

The Darkness of Twilight: A Christian Perspective

Sue Bohlin examines the message of Twilight from a biblically informed, Christian perspective, helping Christians understand how they should approach such popular fare.

Demonic Origin of *Twilight*?

The *Twilight* saga is a publishing and movie phenomenon that sweeps tween and teen girls (and a whole lot of other people) off their feet with an obsessive kind of following. Millions of Christian girls are huge fans of this series about love between a teenage girl and her vampire boyfriend-then-husband. But it's not just a love story made exciting by the danger of vampires' blood-lust. I believe the *Twilight* saga, all four books and their corresponding movies, is spiritually dangerous. I believe there is a demonic origin to the series, and the occult themes that permeate the books are a dangerous open door to Satan and his hordes of unholy angels.

I was stunned to learn about how the idea for *Twilight* came to the author, Stephenie Meyer. She tells this story:

I woke up . . . from a very vivid dream. In my dream, two people were having an intense conversation in a meadow in the woods. One of these people was just your average girl. The other person was fantastically beautiful, sparkly, and a vampire. They were discussing the difficulties inherent in the facts that A) they were falling in love with each other while B) the vampire was particularly attracted to the scent of her blood, and was having a difficult time restraining himself from killing her immediately.[\[1\]](#)



“Fantastically beautiful, sparkly, and a vampire”? Consider what vampires are, in the vampire genre that arose in the 1800s: demon-possessed, undead, former human beings who suck blood from their victims to sustain themselves. A vampire is evil. And the vampire who came to Stephenie Meyer in a dream is not only supernaturally beautiful and sparkly, but when she awoke she was deeply in love with this being who virtually moved into her head, creating conversations for months that she typed out until *Twilight* was written.

When I heard this part of the story, it gave me chills. Scripture tells us that Satan disguises himself as an angel of light, which is a perfect description of the Edward Cullen character.

Then I learned that “Edward” came to Meyer in a second dream that frightened her. She said, “I had this dream that Edward actually showed up and told me that I got it all wrong and like he exists and everything but he couldn’t live off animals . . . and I kind of got the sense he was going to kill me. It was really terrifying and bizarrely different from every other time I’ve thought about his character.”[\[2\]](#)

I suggest that if the *Twilight* saga is demonic in origin, it is dangerous, to Christians and non-Christians alike.

Vampires, Blood, and Salvation

I explained above how the *Twilight* saga was birthed in an unusually vivid dream that I believe was demonic in origin. So it's really no surprise that the books are permeated with the occult.

The *Twilight* vampires all have various kinds of powers that don't come from God. They are supernaturally fast, supernaturally strong, able to read others' minds and control others' feelings. Some can tell the future, others can see things at great distances. These aspects of the occult are an important part of what makes *Twilight* so successful.

In both the Old and New Testaments, God strongly warns us not to have anything to do with the occult, which is part of the "domain of darkness" (Col. 1:13) where demons reign. He calls occult practices "detestable," which tells us that He is passionate about protecting us. One of the reasons *Twilight* is so dangerous is that readers can long for these kinds of supernatural but ungodly powers; if not in real life, then in their imagination. And this is a doorway to the demonic, which is all about gaining power from a source other than God. *Twilight* glorifies the occult, the very thing God calls detestable (Deut. 18:9). This is reason enough for Christ-followers to stay away from it!

For a growing number of people, vampirism is not make-believe. In a special report on the Fox News Channel, Sean Hannity reported, "there's actually a vampire subculture that exists in the United States right now and spreads into almost every community in this country."^{3} Joseph Laylock, the author of a book on modern vampires, explains that there are three general categories of people who "believe they have an 'energy deficit,' and need to feed on blood or energy to maintain their wellbeing."^{4} Some drink real blood, others feed only on "energy" they draw from other humans, and "hybrids" who are a bit of both.^{5}

My Probe colleague Todd Kappelman, a philosopher and literature critic, observed that Stephenie Meyer took unwarranted liberties with the genre. Vampires are evil, and you can't just turn them "good" by writing them that way.

You can't have vampires strolling around in the daytime. You can't make evil good and good evil, putting light for darkness and darkness for light [Is. 5:20]. It's a law of physics: light always dispels the darkness. You can't have the bad guys win. There is no system in the world where evil is rewarded with "happily ever after"; it violates our sensibilities too much. Either the extremely ignorant or the extremely childish would fall for it. And apart from the moral aspect, it's doing violence to the genre—like putting Darth Vader in a Jane Austen novel. [{6}](#)

Writer Michael O'Brien comments,

In the *Twilight* series we have a cultural work that converts a traditional archetype of evil into a morally neutral one. Vampires are no longer the "un-dead," no longer possessed by demons. There are "good" vampires and "bad" vampires, and because the good vampire is incredibly handsome and possesses all the other qualities of an adolescent girl's idealized dreamboat, everything is forgivable. [{7}](#)

Closely connected to the occult is drinking blood, which is a focus of the vampire literary genre; vampires feed on the blood of humans. In *Twilight*, we are supposed to embrace the "good" vampires who have learned to feed on the blood of animals, calling themselves vegetarians (which is an insult to all vegetarians!). Interestingly, in Lev. 19:26 God connected the occult with ingesting blood 3200 years before the vampire genre was invented.

God understands the importance of blood; in both the Old and New Testaments, He forbids eating or drinking it. Not only did this separate His followers from the surrounding pagan

cultures, but it also separated out the importance of blood because it atones for sin. In the Old Testament, animals were sacrificed as a picture of how the spotless Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, would pour out His sacred blood to pay for our sins. God doesn't want people to focus on the wrong blood!{8}

Twilight is also spiritually dangerous in the way it presents salvation. When Daddy Vampire Carlisle turns Edward into a vampire, it is described as saving him.{9} He ended a 17-year-old boy's physical life and turned him into an undead, stone cold superbeing, which Edward describes as a "new birth." {10} Vampire Alice describes the process as the venom spreading through the body, healing it, changing it, until the heart stops and the conversion is finished.{11} Poison heals, and changes, and converts to lifelessness? Healing poison? This is spiritually dangerous thinking. Isaiah warns us (5:20), "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!"

