselves that way, they can literally think themselves into a gay or trans identity. But it doesn't have to be that way. Scripture tells us to "take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5). All of us need to derive our identity from who God says we are.

Thinking of the masculinity spectrum, I like to ask, where would you put Jesus?

I think He embodies the entire spectrum. He was the best of rough-and-tumble men, strong and physically active; He started out as a carpenter or handyman, and men were drawn to Him. Was He artistic? Have you ever seen a sunrise or a sunset? Jesus paints the sky with glorious colors! Was He creative? Scripture tells us He was the Creator of the universe!

I have observed over years that as boys and men grow spiritually, they start taking up more bandwidth on the masculinity spectrum as they become more well-rounded. Rough-and-tumbles learn to listen and show compassion, and sensitives stretch out their comfort zone to take more initiative and reject passivity.

Rough-and-tumbles can become great leaders and servants as they use their strength to love and serve others. Sensitives can become great husbands, dads, pastors, counselors, and



teachers as *they* use their gifts to love and serve others.

## **Femininity Spectrum 1**

On the one end of the femininity spectrum are the girly-girls who come into the world wanting a pink receiving blanket and one of those headbands with a big puffy flower on their little bald head. They can't wait till their fingernails and toenails are big enough for Mommy to paint. In American culture they often gravitate toward pink and purple and silver glitter. They cuddle baby dolls and stuffed animals.

One progressive-minded mother didn't want to support gender stereotypes for her daughter, so instead of buying her stuffed animals and dolls, she gave her cars and trucks. One afternoon she saw her little girl lining up the cars and trucks, covering them with a blanket, and tenderly kissing them "night-night" as she put them down for a nap. Just as she would have with dolls and stuffed toys, if she'd been allowed to have them.

It's easy to define feminine as girly-girls, but God loves and creates another kind of femininity.

He delights to make some girls tomboy jockettes. They have no interest in frilly clothes or makeup. They don't care for skirts or dresses and in fact will often push back when required to wear "girl clothes." For them, comfort is everything. You can find them outside climbing trees, shooting hoops, and perfecting their spirals. Some mechanically-inclined girls want to help their dads work on cars and lawnmowers. They tend to have no patience for girly-girl activities; girl drama drives them crazy. Barbie is stupid, and who wants to play house—nobody wins!

Many times they are gifted athletes, and often natural leaders.

Like sensitive boys, tomboys are outnumbered by girly-girls

and those in the middle of the femininity spectrum. Being the minority, they are often bullied. They are judged and ostracized for not being like the other girls.

Sensitive boys and tomboy girls can get the message loud and clear that they don't have what it takes to be a good boy or girl. They can conclude, wrongly, that they don't belong in the world of boys, of girls. They burn with the shame of being "other than." Different.

But God makes every person male or female on purpose, for His glory. They DO belong in the world of boys or girls, of men and women!

## **Femininity Spectrum 2**

As girls grow spiritually, becoming more like Jesus, they can take up more bandwidth on the spectrum and become a more well-rounded expression of femininity.

Girly girls can put down their mirrors and selfies, and become prayer warriors and first responders. They can walk into emotional crises and hard conversations to point people to Jesus. They can become shepherds, more concerned about other people than themselves.

Tomboys can embrace the softer, more nurturing side of femininity. These girls often want to fight and defend those needing protection. They need to be introduced to spiritual warfare! Whether as a princess warrior or a warrior princess, the kingdom needs all girls and women to be fully engaged in fighting evil!

Many of the gender issues today are about stereotypes. People want to stick everybody in either a blue box or a pink box. They make sweeping generalizations like

- "Boys wear blue and brown and play with trucks and guns."
- "Girls wear pink and purple and play with Barbies and

jewelry making kits.”

But what if a boy thinks blue and brown are boring, and he loves pink and purple? Does it mean he’s gay? No! Jesus loves pink and purple! Have you ever seen a sunrise?

What if he doesn’t want to play tackle football? What if he’d rather sit and try to draw out another kid’s thoughts and feelings? Does it mean he’s gay? No! It may be a junior counselor in the making, who’s also going to be a fantastic daddy!

What if a girl thinks it’s just WRONG that she has to stay inside and learn to make gravy because Grandma says that’s what girls do, when there’s a broken carburetor outside she’s itching to get her hands on? What if she’s an amazing softball player? Does it mean she’s a lesbian? No! It means she’s a gifted mechanic or athlete!

Let’s forget the blue and pink boxes and just open the gift box that is each child and find out how God packed the gifts and interests inside. Let’s celebrate God’s good design of each child IN HIS IMAGE and affirm them as the child they are, even if they don’t conform to stereotypes.

Can you imagine how freeing it would be to celebrate the full spectrum of masculinity and femininity, and teach kids to appreciate and celebrate it in each other?

## Notes

1. I do realize that the plural of spectrum is *spectra*, but most people don’t take five years of Latin like I did. For those who wince at my coining a word, my apologies.

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# The Eclipse Declares the Glory of God, v. 2024

*Sue Bohlin is very excited to be in the path of the upcoming total solar eclipse, where God shows off once again.*

“The heavens declare the glory of God,” Psalm 19 tells us. On April 8, 2024, millions of Americans will have an incredible opportunity to see His heavenly glory in a way most of us never have: through a total solar eclipse. On a path running from Texas to South Maine, observers on the ground will see the moon slip in front of the sun, blocking out all its light and dropping the temperature drastically (about 10 to 15 degrees Fahrenheit) and suddenly.

I am thrilled beyond words that by the grace of God, our home in Dallas, Texas is in the path of totality. All I have to do is go out in our back yard to experience this once-in-a-lifetime event! :::doing the happy dance:::

The glory of God isn't just seen, it's *felt* as well. Eclipse-chasers, and even those who have only experienced one total eclipse, report that at the moment of totality (when the moon completely covers the sun, plunging the land into an eerie darkness), people break out with yells and shouts and applause. Many report the hair on the back of their necks standing up. And both locals and visiting astronomers are equally in awe—and often in tears. Like one's first in-person look at the Grand Canyon, it is deeply emotional to be thrilled by something much, much bigger than oneself.

