

“Is it Christian to Celebrate Birthdays?”

Is it Christian to celebrate birthdays?

Sure! Celebrating birthdays is really celebrating the person who was born on that day, and that is a way to fulfill the second greatest commandment, “Love your neighbor as you love yourself.” Loving and honoring people because they are important takes many forms, and celebrating birthdays is a legitimate way to do that.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“Is It Always Wrong to Lie? Even During War?”

Our pastor claims it’s always wrong to lie. Is this true? What about during war?

It’s one of the 10 Commandments: “thou shalt not bear false witness” (Ex. 20:16). In the New Testament, Jesus claimed to BE the truth (Jn. 14:6). Yes, it’s always wrong to lie, because God’s nature is truth, and lying is acting contradictory to His nature.

It’s always wrong to lie; it’s never wrong to tell the truth and trust God to work it out.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“Is It Always Wrong to Kill? Even During War?”

I read your answer in your article [“Is It Always Wrong to Lie? Even During War?”](#) The last paragraph created another question in my own mind. The paragraph read, “Saving one’s own or someone else’s neck is not always the highest goal. Obedience and aligning ourselves with God’s heart and character is. Hebrews 11 has a list of people who chose martyrdom over doing what was expedient to save their lives, and they wear a crown of glory in heaven. There are better things than lying to stay out of trouble.”

My question is this – in light of your answer based upon the Ten Commandments – Is it always wrong to kill even during war?

No, because the word used in the 10 Commandments that we usually read “Thou shalt not kill” is actually the word for “murder.” There is a personal and deliberate aspect to murder that is not present in wartime killing. This difference is seen in the distinction between a cancer surgeon and a gang member who stabs someone in a fight. Both of them use knives to cut into people, but for completely different reasons with different motivations.

I hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“How Do I Show Concern for My Lesbian Co-Worker Without Approving of Her Lifestyle?”

Hi Sue! I read your questions and answers concerning the topic of homosexuality, but I still have a question.

I work in a public school district. My school district does not recognize same sex marriages, but a lesbian teacher and her partner have recently adopted a baby this summer. This teacher has asked staff members to sign a petition in favor of giving her partner insurance benefits. Her partner has chosen to stay home with the baby and has no insurance (the baby is covered).

A few teachers in my school have chosen not to sign the petition (different reasons: religious, cultural). I did not sign the petition because I do not agree with the lifestyle of homosexuality because of what the Bible says. If something ever happened to this teacher's partner and she needed insurance benefits I would feel terrible.

How do I articulate not agreeing with their lifestyle but caring for the person—and not sounding like a hypocrite? This teacher is starting to confront those who have not signed the petition.

Thank you in advance,

Dear _____,

I don't think it's hypocritical to honestly care about people without supporting them in lifestyle choices you disagree with. This teacher, by confronting those who haven't signed the petition, is not only demanding acceptance but APPROVAL of her lifestyle choice.

Look at it this way; if the teacher were a man with a live-in honey (as Dr. Laura puts it), how would you feel if he demanded that his girlfriend be covered by his insurance?

The thing about lesbian and homosexual relationships is that they cannot produce children naturally; that's one reason they don't qualify as families, and why they shouldn't have the privileges of protection that society gives to families, like insurance coverage. The teacher and her lover have created an unnatural, immoral "family" and now demand that society treat them like a natural family.

So it's not hypocritical for you to remain steadfast in your beliefs. They are in a relationship and a dependency situation that they created. It's nobody's fault if the girlfriend gets sick and needs insurance.

Caring for someone doesn't mean you give in to their demands. It'll be hard and VERY uncomfortable, I know, but you might say something like, "I'm sorry to disappoint you, but what you're asking for is running right up against what I believe about right and wrong. I can't support your decision, though I support your right to make it. I'm sorry."

I hate it that you're put in this situation. Arrrggghhhh!!!

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

"God Made Me Gay"

So...in all that I see in your site, is homosexuality wrong?

Why do you care?

Do you not have lives?

I know that Jesus Christ the Lord loves me for being gay,

because he made me that way and each one of us in his image!

So...in all that I see in your site, is homosexuality wrong?

Homosexual behavior is sin, because it is unholy and not God's intent. Having homosexual feelings is not wrong because nobody has any choice over that.

Why do you care?

Because God cares.

Because the world is telling us a lie, that this destructive behavior is normal and good and desirable, but people are dying from it in both body and soul.

Because there is hope for change and healing, but lots of people don't know that.

