

“What is the Purpose of a Painful Death?”

I know that the Bible tells us that man is appointed to die. That from dust we came, and to dust we return.

My question relates to what purpose a painful, terrifying death serves in God's plan. I realize that illness and tragedy can affect anyone at any age, but what purpose would God have (for example) for someone being trapped in a wrecked car and burning alive? I could give other examples of terrifying deaths that we all hear on the nightly news, but my question is: what is the purpose of the “way” we die? Why some die painlessly while others suffer a lonely, frightening death?

I don't think I have the definitive answer, but as a person who has experienced various kinds of pain in my life, I know a little bit about the kinds of things God accomplishes in us during times of great pain.

A painful death is really just another life experience, so it doesn't belong in a special category. One of the things that we unfortunately can't know, because death prevents any communication with the departed, is the testimony of God's faithfulness and power and glory in that horrible experience. His grace, presence and aid is available to those undergoing awful deaths if they are willing to receive it.

It seems to me that because pain can serve to develop character and deepen the heart, it's entirely possible that a difficult death can be the final experience of pruning and preparation for life after death.

Those who “suffer a lonely, frightening death” are in a particularly wide-open position to experience the compassion and presence of the God who promised “Lo, I am with you always” (Matthew 28:20). Just as even the smallest light is

more appreciated in the deepest dark, I would suggest that the light of God's presence and love might be more apparent in a horrible death.

The testimonies of many of the martyrs who died excruciating deaths for the love of their Savior yet radiated God's peace and grace in the midst of great pain, is one of the things that leads me to this conclusion.

Granted, this would be about the death of believers. What is the purpose of a horrible death for unbelievers, I cannot say, but I still believe it has something to do with the light of God contrasted with the darkness of the heart.

The bottom line is that it is a mystery, I think, but this is the best I can do.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“Should I Be Alarmed by the Concept of Christian Hedonism?”

I am alarmed to hear about a concept called “Christian hedonism,” which my wife encountered in a Beth Moore study. As we were beating this around, I checked on the web and found that there were some philosophers, like Erasmus and Thomas More, who attempted to syncretize religion and hedonism together. But I see a difficulty with this just like I see a difficulty with the term “Christian existentialism.”

The first time you come across the term “Christian Hedonism,”

it really does make you scratch your head, if not blanch. I understand! But other writers are developing this idea, which actually makes a lot of sense when you get into it. John Piper's book *Desiring God* is about enjoying God. Here's a great explanation on that:
http://www.desiringgod.org/library/what_we_believe/christian_hedonism.html

Actually, I think it's a great concept because we evangelicals need to connect our heads with our hearts. For too long, Christianity has been nothing but an intellectual exercise, with our hearts going untouched and, in many cases, unchanged. What a travesty! When we get caught up in God's "wonderfulness," there is a whole new motivation to cooperate in His transformation of our lives and hearts; we can eagerly open ourselves to Him out of love instead of sterile duty.

So, bottom line—I think Christian hedonism is a great concept, and I hope it becomes increasingly contagious! <smile>

Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin

Probe Ministries

“My Hurting Friend Has Stopped Believing in God”

I have a friend who has had a rough couple of years. Her parents split up and she doesn't like her mom's boyfriend and she recently told me she has stopped believing in God though she has been brought up to be a Christian. She just told me and a friend all this stuff and we don't know what to say,

could you please help?

I wouldn't worry about what your friend is saying right now about not believing in God. Those are the words of a broken heart. Often when people feel God has abandoned them or betrayed them because He has allowed something bad to happen, they respond by saying, "OK, God, I'll show you, I won't believe in You anymore!" They don't really mean it. . . they're just hurting so bad they don't know how else to respond.

If she were my friend, I would just be there for her, put an arm around her and hug her and love on her, and silently ask God to love her through me. She needs friends, she needs support, she needs to feel loved and cared for. That's how she'll eventually come to realize how God was loving her in her pain.

I also wouldn't get into any arguments about God. If she says things like "Well, I don't believe in God anymore, if God were there He wouldn't let stuff like this happen," I'd just nod and say, "Yeah, it really stinks what's going on, and I don't blame you for hurting so bad."

