“Who Are You to Say Who the TRUE God Is?”

Who I am is irrelevant and this letter is meant with no intent on harming anyones feelings, as the matter of religious preferences is a very delicate one. I have to say that I was offended by the advice given to a couple taking care of a young Wiccan . I came across this part, “tell her about what the TRUE God is like.” Now in all fairness who are you to say who the true God is??? Are you saying that all other religions are wrong? Maybe I am jumping to conclusions. This next sentence also grabbed my attention: “Those who refuse to acknowledge a personal devil are more vulnerable to spiritual warfare than anybody.” Now I realize that there is not one ultimate devil in Wicca, but there is one in Christianity. Because this girl does not share your beliefs or even those of her parents, there is no need to tell this as advice to someone. The people of Wicca believe that evil is created by man-kind, but they still know it is there and try to use their gifts to do good and never harm anyone or thing. If a Wiccan uses their power to give anything bad or take anything good they are forbidden to use the craft and are no longer allowed in their coven to practice The Craft. Also I feel the need to point out that you do not need to practice ‘Magik’ to be Wiccan.

I have friends of all faiths, Christians, including people from Pentecostal, Mormon and Orthodox churches, Muslims, people from the Jewish faith and to no surprise I do know many Wiccans. I have to say that we all talk and share our different views on religion and I have never heard any one try to convince someone that their God is the true God or that because they do not believe in “Satan” they are “more vulnerable to spiritual warfare” than anybody. I just want you to think more clearly about what you are writing. I do not

want to start an argument, I just wanted you to hear my views. I am sure I am not the only one who thinks this. One more thing, you also said, "We believe that there is one God." Well this is obvious as you are Christian as I believe it, but not everyone does think there is one God. Rather that trying to convert this girl shouldn't this couple have been told to tolerate her religious beliefs and help to practice it safely and carefully with the respect that she deserves. This girl does not have Christian beliefs, it should not be put upon her to change her mind and her beliefs. By all means use your faith to help people not change people.

Dear friend,

If you didn't like what we say on our website, you're probably not going to like my reply either. I am not seeking to offend you or anyone else, but it makes sense you would take offense given your worldview.

The root of the problem in the difference between our position and what you believe is our extremely different perception of religion and truth. I would guess that you see these issues like a restaurant menu where everyone can choose whatever they prefer, and it's inappropriate to tell the other diners that their choice of an entrée is wrong. Our perception of religion and of truth is more like a team of doctors looking at a patient's symptoms; when it's a matter of life and death, they'd better get the diagnosis right instead of merely settling for personal preference! ("Oh, it looks like acne to me." "Well, I think it's eczema, but you can call it acne if you want." "I know a melanoma when I see one, and this is skin cancer!" "Naw, cancer's too harsh a diagnosis, nobody likes to hear that, so I'm gonna stick with acne.")

Just as cancer will kill a person and thus a doctor does him no favors to tell him anything except the painful truth, our worldview is that man-made religions lead to spiritual death and only one—a personal relationship with God through Jesus

Christ—leads to life. We don't base this simply on our preference, but on historical evidence that God has spoken to us through His word and through Jesus Christ.

I know you were concerned at my advice to the couple who were caring for a girl who was dabbling in Wicca. If all religions were equally valid, then my advice would certainly be off-base. But we are staking our lives on the belief that they are not. For this couple to tolerate her religious beliefs when they are completely committed to the ultimate truth of Christianity would be like seeing a cancerous lesion on her skin and "tolerating" her skin condition by ignoring it. What appears to be kindness would end up being the cruelest thing in the world when they knew what would save her.

I know our worldview is unpopular in today's world, but we are convinced it is far more in alignment with reality than the one that says "everybody do what they want, it's all okay." We believe it's not okay.

It leads to a kind of spiritual death far worse than cancer.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

"It's OK to Act Out Because Christ Has Already Forgiven Us?"