Because this is an area where there is SO MUCH pain, both in the lives of those dealing with same gender attraction and in the lives of the people who love them.

Do you not have lives?

Yes, we have lives. But we are committed to what God has called us to, which is proclaiming the truth of His word and its perspective on our culture. Part of that is providing a biblical perspective on homosexuality. Particularly because there is a definite agenda of people whose purpose is to change the culture's view of homosexuality to one that is diametrically opposed to what God says. We can't oppose God without destructive results, so at Probe we are offering the truth to combat the lie that's out there about this issue.

I know that Jesus Christ the Lord loves me for being gay, because he made me that way and each one of us in his image!

You've got two out of three right!! <smile> He sure does love you. He not only loves you, but He LIKES you, and proved it by

dying for you. He DID make each of us in His own image, which makes us all infinitely valuable and precious, an absolute masterpiece.

But He doesn't love you for being gay, He loves you for being His creation. He didn't make you gay. He wouldn't condemn it if He had! You may have always felt different, and you may have been told that you've always been gay, but that doesn't make it true. For example, have you always been an English speaker? You are now; have you always been? Well, no, when you were born you were programmed for being a LANGUAGE speaker, but not necessarily an ENGLISH speaker. If you had been born and raised under different circumstances, you might have been an Indian speaker or a French speaker or a Swahili speaker.

In the same way, if different circumstances had happened to you, you could well have been different—sensitive? emotional? not real physical?—but identified yourself as creative and emotionally gifted but not gay. Like King David in the Old Testament.

A lot of research has examined the contributing factors of homosexual orientation. It seems to be primarily relational.

Which is why thousands of people have discovered that an intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus is bringing healing to those relational wounds that made them think they were gay in the first place, and they are changing from the inside out. If you're ever interested—if you get to the point where life isn't working for you and being gay just isn't making you happy, like you hope it will—I can give you more information.

The Lord bless you and keep you.

Sue Bohlin

Probe Ministries

“Single Men Struggle, Too”

Dear Probe,

Even though I am a man, I found the article on the role of women ([5 Lies the Church Tells Women](#)) quite interesting. I especially enjoyed the section on the struggle/opposition faced by single women engaged career/ministry activity. Though perhaps not as intense, I have also found a similar attitude toward single men with the verses saying a pastor should be the husband of one wife being taken out of context and meaning unmarried men aren't fit for leadership either. It might be fruitful for Probe to conduct a similar study for singles.

Thank you for taking the time to share your response to my article! What an insight. It does seem, doesn't it, that sometimes people in the church are better at excluding than making people feel like they belong. . . .sigh I'm so sorry. The people with the anti-single-man attitude would probably have a problem with the Lord Jesus and the Apostle Paul as well!

Cheerily,

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“I'm Having a Terrible Battle

in My Mind”

I’m having a terrible battle in my mind. I know in my heart these terrible thoughts are lies, but getting it to my mind is hard to do. I have had thoughts of doubt, disbelief, and the devil has even questioned God’s holiness to my mind. About two years ago I got serious about my walk with Christ and answered the call to preach. I need your prayers very much.

The Bible teaches the principle of “displacement.” That is, rather than trying to make thoughts shoo away, we are told to replace them with what is good, true, and perfect (Phil. 4:8). As the truth comes in, the lies are displaced—much like when we fill a bathtub too full of water, and when we get in, our bodies displace the water, which flows out over the top of the tub.

What are you doing to displace the lies with the truth? I suggest that you read and meditate on Psalm 119, memorizing portions of it and reciting them OUT LOUD whenever possible. I also suggest you play good praise and worship music whenever you can, not as background music but as something to focus on. One other thing: it would probably be good for you to invest some time in reading books that will build your faith and send the lies packing, such as Lee Strobel’s books *The Case for Faith* and *The Case for Christ*, and Teresa Vining’s *Making Your Faith Your Own: A Guidebook for Believers With Questions*.

Making
Your Faith
Your Own



TERESA TURNER
VINING

Also, spiritual battles are fought on the battlefield of the mind, so be sure to put on all your spiritual armor (Ephesians 6). It’s all anchored to truth, so fill your mind with truth. That includes being careful what ELSE you’re filling your mind with, such as TV, videos, movies and magazines that are filled with garbage. Most of those sources of information or entertainment come from the world, which is Satan’s realm. Cut

out the garbage, which is flavored with lies about God and about reality.

Let me pray for you, as you requested.