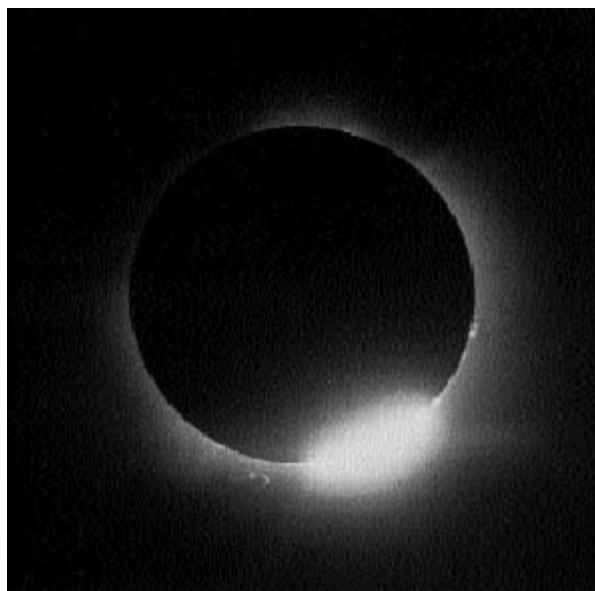
Illustra Media's wonderful DVD *The Privileged Planet*, based on the book by the same name by Guillermo Gonzalez and Jay Richards [{1}](#), exposed me to the magnificence of a total solar

eclipse. I will never forget the goosebumps at learning that the sun is 400 times farther away than our moon, but it's also 400 times larger. This means that both of these heavenly bodies appear to be the same size to us on Earth. This phenomenal "coincidence" also makes a total eclipse possible.

During an eclipse, *the heavens declare the glory of God* by

allowing us to see things about the sun we wouldn't be able to observe any other way, beautiful and gloriously resplendent. Just before totality we can see "Baily's Beads." Only seen during an eclipse, bright "beads" appear at the edge of the moon where the sun is shining through lunar valleys, a feature of the moon's

rugged landscape. This is followed by the "diamond ring" effect, where the brightness of the sun radiates as a thin band around the circumference of the moon, and the last moments of the sun's visibility explode like a diamond made of pure light. After the minutes of totality, the diamond ring effect appears again on the opposite side of the moon as the first rays of the sun flare brilliantly. These sky-jewelry phenomena are so outside of mankind's control that witnessing them stirs our spirits (even on YouTube!) with the truth of Romans 1:20—"God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse."





A total solar eclipse offers so much more, though, than Baily's Beads and the Diamond Ring. At the moment of totality, the pinkish arc of the sun's chromosphere (the part of the sun's atmosphere just above the surface) suddenly "turns on" as if an unseen hand flips a switch. I knew God is very fond of pink because of how He paints glorious sunrises and sunsets in Earth's skies, but those fortunate enough to see a total eclipse can see how He radiates pinkness from the sun itself! ***The heavens declare the glory of God!***

But wait! That's not all! Along with the flare of the sun's pink chromosphere, a rainbow-like band called the "flash spectrum" appears when the sun is viewed through a prism! (You can google this to see pictures. The best ones are copyrighted so I can't show them to you here.) ***The heavens declare the colorful glory of God!***

For the few minutes of totality, the naked eye can see the sun's lovely corona (Latin for crown) streaming out from the sun. We can't see the corona except during an eclipse because looking straight at the sun for even a few seconds causes eye damage, and because the sun's ball of fire overwhelms the (visually) fragile corona. This is another way that an eclipse allows us to see how ***the heavens declare the glory of God.***



Astronomer Guillermo Gonzalez noticed details about eclipses

that got him excited:

- During a total solar eclipse, the moon is just large enough to block the large photosphere (the big ball of fiery gas), but not so large that it obscures the colorful chromosphere.
- The moon and the sun are two of the roundest measured bodies in the solar system. (Some moons are potato-shaped!) So when the round disk of the moon passes in front of the equally round disk of the sun, the shapes match perfectly.
- He studied all 65 of the moons in our solar system and discovered that ours are the best planet and best moon for studying the sun during an eclipse. Because the moon fits so perfectly over the sun, its blinding light is shielded, providing astronomers with a view of the sun's atmosphere. We can discern finer details in its chromosphere and corona than from any other planet.
- Being able to study the flash spectrum during a total eclipse enables astro-scientists to determine the chemical makeup of other, distant stars without leaving Earth.

These facts of *the heavens declare the glory of God!*

Michael Bakich wrote of the 2017 eclipse in *Astronomy Magazine* blog,

This eclipse will be the most-viewed ever. I base this proclamation on four factors: 1) the attention it will get from the media; 2) the superb coverage of the highway system in our country; 3) the typical weather on that date; and 4) the vast number of people who will have access to it from nearby large cities.[\[2\]](#)

I think this is true of the 2024 eclipse as well. Whether you are fortunate enough to be in the path of the total eclipse like me, or will only get to see 75% of the sun's surface

covered by the moon (with eclipse glasses, of course!), this extremely important sky event will be proclaiming to everyone that ***the heavens declare the glory of God***. May it make a lasting impression on us all that teaches us more about God's glory!

1. Guillermo Gonzalez and Jay W. Richards, *The Privileged Planet* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2004)

2.

<http://cs.astronomy.com/asy/b/astronomy/archive/2014/08/05/25-facts-you-should-know-about-the-august-21-2017-total-solar-eclipse.aspx>

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on Feb. 20, 2024.

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## Probe's 50th Anniversary Celebration Banquet

✖ On Nov. 4, 2023, we commemorated Probe's 50th Anniversary with a celebration banquet at Dallas' Renaissance Hotel. We are so very grateful for God's goodness and supernatural enabling to serve Him this half-century by sharing biblical worldview and apologetics worldwide!





200 friends gathered in the Malachite Showroom to help us celebrate God's goodness over 50 years of ministry.



Probe President Kerby Anderson read an official proclamation honoring Probe from Texas Governor Greg Abbott.



We were blessed to share video and written endorsements, like this one from former Moody Bible Institute President Erwin Lutzer, who also wrote a book for us.



Dr. Ray Bohlin, a 48-year veteran of Probe and former president of the ministry, presented an overview of what we've been able to do in our 50 years. See a short list below.



The three children of Probe's co-founder, Jimmy Williams-Trey, Todd and Leslie—shared powerful memories of their amazing parents and growing up along with Probe.



Dr. Jim Thames, representing Dallas Theological Seminary, surprised Kerby with a Lifetime Achievement Award from DTS as our chairman of the board, Parker Eng, documented the award.





We were especially honored to be joined by our beloved June Hunt and her friend Kathy. When June founded the Hope Center, the beautiful retreat lodge-like office building housing scores of Christian ministries, she invited Probe to be one of the first to office there.

**Some of what Dr. Ray Bohlin shared of the past 50 years:**

- Through our Christian Update Forums, we brought biblical worldview to college classrooms as guest lecturers on more than 50 campuses. At least through 1980, we spoke in over 1,600 classrooms, to 70,000 students, with 70% positive to only 7% negative comments. Then we got canceled by administrations who didn't want their students exposed to truth.
- So we launched a radio outreach. Our weekly radio program, still airing after 40 years, has had tens of millions of listeners. They are available as [12-minute podcasts](#) on Probe.org. We launched a second conversational podcast, [Head & Heart](#), in 2020.
- Our website continues to have a literal worldwide impact, being visited by 193 (out of 195) countries in the past year. We offer over 2000 [articles](#) and [answers to email](#). (You might say we were the original "Got Questions.org"?)
- Our staff has taught on every continent except Antarctica (the penguins aren't interested).
  - We've taught 180 [Mind Games](#) conferences, both weekend and week-long camps.
  - As the world gets darker and the church becomes more like the world than the Word, the need for what Probe offers is greater than ever.

