

# “How Can Computers Be Used to Share the Gospel?”

I teach technology in a private Christian school. I am putting together a list of How Computers Can Be Used To Share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Any help or insights you might have would be greatly appreciated.

Since we are really an apologetics ministry and not evangelistic, we're not really in that loop a whole lot. I would suggest you go to Google.com and type in the keywords “internet evangelism” and follow some of those links.

One thing that does come to mind is the fact that almost 100% of young people are online, and they are looking for relationships, even cyber-relationships, and looking for spirituality. So sharing the gospel in the context of developing online friendships in chat rooms (although one has to be waaaay careful there), online discussion groups, and blogging sites (weblogs. . . sort of personal diaries: see [xanga.com](http://xanga.com)) is a good strategy for sharing the gospel online.

I turned to our great friend of Probe, Keith Seabourn, Chief Technology Officer of Campus Crusade for Christ, for help in answering this question.

*I have been using computers and the internet to share Jesus for over 10 years. We in Campus Crusade have found it to be extremely effective. I have several suggestions.*

1. Visit Tony Whitaker's excellent Online Evangelism guide at [www.web-evangelism.com/](http://www.web-evangelism.com/)

2. For stories and statistics over several years, visit my personal website at [www.seabourn.org](http://www.seabourn.org). Specifically, visit my newsletter archives on that site. Many newsletters tell stories. For compilations of responses and statistics, see

*the End of Year Reports for 1999 or 2001.*

*3. For a broad overview of what Campus Crusade is doing to use the Passion of the Christ movie for online evangelism, see [www.seabourn.org/newsletters/0401/thepassion.html](http://www.seabourn.org/newsletters/0401/thepassion.html).*

*These are some initial ways for you to explore. There are many, many more.*

Hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

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## **“How Do We Use Critical Thinking with the Bible?”**

I was involved in a religious cult for a number of years and am still seeking. I've done lots of bible reading and have shared thoughts with many, many people. After reading some info on your site, I was left wondering: If a person takes the bible as the written word, how can it be that critical thinking would have to be applied? Does it not say “My sheep know my voice?”

My chief concern is that it would seem the most simple-minded person should be able to hear the truth and recognize it. Otherwise, truth is only for the intelligent. Does it really need to be that complicated?

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

First of all, praise God for bringing you out of the cult! A dear friend of mine is still working through the lies that marked her life because of a cult's influence on her entire family. I am so glad you have supernatural assistance available to you for working through the differences between the lies and the truth, the deception and the light, just for the asking!

I think of critical thinking as a filter through which we examine truth claims. We ask questions of people and writings to find out if they are reliable—questions like,

- *What do you mean by that? (Defining terms)*
- *Where do you get your information?*
- *How do you know this is true?*
- *What if you're wrong?*

When it comes to the Bible, which claims to be the very word of God, these questions are still helpful. "What do you mean by that?" is an important question to ask when we come to the text. We need to discern whether something is literal or figurative, historical or poetic or prophetic. That's why it's so important to read and study the WHOLE Bible and not just verses here and there. The writers (and God inspiring the writers) had a definite meaning in mind when they wrote down the biblical text, and it's important for us to bring our understanding in line with their intent. For instance, when Jesus said, "I am the vine," did He mean He was green and stringy? Or was He speaking in figurative language? When we read the rest of John and see that He drew analogies a lot to help us understand spiritual truth, we can see that He wasn't speaking literally at this point.

The answer to the question, "Where do you get your information?" is that the Bible is revelation. God speaks to us from "outside the box," so to speak, from His throne in heaven to us down on earth, giving us perspective and

understanding we could never figure out on our own. The Bible claims to be God's own thought, feelings and words, and the worldview that results from reading the Bible is more consistent with reality than any other worldview.

When we look at the reliability of the biblical documents, we can see that we can trust that the Bible we have today has been reliably handed down from the original documents (or very very close). The support for the Bible being the actual word of God is so strong that it answers the question "How do you know this is true?" We have several articles on the issue of biblical reliability that I invite you to read and enjoy:

[Are the Biblical Documents Reliable?](#)

[Authority of the Bible](#)

[How I Know Christianity is True](#)

I think you make an excellent point about even the most simple-minded person being able to recognize truth and respond to it. That's one of the things I personally love about a relationship with Christ and reading and studying the Bible: God has communicated to us very clearly on the most important issues, while still tantalizing us with the unfathomable depths of His mind and spirit to keep us interested for all eternity.