I have a question that I believe you can help me answer. I am a Christian who struggles with homosexual desires. Since I have accepted Christ as my Lord and savior, I no longer regard

myself as gay or homosexual, but instead I claim the new identity I have in Christ. I have a friend who is also a Christian as far as I know, and I do believe he is, who also has these same desires. He doesn't believe that homosexuality is a sin, and has bought into the pro-gay theology. I don't know if he really believes that homosexuality is not a sin, or if he just wants to believe it is not, I can't judge his heart, but he presented me with an argument that I have a hard time with. He said that even if homosexuality were a sin, as a Christian, covered by the righteous sacrifice of Christ, he could continue to practice that lifestyle in harmony with his faith, and because of the work of Christ on the cross, it really wouldn't matter. In conjunction with what Paul said "all things are permissible, but not all things are beneficial", I am having a hard time refuting that argument. Yet I don't believe that he is correct. Am I wrong, do I not understand the power of grace? If so, then why shouldn't I act on my desires and be perfectly comforted in the knowledge that God has already paid the necessary price for my actions? Thank you for your time.

I salute you and honor you for taking the position you have, choosing to take the identity of a child of the King rather than someone who is at the mercy of his desires. That is a HUGE step toward freedom from those desires, and towards healing!

I do share your concern for your friend's rationalization, for that is what it is. Let me share an image that has really touched me from the heart of my friend Randy Thomas, the former director of Living Hope, a ministry to those leaving homosexuality (www.livehope.org). He says that when he is tempted to indulge in a sin, especially of a sexual nature, he imagines himself at the foot of the cross looking up at the Lord Jesus, Who is suffering a horrible death for him. If he allows himself to think, "This sin doesn't matter, You're going to die for it anyway," it's like picking up the nail and

the sledgehammer and pounding it into His body.

Another friend suggested an amazing concept to me. Even though Christ's death was 2000 years in the past, He died for all sins, past present and future. All of my sins were future at that point. That means that every time I choose to sin, I am making Him pay for yet another sin that He didn't have to, and every time I choose NOT to sin, that means that's a sin He didn't have to experience and take onto Himself for me. So, by my choices today, I can affect the number and burden of the sins He suffered and paid for 2000 years ago. Isn't that astounding?

Concerning the power of grace: Paul already answered that very question in Romans 6:1-2: "What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?" Seeing grace as the license to sin is a slap in the face of our Savior. And not seeing homosexual practice as sin is an act of self-deception. Here's a question to pose to your friend: what is glorifying to God about homosexual practice? Consider the biology of sex, for starters. Consider the spiritual meaning of sex between a husband and wife (Ephesians 5), as well. There are very good reasons God limits sex to heterosexual marriage.

Concerning the argument "all things are permissible, but not all things are beneficial," people have to do some serious theological gymnastics to get around God's condemnation of homosexual sin. There is no way it is permissible because every act of homosexual sin, just like every act of heterosexual sin, is immoral, and God stands against all immorality. Scripture is very, very clear that God's intent for sex is restricted to within the marriage of one man and one woman, and everything else outside of those confines is sin. Joe Dallas' fine work *A Strong Delusion* is an excellent answer to the pro-gay theology that he understands well because he was an apologist for it before repenting of it. I heartily suggest it to you and to your friend. In fact, that

book was the reason one of MY friends finally made the decision to leave lesbianism behind—it was such a powerful statement of truth.

I do hope this helps clear things up. I pray that God will overwhelm you with the peace that comes with His truth, and you will enjoy the confidence of trusting Him no matter what others say.

In His grip,

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

"Why Don't You Respect Others' Beliefs?"

How come you can't accept other religions and beliefs instead of always trying to convert them to Christianity? I was brought up in a Christian family and was always taught that you should accept others for who they are instead of forcing them to be how YOU want them to be.