This upside-down, inside-out way of thinking is rooted in Stephenie Meyer's strong Mormon beliefs. *Twilight's* cover photo of a woman's hands offering an apple is an intentional reference to the way Mormonism reinvents the Genesis story of the Fall. LDS (Latter Day Saints) doctrine makes the Fall a necessary step, called a "fall up." {12} At the beginning of the book you will find, alone on a page, Genesis 2: 17—"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

Stephenie Meyer explains:

The apple on the cover of *Twilight* represents "forbidden fruit." I used the scripture from Genesis (located just after the table of contents) because I loved the phrase "the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil." Isn't this exactly

what Bella ends up with? A working knowledge of what good is, and what evil is. . . . In the end, I love the beautiful simplicity of the picture. To me it says: choice.[{13}](#)

Echoing Satan's deception of Eve with the temptation to become like God on her own terms, the heroine Bella eventually becomes a god-like vampire, glorying in her perfection, her beauty, her infallibility. She transcends her detested humanity and becomes a goddess. This is basic Mormon doctrine, not surprising since the author is a Mormon.[{14}](#)

One of the messages of *Twilight* is that there is a way to have immortal life, eternal life, apart from a relationship with God through Jesus Christ; that there is a way to live forever without dealing with the obstacle of our sin problem by confessing that we are sinners and we need the forgiveness and grace of a loving Savior.

This is a spiritually dangerous series.

A Love Story on Steroids: Emotional Dependency

Why are girls of all ages, but especially tweens and teens, so passionately and obsessively in love with Edward, the vampire in *Twilight*?

Edward is very different from the vast majority of young men today. He is chivalrous, sensitive, self-sacrificing and honorable. He wants the best for Bella, his teenage girlfriend and eventual wife. He is able to keep his impulses in check, which is a good thing since he lusts after her scent and wants to kill her so he can drain her blood. No wonder girls and women declare they're in love with Edward Cullen!

But one of the troubling aspects of the *Twilight* saga is Edward and Bella's unhealthy and dysfunctional relationship. Yet millions of female readers can't stop thinking about this

“love story on steroids,” which means it is shaping their hopes and expectations for their own relationships. That’s scary.

The best way to describe their relationship is emotional dependency. This is when you have to have a constant connection to another person in order for you to be okay. Emotional dependency is characterized by a desperate neediness. You put all your relational eggs in one basket, engaging in an intense one-on-one relationship that renders other relationships unnecessary. In fact, there is often a resentment of not only the people that used to be your friends, but you resent anyone in the other person’s world who could pull their attention and devotion away from you.

When things are going well, it’s like emotional crack cocaine. The intensity is addictive and exhilarating. When things aren’t going well, it’s an absolute nightmare. Emotionally dependent relationships strap people into an emotional roller coaster full of drama, manipulation, and a constant need for reassurance from the other.

When Edward leaves Bella for a time, she becomes an emotional zombie. The book *New Moon* is full of descriptions of the pain of the hole in her chest because when he left, he took her heart with him. She had withdrawn from all her friends to make Edward into her whole world, so she had no support network in place when he left. All of her emotional eggs were in his basket. Many readers see this as highly romantic rather than breathtakingly dysfunctional.

One or both people are looking to another to meet their basic needs for love and security, instead of to God. So emotional dependency is a form of relational idolatry. People put their loved one or the relationship on a pedestal and worship them or it as a false god. When you look to another person to give you worth and make you feel loved and valued, they become inordinately essential. When we worship the creature rather

than the Creator as in Romans 1, what results is a desperate neediness that puts us and keeps us at the mercy of the one we worship. They have a lot of power over us, which is one reason why God wants to protect us from idolatry.

Twilight is like an emotional dependency how-to manual. At one point, Bella's mother tells her, "The way you move—you orient yourself around him without even thinking about it. When he moves, even a little bit, you adjust your position at the same time—like magnets . . . or gravity. You're like a . . . satellite, or something."[\[15\]](#) The power of story, especially this story, is that it can set up readers to mistake emotional dependency and relational idolatry for what a love story should look and feel like.

On the Credenda blog, Douglas Wilson makes a powerful case for *Twilight* also serving as a manual for how to become an abused girlfriend and then an abused wife. Edward's moods are mercurial and unpredictable, and Bella just goes along with it, making excuses and justifying his actions.[\[16\]](#)

Twilight is spiritually dangerous because of its demonic origin and its occult themes, both of which God commands us to stay away from. But it's emotionally dangerous too.

Emotional Pornography

The *Twilight* series is touted as pro-abstinence and pro-chastity because the main characters don't "go all the way" before they get married. A lot of parents hear that and give a green light for their daughters to read the books and see the movies. But the *Twilight* books are a lust-filled series, so embedded with writing intended to arouse the emotions, that it is legitimately considered emotional pornography.

Marcia Montenegro writes,

Much has been made of the alleged message of *Twilight*, that

it is one of abstinence and shows control over desire. In truth, Edward is controlling himself because he does not want to kill Bella; her life is truly in danger from a ferocious vampire attack from the one who loves her. Aside from that, a vibrant sensuality of attraction lies just beneath the surface. A TIME reporter who interviewed Meyer wrote, "It's never quite clear whether Edward wants to sleep with Bella or rip her throat out or both, but he wants something, and he wants it bad, and you feel it all the more because he never gets it. That's the power of the *Twilight* books: they're squeaky, geeky clean on the surface, but right below it, they are absolutely, deliciously filthy." {17}

The struggle with self-control is saturated with eroticism and lust. It's so sensual that teenage boys and young men will read it simply for that reason. The protest, "They don't have sex" is lame; the relationship is extremely sensual. One very insightful blogger writes,

To claim that the *Twilight* saga is based on the virtue of chastity is like calling the *Sports Illustrated* Swimsuit Edition pro-chastity because the girls are clothed.

Bella gives detailed first person accounts of her "make out" encounters with Edward—everything from trying to unbutton clothing, to how loud her breathing is and how this or that feels . . . these detailed first person descriptions are designed to arouse young girls—like a gateway drug to full blown romance novels or vampire lore. How can books in which the author has written detailed first person descriptions of actions leading to arousal help readers to be chaste? The words on the page defy chastity. Anyone who claims that the books promote chastity has to explain how a young girl can read detailed first-person descriptions of "making out" as a tool to preserving her innocence. {18}

The sensuality of *Twilight* is not lost on even the youngest

readers and movie-goers. Robert Pattinson, the actor who plays Edward Cullen in the *Twilight* movies, was asked in a *Rolling Stone* interview, "Is it weird to have girls that are so young have this incredibly sexualized thing around you?" He answered, "It's weird that you get 8-year-old girls coming up to you saying, 'Can you just bite me? I want you to bite me.' It is really strange how young the girls are, considering the book is based on the virtues of chastity, but I think it has the opposite effect on its readers though. [Laughs]"[\[19\]](#)

God's word says, "Flee youthful lusts" (2 Tim. 2:22). Without a strong discernment filter in place, and without a strong determination to guard one's heart (Prov. 4:23), it will be very hard to obey that protective command when reading the *Twilight* books or watching the movies.