The fact that mentally retarded children can understand that Jesus is God's Son, He loves them and came to die on the cross in their place, and then choose to trust Him as Savior and Lord, shows me that the most basic and essential truths are accessible to everyone.

Thanks for writing!

Sue Bohlin  
Probe Ministries

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# “We Only Learn from What We Experience in Life—Stop Judging!”

How can you be so sure of what you write? We only learn from what we experience in life. Expand your horizons, stop judging and embrace life. Peace.

Dear friend,

How do you know that experience is the only source of knowledge? I would suggest that that is an unnecessarily narrow understanding of how we gain knowledge. I would also suggest that you do not live by this belief. Since you appear to be a student from your e-mail address, let me ask: Have you passed any history classes? You didn't *experience* the subjects of the classes; you learned about them a different way. Did you ever see someone do something unwise or dumb and choose not to do it? You learned without experiencing.

We suggest that there are four primary ways we learn things:

1. Experience: living through it (for example, getting burned by putting a hand on a stovetop or in a flame)
2. Reasoning: figuring things out (for example, logic—2 premises and a conclusion. “My husband earned his doctorate. Ph.D.s are earned in graduate school. Therefore, Ray went through graduate school.”)
3. Observation: watching (things always fall down, not up)
4. Revelation: being told from an outside source. Some things we can't know without being told. (for example, what God tells

us in the Bible and through the person of Jesus Christ)

The reason you (correctly) discern confidence in our writing is that our faith is based on strong evidence, and because we understand that there are other ways of knowing than experience.

If you truly are curious—as opposed to simply venting some steam—we have a couple of articles you may find interesting:

- [\*“Confident Belief”\* by Rick Wade](#)
- [\*“How I Know Christianity Is True”\* by Pat Zukeran](#)

Thanks for writing.

Sue Bohlin  
Probe Ministries

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## **“How Can a Loving God Send People to Hell?”**

**Did God create hell? If He did create it, then how can He be a loving God, yet send people to a place of eternal damnation?**

Yes, God created hell. Matthew 25:41 suggests that it was originally prepared for the devil and his angels. But unregenerate human beings will also be cast there.

We must not try to separate God’s attributes from one another. God is love, but He is also holy, just and full of wrath against sin. Because of His great love for us, God has provided His Son as a sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the world (John 3:16, etc.). Those who reject this sacrifice will not receive its benefits (including the forgiveness of sins).

These will be justly punished by God for their sins, and the wages of sin is death. "Death" in the Bible carries the idea of separation. Physical death is the separation of the spirit from the body (James 2:26). Spiritual death is the separation of a person from God (Ephesians 2:1-2). Eternal death (the Second Death, or Lake of Fire) is eternal separation from God.

I hope this helps.

Michael Gleghorn

Probe Ministries

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P.S. From Sue Bohlin:

We must also remember that God wants to save people He made in His image, and for whom Christ died, more than we want to be saved. 2 Peter 3:9 tells us that God is not willing that *any* should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance. It's not that a loving God SENDS people to hell, but that He sadly allows people to experience the horrible consequences of their refusal to trust Him.

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## **"Does Fornication Ruin Your Life Forever?"**

I recently had a child outside of marriage. Upon being brought up inside the church with a family who have strong Christian beliefs, I found pregnancy to be the most unhappy time of my life, with family sicknesses making me more stressed.

I knew what to expect from my family, with feelings of

disappointment all round, but they have grown to be supportive and love my daughter. Although they seem to have accepted the new lifestyle I will lead, I myself cannot come to terms with things.

I constantly go over my mistakes, wishing I could rewind time. I would have done so many things differently. I've been going out with my boyfriend for a long time but I feel we have made so many mistakes. I love my boyfriend to bits and couldn't lose him after nearly four years of going out and don't want to make things sound like he is a mistake. Even more so, when I say I wish this situation had never happened, I feel like I am saying that I wish my daughter wasn't here, which isn't true because I love her to bits too!