I personally am an atheist and have told my family that since I was old enough to fully understand my own feelings on religion, and my own family have not tried to convert me as they respect what I think and feel. But when I read your replies to people's e-mails you try to convert people you don't even know. I fully respect your beliefs and thought that since you were Christians you could respect others. I am not trying to be disrespectful but I have friends from almost every religion in the world and yet even when we come to together we never try to (for lack of a better word) force,

our views on each other instead we respect each other. I am sorry if I am sounding rude when I say this but would you please email me back with your views on this and I will gladly read them and attempt to understand them.

Dear _____,

I very much appreciate the respectful tone of your letter. Bless you!

There is a difference between accepting others for who they are and forcing them to be someone you want them to be. I am not aware of anything on our website that attempts to force anyone to do anything; we do OFFER the way to know God through a personal relationship with His son Jesus, and we do OFFER a Christian perspective on many topics, but I would be grateful if you would help me see any place where we're forcing anything on anyone. Especially since everyone who reads our website freely chooses to come here and freely chooses to continue reading once they discover our position.

We don't have the power to convert anyone. We will do our best to explain why Christianity makes the most sense because it's true, and you have no doubt discovered that we have a lot of confidence in our position. But everything we say comes from a deep understanding that God created us with the ability to choose. We understand the power of influence, and we try to use whatever influence we have by way of what we have learned about the evidence for Christianity being true to help others understand what is right and true.

Many people think that respecting others' views and beliefs is the same thing as affirming that they are all equally valid, and we can't do that. For instance, what if you met someone who believed that red lights mean go and green lights mean stop. Would you respect that view? Really? Or would you do your best to convince the person believing it that it is a wrong and dangerous view to hold?

That's what we do. We believe that God has spoken to our world through the Bible and through the person of Jesus Christ, and thus we can know truth because God has communicated it to us. And those who believe differently from what God has specifically said, hold wrong and dangerous views because it can keep them separated from God forever.

I hope you understand us better now, even if you don't agree. And if you get to the point where your life seems pointless and meaningless—because if there is no God there is no meaning-giver—then we'll be here to help you.

Respectfully,

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

"I'm a Feminist and a Christian, and I Didn't Like Your Article."

Concerning your article "The Ten Lies of Feminism."

I believe John Gray has been divorced 3 times. Surely not an expert on women and men's relationships that you would like the reader to believe.

Remember that before it says women submit to your husbands—it says husbands and wives submit to EACH other.

You said "It's important for men to experience personal significance by making a mark on the world. But God calls women to trust Him in a different area: in our relationships.

A woman's value is usually not in providing history-changing leadership and making great, bold moves, but in loving and supporting those around us, changing the world by touching hearts. Once in a while, a woman does make her mark on a national or global scale: consider the biblical judge Deborah, Golda Meir, Margaret Thatcher, and Indira Ghandi. But women like these are the exception, not the rule."

Please be aware that besides women, there are few people of color—men AND women—who have gone on to be exceptional in a publicly recognized way. It is not because they are in the "roles" God ordained them to be, but because of the man made white patriarchal society that has oppressed and dominated them.

In the spirit of the Lord who spent so much time with the downtrodden, and rebuffed the Pharisees for only giving lip service to the word, I am careful to not just "accept" what has been instilled as doctrine, but question and question again as God encourages us to do. God is not about oppression.

I could take on everything you have written, but the great thing about this country is our freedom of speech.

I'm a feminist—and a christian.

Just a couple of thoughts in response to your letter. . .

First, citing something John Gray said doesn't mean we endorse everything about the man. Even a broken clock is right twice a day!