Father God, I thank you that _____ is recognizing there is a terrible battle going on for his mind, and I ask that You show him what to do about it. Father, give him a distaste for anything other than the truth, and give him a deep desire to immerse himself in Your word and in works—books and music—that bring glory to You. Show him the source of the lies and give him a hatred of them, Father. Give him joy in resting in You and in developing discernment about his thought life. Teach him to love You with his mind as well as his heart and strength.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“How Do You Determine Your Spiritual Gift?”

How do people determine their spiritual gift? Is it through prayer? Or does the Lord reveal it to them in some way?

There are several ways. Praying for guidance about your spiritual gift(s) is the first step, certainly. Also important is educating yourself to find out what the gifts are and what they look like in operation. And ask the people around you what they think your gifts are, if the people around you know

anything about spiritual gifts! (They are found in 1 Corinthians 12:7, 11; Romans 12:4-8; Ephesians 4:7; and 1 Peter 4:10.)

I have discovered that when you're operating in an area of supernatural gifting, it's like getting on the moving sidewalks at airports—you can get where you're going twice as fast as the people walking next to you who *aren't* on the people mover, and there's energy and power and a spring in your step. It's FUN! When you're using your spiritual gifts, you are aware of operating in God's power and strength instead of your own. . . and the Spirit-led response is humility instead of pride.

After studying spiritual gifts, my husband Ray and I compiled a spiritual gifts inventory that some have found helpful. I hope you do too. (These are limited to the ministry gifts and do not include the foundational gifts of apostleship or prophet, nor the sign gifts of tongues, interpretation of tongues, healings or miracles.)

Spiritual Gifts Evaluation

Teaching – *The supernatural ability to explain clearly and apply effectively the truth of the Word of God.*

- Do you love the Body of Christ and desire that others know more about Scripture and how to apply it?
- Do you love studying the Word of God?
- Do you have a passion for sharing the insights and principles you have learned from the Word?
- Do you find it a challenge to make complicated truths simple and understandable?

Pastor/Teacher – *One who is supernaturally equipped to shepherd and feed the flock of God with the result of their growth and maturity.*

- Do you deeply love the people of God?

- Do you feel a yearning to model the principles of Scripture and mentor others so that they can follow Christ also?
- Do you feel God's calling to shepherd His people, tenderly nurturing and nourishing them?

Evangelism – *The supernatural capacity to present the gospel message with exceptional clarity and an overwhelming burden for those who don't know Christ.*

- Do you find yourself in situations where the topics of Christ and salvation come up?
- Do you gravitate toward relationships with non-Christians?
- When others hear you explain the gospel, do they respond by trusting Christ?
- Do you have a passion for the lost?

Word of Knowledge – *The supernatural ability to receive information and truth directly from God without natural means. To know without knowing how you know.*

- Do you find yourself "knowing" something you did not learn, and unable to explain how you know it?
- If you feel that God has given you a message to give to another Christian, is it confirmed by that person's response as truly coming from God?

Word of Wisdom – *The supernatural ability to have insight concerning God's perspective and relay this insight succinctly to others. "Deep insight with handles."*

- Do you experience flashes of insight on spiritual things, unusual in their clarity?
- Are you able to express this wisdom in ways that minister to people?
- Do you recognize wisdom in others when you hear it?
- Do people consider you unusually wise, and trust your judgment?
- Do you find yourself being quoted, and you recognize the

quote as “a God thing”?

Faith – *The supernatural ability to believe God for the impossible.*

- When diverging roads appear before you, are you able to see God’s path based on His word, in a way that others miss?
- Do you depend on God’s resources and guidance to an unusual degree?
- Are you able to firmly claim God’s presence in the midst of chaos?
- When God answers your prayers, is your response one of calm satisfaction rather than wonderment?

Exhortation (Encouragement) – *The supernatural ability to come alongside and help others by comforting, encouraging, challenging, and rebuking.*

- Are you especially sensitive to people?
- When you encourage someone, do they respond with grateful appreciation?
- Is the timing of your encouragements usually “perfect”?
- When you challenge or rebuke another believer, is it well received?

Showing Mercy – *The supernatural ability to minister compassionately and cheerfully to those who are difficult to minister to.*

- Do you have the ability to sense when a person is in need, even before they tell you?
- Are you drawn to people with emotional or physical pain, and to those society considers “unlovely”?
- Do you have an intuitive sense of when to be quiet and when to speak, or what to say and what not to say?
- Do people seek you out when they’re hurting? Do they enjoy having you around?