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# “Do Babies Go to Heaven?”

**Do babies and small children go to heaven?**

We have lengthy answers to this question [here](#) and [here](#), but [Shane Pruitt](#) provided an especially insightful, excellent answer to this question on [X \(Twitter\)](#):

At 12:50 AM on a Tuesday morning, our ten-year-old son with unique needs went to be Jesus.

So, a statement like this begs the question, “Am I just wishing this to be true, or do I Biblically know this to be true?”

Meaning, is there support in Scripture that God welcomes babies (born and unborn), young children, and those with unique mental needs (meaning they may be older, but have the mind of a child) immediately into Heaven?

I absolutely believe the Bible answers this. Here are Biblical reasons why I know this to be true:

*God’s Knowledge:* The Lord knows every child at conception and values them. They are considered a person, known and loved by God, from the very beginning. (Psalm 139:13 – 16).

*God’s Declaration:* God refers to young children as “innocents”. Not that they were perfect or without a sin nature, but they were innocent of the ability to understand the need of repentance and forgiveness. (Jeremiah 19:4).

*God’s Promise:* In Deuteronomy, we find an unbelieving generation of Israelites being prevented from entering the Promised Land, but their children were exempt from that penalty and were able to enter (Deuteronomy 1:39).

*God's Possession:* He considers all babies to be His. God condemns Israel in Ezekiel 16:21, of the wretched act of child sacrifice. "You slaughtered My children and offered them up to idols by causing them to pass through the fire."

*God's Compassion:* He has compassion on all little ones and infants, and is not willing that even one of them should perish (Matthew 18:14). His grace covers them, until they realize their need of a Savior.

*God's Illustration:* He used a child to illustrate what one must become like to enter His Kingdom (Matthew 18:1 -5). If infants and children would end up in Hell if they died young, He most likely wouldn't use them as an illustration of how to enter the Kingdom.

*God's Compliment:* He said children were the greatest in His Kingdom (Matthew 18:4).

*God's Blessing:* Jesus blessed the little children and said the Kingdom of God belongs to them (Mark 9:13 – 16). Jesus typically didn't bless those destined to Hell or promise them the Kingdom, unless He meant it.

*David's Assurance:* David knew that he would be in heaven forever after death (Ps 23:6). He also had the assurance that his baby (that had died) would be there as well, where they would be reunited. "... I will go to him, but he will not return to me (2 Samuel 12:22 – 23)."

*God's Presence:* I do not believe in a "soul sleep". When babies, young children, and those with unique needs die; they are with the Lord immediately (2 Corinthians 5:8, Luke 23:43).

God is not silent on this topic. Scripture speaks.

Therefore, you can know with absolute confidence that you did not "lose" your baby, child, or loved one with unique needs. You didn't lose them, because you know exactly where they are.

They are perfectly and fully alive with Jesus.

Posted 8/3/2023

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## Sticks and Stones . . .

I'm not sure when it began, but the last several years we have seen an explosion of name-calling. Social media is probably the main culprit in giving people freedom to chunk labels and names like snowballs at people they don't even know, with no concern of consequences.

It's no longer a matter of normal human interactions to disagree with someone; now it's about demonizing them. And dragging them through the mud. And judging their character and reputation.

- Refuse to subscribe to progressive ideologies? You are hateful.
- Dare to criticize someone's position? You're a bigot.
- Talk about God's plan for marriage as only between one man and one woman? You're homophobic.
- Stand up for common sense in insisting that boys can't become girls and girls can't become boys? You're transphobic.

This kind of name-calling has become personal. The Southern Poverty Law Center, having discovered a cash cow in declaring organizations hate groups, declared Probe Ministries a hate group because we (mainly me) agree with God's design for sexuality and gender. In agreeing with scripture that homosexual behavior violates God's command and is thus sin, we are called hateful. For years, I have vetted my articles on LGBT by sharing them with friends who no longer identify as

gay or lesbian, to make sure they are not only accurate but also kind and compassionate.

But when our neighbor learned that Probe was on the SPLC's hate group list, he told my husband that I was hateful.

"Sue? Hateful? C'mon, you've known her for years. Do you honestly think she's hateful?"

I'm grateful that he gave it some thought, and the next week he retracted his assessment. That was nice; his name-calling wasn't hurtful to me. Kinda crazy, but not hurtful-because I knew it wasn't true. He was just being consistent to his leftist beliefs.

In addition to being called hateful, I've received a number of ugly emails declaring me ignorant, foolish, biased, an idiot, and some disgusting sexual slurs as well. In each case, the writers felt free to unleash their hostility and judgmentalism on me, a total stranger.

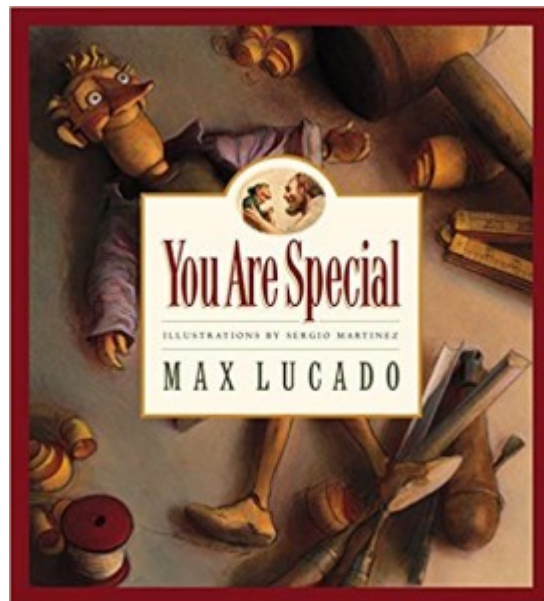
We've all heard the old rhyme, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me," right? Of course, it's a lie. Name-calling DOES hurt, especially from people close to us, who should be protecting our hearts rather than trying to inflict pain.

But it doesn't necessarily have to.

I was thinking about why these names slide off me the way hair slides off a plastic cape during a haircut.



The best explanation, I think, is found in my favorite children's book, Max Lucado's *You Are Special*.



It's about a group of wooden people called the Wemmicks who all day, every day, go around giving each other gold star stickers or gray dot stickers. Punchinello, who can't seem to get anything right, only gets gray dot stickers.

But one day he meets a girl who doesn't have any gold star OR gray dots. It's not that people don't try to give her stickers-they just don't stick.

Punchinello asks her why, and she says, "It's easy. Every day I go to see Eli the woodcarver. I go and sit in the workshop with him."

Punchinello goes to see Eli.