Recently at a youth discipleship camp, I asked the young men how they felt about *Twilight*. They booed. Real men don't stand a chance to be *enough* compared to the too-good-to-be-true Edward Cullen. When girls use the emotional porn of romance novels or movies, they are setting up impossible expectations that have no hope of being fulfilled by limited, fallible, all-too-human beings. It's a cruel twist on the way men can sabotage their relationships with real women by their use of internet porn. Is there much of a difference between using sexual porn or emotional porn? In both cases, fantasy creates unrealistic expectations that reality cannot satisfy.

Apart from the problem of unrealistic expectations, it is unhealthy to make such an intense heart connection with a fictional character. Some people choose getting lost in reading and re-reading the books over having connections with real human beings in community. One lady told me that she called a friend about going out to a movie, but her friend begged off: "Oh, I'm going to stay in with Edward tonight." A nail technician had one 60-year-old client who confided, "Don't tell my husband, but I'm in love with Edward."

In the first *Twilight* book, Edward sweeps Bella off her feet with the intoxicating description of his intense desire for her and why she desires him: “I’m the world’s most dangerous predator. Everything about me invites you in. My voice, my face, even my smell. . . I’m designed to kill. . . I’ve wanted to kill you. I’ve never wanted a human’s blood so much in my life. . . Your scent, it’s like a drug to me. You’re like my own personal brand of heroin.”[\[20\]](#)

I believe there is a spirit of seduction in the *Twilight* saga. Something supernatural draws millions of readers to fantasize about being desired, pursued and falling in love with a character that I believe has a deeply demonic component. It’s dangerous on several levels.

The (Rotten) Fruit of *Twilight*

Twilight is one of the most successful series ever published. Readers don’t just read the books; many of them re-read them, multiple times. In order to be discerning, we need to examine the fruit of this series to see its effect on readers. I believe that there is a spiritual reality of evil behind *Twilight* that explains three kinds of fruit I see.

First is the fruit of obsession. Literally millions of fans can’t stop thinking and talking about the books, the characters, the minutia of the *Twilight* world. There is an addictive element of the series for many people. Addiction is bondage; why willingly submit yourself to bondage?

Some girls talk about their daily reading and study of “The Book,” and they’re talking about the whole saga—not the Bible.[\[21\]](#) With social networking and digital media, fans have access to an ever-growing community of other *Twilight*-obsessed people, which allows them to connect with their God-given desire to be part of something bigger than themselves. But the transcendence of connecting to the *Twilight* world is so much

less than God intends for us to experience!

The second fruit is the spiritual warfare reported by Christians, especially those who disobeyed God's leading to get rid of the books—night sweats, hearing voices and other unusual noises, being gripped by a spirit of fear, loss of intimacy with God. Some thoughtful people have reported what one woman called “a stronghold I didn't want and couldn't seem to overcome. I became uncontrollably obsessed over this make-believe world. And fell into a pit of manic-depressive-suicidal state.”[{22}](#)

One Christian teenager, clearly under conviction, wrote this comment on a blog:

As a 15-year-old, reading those books was a . . . strange experience for me.

I didn't think they were too bad or morally lacking until I heard my old high-school chaplain [a thirty-something woman, I think. Never dared to ask ☐] praise them. And then something inside me clicked, because it struck me as wrong that a Godly woman would find this series good. . . .

Another problem with *Twilight* that I had is that it drives girls to think of love before they are emotionally and mentally ready for the idea. It pretty much skews their ideas of love up. I know it's done that to me. Because what this series has done is stick Edward Cullen in one category (i.e. “pure perfection”) and “everyone else” lumped together in another as a portrayal of pure “ocker”ness. I am now not sure to what percentage *gentlemanliness* exists in a normal, TANNED boy. So it's not really fair to guys, or girls, because of skewed expectations. . . .

Otherwise, I enjoyed the *Twilight* series, but I don't feel that I should have, so I'm going to pray about that one.[{23}](#)

The third fruit is a spirit of divisiveness. Some Christians

are inordinately defensive about *Twilight*, choosing the books over relationships with other believers who take a negative view of the series. One Christian speaker who shared her deep concerns over *Twilight* at a church conference was verbally attacked at the break by supposedly mature women. Some of them still refuse to speak to her.

Of course, we hear the refrain, "Oh come on. It's just a book. It's just fiction." But all forms of entertainment are a wrapper for values and a message, and we need to be aware of what it is. Remember, what we take into our imaginations is really like food for our souls. If something has poison in it, it shouldn't be eaten. Saying "It's just a book, who cares what it is as long as we're reading," is equivalent to saying, "If you can put it in your mouth and swallow it, it must be food." What are you feeding your soul? Goodness or poison?

Readers resonate with the important themes of life and literature: romantic love, family love and loyalty, beauty, sacrifice, fear, danger, overcoming, conflict, resolution. But these themes are laced with spiritual deception: "You, too, can be like God." You hear that *Twilight* is a love story on steroids, and people—especially young girls—are drawn to God's design for a woman to be cherished, protected, and provided for. They are drawn to the way Bella responds to Edward with love, respect and submission, which is also God's design. So it is especially devious that the elements that resonate with our God-given desires for love are poisoned as occult principles are interwoven with the story. [{24}](#)

One teenage girl made this comment on a blog: "I never thought of [the books] as arousing or erotic in any way. Like many other girls, I found myself falling for Edward as I delved into the story. Before I knew it, my heart was beating faster during the mushier scenes." Like millions of others, she is unable to discern the line between emotional and sexual arousal. Swooning because you are in love with a fictional character, when you long for this character when you're not

reading the book, means you've been taken captive (Col. 2:8). And God does not want us in bondage to anything except Him!

Twilight is dangerous because it subtly stretches us into accommodating that which God calls sin. People don't leap from embracing good to embracing evil in one giant step; it's a series of small, incremental allowances. Readers easily accept unthinkingly an unmarried couple spending every single night together when the Word says to avoid every form of evil and to flee temptation, not lie there cuddling with it! Readers are led to accept as heroes and friends vampires who murder human beings to drink their blood.

Commentator Michael O'Brien makes a stunning analysis of *Twilight*:

In the *Twilight* series, vampirism is not identified as the root cause of all the carnage; instead the evil is attributed to the way a person lives out his vampirism. Though Bella is at first shocked by the truth about the family's old ways (murder, dismemberment, sucking the blood from victims), she is nevertheless overwhelmed by her "feelings" for Edward, and her yearning to believe that he is truly capable of noble self-sacrifice. So much so that her natural feminine instinct for submission to the masculine suitor increases to the degree that she desires to offer her life to her conqueror. She trusts that he will not kill her; she wants him to drink her essence and infect her. This will give her a magnificent unending romance and an historical role in creating with her lover a new kind of human being. They will have superhuman powers. They will be *moral* vampires—and they will be *immortal*.