Secondly, concerning mutual submission: if you check Ephesians, it does not say that husbands and wives are to submit to each other. The context is that Paul is writing to the entire Ephesian church, and he is telling the Ephesian believers to have an attitude of submission toward each other. The phrase "submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" can mean "Everyone submit to everyone" or "some submit to

others." It is not addressing husbands and wives. Some relationships are a one-way sort of submission, and this would include wives submitting to husbands, children submitting to parents, employees submitting to employers, and church members submitting to church elders. If you try to turn Eph. 5:21 into a doctrine of mutual submission within marriage, then you have to extend it to the other relationships as well, and common sense tells you that won't (and doesn't!) work. I don't know if you have children yet, but I assure you, Paul isn't telling me as a mom to submit to my kids! :::smile::: And I don't know if you are married yet, but I can assure you that submission to a man who loves, cherishes, respects and supports me, and who leads me as he is led by Christ, is not in the least burdensome but a true joy.

Third, I certainly won't argue that women have been disrespected and oppressed women throughout time. I see this as a horrible consequence of the Fall. But as a Christian, I believe that God defines power and influence and what it means to be exceptional very differently from the way the world does, and I believe that women have been very powerful in ways that the feminist mindset refuses to acknowledge. I respect your identification as both a Christian and a feminist, but please be aware that it is easy to let the world (read: feminist thought) squeeze you into its mold so that you see things from a worldly perspective instead of a biblical perspective. To use a phrase like "man made white patriarchal society that has oppressed and dominated them" tells me that you have bought into the feminist perspective. May I suggest that the evil is not patriarchy, but the sinful abuse of power within patriarchy?

You are right, "God is not about oppression." He is about freeing the captives through Jesus Christ, not through man-made political systems and philosophy. Jesus was absolutely radical in His respect for, treatment of and elevation of women, and when people follow the Bible's actual mandates they

move from oppressing others to true freedom and celebration of others' dignity, abilities, gifts and calling.

Sincerely,

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

"Saying Someone Else's Path is Wrong Misses the Mark"

Firstly let me say, I read your site with interest. Secondly I come from a VERY religious background and spent my formative years attending Sunday School, church, youth fellowship etc.

(I have a very strong set of moral beliefs but they revolve around personal responsibility, honesty, integrity and REVENGE – not upon blindly following the words of others.)

In all that time I was treated with nothing but contempt (I never did fit in – yes, I do love thrash metal). This is a source of much anger to me.

I have never gained ANYTHING from worship or religion, if god existed he never would have let half the things happen in my life/family that have happened, therefore, I have rejected him.

I feel fine, better for it in fact and I think that for me at least, I have chosen the correct path. Maybe your choice is right for you but to say that someone else's is wrong (just because you believe it to be so) is nonsense. Basically, I feel you miss the mark.

Still, that's your personal choice and as such that's your right.

Dear _____,

When bad things happen to people, I have to admit that is a very powerful argument against the existence of God, or at least against the goodness of God.

However, all of us at Probe have been convinced that the evidence that God truly exists and that there is a purpose beyond the horrible things that happen, is greater than the weight of the argument of pain and suffering. Personally, I believe that the shame and contempt that "church people" heap on those who don't fit their mold, like yourself, makes God both angry and extremely grieved. Since the Bible says God made us in His image, then we're supposed to reflect what He is like to the world and most especially, to others who are also made in His image. When people treat others with contempt, they are telling a lie about what God is like, and I think none of us understands the depth of His anguish about that.

I think I understand where you're coming from in terms of wanting to castigate us for saying that someone else's path is wrong since it is different from ours. That would, indeed, be an arrogant and revolting position to take if it didn't matter because there is no God and thus no purpose in life, no afterlife, and no ultimate meaning. On the same plane, I guess, as saying that someone is wrong for choosing Neapolitan ice cream because chocolate is right.

However, if God has truly spoken and revealed true truth to us, and if He determines what is the right path and the wrong path because He is God and He has the right to do that, then simply agreeing with what He says is neither arrogant nor revolting.

I wish you peace, and I pray for you the ability to sift

through what you learned when you were young and sort out what was true from what was merely man's teaching and from the pain you received and understandably rejected. I pray that somehow, God will communicate to you the tears HE cried because of the way you were treated. He made you, He loves you, and He died for you. You were never supposed to experience contempt.