*"Hmm," the maker spoke thoughtfully as he inspected the gray circles. "Looks like you've been given some bad marks."*

*"I didn't mean to, Eli. I really tried hard."*

*"Oh, you don't have to defend yourself to me, child. I don't care what the other Wemmicks think."*

*"You don't?"*

*"No, and you shouldn't either. Who are they to give stars or dots? They're Wemmicks just like you. What they think doesn't*

*matter, Punchinello. All that matters is what I think. And I think you are pretty special."*

*Punchinello laughed. "Me, special? Why? I can't walk fast. I can't jump. My paint is peeling. Why do I matter to you?"*

*Eli looked at Punchinello, put his hands on those small wooden shoulders, and spoke very slowly. "Because you're mine. That's why you matter to me."*

Eli explains to Punchinello why the stickers don't stick on his friend:

*"Because she has decided that what I think is more important than what they think. The stickers only stick if you let them. . . The stickers only stick if they matter to you. The more you trust my love, the less you care about the stickers."*

As Punchinello walks out the door, Eli reminds him, "You're special because I made you. And I don't make mistakes."

Punchinello thinks, "I think he really means it."

And then a dot fell to the ground.

For 50 years I have been spending daily time with my Maker, listening to what He says is true about me: I am His beloved child in whom He is well pleased. I am His redeemed daughter, a princess warrior, His workmanship, gifted with supernatural enablings to fulfill the works He gave me to do. My heavenly Father loves me the same way He loves His Son; His Son loves me so much He died for me and rose from the dead to make me His bride.

Being loved and cherished like that, no wonder the stickers of labels and names slide right off me.

If you struggle with what other people think of you, immerse yourself in what your Maker says is true about you. My favorite list, “I Am a Child of the King” by Dr. Ed Laymance, can be found [here](#).

This blog post originally appeared at [blogs.bible.org/sticks-and-stones/](https://blogs.bible.org/sticks-and-stones/) on July 23, 2023.

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## Be WHAT?

*Be not afraid, be strong, be not discouraged, be anxious for nothing, be transformed. How are we supposed to obey God's seemingly impossible commands?*

During a recent sermon, our pastor was teaching through Jesus' healing of a leper, who threw himself on Jesus' mercy and implored Him:

“Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.”

And He stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, “I am willing; be cleansed.” And immediately the leprosy left him. (Luke 5:13)

I was struck by Jesus' command, “Be cleansed.”

Huh?

How does a leper, afflicted by an incurable disease that isolated him so terribly, just . . . “be cleansed”?

How does one obey a command like that?

Further, how does one obey similar seemingly impossible

commands, such as:

- Be not afraid.
- Be strong.
- Be not discouraged.
- Be anxious for nothing.
- Be transformed.

It makes me smile to think about the one answer that all these “Be \_\_\_\_\_” commands have in common:

We can’t do it. Jesus wasn’t kidding when he said in John 15:5, “I am the vine, you are the branches. If you abide in Me and I abide in you, you will bear much fruit. Apart from Me you can do nothing.”

What we CAN do, *all* we can do, is to open ourselves up to the grace and power of God, giving Him access to ourselves, and inviting Him to do the work, to make the changes.

How was the leper cleansed? Jesus took his leprosy into Himself, I think, exchanging His health and “leprosy-freeness” for the man’s horrible sickness. Jesus’ holiness and perfection destroyed the leprosy the way bleach destroys mold and mildew. The point is, Jesus did it.

### **“Be Not Afraid”**

I understand there are 365 commands to “be not afraid” in the Bible, one for each day of the year. When we are beset by fear, how can we stop being afraid? How do we just turn it off?

We can’t. But Jesus can.

Just as He reassured Joshua in entering the Promised Land that He was with him and would never leave him or forsake him (Joshua 1:5), Jesus promised us before leaving earth to go back to heaven, “I will be with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20)

The last two medical procedures I had done, I was scared. I was so scared I was literally shaking. I couldn't turn off the fear, but I could (and did) remind myself that Jesus was with me, He had me, He was in charge and taking care of me. That's what I focused on, and that's what shrank the fear.

I get that; as a mother, when my young kids were scared, I would reassure them with, "I'm here, I'm here, Mommy's here with you."

### **"Be Strong"**

As a polio survivor whose entire left leg was originally paralyzed and has been very weak my whole life, I can truly appreciate the apparent craziness of this command. It's like my brain telling my frail and lame leg, "Hey! Be strong!" Ain't gonna happen! So why would God give us this command?

We see the full story in Ephesians 6:10, which literally says, "[B]e being strengthened in the Lord and in the strength of His power." The verb is present passive imperative, which means we are told to move out of the driver's seat and let the Lord drive. Let Him be strong in us; let Him pour the power of His might into and through us.

It's like allowing ourselves to be hooked up to a "Jesus IV" so that His power and strength flows into our veins.

It's like buckling ourselves into an airplane seat, sitting back, listening to the mighty jet engines roar to life, and allowing the pilot to hurtle us down the runway, gaining speed, until the plane takes off and we are soaring through the skies. Somebody else does all the work.

The way to "be strong" is actually to be strengthened by a power and force not our own, by receiving and trusting in God's strength and not trying to be strong in our own strength.

## **“Be Not Discouraged”**

This command is often paired with the command to not be afraid, which makes sense. In the Old Testament, God linked His command to “be not discouraged” with the powerful promise of His presence and power for His people. Since God is not only powerful but also sovereign—He has everything under control and will work everything together for our good if we love Him and are called according to His purpose, Romans 8:28—we can jettison discouragement and be encouraged.

I love this passage in 2 Chronicles 32:7—

“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged because of the king of Assyria and the vast army with him, for there is a greater power with us than with him.” I’m pretty sure the apostle John had this in mind when he wrote in the New Testament, “Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world (meaning Satan).”

And how encouraged was the prophet Elisha’s servant who “had risen early and gone out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was circling the city. And his servant said to him, “Alas, my master! What shall we do?”

So he answered, “Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.”

Then Elisha prayed and said, “O LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.” And the LORD opened the servant’s eyes and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. (2 Kings 6:15-17)

We can choose to be encouraged over discouragement if we remember that there is a spiritual reality in the heavenly realms that our physical eyes can’t see, another reason to trust God.

## **“Be Anxious for Nothing”**

The twin terrorists of anxiety and depression have a chokehold on many people today, especially in the wake of the pandemic. Yet we are told in Philippians 4:6 to “be anxious for nothing.” I’m so glad there is a comma and not a period after the word *nothing*, because the antidote for anxiety is right there in the text: “but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

I think Paul had meditated on his friends’ notes of the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus challenged His audience’s worry about the basics of life in Matthew 7:25-34. His perspective was to trust His Father, who cared far more for people made in His image than lesser parts of His creation that He also cared for.

The antidote for anxiety is to tell God what we’re concerned about, but not to stop there: also focus on and deepen our understanding of just how loving, kind and generous the Father is toward us.

Wise people have defined anxiety as “fear of loss.” When we focus on and trust in God instead of the things we are afraid of losing, the anxiety will shrink.