Here, then, is the embedded spiritual narrative (probably invisible to the author and her audience alike): You shall be as gods. You will overcome death on your own terms. You will be master over death. Good and evil are not necessarily what Western civilization has, until now, called good and

evil. *You* will define the meaning of symbols and morals and human identity. And all of this is subsumed in the ultimate message: The image and likeness of God in you can be the image and likeness of a god whose characteristics are satanic, as long as you are a “basically good person.”

In this way, coasting on a tsunami of intoxicating visuals and emotions, the image of supernatural evil is transformed into an image of supernatural good. [\[25\]](#)

Twilight is not dangerous because people will literally want to become vampires. *Twilight* is dangerous because, through the powerful medium of storytelling, dangerous ideas and messages go straight to the heart like a poisoned-tipped arrow, without being passed through a biblical filter. Beware the darkness of *Twilight*.

Addendum: Should I Let My Children/Grandchildren/Students Read *Twilight*?

I have read all four books in the *Twilight* series. I strongly recommend against reading these books.

But I also understand that it's a cultural phenomenon, and lots of people are going to read the books no matter what anyone says. So allow me to attempt to redeem the cultural pressure inherent in these books' popularity by suggesting how you can help the tender, untaught minds of your loved ones to think critically as they read.

If your teen or tween expresses a desire to read the books, give an explanation for why you think they shouldn't. (“Just say no” just doesn't work with most kids. They need to know why, and that's fair.) I would suggest something along the lines of, “I love you and I want what is best for you, and that means protecting you from dangers you are not aware of. This series is steeped in the occult and in demonic influence,

both of which God strongly warns us against in His word. There is also a powerful emotional draw into unhealthy fantasy which could sabotage future relationships with real people. There are spiritual dangers and emotional dangers that I want to protect you from.”

If you receive pushback, then you might respond by saying, “If you want to read the books, then I’ll read them with you. We’ll talk about them, a chapter or a scene at a time. The choice is yours.” This gives your loved one the power of choice, but you remain involved in the process. What would be especially powerful for young girls is for Dad to read the books as well and talk to his daughter(s) about what’s in them. Men would have a very different take on the emotional lust in these books, as well as a sensitivity to the unfair expectations of a lover that would be formed in their daughters’ hearts. Girls need their father’s input in this adolescent time of emotional and sexual confusion, and *Twilight* is almost guaranteed to add to the confusion.

Talk about the books’ content frankly and openly; if they are embarrassed for you to know what they are reading, their well-placed shame will make a powerful statement about the wisdom of reading this kind of book. Make sure they know that you are completely aware of what they are taking into their minds and spirits, just as you would want to know if they were taking drugs into their bodies. Reframe the book’s content in terms of what the Bible says, and ask questions: Does this agree with the Bible’s explanation of life and reality? Does this help you draw near to God, or does it make you want to avoid Him and His Word? How do the descriptions of Bella’s, Edward’s and Jacob’s thoughts and feelings make you think about the people in your real life? Are you tempted to look down your nose at the “mere humans” you do life with?

Even though this work is fiction, it is still making statements about reality. What is it saying about life on earth? About God? About sin? About love? About the soul? About

heaven and hell? About biblical truth?

How does the book compare to what the Bible says? For example, look together at the Ephesians 5 passage about marriage and why it is important. (Marriage is an earthbound illustration of the union of Christ and the church.) And what Jesus said about the nature of the marriage relationship in heaven in Matthew 22:30. (The marriage relationship is ended by death.) How does it compare with the ideas about marriage in *Twilight*? Look for the ways Bella relates to her father. Is it according to God's command to children to obey their parents (Eph. 6:1; Col. 3:20)? Does she get away with her deceptions and repeated acts of disobedience? (Yes.) Is this consistent with the Bible's teaching on the consequences of sin (Gal. 6:7)?

Talk about the gold standard for what God wants us to expose ourselves to: "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things" (Phil. 4:8). Look for what is true and not true, noble and not noble, right and not right, etc. The books are not without statements and ideas that are true, noble, and right; the problem is that they are mixed in with even more compelling ideas that are false, ignoble, wrong, impure, unlovely, and shameful.

"As a man thinks in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 7:23). The things we think about by filling our minds and hearts will shape us. What are you filling your mind and heart with? Longing for the perfect lover that no human being can fulfill? Discontent with being human and wishing you could have supernatural powers? Will that serve you well?

Lia Carlile, a teacher at a Christian school in Washington State, offered these excellent critical thinking questions to help students think through *Twilight* or any other cultural phenomenon. Lia cites many Scriptures in her notes, which I highly recommend. [{26}](#)

Question 1 – Me and God

- *How is this thing building my relationship with the Lord?*
- *How does my interest in this area compare with my time invested in my relationship with the Lord?*

Question 2 – Me and the People Around Me

- *Is this creating conflict in my family or with others?*
- *Does it offend other believers or is it confusing them in their faith?*
- *What am I saying to my non-Christian friends or what example am I setting for others?*

Question 3 – The Bible

- *What does the Bible have to say about this? Who does it glorify—God or Satan? Jesus or the things of the World?*

Question 4 – Me and *Twilight* (or whatever applies)

- *How is this affecting what I think about; my attitude, heart, and mind?*
- *Does it help me to do what is right according to God? Or, does it promote things of the world?*
- *Does it distract me from the Lord and my relationships with others? Serving, praying, reading Bible, ministry, etc.*
- *Does it cause me to say, think, or do things that are contrary to Jesus and his life?*

Notes

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3. Steve Wohlberg, "The Menace Behind *Twilight*," *SCP Journal*: Vol. 32:2-33:3 (2009), p. 27.
4. Ibid., 28.
5. Ibid.
6. Personal conversation with the author, May 2010.
7. Michael O'Brien, "Twilight of the West," www.studiobrien.com/writings_on_fantasy/Twilight-of-the-west.html
8. I am indebted to Steve Wohlberg's article cited above for this insight.
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10. Meyer, *Twilight*, 342.
11. Meyer, *Twilight*, 414.
12. http://www.truthinlovetomormons.com/basic_mormon_doctrine/doctrine/theo/fall.htm
13. www.stepheniemeyer.com/twilight_faq.html
14. "As God now is, man can become. As man now is, God once was." James E. Talmadge, *Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1976).

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15. Stephenie Meyer, *Eclipse* (New York: Little, Brown and Co., 2007), 68.

16. Douglas Wilson has written a series of insightful reviews of *Twilight* at Credenda: www.credenda.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=author&id=64&Itemid=127

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21.