Cordially,

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

"Is the Eucharist the Literal Body and Blood of Christ?"

I have frequent discussions with my friend, who is Catholic, about our beliefs and one of the things that comes up a lot is the Eucharist. She believes that when the priest blesses the bread and wine the spirit of Jesus goes into them. She also gives me John 6:27-58. Is it literal or not?

This is such a huge issue with grave theological disagreements that we cannot and will not be able to solve. But here are some thoughts that may help.

First, concerning your question about the literalness of the Lord's statements in John 6: When He says, "Unless you eat of the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you" (John 6:53), does He really mean, "Tear off a chunk of My arm or leg with your teeth and chew Me up"? Furthermore, if partakers literally eat the body and blood of the Lord, it is broken down during digestion, but God has promised that His Holy One would never see decay (Acts 2:27).

In the same chapter, when He says He is the bread of life, does He mean He is made of grain and water and yeast? We also need to look at all the other "I am" statements in the book of John and ask, Does He mean those literally as well? When He says He is the light of the world (ch. 8), is He claiming to be the sun? When He says He is the door (ch. 10), is He saying He's made of wood and has a doorknob? When He says He is the good shepherd (ch. 10), does it mean He gave up carpentry to keep sheep on Israel's mountainsides? When He says He is the vine (ch. 15), is He saying He's green and leafy?

There is a lot of very important and deep symbolism in the book of John that gives us insight into the spiritual truths the Lord Jesus was trying to communicate about the nature of spiritual reality. We need to be careful when we say we take the Bible literally. Yes, we do—in the places where it's intended to be taken literally. But when a metaphor is used, we need to read it that way.

Secondly, in terms of the nature of communion:

There tend to be three positions on the nature of communion, or "the Lord's supper" (1 Cor. 11:20). One is that the bread and wine are mystically changed into the actual body and blood of Jesus in a process called "transubstantiation." A second position is that the bread and wine (or, in many churches, grape juice) are merely symbols of His body and blood. A third position is that the bread and wine are not chemically or supernaturally transformed, but they are still more than mere symbols: that the real presence of the Lord Jesus is *in* and *around* and *through* these tangible elements of His table.

We don't have an official position on communion at Probe, but I will tell you that personally, I have held all three positions at various times and have landed on the third. I believe that part of the Lord's grace to us corporately and individually is this gift of something physical and tangible that is a touch point between the physical realm and the

spiritual realm, much as His body was that touch point between heaven and earth while He walked among us.

I hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

"Did Mary Remain a Virgin After Jesus was Born?"

A Catholic friend and I (Protestant) were having a discussion about the differences in our beliefs, specifically the virginity of Mary. While we have no disagreement that Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit in Mary, we do disagree about Mary's ongoing virginity. It's my understanding that Catholics believe (1) Mary remained a virgin the rest of her life; (2) she was sinless; and (3) she was assumed into heaven, circumventing death. My contention was (1) Jesus had brothers and sisters, so Mary could not have remained a virgin; (2) the Bible states that Jesus was the only person to walk the earth sinlessly; and (3) Mary died a normal (human) death and is in heaven, just like believers after Jesus' death. I'm not trying to change his beliefs, but I would like some outside source of information on these topics.

The problem with these issues is that Protestants only accept Scripture as the basis for our authority, and Catholics accept Scripture AND Tradition as the basis for their authority, with Tradition often winning out. The three disputed doctrines you mention (and you're mainly right except for the doctrine of the Assumption: Mary's death is not disputed. The doctrine of the Assumption says her body was taken into heaven after

death) are all based on Tradition.

The “Catholic in the pew” is often committed to what the Church teaches because that’s all they know and they are taught that the Church’s teachings are infallible and not to be questioned. Logic doesn’t get in the way. For instance, I remember a discussion with a Catholic lady about Mary’s supposed sinlessness. When I brought up the Magnificat, Mary’s wonderful prayer in Luke where she says, “My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,” pointing out that only a sinner needs a savior, the other lady dismissed it, saying, “Oh, she was just being holy.” End of discussion. Logic doesn’t get in the way.