### **“Be Transformed”**

Romans 12:2 says to “be transformed by the renewing of our minds.” We can’t transform ourselves, we need to give God permission to change us from the inside out. It really starts with recognizing the need to BE transformed in the first place, with the humility that begins to see how much we fall short of Jesus’ command to “Be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48).

Oh look, there’s another “Be \_\_\_\_\_” command! Be perfect! Yikes! How can we do that?

By being transformed.

## How do we do *that*?

By asking for it. By inviting the Holy Spirit to make us like Jesus and His Father. By responding with repentance when He convicts us of sin and righteousness, which is His job (John 16:8). By “taking off” the old thinking habits and behaviors that are displeasing to God, and “putting on” the new habits and behaviors that align with the heart and character of God—which we learn about as we get to know Him in His word. And we take off and put on with the Spirit’s empowering, not our own efforts.

There's an important thread to obeying all these "Be \_\_\_\_\_" commands: God does the work in us, with our cooperation, as we surrender and submit to Him.

Philippians 2:13 tells us that God is at work in us, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. He gives us “the want-to and the can-do.” He’s the one who enables us to live out His commands to “Be \_\_\_\_.”

The Christian life is a supernatural life! God does the work,  
we get the blessings!

This blog post originally appeared at [blogs.bible.org/be-what/](https://blogs.bible.org/be-what/)  
on June 21, 2023.

# Bible Literacy Quiz:



# Separated Format

*The original Bible Literacy Quiz can be found [here](#).*

1. Who wrote the first four books of the New Testament?

[Answer](#)

2. Who wrote the first five books of the Old Testament?

[Answer](#)

3. What two Old Testament books are named for women?

[Answer](#)

4. What are the Ten Commandments?

[Answer](#)

5. What is the Greatest Commandment?

[Answer](#)

6. What is the second Greatest Commandment?

[Answer](#)

7. What is the Golden Rule?

[Answer](#)

8. What is the Great Commission?

[Answer](#)

9. What was the test of a prophet, to know that he was truly from God?

[Answer](#)

**10. To whom did God give the 10 Commandments?**

[Answer](#)

**11. Which two people did not die?**

[Answer](#)

**12. What is the root of all kinds of evil?**

[Answer](#)

**13. What is the beginning of wisdom?**

[Answer](#)

**14. Who delivered the Sermon on the Mount?**

[Answer](#)

**15. How did sickness and death enter the world?**

[Answer](#)

**16. Who was the Roman governor who sentenced Christ to death?**

[Answer](#)

**17. Who are the major prophets?**

[Answer](#)

**18. What people group is the Old Testament about?**

[Answer](#)

**19. What happened while the Lord Jesus was in the desert for 40 days?**

[Answer](#)

**20. How many people were on Noah's ark?**

[Answer](#)

**21. Who was the first murderer?**

[Answer](#)

**22. Which person was afflicted with terrible trials but trusted God through it all?**

[Answer](#)

**23. Who was Israel's most well-known and well-loved king?**

[Answer](#)

**24. Who was "the weeping prophet?"**

[Answer](#)

**25. Who was thrown into the lion's den?**

[Answer](#)

**26. Who were the two people in the famous fight with a stone and a sling?**

[Answer](#)

**27. What is the book of Acts about?**

[Answer](#)

**28. What are epistles?**

[Answer](#)

**29. On what occasion was the Holy Spirit given to the church?**

[Answer](#)

**30. Whom did God command to sacrifice his only son?**

[Answer](#)

**31. What was the Old Testament feast that celebrated God's**

**saving the firstborn of Israel the night they left Egypt?**

[Answer](#)

**32. Who was the Hebrew who became prime minister of Egypt?**

[Answer](#)

**33. Who was the Hebrew woman who became Queen of Persia?**

[Answer](#)

**34. Who was the pagan woman who became David's great-grandmother?**

[Answer](#)

**35. Which angel appeared to Mary?**

[Answer](#)

**36. How did the Lord Jesus die?**

[Answer](#)

**37. What happened to Him three days after He died?**

[Answer](#)

**38. What happened to the Lord Jesus 40 days after His resurrection?**

[Answer](#)

**39. What should we do when we sin, in order to restore our fellowship with God?**

[Answer](#)

**40. How did the universe and world get here?**

[Answer](#)

**41. Where did Satan and the demons come from?**

[Answer](#)

**42. Who directed the writing of the Bible?**

[Answer](#)

**43. Where was the Lord Jesus before He was conceived in Mary?**

[Answer](#)

**44. Who taught in parables?**

[Answer](#)

**45. What are parables?**

[Answer](#)

**46. Which two animals talked with human speech?**

[Answer](#)

**47. With which woman did David commit adultery?**

[Answer](#)

**48. Which one of their sons succeeded David as king?**

[Answer](#)

**49. Who was the female judge of Israel?**

[Answer](#)

**50. Who was the wisest man in the world?**

[Answer](#)

**51. Who was the first man?**

[Answer](#)

**52. Who was the most humble man on earth?**

[Answer](#)

**53. Who was the strongest man on earth?**

[Answer](#)

**54. Where were the two nations of God's people taken into captivity?**

[Answer](#)

**55. Which cupbearer to a foreign king rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem?**

[Answer](#)

**56. Who were the two Old Testament prophets who worked miracles?**

[Answer](#)

**57. Which Old Testament prophet spent three days in the belly of a great fish?**

[Answer](#)

**58. What is the last book of the Old Testament?**

[Answer](#)

**59. For which Israelite commander did the sun stand still?**

[Answer](#)

**60. Who was the first king of Israel?**

[Answer](#)

**61. Who built the temple in Israel?**

[Answer](#)

**62. Which of the twelve tribes of Israel served as priests?**

[Answer](#)

**63. Which city fell after the Israelites marched around it daily for seven days?**

[Answer](#)

**64. What did God give the Israelites to eat in the wilderness?**

[Answer](#)

**65. Which two people walked on water?**

[Answer](#)

**66. Who was the first martyr?**

[Answer](#)

**67. Who betrayed Jesus to the priests, and for how much?**

[Answer](#)

**68. What is the Lord's Prayer?**

[Answer](#)

**69. Who was the first person to see the risen Lord?**

[Answer](#)

**70. Which prophet and cousin of the Lord was beheaded?**

[Answer](#)

**71. To what country did the young Jesus and His parents escape when Herod was threatening His life?**

[Answer](#)

**72. What was Christ's first miracle?**

[Answer](#)

**73. Which one of the Lord's personal friends did He raise from the dead?**

[Answer](#)

**74. Who was the greatest missionary of the New Testament?**

[Answer](#)

**75. Who was Paul's first partner?**

[Answer](#)

**76. Whom did an angel release from prison?**

[Answer](#)

**77. Which event caused God to splinter human language into many tongues?**

[Answer](#)

**78. Which chapter of an Old Testament prophet's book gives a detailed prophecy of the Messiah's death by crucifixion?**