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22. spesunica.wordpress.com/is-Twilight-anti-christian-yes/

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24. I am indebted to the wisdom shown in the comment by Jae Stellari on spesunica.wordpress.com.

25. O'Brien, "Twilight of the West."

26. www.ericbarger.com/twilight.carlile.pdf

“What Sins Disqualify Me For Ministry?”

I'm a guy in my mid twenties and a few months ago, I resigned from my work as director of a local ministry because I just can't get over my struggle with pornography. I've been "clean" for weeks and sometimes months, but it seems that inevitably I fall again. I really want to break this cycle of sin and live a life of sexual purity, both inwardly and outwardly. To do that I am seeking the Lord in His Word and through prayer (though not as consistently as I should). I have people that keep me accountable. I meet weekly with a few older men for a study on sexual purity. At the same time, I want to serve the Lord in anyway he wants me to serve. But there is some confusion...I have been presented with many opportunities to serve God (leading worship, camp counselor, teaching Bible study, and doing part-time youth ministry at a local church), but I don't know if I should serve in these ways since I haven't been able to break free of this sin. So my questions: Which sins disqualify me from Christian service and/or leadership? And for which roles would those sins disqualify me?

It breaks my heart to read your question (though I am SO glad you wrote!). Not because of your actual question, but because of the mentality that indeed permeates so many churches and ministries that one has to be perfect (especially in the area of sexuality) in order to serve God. We can't be perfect, so either we allow the enemy to persuade us to disqualify ourselves, or we can find ourselves immersed in an atmosphere

of impossible expectations and standards that results in secret sin and resulting hypocrisy.

I prayed about my response and talked to a number of men in leadership at my church ([Watermark Community Church](#) in Dallas), where transparency, honesty and accountability are bedrock values.

First, let me affirm you in your decision to step down from ministry for the purpose of focusing on your relationship with Christ. It's also essential to listen to your accountability group to determine whether and when you are ready to resume a leadership position like the ones you list in your email.

From what you describe, it sounds like you may already have components in place for successfully achieving sexual purity, which is a process and not an event:

1) It's essential to actively pursue intimacy with Christ through prayer, the Word, and developing the habit of daily surrender and dependence on Him. Meditate on the truth of 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 until it soaks down into your soul and you "own" it:

And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for **power is perfected in weakness.**" Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for **when I am weak, then I am strong.**

(This is the part that differentiates trustful empowerment from "white-knuckling" it.)

The fact that you admit inconsistency in your time in the Word and in prayer is really key. Allow me to strongly encourage you to make these disciplines your highest priority in this time of learning to become an overcomer. Otherwise, it would

be the equivalent of trying to train for a marathon without eating or drinking regularly!

2) It's also essential to build an accountability support system as you live in community with other Christ-followers. Naturally, there are different understandings of what constitutes accountability, but what works very well at Watermark is a network of people with whom we can be honest, on whom we can depend to show us grace at the same time that they speak the truth to us, and who are safe people to whom we can confess our sins immediately before getting caught in a downward spiral of secrecy and dread that allows sin to continue, unrepented, for a period of time. Even people in leadership, when they confess immediately and ask for help, prayer and continued accountability, do not lose their jobs or, for volunteer leaders, their opportunity to serve through leading, if they are proactive in confessing and repenting to their accountability "safety net." One of my pastors wrote, "There are times when we need to step back from leadership positions to devote all our energies to focusing on Jesus so that we can deal with the sin that sometimes entangles us. That has happened to a number of our staff who are back in leadership positions today."

Watermark has the largest Celebrate Recovery ministry in the U.S., so some of the recovery vocabulary spills over into the rest of the church culture. We are all familiar with the phrase "struggling well," which means actively denying our flesh's tendencies and desires to stumble and sin, and when we do fall into sin, we immediately confess and repent, receive forgiveness and cleansing from the Lord (1 John 1:9), and get back up again. And we get that struggling is just an expected part of living in a fallen world, and we all struggle against various temptations. One of the pastors I talked to in preparation to answer your email stressed that what disqualifies someone from serving in leadership is not "struggling well," which is good, but engaging in continuing,

unrepented sin—which also includes a rebellious, increasingly hard heart. That doesn't sound like it describes you, but that's something you and your accountability team would determine.

The CR Men's director wrote, "His struggle with pornography sounds like it has been ongoing with consistent defeat. I am saddened that he felt the need to resign, instead of "sitting the bench" for a season. This indicates to me that he couldn't be honest with his employer (my assumption, of course). In the future, I hope and pray that _____ will see his struggle with porn as a platform of authenticity that God can use in his life to relate to and minister to others. As he relates to and ministers to others, he will experience freedom and fellowship like never before (1 John 1, 2 Cor. 1). He just needs the opportunity to begin sharing. I would highly recommend CR or some other Christ-centered recovery program."

You asked for a list of disqualifying sins and "off-limits" places of service and leadership. I don't know that such a list exists, although I do think it's important to keep in mind Paul's command and statement in 1 Cor 6:18—"Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body." Sexual sin (defined as "illicit intercourse," the meaning of *porneia*, translated "immorality") is in a different category than other sins. For example, if a man or woman in church leadership has an ongoing sin problem with having sex with anyone they're not married to, they need to direct their energies into learning chastity and purity, learning to keep their passions under control (1 Thess. 4:3-5), rather than continuing to minister to others in the name of Jesus while practicing the hypocrisy that Jesus condemned.

One of the themes that runs throughout the gospels is the importance of the heart as opposed to outward appearance. What grieved the Lord Jesus was not sinners who came to Him with a broken, contrite spirit (Ps. 51:17), but religious leaders

with a hard, rebellious heart. In the Sermon on the Mount, He revealed the way God sees the sinfulness of the heart, even if it doesn't manifest in outwardly apparent sin. So I would respectfully suggest that what disqualifies someone for a position of responsibility is a hard, rebellious heart.

This may have been more than you expected when you wrote, but I do hope you find it helpful.

Warmly,
Sue Bohlin

Update 2018: Watermark is no longer using the Celebrate Recovery curriculum, though we parted from the CR folks on very good terms. We have written our own program called "re:generation," which a growing number of other churches have brought to their congregations: www.regenerationrecovery.org/.

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"Marijuana is a GOOD Thing!"

I know your article "[Is smoking marijuana okay for Christians?](#)" It's misleading and untruthful. You don't take into account of people's lives and their suffering. You don't care to think that maybe marijuana relieves depression, anxiety, stress, other mental illness symptoms, and other ailments. If marijuana is a sin to partake, then God made one when he made marijuana. To say marijuana is a sin, is to say God is a devil because he put right in front of our noses and didn't say anything. It's not an intoxicant because it does not poison us, it works with us. Please explain to me exactly where in the bible it says we can't make moral decisions? My point I'm trying to say is this, if it weren't for marijuana I

would have been in jail or dead from alcohol. You can't overdose on marijuana.