The question I would bring up is, What happens when Scripture—which is inspired and inerrant—contradicts Tradition? Asking that kind of question can serve as a seed-planting ministry in your friend’s life.

Bigger than the Catholic doctrine issue, and predating even the birth of Christ, is the philosophical underpinnings of these three beliefs. Many of the Church fathers accepted Plato’s teachings about the nature of reality, which are that only the unseen, spirit realm is important; the material realm is evil and unimportant. (The other, opposite philosophy at the time, and which still drives a great deal of Western thought, is from Aristotle, who taught that the material world is more important than the unseen realm of ideas.)

Plato taught that the mind and spirit was good and the body was base or bad. Many people, including many of the church fathers, took this belief and arrived at the conclusion that sex is evil, even in marriage, because it is a bodily function. Thus, because they wanted to believe Mary was sinless, the church decided that she had to stay a virgin because sex with Joseph would have been evil. Most non-Catholic theologians believe that Mary and Joseph had a normal marriage, producing several children which are mentioned in

texts such as Matt. 13:55 (“Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?”). This “material is bad” idea is also behind the belief that she could not have experienced the decay of deathlike the rest of mortals, which spawned the idea of her assumption into heaven.

I suggest you check out this web site for further information: www.reachingcatholics.org/

Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“My Boyfriend and I Are Committed to Each Other, So Why is Sex Sinful?”

My boyfriend and I have both have been faithfully committed to each other for 4 years. He is now questioning the issue of fornication and is having a hard time in dealing with this issue. He believes that it is a sin to have sex out of marriage.

I agree, but I believe that we are committed to each other, and in God’s eyes I am committed 100%. The only difference is that we are not legally married. We do plan to marry, maybe in a few more years. We do not live together. Please help me understand why do I see it OK??

Dear _____,

I would gently take issue with your choice of words. If you and your boyfriend are not married, you may like each other and even love each other, but you are not in a committed relationship. A committed relationship is marriage. Right now all you have is strong feelings and good intentions. God's standard for what makes sex holy and right and not sinful is a marriage relationship, which means you have gone through a wedding, a public declaration of commitment that makes you a new social unit in the eyes of the community.

I'm glad you care about this issue. But how can you say you are committed in God's eyes when He has already told us what He thinks? In God's eyes you are committing fornication, because you are not married. It really is that black and white.

Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

"Why Did God Create a Flawed World Where Eve Could Eat the Forbidden Fruit?"

I found Rick Rood's article on The Problem of Evil helpful in some way, but I was hoping to find some additional information. No where in my search have I seen anyone address the issue of why God allowed Eve to eat from the tree of knowledge. Surely God knew Eve would be tempted by Satan (the serpent). Why did he allow this? Surely he must have known this would be the downfall of his creation, Earth? And

subsequently the root of all pain, hate, and evil to come in the world, both behind and ahead of us. If God had intended for us to live in a Paradise here on Earth, he never would have permitted this event to occur, indeed the event that destroyed what civilization could have been. Instead, God MADE it necessary to save us from ourselves through Jesus. WHY WAS THIS NECESSARY? WHY THE DRAMA? IS GOD SO LONELY AND SELFISH HE CONCOCTED THIS FANTASTIC REALITY SO THAT MANKIND WOULD LOVE AND REVERE HIM? TO THINK THAT WE COULD ALL BE HAPPY AND LOVING AND TOGETHER AS A PEOPLE HERE ON EARTH, RATHER THAN THE CESSPOOL WE HAVE TODAY, MAKES ME SCREAM OUT IN ANGER AT THE GOD WHO SAYS HE LOVES US.

THE EVIDENCE THAT GOD IS NOT ALL POWERFUL AND ALL LOVING IS ON TV. DOES GOD LIKE THE ATTENTION? IS ANY ADVERTISING GOOD ADVERTISING FOR HIM?