[Answer](#)

**79. Who wrestled all night with the Lord and was left with a permanent limp?**

[Answer](#)

**80. Which two pastors did Paul write letters to?**

[Answer](#)

**81. Who was hailed as a god when he was bitten by a snake but nothing bad happened?**

[Answer](#)



**82. Which two New Testament writers were brothers of the Lord Jesus?**

[Answer](#)

**83. Which two New Testament books were written by a doctor?**

[Answer](#)

**84. Who had a coat of many colors?**

[Answer](#)

**85. In what sin did Aaron lead the Israelites while his brother Moses was up on the mountain talking to God?**

[Answer](#)

**86. How many books are there in the entire Bible?**

[Answer](#)

**87. What's the difference between John the Baptist and the John who wrote several New Testament books?**

[Answer](#)

**88. Who saw the Lord appear to him in a burning bush?**

[Answer](#)

**89. How many sons did Jacob have?**

[Answer](#)

**90. Who gave up his birthright for a bowl of stew?**

[Answer](#)

**91. Which Psalm starts out, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want?"**

[Answer](#)

**92. Who disowned the Lord Jesus three times before a cock crowed?**

[Answer](#)

**93. What did the Lord do just before the Last Supper to demonstrate His love and humility?**

[Answer](#)

**94. Where is the New Testament “Hall of Faith?”**

[Answer](#)

**95. Who appeared with the Lord in glory on the Mount of Transfiguration?**

[Answer](#)

**96. Who is the second Adam?**

[Answer](#)

**97. Which Old Testament prophet married a prostitute because God told him to?**

[Answer](#)

**98. What are the two sacred ordinances that the Lord commanded us to observe?**

[Answer](#)

**99. What are supernatural enablings that allow a believer to serve the Body of Christ with ease and effectiveness?**

[Answer](#)

**100. Whose tomb was Christ buried in?**

[Answer](#)

**101. Who wrote the book of Hebrews?**

[Answer](#)

**102. Which is the “epistle of joy?”**

[Answer](#)

**103. What is the book of Revelation about?**

[Answer](#)

**104. Who is the bride of Christ?**

[Answer](#)

## Answers

1. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. [Back](#)
2. Most conservative scholars hold that the Pentateuch was written by Moses. [Back](#)
3. Esther and Ruth. [Back](#)
4.
  1. I am the Lord your God; you shall have no other gods before Me.
  2. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.
  3. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.
  4. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.
  5. Honor your father and your mother.
  6. You shall not murder.
  7. You shall not commit adultery.
  8. You shall not steal.
  9. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.
  10. You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife—or anything that belongs to your neighbor. (Exodus 20:2-17) [Back](#)
5. “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all

your soul and with all your mind.” (Matthew 22:37,38) [Back](#)

6. “Love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:39) [Back](#)

7. “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”  
(Matthew 7:12) [Back](#)

8. “Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19,20) [Back](#)

9. He had to be 100% accurate in his prophecies. The penalty for a false prophet was death by stoning. (Deuteronomy 18:20-22) [Back](#)

10. Moses. (Exodus 20) [Back](#)

11. Genesis 5:24 says that Enoch, who was Noah’s great-grandfather, “walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.” The other was the Old Testament prophet Elijah, who was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind with a chariot and horses of fire. (2 Kings 2:11) [Back](#)

12. The love of money. (1 Timothy 6:10) [Back](#)

13. The fear of the Lord. (Psalm 111:10) [Back](#)

14. The Lord Jesus. (Matthew 5-7) [Back](#)

15. Romans 5:12 says that sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin. The fall of man is recorded in Genesis 3, where God’s perfect creation was spoiled by Adam’s sin. [Back](#)

16. Pontius Pilate. (Matthew 27:26) [Back](#)

17. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. [Back](#)

18. The Hebrews, who became the nation of Israel. They were descendants of Abraham though Isaac. [Back](#)
19. He was tempted by the devil. (Matthew 4:1) Hebrews 4:15 tells us that He was tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. [Back](#)
20. Eight: Noah and his wife, his three sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and their wives. (Genesis 7:13, 1 Peter 2:5) [Back](#)
21. Cain, who killed his brother Abel. (Genesis 4:8) [Back](#)
22. Job. (See book of Job) [Back](#)
23. David. (1 Chronicles 29:28) [Back](#)
24. Jeremiah. [Back](#)
25. Daniel. (Daniel 6) [Back](#)
26. David and Goliath. (1 Samuel 17) [Back](#)
27. The early years of the church, as the gospel begins to spread throughout the world. [Back](#)
28. Letters. [Back](#)
29. Pentecost. (Acts 2:1-4) [Back](#)
30. Abraham. (Genesis 22:2) [Back](#)
31. Passover. (Exodus 12:27) [Back](#)
32. Joseph. (Genesis 41:41) [Back](#)
33. Esther. (Esther 2:17) [Back](#)
34. Ruth. (Ruth 4:17) [Back](#)
35. Gabriel. (Luke 1:26) [Back](#)
36. He gave up His life while being crucified. (John 19:18) [Back](#)

37. He was raised from the dead. (John 20) [Back](#)
38. He ascended bodily into heaven. (Acts 1:9-11) [Back](#)
39. 1 John 1:9 tells us, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." [Back](#)
40. Genesis 1:1 tells us, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." We are told further in Colossians 1:16 and 17 that the Lord Jesus Christ was the one who did the creating. [Back](#)
41. Satan was originally the best and the brightest angel, but he sinned in his pride, wanting to be God. Some of the angels followed him, and these "fallen angels" were cast out of heaven. (Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28) [Back](#)
42. The Holy Spirit. (2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:21) [Back](#)
43. In heaven. (Philippians 2:6-11, 1 Corinthians 15:49) [Back](#)
44. The Lord Jesus. (Matthew 13:3) [Back](#)
45. A short, simple story with a spiritual point. [Back](#)
46. The serpent in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:3) and Balaam's donkey (Numbers 22:28) [Back](#)
47. Bathsheba. (2 Samuel 11) [Back](#)
48. Solomon. (2 Samuel 12:24) [Back](#)
49. Deborah. (Judges 4:4) [Back](#)
50. Solomon. (1 Kings 3:12) [Back](#)
51. Adam. (Genesis 2:20) [Back](#)
52. Moses. (Numbers 12:3) [Back](#)
53. Samson. (Judges 13-16) [Back](#)