Just keep in mind what her heart needs instead of what her mouth is saying. And love her, love her, love her through it. Later on you can tell her you were doing it in Jesus' name.

I hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin

Probe Ministries

“I Battle Terrible Self-Esteem”

Dear Sue,

I read your testimony, [How to Handle the Things You Hate But Can't Change](#). I am not physically handicapped, but what about spiritual or mental handicaps? I not saying I am stupid or slow but things happened to me as a child that have haunted me all my life. I have a very low self-esteem and I don't feel like I am worth anything to any body. I feel more like a hindrance then a help. I am a Christian and I am spiriting, but strongholds from the past keep me in bondage. I have served the Lord most of my life and in many areas my life has changed, but in this area of low self-esteem, I have prayed about it for so long without results, that I have almost decided to learn to live with it. If our God can heal the physical can he not heal the mental? Sometimes I get physically sick over this thing. As they say I am sick and tired of being sick and tired. This thing is so deep that I don't know what to do about it anymore. It is destroying my marriage and hurting my kids. It is a constant battle.

My mother died when I was about two-and-a-half and my father married again when I was five. I then had new brothers and sisters and the home life was not exactly Shangri-la. I ran away when I was fifteen and have never really looked back. I understand why I feel rejected but what I can't understand is why I can't get rid of it. I found the Lord when I was seventeen and it has been the best thing ever. I brought my husband to the Lord when we were dating and both my girls are born-again and serve the Lord. But why after all these years does this one thing still plague me? I have rebuked it until I wore my rebuker out. And still this thing is there. Sometimes it fades into the background but it is always there hovering over me. I am sad to see my family suffer because of my

suffering. They do not complain but it makes me sad not able to fix this problem for their sakes. I don't know if you can help, but please pray that God will bring along the right person who can help me.

Dear _____,

Thank you for sharing your heart with me. I am so very, very sorry to hear of the heavy burden you have been carrying all this time. You must be exhausted!!

I can understand why rebuking this thing isn't working; it can't be overcome by rebuking anything. From what I understand of your life and your situation, you have been wounded by not just life but also by the lies of the evil one who wants to keep you in bondage to false beliefs. Since you are a believer, you need to know who you are in Christ so you can replace the false beliefs with what is true.

For instance, you've been carrying the baggage of feeling rejected, but you won't be able to let go of it until you embrace the truth that you are "accepted in the Beloved," as Ephesians 1 says. And if God accepts you, you can choose to see yourself as acceptable. . . and you can choose to accept yourself. Listen—it's only been two years since I made a conscious choice to realize that God MADE me to be a self-accepting person, so I can accept myself!

The best resource I know of to help you grow in your identity in Christ is Neil Anderson's book *Victory Over the Darkness*. Another couple of excellent books that would help are both by Kay Arthur: *Lord, Heal My Hurts* and *Lord, Is It Warfare?* I promise you, _____, Satan doesn't want you to know and fully grasp the truth that you are a princess, a greatly beloved child of the King and the Bride of Christ. . . infinitely significant and valuable simply because God made you no matter WHAT happened after that! But Neil's and Kay's books are really good for helping people move out of the darkness of the

enemy's lies and into the light of the truth.

I hope this helps.

In His grip,

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“How Do I Find Out Who I Am Inside?”

I have a question....I've been struggling lately with my identity. Not my identity in Christ, but who **I** am! I know what I want to do, I know what ministry I want to get in, I know my strengths and my weaknesses! But I've been trying to figure out who I AM!!! I'm not shy or timid, I just lack a persona, a character. I feel like sometimes (and I know this isn't true) that God has written the script for my life and forgot to write the character background. IT'S KILLING ME INSIDE, I FEEL SO EMPTY AND HELPLESS...How do I find myself, how do I figure out how I'm supposed to act, feel, think. People say “Well, you should be more like Jesus in what you do in your life and your personality” but I don't trust that response. How do I find my personality, I FEEL LIKE A SKITTLE WITH NO FLAVOR, I find it impossible to be me. Help!

A very wise man was teaching on boundaries and provided the most wonderful chart:

Who Am I?