It seems to me God wanted this to happen—he made it happen. He WANTS us to suffer, in order to be driven TO Him. That must be the only way he figured we would love and come to Him? I've heard that God does not need us. But surely he does, or he would not have introduced pain and suffering to the world to drive us to him. Without it, why would we need him, goes the argument.

We have the perfect Villain—Satan—to blame everything bad on. But Satan did not create Adam and Eve. Satan did not make the Tree. And where was God when the Serpent came sliding in in? Did God not know Eve would eat it? TO ME, THIS IS THE MOST CRUCIAL QUESTION IN ALL OF HUMANITY. Assuming God is all knowing, he knew what would happen, the chaos for all time it would bring, and chose to do nothing. Or rather, let it happen. Had God stepped up at the crucial moment, we would all be loving and happy and together here on Earth, JUST AS IT WAS INTENDED. GOD MADE THE WORLD WHAT IT IS TODAY. GOD CREATED MAN'S HEARTS, GOD IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL THAT HAPPENS. UNLESS YOU BELIEVE SATAN IS ON PAR AT EQUAL STRENGTH WITH GOD, THEN GOD HAS TO BE ACCOUNTABLE. IT'S TIME RESPONSIBILTY WAS PLACED

WITH THE RIGHTFUL OWNER.

Hi _____,

I will be happy to talk to you about this, but first I have a question: do you have any children?

Sue Bohlin

Thank you for your response, I really do appreciate it. No, I don't have any children. I smell an analogy using children coming….Something like "As a parent, we do things in the best interest of our children, and it is only until later in life that those same children understand the actions that were taken…". One analogy I have heard puts God in the example as the parent and us as the children. I would never have children until I was able to resolve these questions in my own mind and heart. Otherwise I am sure I would pass on the same frustration about God to my family.

After even more thought, I guess the Root of my problem/question is creation, and specifically why God created a flawed world intentionally. I use the word "flawed" in the sense that he

- ***Knowingly created an access point for evil for all the world (apple tree)***
- ***Had foreknowledge Eve would eat from it***
- ***Knew that eating from it would result in Sin throughout mankind***
- ***That the sin would cause great suffering to all of God's People***
- ***That it would be necessary for God to "save" the world through his Son***

Is God so selfish he would intentionally and knowingly cause

all this so we would “choose” him through the salvation in Jesus and 2) He must have known it would turn out like this (the hell that is our world today).

I must sound like a maniac, but I’m 29, well educated, catholic raised and partially practicing, with a good heart. I want to love God, but when I am honest with myself I realize I don’t. In fact I hate the person I have concluded God to be. I love Jesus, and of course do believe he died for my sins. My problem is with the Father, and why this grand scheme to make everyone love him was necessary. He could have designed us that way. I finally stopped prayer almost entirely 3 years ago, because I would get so mad and angry at God during prayer—because I would find myself 1) praying for the same stuff with no result 2) many of the things I was praying about were caused by God (natural disasters, human suffering, etc.) When I say human suffering is caused by God, of course I understand free will and that people cause suffering. I hold God accountable for allowing evil and pain and suffering to exist.

Hope this provides you with a little more insight into my problem. If you are able to assist or offer a new perspective that would be great. Thank You.

Dear _____,

I believe the answer to your question is the fact that God has a very big plan for creation that we cannot see from our vantage point in space and time. He knew before He created anything, what would be the best way to get to His final desire, which is to provide a Bride for His Son. Just as any man wants a woman to marry him freely and out of love and commitment and support, the Lord Jesus wanted a Bride who chose Him freely. The only way to have a Bride who chose Him freely was to create people who could also choose freely to reject Him.