I can't rid the shame I feel and felt throughout pregnancy. I read so many magazines that talked about happy expectant mothers-to-be and how to enjoy pregnancy and the blooming process. I cannot say I felt the same way. Right now I hate everything I have done and feel I have let my family down. I feel all the respect I built up over the years has amounted to nothing.

Not only that but my personal dreams have been affected. By now, I always imagined I'd have a big house, be well into my career and be married with a good Christian man. Instead everything is the total opposite and I feel I no longer have a purpose to serve or way to enjoy life. I feel I've ruined everything. I'd never have thought I'd have ever been in this situation. I saw it happen to friends of mine also in church previously and had deep sympathy for them. But going through it yourself is 100 times worse.

I feel alone, hopeless, depressed, and unloved. My boyfriend wants us to get married, go back to church and get our lives back on track but I don't know how to because all I feel is constant pain and reminders of what I've done. After all, the baby has to be a reminder and I can't forget her. I feel like



my mistakes will affect my life forever.

I also feel a slight anger in all of this with myself, my boyfriend and certain friends. I can't understand why I had to be made to be everyone's gossip and selected out of all the girls in the world to be made an example of. I feel so hard done by, especially more so as I was trying ever so hard to change and that was when I was hit with the news. I still hear a couple of my friends talking of their fornication and can't help but feel angry that they are not being frowned upon by the church as people are none the wiser of their goings on, which I know is bad for me to feel, but I am full of all kinds of emotions right now.

When will the sun shine for me? I can't take much more of these cloudy days?!

Very unhappy.

You have touched my heart with your letter. I am so sorry for the pain you are going through, but I have *such* good news of comfort and HOPE for you! I have a dear friend in our church who was in your exact shoes. God is using Ellen so mightily now, and blessing her life so much, that when people make a list of who is most used by God in our church, she's right up near the top—and that is no exaggeration. I asked her to write a response to your letter, which follows my remarks.

One thing I want to share is that a mark of maturity is the ability to distinguish between a bad choice you have repented of, and the grace of God giving us good things even as a result of that bad choice—like your precious daughter and your boyfriend. You can say that you sinned, that you made a bad choice, and still embrace the goodness of God in giving you two wonderful people who love you, and they don't cancel out each other. That's what grace looks like: God continues to bless us even though we don't deserve it. He's such a good and loving God! He is inviting you to enjoy His blessings with a

smile on His face—all you have to do is decide to “turn your cup right side up” to receive the joy of those blessings.

Also, I strongly encourage you to forgive yourself. That’s really about embracing God’s forgiveness, which He has already given you if you have trusted Christ, but 1 John 1:9 says God not only forgives us, He *cleanses* us from all unrighteousness. Make a decision to “turn your cup right side up” to receive His cleansing, which will wash away the guilt and, in time, the shame you carry.

Enjoy the letter that follows from someone who is praying for you and absolutely understands you.

In His grip,

Sue Bohlin

Dear friend,

When I read your email today I could truly sense the sadness and hurt in your heart. I have prayed for you many times today already. I am deeply sorry for your heartache. But I have a message of hope for you: God loves you desperately and He is a God of second, third, and fourth chances. His arms are outstretched to you, just waiting for you to accept His love and forgiveness.

I could understand your pain because my story is similar to yours. I, too, grew up in a strong Christian home. I trusted Jesus as my Savior when I was five years old. I remember that night clearly, my Mom and Dad had shared with me in God’s word that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). That included me. I was a sinner. But, God loved me so much that He provided a way for me to spend eternity in Heaven. He sent his only Son, Jesus, to be born of the virgin Mary, live a sinless life and then die on the cross for all the sins I had (and ever will) commit. Then He was raised from the dead on the third day! The Bible

says in Ephesian 2:8-9, "For by grace are you saved through faith, it is a gift of God, not of man, so that no man can boast." By placing my faith in Jesus alone, not counting on anything that I could do, I could spend eternity in Heaven. If you have never made the decision to trust Jesus as your Savior, you can do that right now. It is not enough to know the information, you must receive it as your own.