54. Israel was taken into Assyria (2 Kings 17:23), and Judah into Babylon (2 Chronicles 36:20). [Back](#)
55. Nehemiah. (Nehemiah 2:5) [Back](#)
56. Elijah and Elisha. (1 Kings 17 – 2 Kings 6) [Back](#)
57. Jonah. (Jonah 1:17) [Back](#)
58. Malachi. [Back](#)
59. Joshua. (Joshua 10) [Back](#)
60. Saul. (1 Samuel 13:1) [Back](#)
61. Solomon. (1 Kings 6) [Back](#)
62. Levites. (Deuteronomy 10:8) [Back](#)
63. Jericho. (Joshua 6:20) [Back](#)
64. Manna and quail. (Exodus 16) [Back](#)
65. Jesus and Peter. (Matthew 14:29) [Back](#)
66. Stephen. (Acts 7) [Back](#)
67. Judas betrayed Him for 30 pieces of silver, the price of a slave. (Matthew 26:14-15) [Back](#)
68. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. (Matthew 6:9-13) [Back](#)
69. Mary Magdalene. (John 20:16) [Back](#)
70. John the Baptist. (John 14:10) [Back](#)

71. Egypt. (Matthew 2:13-15) [Back](#)
72. He turned water into wine at the wedding at Cana. (John 2:11) [Back](#)
73. Lazarus. (John 11) [Back](#)
74. Paul. (see book of Acts) [Back](#)
75. Barnabas. (Acts 13:2) [Back](#)
76. Peter. (Acts 12) [Back](#)
77. The building of the Tower of Babel. (Genesis 11) [Back](#)
78. Isaiah 53. [Back](#)
79. Jacob. (Genesis 32:22-32) [Back](#)
80. Timothy and Titus. [Back](#)
81. Paul. (Acts 28:5-6) [Back](#)
82. James and Jude. (Matthew 13:55) [Back](#)
83. Luke and Acts. (2 Timothy 4:11) [Back](#)
84. Joseph. (Genesis 37:3) [Back](#)
85. They made an idol in the form of a golden calf. (Exodus 32) [Back](#)
86. 66: 39 in the Old Testament, and 27 in the New Testament. [Back](#)
87. John the Baptist was a prophet who proclaimed the kingdom of God was near in preparation for his cousin Jesus' ministry. The John who wrote the gospel of John, the epistles—1, 2 and 3 John—and Revelation, was one of the twelve apostles and one of those closest to the Lord, along with Peter and James. He called himself "the disciple whom Jesus loved." [Back](#)



88. Moses. (Exodus 3) [Back](#)
89. Twelve. They were the ancestors of the twelve tribes of Israel. (Genesis 35:22) [Back](#)
90. Esau. (Genesis 25:33) [Back](#)
91. Psalm 23. [Back](#)
92. Peter. (Matthew 26:69-75) [Back](#)
93. He washed the disciples' feet. (John 13:5) [Back](#)
94. Hebrews 11. [Back](#)
95. Elijah and Moses. (Mark 9:4) [Back](#)
96. The Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:45-49) [Back](#)
- 97 Hosea. (Hosea 1:2) [Back](#)
98. Baptism (Matthew 28:19,20) and Communion, or the Lord's Table (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). [Back](#)
99. Spiritual gifts. (Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4:8-13, 1 Peter 4:10-11) [Back](#)
100. Joseph of Arimathea. (Matthew 27:57-60) [Back](#)
101. Nobody knows. [Back](#)
109. Philippians. [Back](#)
103. The end of the world. [Back](#)
104. The church—that is, all who have trusted Him for salvation. (Ephesians 5:25-27, Revelation 19:7-8) [Back](#)

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# Is Comparison Always Bad?

*Sue Bohlin contrasts some downsides and upsides of comparing ourselves to others.*

"Comparison is the thief of joy."

I've been hearing that for decades.

But is it, always?

Examples of how true that is, most certainly abound.

I recently read my friend Amy's Facebook account of her college experience. A gifted singer, she was a jazz vocalist major at a university known for its excellent music program. The only problem was that she had a friend and classmate who was so much better than Amy. She used to go home on weekends and bemoan the difference to her parents, asking why *they* couldn't be jazz musicians like her friend's parents. She eventually changed her major to pre-med, which was easier in comparison.

"A few years later," she writes, "I was watching the Grammys. I went on to watch my friend Norah win 11 out of 11 Grammys she was nominated for!!! At that moment she did something bigger than most people ever even do in the industry.

Yes. I had compared myself to Norah Jones . . ."

Yeah, it's not such a great idea to compare yourself to a legend.

Comparing oneself to others can easily result in landing in one of two bad places, particularly through social media.

You can look down your nose at people you think you're better

than, puffing yourself up with pride and arrogance. You can judge others for how they look, where they (or their children) go to school, what kind of car they drive, the home they live in. It's easy to slide into contempt for people who don't measure up to your standards.

It's not just personal assets though. On Facebook and Cruise Critic, I read people dissing Carnival Cruise line as "the Wal-Mart of cruising." This affordable vacation provides customers with 24/7 electricity and clean water, unlimited food and drink, a clean room and a comfortable bed with their own bathroom, daily room cleaning, more entertainment and recreation options than they can possibly take advantage of—all available in the middle of the ocean. Millions if not billions of people on earth can only dream of this level of luxury.

Or, more likely, you can compare your reality to everyone else's curated, carefully chosen and often edited pictures of the images they want the world to see. Particularly for teenagers and young adults, this is resulting in a higher degree of depression and anxiety than the world has ever seen.

The invention of filters for social media apps such as Instagram and Snapchat makes it possible for people to compare their reality to the impossibility of unattainable perfection—of their own face! Growing numbers of people are requesting plastic surgeons to make them look like they do on their filter-adjusted images. Of course, no one can make a human being perfect.

So this leads to a morass of self-pity. It feels like people can almost taste a level of perfection they long for but it is denied them. How cruel! They wouldn't even know this kind of sadness and discontent if it weren't for technologically-driven comparison.

In a completely different vein, we are also seeing the

incredibly sad results of boys comparing themselves to girls and wishing they had a girl's body and a girl's life—and girls convinced their lives would be better and they would be happier and safer in a boy's body.

This kind of comparison is bad enough on its own, but with the rampant gender ideology and medicalization of gender-confused people, it is now easier than ever before to feed the fantasy and delusion that the other sex would be better through easy access to cross-gender hormones and body-mutilating surgeries.

This is heartbreaking.

And it is yet another example of how comparison can be the thief of joy, because trying to secure what God has not granted us leads to all kinds of disappointment.

So . . . is comparison *always* bad?

No!

It can be a source of perspective that feeds our awareness of how blessed we are.

As I continue to recover from the trauma of [tongue cancer surgery](#), I have discovered a worldwide Facebook support group for tongue cancer survivors. This is how I have learned how easy I have it. My cancer was cut out of my tongue, but I didn't need a "tongue flap," a graft harvested from my arm or leg. I didn't need a feeding tube, and I can still swallow, and eat, and taste, and talk. There was no cancer in my lymph nodes, so I didn't need chemotherapy or radiation. As I have read of other people's horrendously difficult journeys through tongue cancer, I am deeply moved with gratitude for my relatively easy path.

I see people living in homelessness, and I give thanks for the blessing of a home to live in.