I AM:

What I think / What I don't think

What I feel / What I don't feel

What I want or need / What I don't want or need

What I will do / What I won't do

What is acceptable to me / What is not acceptable to me

"Who I am" is the answer to these questions. It's not like a test where you sit down and fill in the blanks; it's more of a grid through which you pass the moments of your life, with these questions in the background. It takes a while to come up with a picture of who you are by finding out the sorts of things you like and don't like, what you think and what you don't think, what you want or need and what you don't want or need, etc.

For instance, there was a time in fourth grade when someone asked me who I was rooting for in the World Series. I didn't have a clue, not being a baseball fan. So I found out what team John Witten was for, since he was the love of my life at that point in time, and that's who I was for. But I really wasn't: the REAL me didn't care about baseball and couldn't care less who was in the World Series. But I didn't know that that was an acceptable answer. I do now! ☐

I would suggest you write these questions on an index card and carry them with you, and as your personal beliefs and preferences and surface, make a note of them. I think you'll discover who you are.

I hope this helps—I am very confident that it should at least help you get started!

Warmly,

Sue Bohlin

Probe Ministries

“Where is the Scientific Evidence of Joshua’s Long Day?”

I was talking with a guy at work about Jesus and the word of God. He is very skeptical of the whole thing and doesn't really believe God exists. I told him I was watching The Discovery Channel a while back, they were saying how there must be some truth to the bible because they found that time was stopped for a certain amount of time and they traced it back to biblical times and found God did stop time. I was wondering if you could point me in the direction of scientifically proven scripture. Maybe a website or a book. This person wants proof of God [as most people do]. I know there is scientific proof, I just don't know where to look or know if I'll be able to [or he will] understand it!!

I'm sorry, _____, but the idea that scientists have proven that God stopped time is a Christian urban legend. What you are referring to is Joshua's long day. Here's the webpage that debunks that theory:

<http://www.ship-of-fools.com/Myths/index.html>

Actually, there is no PROOF of God's existence; if there were proof, there would be no place for faith! However, there is a lot of evidence. For starters, may I suggest an article I wrote on that very topic: [Evidence for God's Existence](#).

I hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“Will I Go to Hell For Getting Divorced?”

If I get a divorce, does that mean I will spend eternity in hell? I am saved so I don't think I would be forgiven for it. I know that if someone gets divorced and then gets saved then they will be forgiven but I am saved so I'm supposed to know better. And I think the only acceptable reasons for divorce are abuse or infidelity and neither are true in this case. So does that mean I have to spend the rest of my life with someone incompatible just to avoid the lake of fire??

Sorry to be so intense but I really need to know, and could you use specific evidence from scripture to explain your point? Thanks.

Bless your heart. I can only imagine the pain that would bring you to the point you're at.

No, divorce does not send anyone to hell. Refusing to be reconciled to God through Jesus is the only thing that sends anyone to hell. If you have been saved by trusting in Jesus, you have been sealed to Him through the Holy Spirit, and your eternity is secure. (We have a few articles on that subject that I think you will find helpful:

- [“How Can I Know I'm Going to Heaven?”](#)
- [“Can a True Believer Commit the Unforgivable Sin?”](#)
- [“I Fear I Have Committed the Unforgiveable Sin!”](#)

Back to your question: consider what the Lord Jesus said about divorce in Matt. 19:3-8—

Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every

reason?" "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate." "Why then," they asked, "did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?" Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery."

Yes, God's intention is for our marriages to be forever. However, because God is good and because He understands the wickedness of the human heart, he allows for divorce; note His reason: "because your hearts were hard." He knows that being married to a person with a hard heart is like a prison sentence, and He provides a way out. I think the issue is more remarriage than divorce. If nothing has broken the marriage covenant, then when a divorced person remarries, he or she commits adultery.

So if your husband's heart is unrepentantly hard, know that divorce is God's grace in that situation. If it's YOUR heart that's hard, then the order of the day is confession and repentance, asking for His help to make it soft.

But please know, regardless of what happens, that divorce will not send you to hell. Jesus forever indwells your heart through faith, and the Father would not send Him there!

I hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“We Want an Easy Way Out of Our Pregnancy”

Dear Sir/Madam,

With due high respect I've got a deep problem in my family, I hope you are able to help us. My wife and me have a unwanted embryo. She had a pregnancy test and unfortunately it was positive. Our embryo is 3 weeks old. In my country, Iran, “pregnancy abortion” is illegal and even if it is possible it will be very expensive. We are not ready for have a baby and both of us hate this. What should we do? We are looking for medicine and easy way for clear it. We are impatiently waiting for your efficient way to save us and improve our life with your guidance.

Dear _____,

I'm not sure how you found us, but we are against abortion because it is the murder of an innocent human being. I know it is distressing to find yourself pregnant before you are ready, but you and your wife do not have an unwanted embryo, you are growing a BABY who is in an early stage of development.

I don't know if it will make any difference to you, but I want you to know I regularly talk to women who had abortions, and it traumatized them. The guilt and shame they carry is a huge burden. They can't get away from the fact that they murdered their own babies. Please reconsider your position.

There is no easy way to “clear” an unwanted pregnancy because it is a serious matter to take the life of another human being. This baby could not have been conceived without God's permission and blessing; He means for you to have him or her,

love him or her, and trust Him to help you care for this precious life.

I pray God will give you a peace that will enable you to trust Him to get you through this time without doing something you will regret for the rest of your lives and for which you will have to answer to Him.

With concern,

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“Our Kids Have a Problem with Anger”

I read your commentary, [“Supernatural Parenting.”](#) I have 5 and 7 year old boys and a 9 year old girl and we have a family problem. I call it easy provocation to anger which is antithetical to the fruits of the spirit including patience. Do you know of any other resources to call upon supernatural power to meet the demands of parenting in this regard?

One of the things I would encourage you to remember is that there is no spiritual maturity without emotional maturity, and part of being a child is immaturity. So a big part of your family problem is simply developmental angst that comes from having kids!

I do want to suggest, however, three books:

- *Boundaries with Kids* by John Townsend and Henry Cloud
- *Parenting with Love and Logic* by Foster Cline and Jim Fay

- *The Heart of Anger* by Lou Priolo. It has a workbook as well.

As you trust the Lord to be patient in you as you deal with your kids and model His patience to them, these books will provide sound, biblical wisdom in practical parenting techniques. I really wish I'd had them when my two were growing up!

I hope this helps.

Warmly,

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“Is a Marriage Ceremony Necessary?”

I have been embroiled in a recent debate over the evils of cohabitation and sex before marriage. Another Christian agrees that fornication is a sin, but he doesn't believe that two “committed” people living together should be considered fornication. In his mind, fornication is wanton sexual promiscuity with no commitment or sincerity. You know—Spring Break sex. ☐ ☐

He believes that if two people intend to spend the rest of their lives together and have pledged themselves to one another, God sees their hearts and doesn't require legality or ceremony.

I explained that this would be true if two people were stranded on a desert island with no opportunity to participate

in the process. However, in America, it is our custom and law to have a ceremony, even if it is only between us and a justice-of-the-peace, and we have maximum opportunity to engage in this custom. If we choose not to then we are not recognized as husband and wife by the state. Since we, as Christians, are bound to obey the authority that God has placed over us, such a non-recognition by our culture and authorities would amount to a non-recognition by our God.

Unfortunately, though, he doesn't want to listen to what I consider sound reason. He demands scriptural proof that a ceremony is necessary for a marriage blessed by God. Do we have any other argument that may satisfy him?

God says in Genesis 2:24, "A man shall leave his father and mother and cleave unto his WIFE and the two shall be one flesh." What changes a man into a husband and a woman into a wife? Only a wedding ceremony.

God says in Hebrews 13:4, "Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge." What defines a marriage bed? A place where a husband and a wife sleep.

So what makes for marriage? A social ceremony in the presence of witnesses who are there to support and ratify (in a social sense) the public commitment of two coming together to become one. The role of witnesses in the formation of social contracts is a biblical principle. (Just do a word search for "witness" in any Bible software program.) No matter where you go in the world, wedding ceremonies occur in the context of community (witnesses) because a marriage creates a new social unit that becomes part of the community.

Two unmarried people who are "committed" to each other in their hearts are still unmarried people, and their sex is fornication. It's God's definition that matters, not ours. Fornication, by His definition, is sex outside of marriage.

Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin

Probe Ministries