Giving – *The supernatural ability to give of one’s material*

goods to the work of the Lord consistently, generously, sacrificially, with wisdom and cheerfulness.

- Are you enthusiastic when presented with an opportunity to give money to meet a need?
- Are you constantly looking for ways to give?
- Do you enjoy giving privately or anonymously?
- Do you REALLY think of money as God's, not yours?

Leadership/Administration – *The supernatural ability to organize and lead projects while handling people tactfully and providing the vision to keep them at the task.*

- Do you enjoy taking a disorganized situation and straightening it out?
- Are you able to motivate others to complete the project? Do people respond when you step in to give leadership?
- Do you enjoy planning and completing projects?
- Do you enjoy sorting out details, or do they frustrate you?

Service – *The supernatural ability to serve faithfully and joyfully behind the scenes, in practical ways, in long-term commitments to service.*

- Do you willingly volunteer to help with details?
- Do you prefer to work behind the scenes?
- Do you gain a sense of satisfaction when others succeed as a result of your behind-the-scenes work?
- Is faithfulness over the long term important to you?

Helps – *The supernatural ability to minister joyfully to God's people in short-term service with flexibility and sensitivity to what needs to be done.*

- Are you sensitive to specific and immediate needs?
- Are you flexible?
- Would you rather meet a one-time need than commit yourself to long-term service?

Discernment of Spirits – *A supernatural ability to distinguish between the spirit of truth and spirit of error, between holiness and evil. Can instantly sniff out when someone's a phony or lying.*

- Do you have an internal alarm that goes off when you encounter something phony or evil?
- Even when you're the only one who senses something wrong, is your "intuition" eventually validated?
- Do you (and others) consider yourself a good judge of character?

Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

"How Do We Repent If Those We Hurt Are Dead or Far Away"

If we are asked to make up to those we may have offended, ask for their forgiveness—before prayers are answered or before coming to God, how do we possibly repent if those we hurt are no longer alive, or if many years have passed and they are now married, have good jobs? If we hurt people in the past by our very attitude daily—and everyone, really, we came in contact with for any length of time through negativity and criticism—how can such a lifelong sin be forgiven? How to ask repentance of so many? A very kind woman is praying for me today, and I don't want to get too close, or mislead her, but her prayers are so BIG I almost think I can begin again after many, many years away from life. Don't mean to sound self-pitying. I really do just want to make sure I don't weaken

another good person again.

What wonderful questions!! I can sense that God is answering your friend's prayers by opening your mind to a new way of thinking.

Repenting means to change the way we think and to turn 180 degrees around, a U-turn, in our behavior. Repenting of our bad thinking and behaving patterns is the first step. Then comes the step of asking for forgiveness, which is necessary for there to be any reconciliation. They are two separate steps.

If the person we hurt is no longer alive, then we can't ask for forgiveness. We can receive God's forgiveness, but that's where that process ends. The next step may be to grieve the loss of that relationship and the loss of the ability to be reconciled. You just have to leave that in God's hands.

If the person we hurt is still around, then we need to pray and ask God if HE is the one telling us to contact the other person and confess our sins and ask for forgiveness. (In some situations, that would cause even more pain and it's best left in His hands.) As you continue to pray about each person you have hurt, God will give you direction about what you should do concerning each one. The best way to handle it is often through a letter because it gives the other person the opportunity to think about what you've said before replying. And it even gives them the opportunity to decline to reply at all. So you honor that person in several ways.

Your "lifelong sin" can and WAS forgiven in one moment (the moment you trusted Christ—I am assuming you have made that decision) because Jesus paid for it. His love is stronger than your sin, and His blood is more powerful than your sin. He wiped out the penalty for it. You may not have the forgiveness of those whom you offended, but you DO have God's total and unconditional forgiveness. God doesn't command you to secure

the forgiveness of everyone (you don't have that kind of power), He tells you to do what is within your power to do. That is, acknowledge and confess your sin, and ask for forgiveness. That's why Romans 12:18 says, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men." If someone doesn't grant the forgiveness you humbly ask for, you can't be reconciled with them, but at that point it's not your fault.

I hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

"How Do We Discern God's Will?"