I look at my canes, which I need as my polio-ravaged body

continues to weaken, and I give thanks for the privilege of walking. I didn't need my canes for the year and a half I wasn't able to walk because of horrible arthritis in my hips. When walking was restored to me after [hip replacement surgeries](#), my wonky polio gait changed from one kind of limp to another, but limping meant *I was walking again!* Thank You Lord!

I think the ultimate value in the redemptive kind of comparison, though, is found in comparing ourselves not to other people, but to Jesus.

Hebrews 12:2 tells us to “fix our eyes on Jesus.” If we compare ourselves to Him, we will see ourselves as appropriately small, weak, lesser than, and desperately needy of Him. If we fix our eyes on Him, we won't be distracted by comparing ourselves to others and end up feeling either puffed up or put down. If we compare ourselves to Him, we will experience true humility, which is seeing ourselves as neither too big nor too small, but right-sized.

So comparison can be bad and ugly, but it can also be a source of great blessing. May we be wise in what we do with it.

This blog post originally appeared at [blogs.bible.org/is-comparison-always-bad/](https://blogs.bible.org/is-comparison-always-bad/) on May 16, 2023.

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## Trusting God on the Other Side of Bizarre

In my last blog post, [Trusting God in the Bizarre](#),” I shared how a diagnosis of tongue cancer had blown up my world and how I was wrestling with [my fear](#)—again—of pain and suffering.

It has now been 11 weeks since a surgeon removed a third of my tongue. I am still healing, both my tongue and my neck, from which he removed 20 lymph nodes—which were cancer free. I still thank the Lord for that graciousness. My speech is no longer impaired although it *is* affected. I sound like I have a cough drop in my mouth when I talk, and the “s” sound is still a challenge.

Let me share with you what “Trusting God in the Bizarre” looks like on the other side of surgery.

I continue to believe that this cancer is a form of spiritual warfare, and it was a very personal attack as retaliation for continually speaking out about the goodness of God’s design for sex, gender, and sexuality. According to Ephesians 6:13, the outcome of successful spiritual warfare is to *just stay standing*. (“[W]hen the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.”) I dug in my heels, so to speak, and determined to keep standing in the goodness of God, not allowing the enemy to knock me down. And to keep standing in my trust of His sovereignty, that a good and loving God is in control. As I praised Him for using pain as a sculpting tool to shape me like Jesus, my heart of thanksgiving repelled the enemy, for the Lord abides in the praise of His people (Psalm 22:3). I love the image of the God of light dwelling in the heart of the believer, because darkness cannot stand before light. It has to flee. And so did the enemy, as I thanked and praised God for His lovingkindness to me.

Before the surgery, I was pretty much terrified of the physically torturing pain that never came—a source of wonder and deep thanksgiving. What I was *not* prepared for was the emotional pain of soul-wrenching loss. The grief of losing my life before the surgery; the grief of losing a body part; the grief of losing my clear speech, which I had always taken for granted. In the first couple of weeks, my husband Ray told people at church, “She almost never smiles anymore,” and when

I did, it was lopsided, still affected by the surgery, the numbness, the cut nerves.

*I journaled, I am depressed and sad and grieving and unhappy and feeling crummy. My life is not lost, it's put on hold. . . . STUPID HARD. That's my phrase for this. And the shock of it shows I'm blessed by how beautiful my life has been up to this point.*

For two of those early post-op days I was deep in the weeds of grief, exhausted from frequent tears that came unbidden. Instead of a tissue box, I kept a stack of napkins next to my recliner and it was amazing how many I went through. Then the third day, I received such moving encouragement via texts from my son in California that tears of gratitude and appreciation flowed. I actually started to feel dehydrated from the crying. When the fourth day proved to be tear-free, I was amazed by how much energy I had! What a poignant reminder of how exhausting tears are, and why people overtaken by tears need to be given extra-large doses of grace and compassion.

Before my surgery, I asked God to give me a handle to hang onto when I woke up and then afterwards, and He gave me this: "Be a window." I journaled, *A window doesn't work at being transparent and clear, just as a branch doesn't work at receiving the life of the vine. I just need to ABIDE. I will have the IV right there as a visual reminder to be "actively passive" in receiving the Lord's life and letting Him shine through me.*

Wincing internally because of my speech, I kept using the phrase, "I'm not ready for prime time," but the Lord showed me that oh yes it is. I noticed that when people knew about my tongue cancer surgery, they were able to understand me easily, not like strangers who didn't know and would ask me to repeat myself. He impressed on me that I am in a window of time, ever-closing as I slowly heal, where people are listening more closely to me than ever before. I don't know if God is

anointing me, or if He's anointing the ears of people I'm talking to, but something special is happening.

When I realized that rather than putting my life on pause, waiting for "prime time," I am in a limited-time window of blessing, I prayed, "Please don't let me miss any opportunity You are opening for whatever You want to do through me?" Various doors opened to speak or teach—at church, at a women's luncheon, in a couple of classes at a Christian high school—and when I am able to share about recovering from tongue cancer surgery, *people listen extra hard.*

So the first direction I got from God was, "Be a window." Now that's been expanded to, "Be a window **IN** this window."

Before the pathology report for my lymph nodes came back clear, I wrote:

*I have been begging God for no cancer in the lymph nodes, but what if He says no? What if my path goes into the radiology unit?*

*God is good even when there is cancer. He loves me even if He has given a green light to more cancer. If He says yes to lymph nodes then He has a plan for me to bring glory to Himself through me, through my response. He will show others what the response of faithfulness and trust looks like, as I seek to "be a window." Lord, give me direction and wisdom in how to show **YOU** off without showing **ME** off. You know—oh, how You know!!—how I struggle with pride. I want to be the best example of a faithful suffering Christian—but I don't want to suffer to do it! Thank You for using this trial to make me more like Jesus. Thank You that I will look back on this "light and momentary affliction" (2 Corinthians 4:17) and think, "**TOTALLY WORTH IT!!**" Thank You that this is how I glory in my suffering (Romans 5:3)—by focusing on You and on what is true, and not the pain. Just as Peter needed to focus on You and not the storm when he walked on water.*



I recorded several videos for social media to give updates on how I was healing and how I was sounding. In this one, I was transparent about the fact that sometimes I have a hard time with the “s” sound. But it struck me that there is more value in people seeing the Spirit-enabled grace of self-acceptance in the face of loss, than if my speech were unaffected in the first place.

<https://www.facebook.com/559034244/videos/1924001134618178/>

Several people have asked, “What do you think God wanted you to learn from this trial?”

I honestly don’t think it’s about gaining more information about God or learning more life lessons. I think it’s about building my character and perseverance. I think it’s about growing my roots deeper in my dependence on Christ and maturing me spiritually, to make me more like Him. That’s the spiritual fruit that the Lord wants to see His people bear, I think.

I’ll keep you posted. \*still a little lop-sided smile\*

This blog post originally appeared at  
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