Let me respond to your email one point at a time.

I know your article "Is smoking marijuana okay for Christians?" It's misleading and untruthful. You don't take into account of peoples lives and their suffering. You don't care to think that maybe marijuana relieves depression, anxiety, stress, other mental illness symptoms, and other ailments.

Actually, marijuana doesn't relieve these troubles; it medicates the symptoms. It's a cover-up, but it doesn't solve anything. Medicating the negative parts of life does not make them go away, even if it gives a feeling of relief in the moment. They're still there when the high wears off.

There are lots of things that people can do to relieve stress and anxiety. A large number of men feel better after they've taken their stress and anger out on their wives and girlfriends by beating them. Simply relieving symptoms doesn't justify using that method.

Then you've got the lingering effects of pot smoking. I did an informal survey of a wide range of people to answer your question, and several shared their experiences of self-induced ADD, muddled thinking and forgetfulness, overwhelming paranoia, and brain changes that resulted in a permanent state of schizophrenia. And then there's the damage to the bronchial passages and lungs. Several told me heartbreaking stories of family members whose lives were ruined as a result of their pot use.

The problem with marijuana is that it can temporarily numb emotional pain, but it can leave even bigger problems in its wake.

If marijuana is a sin to partake, then God made one when he made marijuana. To say marijuana is a sin, is to say God is a devil because he put right in front of our noses and didn't say anything.

God made a number of plants that He never meant us to ingest. Consider poison ivy and hemlock. Plus, we don't know the impact of the Fall of man (when Adam brought sin into God's perfect creation) on plants. It's possible some plants were very different before the Fall.

It's not an intoxicant because it does not poison us, it works with us.

Google "marijuana intoxication." You will find almost half a million entries. The DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration) disagrees with you: www.justice.gov/dea/marijuana_position.html

Please explain to me exactly where in the bible it says we can't make moral decisions?

I don't think this is what you mean to say. We make decisions all the time. God gave us the gift of volition (the ability to make choices) and then calls us to use it well. Using marijuana is a choice that we are free to make, but since it's illegal, that makes it a moral choice. Legal or illegal, there would be consequences to smoking marijuana. See above.

My point I'm trying to say is this, if it weren't for marijuana I would have been in jail or dead from alcohol. You can't overdose on marijuana.

I'm glad you didn't go to jail (though you could have, since it's illegal) and especially that you're not dead from alcohol. But you did have other choices for handling your

stress and pain. And while you can't overdose on marijuana, that doesn't make it wise.

Thanks for writing.

Sue Bohlin

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Ash Plumes and the Sovereignty of God

Sunday, April 18, 2010 – This is not a story with a happy ending, because the story hasn't ended yet. Ray Bohlin, Todd Kappelman and I, along with millions of other travelers stranded around the globe, are in Frankfurt, Germany far longer than the eighteen hours we expected to be here on our way home from Minsk, Belarus.



For two weeks, we were privileged to share some of Probe's worldview and apologetics material with young adult believers and future church leaders in Belarus. This country was part of the former Soviet Union, located between Poland and Russia. Until "freedom came" (their term) in 1991 with the fall of the USSR, it labored under the oppression of communism. The spiritual darkness of this country is part of the oppression as well. One of Ray's spiritual gifts is discernment, and he feels the weight of oppression and darkness from the moment we get off

the plane. Even though God has blessed me with a sunny disposition, the unending ugly gray, featureless, monstrously huge apartment buildings thrown up by the government to house millions of citizens as if they were animals, depresses my spirit as well.

But it was a good, rich time with our friends in Belarus; they appreciated our teaching styles, the (very different!) material we presented, and the way we loved them. The warm reception from those we spent time with last year was encouraging to us, as were the tears at the farewell ceremony from this year's new friends. We have been invited back with opportunities to expand our ministry there, and we look forward to returning next year.

Belarus is not kind to people with disabilities. As one now living in the throes of post-polio syndrome (muscle weakness, fatigue and pain), the ubiquitous stairs make getting around more difficult than I am used to in the U.S., especially since many of my supporters and friends gave generously to allow me to buy a mobility scooter. Neither a scooter nor a wheelchair are of any use in a country with lots of stairs but not elevators or usable ramps, so we don't bring them to Belarus.

Our time with Belarusian believers was wonderful, but we gladly flew to Frankfurt, where we were grateful for simple things that are easy to take for granted, like absorbable and flushable toilet paper, and safe tap water. Before leaving Minsk we learned about the volcanic eruption in Iceland, but it was too far away to have any impact on our flight. We checked our bags all the way through to DFW from Minsk, since we only had a one-night stay in Frankfurt. My small sack with nightwear and a change of clothing was inadvertently stuck in one of the checked bags instead of a carry-on, but I shrugged it off since it was only one night.

That's what we thought.

The Frankfurt airport was closed to air traffic at 8 a.m. Although the lines to rebook flights were impossibly long, Lufthansa (my new favorite airline) designates an office and waiting area for special needs passengers, especially those with handicaps. They got us confirmed seats on the next day's flight, and Lufthansa gave us vouchers for hotel rooms and that night's dinner in the hotel restaurant. Since the rooms would not be available till after 2 p.m., we enjoyed a leisurely lunch in the airport. There were so many people it reminded me of being at Disneyland on New Year's Day.

A shuttle took us and a bus full of other passengers to the hotel, ten minutes from the airport. And here we stay, so grateful to have been provided a bed to sleep in and three meals a day when thousands of people are stuck at the airport because their airline does not cover these needs, or their visa does not allow them to leave the transit zone.

As the world now knows, the ash plume continues to push its way into Northern Europe, at the same high altitude as the jets fly, where they can suck in small, jagged pieces of volcanic rock and glass that also conduct electricity and cause total engine failure. No one knows when it will be safe to fly again. No one knows when we will get to our destinations. And there is no one to get angry with, no one to blame, no one to sue.

Processing this experience through the grid of a biblical worldview colors the way we think about our "adventure."

We know that God is in control of volcanoes, and eruptions, and winds, and the timing of it all. He is in control of the world's flight systems. He is in control of our schedules. He knew when He allowed us to be stranded in Germany that Todd had classes to teach at Dallas Baptist University, that Ray had a number of events and meetings scheduled in his role as president of Probe, that I had several Christian Women's Club luncheons to speak at in New Mexico this week. And He allowed

us to be stranded in far-easier Germany, not in Belarus; twenty-four hours later, and our flight out of Minsk would have been cancelled. He provided food and shelter for us. He has given grace for Ray and me to have our laptops with us with easy internet access from our room, and He helped me find and disable the virus that infected Ray's computer last week.