I did that when I was young, but as I got older, I began to drift away from the Lord.

I, too, got pregnant outside of marriage. I, too, felt like it was unfair that all the other girls who I knew were sleeping with their boyfriends didn't get "caught." I felt the course of my life was altered forever. It wasn't the way I had planned my life. But, I can tell you, I know now that it was a situation that God allowed for my life so that He could be glorified.

I say that because what I came to understand was that I was living my life according to how I thought it should go and doing whatever I wanted. I know now that getting pregnant was God's way of shaking me by the shoulders and saying, "OK, you did it your way, but I have a better plan for your life. Follow Me now." I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that my precious daughter was a gift from God, not a punishment, to gently push my life back on track. All children are special, but I feel that she saved me from even more potential bad choices had I not become a mother when I did.

I now want to fast forward my life for you eight years. I did marry my boyfriend and we will celebrate our 8th wedding anniversary next month. Our daughter is 7 1/2, and our son is 2 1/2. We are very involved in our church where we serve in the High School ministry. I have shared my testimony several times with many girls. My story, by the grace of God, has been beneficial to many people. I have girls who ask me to keep them accountable for their behavior with

their boyfriends. They ask me advice, and God speaks to them through me. Not everyone knows my story, not everyone remembers how my husband and I started out, but, for some, it is a blessing. Maybe God allowed this in my life so I could share my story with you. Maybe there is another girl who you will be able to bless with your story some day.

Satan is the father of all lies and would have loved for me to think that I messed up, so why bother with church, God, or anything like that. He wants you to believe that as well. All your negative thoughts about yourself and situation come from Satan, not God.

God, on the other hand, is the Father in Heaven who loves you so much and wants to pour out blessings on you. Choose to accept His love. Choose to live in His forgiveness. He wants the absolute best for your life. His plan for your life is perfect. While it is hard to understand why He allowed this in your life, focus your attention on Him. Get to know Him. Listen to praise music and praise God. Allow Him to fill you up. Let God fill the void in your heart. After all, He is the only one who can. Although my husband is a wonderful, fun, sweet, caring man who loves the Lord, if I look to my husband to fulfill all of my needs I will be disappointed. Only God can fulfill my deepest needs and desires. He made us that way.

My story did not turn out great because I married the father of my baby, my story turned out great because I let God lead me and love me. Not all girls in our situations end up marrying their boyfriends, and they can still have a wonderful life and relationship with God.

Some women who have had sex outside of marriage end up with so much guilt that they can't enjoy a sexual relationship when they do get married. That is not what God intends. Sex is a gift to married couples, and God meant for it to be enjoyed, guilt-free. Pray that when you do marry, you will

let God take away your guilty feelings so that you can enjoy an intimate relationship with your husband as God intended. I would encourage you to abstain from sex until you do marry. You can start over.

I would also encourage you to go back to church. Hold your head up high when you walk in the door. God loves you. The creator of the universe cherishes you! He is proud to be your Heavenly Father.

While changing your thinking will not be easy, it can be done. Trust God, pray that you can believe the wonderful things about yourself that He thinks about you. Pray with your boyfriend. Thank God for your precious daughter. Thank God that he shook your shoulders, too! This can be a turning point in your life. Choose to let yourself be loved by God and His people.

I will continue to pray for you, your boyfriend, and your daughter. May the Lord bless you abundantly. If you would like to correspond further, I would be happy to.

By His Grace Alone,

Ellen

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## **“What’s a Good Book to Give to a Seeker?”**

My coworker seems to be searching about religion in general. She is a single mom and I want to provide her a book to gain insight into Christianity and how it will change her life. Something that is simple and easy to read. Do you have any recommendations?

Yes!! Lee Strobel's excellent book *The Case for Christ*. Your coworker doesn't need Christianity. . . she needs Jesus. Strobel was a hardened atheist, a journalist for the *Chicago Tribune*, who chased down experts who could talk to him about Christ. It not only is very convincing, it's a wonderful way to walk through his steps toward placing his faith in Christ himself.

I'm glad you asked!

Sue Bohlin  
Probe Ministries

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## **“Why Do We Pray at All if God Already Has a Plan?”**

For as long as I can remember, I've always thought that God has a purpose for everything. Everything happens for a reason, whether this event is good or bad. Is this a good assumption?