Ray and Sue,

I was hoping I could take a few minutes to ask a question and draw upon your experience and wisdom. It concerns knowing the will of God and faith and confidence. We have a decision to make in our family, and there are good reasons to believe we should go through with it, for the benefit of many of us. There are many factors involved: financial, relational, comfort, influence of the children, etc. And, though I may be convinced it is the right thing, there is still an uneasiness. Now, I know many of the principles of finding God's will:

- *What is righteous*
- *Peace after prayer / Clear feeling of direction*
- *Open and closed doors*
- *Blessing to others*

- *Wisdom of scripture*
- *Wise counsel (uh, that would be you guys!)*

My question is whether my uneasiness is a lack of faith. In studying science (and especially probability and statistics), we define confidence as a measure of certainty, and it is always somewhere on the continuum between 0 and 1, exclusive of the endpoints. So, I feel that I cannot say anything with 100% confidence, though I may approach that on the most serious issues in life. And when I want to determine the will of God in the gray areas, my confidence is much less than on things of which I'm doctrinally certain.

If it is a lack of faith, does this have spiritual implications I'm unaware of? I mean you can say I'm sure God exists, and I'm certain Jesus was raised from the dead. To some extent, though, my confidence is based upon my perception of these realities. Any my perception can always have a (remote) possibility of being false, right? The easiest person in the world to fool is myself (Richard Feinman). Even if I know God wants me to walk that tightrope, I may still have an uneasiness as I do it, right? Is this a lack of faith? What am I missing here? What are your experiences regarding this?

Thanks for your time. I'll be very appreciative of any insight you can throw my way.

Dear _____,

Good to hear from you. Glad to know God is leading you into places of uncertainty!

Let me explain. It sounds like you have availed yourself of godly wisdom and sound counsel. Your hesitancy is not so much a lack of faith as it is a normal human reaction to change. It's called fear! Stepping out of our comfort zone! When a soldier is asked after performing a heroic deed in battle if he was scared, he invariably says YES! Courage is not the lack

of fear but the ability to do what is right in the midst of fear. Jesus Himself experienced the agony of Gethsemane. It wasn't a lack of faith He wrestled with, but the very real fear of separation from the Father. Once He was convinced that the path ahead was the will of the Father, He went ahead despite the fear.

Each time I was elected chairman of the elders at our church (two consecutive years), I experienced times of wrestling with God whether He really wanted me to do that. I was scared of not being able to measure up. I felt unqualified. But once I was convinced that this was His path, I was still scared and insecure but determined to follow His path for me regardless of the consequences.

I have found that this is precisely where God wants us so we can depend on Him and not ourselves. If we are fully confident in our own abilities and decision-making, then our confidence is in our own flesh and not in Christ. Sometimes we need to be put in a rather squeamish or uncertain position, so we can recognize that it got done by His grace, and God gets the glory and not us.

If God is leading you in an uncertain or slightly scary position or decision, that means He is giving you an opportunity to grow. Will you trust Him or yourself? He won't shout or make it so plain as to be a no-brainer. He wants to see if you are listening to that still small voice despite the contrary noise of your flesh. I have never regretted stepping out when it didn't always make complete sense. The fear or uneasiness often doesn't dissipate until well after the decision is made and the results begin to show.

You are right to say that we are never entirely certain of anything. But that is not a lack of faith, just being human.

As a whole, I am firmly convinced that the church suffers today because too many are unwilling to face their fear or

indecision and truly rely upon God and not themselves. I think you already know what is the course He wants you to follow. My advice is to make the decision knowing that at every step you are relying on Him and not yourself.

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin

Dear _____,

So good to hear from you, and thank you for honoring us with this question!! I loved what Ray wrote and mega-dittoes to him on everything he said. I just have one thing to add. . .

I think that when we have a decision to make, it's either between two good things OR between the right thing and the wrong thing (or possibly wise and unwise). If it's a choice between good things, we can choose either one and the Lord will be glorified and He will accomplish His purposes either way. In that case, it's been my experience that we don't necessarily get a super clear "YES, DO THIS AND DON'T DO THAT" kind of response from the Holy Spirit. Which can be a little unsettling because we want clear direction and instead what we get is the Lord saying, like a waiter opening the menu before you, "Choose whatever you want and you'll enjoy whatever you choose."

Then there's the other kind of choice, which is between right and wrong or wise and unwise. I like to think of those as "red light/green light" kinds of choices. Either the Lord gives us a red light ("Stop! Don't do it!" or a check in our spirit) or a green light, which is either a sense of being given permission or a lack of any constraint otherwise (and sometimes it's a clear "Go for it!").

So my question is, is your uneasiness due to a "red light," in which case making that choice would be disobedience, or simply the reality that you're not completely sure?

Sounds to me like it's the second, which takes you back to what Ray said about the humanness of experiencing fear as we step outside of our comfort zone.

Hope this helps!

Warmly,

Sue