We don't know how long we will be here, or when we'll see our luggage again. We DO know that God is good, and the fact that we have been blessed with so much favor doesn't mean that He loves the people stuck inside security at the airport any less. Or that any of us did anything wrong to have Him punish us.

And we are aware that the more the world grows flat and interconnected, the greater the fragility of the systems. So much of our comforts and our technology relies on everything continuing to run smoothly without interruption. It is good for us as human beings to be reminded that we are *not* the masters of our fate or the captains of our souls, as the obnoxiously humanistic poem *Invictus* declares. God is bigger and more powerful than we are; a nature that has been impacted by the Fall, producing things like the disruptions from volcanic eruptions, is bigger and more powerful than we are. We are tiny and insignificant in the face of something like Iceland's exploding mountain; and yet, God still counts the hairs on our head and is still Immanuel, God with us, whether in an "adventure," or a disaster, or the blessedly uneventful days of blessedly uneventful routine.

The bottom line: God is still good. He is still loving. He is still sovereign.

And we rest, as trustful children, in these wonderful truths. All the way to the end of the story, however it ends.

Addendum: April 20, 2010

It *is* a happy ending!

Late yesterday afternoon, Lufthansa summoned their international passengers to the airport because they were going to let a handful of flights depart. One of them was to the U.S., and Ray said, "It doesn't matter what city it is, if it's on American soil. We can always get to Dallas, if we can just get out of Germany!" Although this flight to Chicago was fully booked, not all the passengers made it to the airport, and all three of us were given seats. We arrived in Chicago at midnight, and to our amazement, all our bags were on that flight. Since they were tagged for Dallas/Ft. Worth and there was only a small window of time from when we received our boarding passes, we were amazed and delighted to see them.

We were able to get some of the last seats on a 6 a.m. flight to Dallas, and a few hours later we were back at home, grateful, blessed and tired.

And ready for a shower and a change of clothes!

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"Is There a Demonic Spirit of Homosexuality?"

Could people who honestly believe they are gay, possibly be blinded by a demonic spirit of homosexuality? Or could they possibly have a demon of homosexuality in them? I am not saying all are demon possessed, but what is it that makes them truly, honestly believe that they are born this way?

Having studied both spiritual warfare and the contributing factors to homosexuality, I do not think that a demonic spirit of homosexuality is the definitive explanation for believing

one is gay. Yes, deception is an important component to a homosexual orientation; those who experience same-sex attraction unwittingly believe a number of lies about life, about themselves, about others, and often about God. And where sin and deception are, there is often a demonic presence or element.

In those who feel "different" from childhood, homosexuality comes from emotional and spiritual brokenness. There is a constellation of contributing factors to this brokenness: hurtful relationships with parents and peers, unmet emotional needs, emotional traumas due to abuse, wrong perceptions, warped gender identity. I believe that the enemy of our souls exploits this brokenness and whispers lies to broken people that are very easy to believe because they don't know they're lies. (Lies such as, "You make a lousy boy [or girl]." "You're not like everybody else." "Nobody will accept you." "If you were a better boy/girl, your father/mother would love you more." "The way to get love is through sex." "God made you gay." "You may not like being like this, but you can't change." "You don't deserve anything better.") So in this way, there is probably a demonic element to the development of homosexuality.

In regard to those who experienced a normal heterosexual childhood: some people are so addicted to indulging their flesh that they turn to homosexual behavior in adulthood. In this case, sin grows up from within the darkened human heart, as described in James 1:14-15: "But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death." There's probably some demonic influence involved in this process as well.

Is there an actual demonic spirit of homosexuality? Probably so. I have heard a few (a very few, and I've been involved in homosexual ministry for 10 years) testimonies of people who experienced something like a net of same-sex lust being

dropped on them, or out-of-the-blue, overwhelming homosexual desires coming upon them like a car wreck. I have also heard from people who report having experienced a spirit of sexual “strangeness” ever since early childhood. In those cases, eventually they recognized the demonic aspect and stood against it. Sometimes, people can dabble in homosexual behavior, and this sin opens the door to demonic oppression. Only repentance, renouncing the door-opening in Jesus’ name, and trusting in Christ, makes the demons leave.

But on the other hand, many gay-identifying individuals have pursued deliverance ministry, seeking to have “the demon of homosexuality” cast out of them—and it didn’t make any difference in their feelings or thoughts, because that wasn’t the cause of their same-gender attraction in the first place. They were seeking an easy fix to a complex problem, but if it’s not the cause of the problem, it won’t work. Romans 12:2 directs us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, which means changing our beliefs and thoughts (which can result in a change of feeling), but this is the work of discipline. Again, no easy fix.

You ask why people honestly believe they are born homosexual. Well, for the same reason you could honestly believe you were born an English speaker. You’ve always spoken English, it’s all you’ve ever known, it’s the most natural thing in the world for you. The reality is that you, like all humans, were born a LANGUAGE speaker, but being an English speaker was shaped by thousands of interactions with your family and your culture. Homosexuals are shaped in similar ways that started at birth. All people are born to be relational, but some people are relationally broken because of thousands of interactions that are a result of living in a fallen world with fallen people. And different people express relational brokenness in different ways. I think of families where one sibling is gay and another deals with chronic rage or depression. Different kinds of brokenness, depending on the

personality and perceptions of the individuals.

I hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

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“We Need Encouragement After Repeated Miscarriages”

Recently, my wife and I suffered our third miscarriage in a little over a year. I am feeling so many emotions right now from anger and frustration to confusion. We have no kids currently, but would like to one day. I am having trouble reconciling these miscarriages and was hoping for some encouragement I guess. Where can I look in the Bible for something that helps?

My hurt aches for you and your wife. I am so very, very sorry for the tsunami of pain and disappointment and grief you and she are experiencing. My husband and I are also in the “Parents Who Have Lost Babies” club. Burying our daughter after nine days of life was devastating to us, but God has greatly redeemed every bit of the pain in the years since then.

I think the encouragement you seek will come from being able to see the bigger picture, one that includes God’s tender love for you and His tears for your pain as He works out His purposes in your life and character. May I suggest a couple of resources that may help? My Probe article “The Value of Suffering” is intensely practical in terms of understanding a

biblical view of pain and suffering: [The Value of Suffering](#)

At our last Probe Mind Games conference, where we equip students to be confident in their faith before they get to college, I recorded my teaching session on this subject, which I sensed was very much anointed by God. I pray you find it helpful and comforting: www.box.net/shared/66gn28bubc (It opens with the sound track to the video I show first, Rob Bell's NOOMA video "Rain.")