Although rarely do I pray for gifts or anything to happen, it occurred to me that this is a pretty common practice. Last night my Bible-study group prayed for the safe trip of a friend to a missions trip in Europe, but lately, I've been wondering this... if indeed God has a purpose for everything, then if my friend didn't have a safe flight to Europe (really worried about my friend here), then God willed it and there's a larger purpose for that. This, for me, answers “why good things happen to bad people,” and I can accept that, but my real question is why do we pray at all? Why do we pray for certain events to steer a certain direction if God has a plan for it to go either way and it'll happen according to plan anyway regardless of what we ask? Does that make sense? .. or

**am I looking at this completely skewed? Please help.**

*For as long as I can remember, I've always thought that God has a purpose for everything. Everything happens for a reason, whether this event is good or bad. Is this a good assumption?*

Yes, it is, because the Bible teaches us that God is sovereign—He is in control over everything that happens. Things may not be God's first choice, for example when we sin, but He is powerful enough that He can make good come out of evil.

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If we look at what the Lord Jesus taught us about prayer, we see that it's about aligning ourselves with God's kingdom, with His values, and with His character. I like the word "align" because I think it accurately reflects what we need to do in light of the effects of the fall, when we were all plunged into a state of sin. This means we are out of alignment with God and prefer instead to indulge our own desires. Just as we sometimes have to take our cars into the shop to get our wheels realigned when they "want to" go in a different direction than the designers' intent, prayer is about submitting ourselves to God, aligning ourselves with Him and His purposes. So prayer isn't mainly about telling God what we want so He can give us our heart's desire, it's

supposed to be about submitting to His will even as we share our desires with Him, with the understanding that if He wants something different and better than what we want, we acknowledge that He has the right to do whatever He wants because He is God and we are not.

We pray to communicate with God, because communication is an absolutely essential part of maintaining a relationship. And Christianity is about relationship with God, not rules and rituals. We pray because He invited us to ask Him for whatever we want, just like He invited Solomon to ask for whatever he wanted, and hopefully that kind of divine generosity and open-heartedness will call us to ask thoughtfully, like Solomon, with an awareness of how big and powerful and loving God is. We pray because we are and can do nothing without God and we need Him desperately. We pray because it reminds us that we are completely dependent on God like American astronauts are dependent on NASA to keep them alive up in space. We pray because it reminds us of our relative size and position before God.

*Why do we pray for certain events to steer a certain direction if God has a plan for it to go either way and it'll happen according to plan anyway regardless of what we ask? Does that make sense? .. or am I looking at this completely skewed? Please help.*

Well, if you read the prayers of the apostle Paul in the New Testament, you see that he didn't spend a lot of time praying for things to go a certain way. He certainly prayed about his hopes and intentions, such as his desire to go into Asia to preach the gospel, but the Holy Spirit told him no, which he humbly accepted (Acts 16) because he lived his life in an attitude of submission and obedience. I think the wisest course of action is to lift events and concerns into God's hands, telling Him what we would like and then yielding to Him about the whole thing. Which is the pattern we see modeled by



the Lord Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane the night before He died. He poured out His heart to the Father, asking Him if there was ANY way to escape the cup of suffering before Him, but yielding by saying, "Yet not My will, but Thine be done." I think that cultivating an attitude of "Thy will be done" is the most important part of prayer. That goes along with Paul's admonition of how to pray in Philippians 4:6 when he says to "let your requests be made known to God." We don't demand, we offer our requests, leaving them in the hands of a God who knows what is best and loves us perfectly.

God is sovereign and yet when we pray it makes a difference. Jesus invited us to take His yoke upon us, which makes us not only His companions but co-laborers in the kingdom. I think that praying keeps us connected to our Source, Jesus, so it is a way to keep on abiding in Him and allowing Him to abide in us. So we pray not to get what we want out of God like some cosmic vending machine, but to keep us connected to and dependent on Him, which is what we were created for in the first place.

I hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin

Probe Ministries

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## **"I'm Depressed; What Causes Happiness?"**

I am depressed right now and so is my friend. What causes happiness? I don't want the chemical description, but what stuff, like situations and actions, causes happiness? I know

that the Bible says that just because we are Christians, doesn't mean we won't suffer. But how would I get out of depression? I don't want an answer like read your Bible and pray, because I do that every night, and here I am still depressed. There's no fun in life anymore, and somewhere along the line, I lost the fire of the Spirit. I wish I could get it back.

I realize yours is a very serious question, and having walked through deep depression with our son several years ago, I would be the LAST person to give you the cliché of "read your Bible and pray more."

Sometimes, depression is caused by a brain chemical imbalance. In that case, medications are the best way to adjust the brain chemistry. Sometimes, depression is caused by unconfessed sin. That needs to be faced, repented of, and confessed, both to God and to other people. Sometimes, depression is caused by loss and sorrow. The way out of that kind of depression is to embrace the grieving process. That means facing and feeling the pain of loss and grief so that you can let go of it. (That also means crying, yelling, journaling one's feelings, or all of the above.)

One very wise person has said that an intrinsic part of happiness is having something to look forward to. I have found this to be true.

So what causes happiness? Generally speaking, it's:

- cultivating a positive attitude (This is admittedly harder for people with melancholy temperaments.)
- not having anything sad going on
- the presence of something worth anticipating
- having friends; healthy relationships is an important part of happiness

And probably the most important thing I have to offer you is the suggestion that you cultivate a grateful heart. People who

get in the habit of looking for and expressing gratitude for the small and large blessings of life find themselves in better physical and emotional health. One of the best things you can do for yourself right now is to invest in a small notebook and write in your "Gratitude Journal" every single night before going to bed. Write down ten things you are grateful for, things in which God showed you He loves you, things that went well during the day. Things like parts of your body that work and aren't in pain. Things that are easy to take for granted but which you would REALLY miss if they went away tomorrow, like your bed, running water, electricity, heating and air conditioning, having transportation, paved roads, lungs that breathe for you without having to think about it. . . you get the picture?

Usually, I suggest people write down three things, but if you're really struggling with depression, ten will help more. It will help you focus on the many, many good things in your life instead of focusing on the flatness and darkness of your depression.

Let me know several months down the road how you're doing, OK?

Sue Bohlin

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## **"There Is No Evidence for God or the Bible"**

I read your article about the [evidence for God's existence](#). Although it was an interesting article, I didn't really see any evidence of God's existence in the article. I am a believer in God's existence. However, my belief is strictly faith based. I suppose it is possible that God does not exist.

I choose to believe that he does. There are many things in the world we live in and our Universe that are truly amazing and unexplainable. But just because something is strange, amazing, awesome, mind boggling or unexplainable, does not mean it is evidence of God's existence.

Just like the existence of God cannot be proven, the Holy Bible itself can not be proven that it is the inspired word of God. There simply is no evidence. It is faith that people have in that it is the word of God. It can never be proven. This is very hard for many Christians to accept, but it is the undeniable truth. You believe because you choose to believe and for no other reason.

I think perhaps you misunderstand the difference between evidence and proof. I agree with you that we do not have proof of God's existence or that the Bible is the Word of God. However, what we do have is very powerful evidence that choosing to put our trust in God in His word is a reasonable choice.

Recently my husband was up on the roof of our house putting up Christmas lights. From inside the house, I heard noises above my head that sounded like footsteps. And when I looked out the window, I saw a man's shadow on the ground that indicated there was a person on the roof. Since Ray had told me he was going up on the roof, I believed he was up there. Could I prove it from inside the house? No, but it was completely reasonable for me to look at the evidence and conclude my husband was putting up Christmas lights.

Sometimes people look evidence full in the face and then deny it. Our founder, Jimmy Williams, is fond of telling the story of the man who went to a psychiatrist convinced that he was dead. The psychiatrist was unsuccessful at talking him out of his illusion. Finally he asked him, "Do dead men bleed?" The patient said no, they don't. The psychiatrist pulled out his Swiss army knife, reached over and nicked the man's finger.

Amazed, the patient exclaimed, "Well, how about that! Dead men DO bleed!"

See the difference between evidence and proof?