You may also find [Caleb Ministries](#) helpful; they help people who are in exactly your position.

I send this with the prayer that you and your wife experience the warmth of God's comfort wrapped around your soul like a warm blanket on a cold and rainy day.

Again, I am so sorry for your losses.

Sue Bohlin

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“What’s the Difference Between a Prophet and a Clairvoyant?”

How can I show my friend biblically that clairvoyance, tarot cards, and such are wrong? She seems to think that there is no difference in a prophet and clairvoyant (psychic reading), seeing as they both can predict the future. Can you help me explain the differences?

You might try to get your friend to understand the importance of making distinctions between prophecy and clairvoyance by pointing out the difference between poisonous mushrooms and safe mushrooms: they can both be eaten, but one kind will kill you! Those who claim to be clairvoyant are either fraudulent, making things up as they read the body-language responses of their customers, or they are being fed information from demons. [For an example of a fraudulent psychic, see our answer to email "[What About Crossing Over's John Edward?](#)"] And Jesus told us that demons lie ("[W]hen he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies." John 8:44).

The biblical standard of a prophet of God is 100% accuracy. This is because the information about future events is coming from God Himself, and He is powerful enough to overcome the limitation of speaking through a fallen, fallible human being. That is a long way from the fuzzy "information" from self-proclaimed psychics and clairvoyants! If anyone is receiving their "power" or information from anyone except God, which would be demonstrated by 100% accuracy in their predictions (and, I would suggest, the mark of Christlikeness in their character and life), it is coming from the dark side—the Evil One. There is no such thing as morally neutral supernatural information or power.

It is a dangerous thing to play around with the occult, as many can testify that this is how they opened the doors to demon oppression in their lives.

We have several articles you may find helpful in showing your friend God's warnings to stay away from the occult:

["What's a Biblical Description of Witchcraft?"](#)

[The World of the Occult](#)

[The Occult Connection](#)

Hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

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See Also:

- ["Is Clairvoyance Wrong?"](#)

"My Beseating Sin Makes Me Doubt My Salvation"

I am almost 70 years old and undoubtedly nearing "the end of the road." I came to faith in Jesus Christ over thirty years ago but have consistently been plagued by a "beseating sin" that I seem not to be able to have consistent victory over. I fall, confess, repent, and have "victory" for awhile, and then fall again. This continual struggle has led me to sometimes doubt my salvation, and I am troubled that perhaps the Lord has grown weary of my shallow commitment and has given up on me. What can I do?? I have recently been diagnosed with prostate cancer and I am in terror of dying and finding myself in hell. **Please help!**

I am so glad you wrote! You are not alone. I think this secret fear plagues millions of Christ-followers. And I also think that the core of this fear is not knowing how huge is His love for us, and His deep understanding of our broken humanity (Ps. 103:14—"For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are but dust.").

Our flesh, the part of us that operates independently from God and in our own strength, is hopelessly corrupted and unredeemable. But even though we can operate in the power of the Holy Spirit, in dependence on Christ, the same way that we can fly in an airplane that is dependent on the laws of aerodynamics to get and stay off the ground, eventually we return to our default position of fleshliness.

God knows this, and He understands it! And He loves us anyway. Consider the strong encouragement from Romans 8. The chapter opens with the astonishing statement that is a sure shame-killer: "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." NO condemnation! The Lord has not "grown weary of your shallow commitment," brother. He understands your weakness and looks forward to the time when you are no longer fettered by the flesh that pulls you down like spiritual gravity.

But then consider the end of the chapter:

33 Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; 34 who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

The Lord Jesus died for you and, far from condemning you, intercedes for you this very day!

35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

Nothing can separate us from Jesus' love. Nothing has the power to keep Him from loving us, and nothing has the power to keep us from being loved!

36 Just as it is written, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE

SLAUGHTERED.” 37 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.

God has pronounced you a conquerer through Christ, and is working to transform you into who He says you are. Even on the days when it doesn't much feel like it. He is still at work!

38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ. Nothing, nothing, nothing! Including our sin. Including our brokenness. Including our weak humanity.

And including besetting sins, which He allows us to struggle with so that we will turn to Him in dependence and trust. Recently I was blessed to attend a banquet for a ministry that helps people deal with unwanted same-sex attraction. The star of the evening was Jesus, who showed up in testimony after testimony of changed lives. Every person who spoke, uncoached except by the Holy Spirit, said in one way or another that they are now at the point where they can see that their struggle is a blessing because it forces them to depend on Christ with a desperation they never would have known otherwise. And that dependence on Christ has taken them to a place of intimacy with the Living Lord they didn't know was possible.

God is honored in our struggles, even when we slip and fall but continue to repent and get up again. It's all about teaching us to enter more deeply into relationship with Him, a relationship of love and friendship and affection and appreciation. I hope I have begun to reframe your struggle in a way that enables you to go to Him for help rather than

hiding from the only One who has the power to help you stand against your flesh.

The Lord bless you and keep you today!

Sue Bohlin

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For some reason, our search function is returning this “Page Not Found” page the first time. Please submit your search term(s) again and it will probably come up just fine!



Something went wrong with the link to the page you really want. (Still working out the kinks from our Extreme [website] Makeover.) We're so sorry!	
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Black Friday and Dark Hearts

“Black Friday,” the day after Thanksgiving in the U.S., is called that because it usually allows retailers to go into the black. But this year, the early morning shopping frenzy turned deadly. A Walmart employee was trampled to death by New York shoppers who broke down the door before dawn, anxious to get into the store and get their hands on the sale merchandise.

The next day, the *Dallas Morning News* carried a short story providing analysis of why shoppers turned into killers.

- * Fear of being unable to afford gifts drives shoppers to shop competitively
- * The urge to snap up discounts can cause people to abandon their normal behavior
- * When people are jostled in a crowd, their personal space is shattered, resulting in loss of individual judgment
- * Individual identity can become erased, and one becomes part of the crowd
- * People’s frustration at things like linecutting and being denied access to a big sale flares into rage

Interesting suggestions, these psychological profiles. But something’s missing.

Sin. And the nasty ugliness of unfettered flesh.

God has His own explanation:

Where do the conflicts and where do the quarrels among you come from? Is it not from this, from your passions that battle inside you? You desire and you do not have; you

murder and envy and you cannot obtain; you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask; you ask and do not receive because you ask wrongly, so you can spend it on your passions. (James 4:1-3)

And perhaps the scariest part of that horrendous killer stampede at the Walmart is that every single one of us is equipped with the same nasty, ugly, unredeemable flesh. But for the grace of God, those shoppers could have been us.

Could have been me.

Which is why we all need a Savior.

This blog post originally appeared at
blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/black_friday_and_dark_hearts
on December 2, 2009