Sue Bohlin

Probe Ministries

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## **"Why Wouldn't God Let Me Commit Suicide?"**

Hi Sue,

I just read your article [Do People Who Commit Suicide Go to Hell?](#). I believe everything you say to be true and biblical...and then I get stuck.

I have bi-polar depression, I thank God that I am now stable, but last year there were many times when I seriously considered suicide. I believe in God, His grace, and Christ's death for all sinners, and I believe, like Romans 8 says that we can never be separated from Him – but my one question is, "Why am I still here? Wouldn't it have been/be much easier to die and be with Him in His glory for eternity?" I mean I'm not sure that the suffering is worth it...

I believe God kept me from suicide...but I still wonder if it's so easy to be with Him (in death) then where's the catch?

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Bless your heart. I have friends who are bipolar and we have gone through some DEEP depression with our son over this.

What's the catch, you ask?

Well, to make what's probably a weak analogy, are you familiar with the NBA draft that has signed young basketball players just out of high school? Oh wait, I see you are in another country. Oh well—I bet you can appreciate it anyway. . . There is a promise of money and fame and glory for these young athletes, so why “waste” their time in college when they could be making big bucks playing basketball? Sounds good—only, they are too young to appreciate the maturing process that happens in college. So often, they crash and burn once they turn professional because they're not ready. The trials of being a college student, it turns out, are deeply beneficial for maturity and character development; they prepare students for life as professional athletes.

Our life on earth isn't a holding tank or a detention center where we impatiently wait out our time until we're given a “green light” to die and go to heaven. (I know, it's easy to think of it this way, particularly for sensitive people who really hate living in a fallen world.) God's purpose in leaving us on earth once we are saved is to grow holiness and maturity and strength in us, a process that would be short-circuited by an early death. It would mean we enter heaven in a state of “arrested development,” so to speak. Since the scriptures speak of being given power, authority and responsibilities in heaven, the only place and time we have to develop our stewardship is here on earth.

I understand your feelings of not being sure if the suffering is worth it, but that's because of not having an adequate view of God and of heaven and of your future, not to mention not understanding the value of suffering. (If I may be so bold as to recommend my own article on that subject. . . it's the best thing I've ever written: [“The Value of Suffering.”](#))

Yes, it would be a lot easier to be in heaven than to continue to live in a fallen world and a fallen body on earth, but God

isn't into "easy," God is passionately committed to fashioning us into the image of His Son. I'm afraid there are no shortcuts, but you can be assured that every difficult day you endure, every trial and every heartache, is being used to achieve that "weight of glory" in you (2 Cor. 4:17). God never wastes suffering, not a scrap of it. He redeems all of it for His glory and our blessing. Every single tear you have shed is so precious to your heavenly Father that He has them stored in a heavenly bottle. He hasn't turned away or forgotten you.

\_\_\_\_\_, I pray you will know His comfort and peace like a warm blanket enveloping your soul.

Sue Bohlin

Probe Ministries

*(Follow-up e-mail from Sue)*

I have continued to think about your question and my answer, and the Lord put it on my heart to send you a P.S.

I have a young friend (early 20's) who attempted suicide several years ago but survived. She couldn't understand why God didn't just take her to heaven, either. Why wouldn't He honor her (seemingly) reasonable request to be with Him in glory?

Well, not too long after her suicide attempt she met a wonderful man, got married, and just had a precious little baby. On both her wedding day and then especially when she first held her newborn infant in her arms, she was overwhelmed with thanksgiving that God DIDN'T take her home to be with Him when she wanted it. She realized that God still had blessings to lavish on her that couldn't come in heaven. As a cystic fibrosis patient, she understands that she also has certain trials and pain ahead of her, but the joy far outshines the darkness.

This brings up one of answers to the question, What is the purpose of life? –For God to bring glory to Himself by lavishing His love and grace on us. All of creation, including the unseen realities in the heavenlies, is given the opportunity to see evidence of God’s character and heart as He pours out His blessings on the people He made in His image. And that’s one of the reasons why so many people who have been tempted to kill themselves are prevented from doing so—because God still has blessings in store and we need to be HERE on earth to receive them.

Warmly,

Sue