Could God have made people who couldn't have chosen NOT to love Him? No. Love means choice, and the other alternative would have been to create automatons who were programmed to behave in a certain way. If I read your e-mail correctly, you believe God could have made a world in which we were "happy and loving and together as a people here on earth," but He didn't and you're mad at Him for that. People without choice cannot be happy and loving. (Have you ever used a word-processing program that automatically changes what it thinks are misspellings and punctuation errors? No matter what you type, the program rearranges your letters, removing your choice. I don't know about you, but "happy and loving" doesn't describe me when I growl, "That's not what I meant! Let me type things MY way!"<smile>)

I would suggest that an ant colony is busy and productive, ant-wise, but they are not happy and loving. They ARE together, but in the scope of eternity, what does it matter? Their behavior is programmed, but there is no depth to any of it.

God created a world in which the people WERE happy and loving and together, and they chose to trash it. I guess you don't have any trouble accepting that reality; if I'm not mistaken, what you want is all the benefits of Eden without the choice to trash it. I can certainly understand that! □ But you also haven't seen the end of the story, either, when everything is made right again, and that's exactly what we will have. I respectfully suggest that that's the part you're missing. The big picture where God restores creation to its original perfect state. I also respectfully suggest that the evidence of the world today that God is not all-powerful and all-loving, is actually evidence that God is very patient. He's not finished yet. He's allowing a certain amount of pain and suffering—which He will redeem, every bit of it—because there is a larger purpose behind it. Our inability to see it doesn't mean it's not there.

I asked if you if you had children because this is one of the things we can learn about God as parent when we have children. I passionately love my children, but I allowed them to experience pain of immunizations and school tests and other things they hated because I had a larger purpose for them besides preventing discomfort and pain in their lives. For instance, now that my son is in college, he's glad I made him do his homework in 5th grade although he sure didn't at the time. I never lost sight of the big goal, of maturity, because I am his mother who loves him and wants the best for him. God never loses sight of His big goal either.

You have a lot of company in being angry with God for allowing pain and suffering to exist. In fact, many wise people have said that pain and suffering is the single biggest evidence that God is not good. Or that He doesn't exist. (But then, if there were no God, and we evolved by chance, then where did we get this idea that life is unfair and broken? Life just IS, according to that worldview. But we are haunted by the sense that things should be much better than they are. And sure enough, God has revealed that we live in a fallen and broken world that is so much less than what He originally created for us. We're the ones who blew it.)

But you're not there; you know God exists, and you apparently resent Him for being a bad God for allowing life as we know it.

I'm afraid all I have to offer you is what God has revealed to us: that there IS a bigger plan, than He will make all the pain and suffering worth it some day. If you insist that there was a way for God to create people who could freely choose to either love Him or ignore/hate Him AND there be no chance for pain and suffering in the exercise of that choice, then I guess you will continue to be irreconcilably angry. You may as well fume over God not making a "square circle" or "light-filled darkness." God is a powerful God, but He is not able to create nonsense.

You know that Jesus came to earth and was tortured and died to pay the penalty for our sin. And bless you, you love Him for it. Jesus coming into the midst of our suffering and pain is the clearest indication of the Father's heart there is. He didn't do or say a single thing that was not the Father's will, and to see Jesus is to see the Father. So to hate the Father and love the Son is inconsistent. They are one God with one heart. It cost the Father everything to let the Son pay for our sins, and it cost the Son His life. That's how valuable we are to Them.

The bottom line here, _____, is that what you want God to have done is something He couldn't do. He couldn't make a world for Him to lavish with His love that didn't include the ability to reject that love. Otherwise creation would have been pointless, and God never does anything pointlessly.

May I suggest, humbly, that you try a prayer again, even though it's been three years, and ask God to show you what you're not getting? Ask Him to open your eyes to see the truth about Him and His ways? And ask Him to help you deal with your anger? He's not intimidated by it; He fully understands your frustration. And He'd love to relieve you of the burden of that anger and replace it with His peace.

I hope this helps, even a little.

Sue Bohlin

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“Is There A Verse About Casting One’s Seed in the Belly of a Whore?”

All my life I’ve heard that somewhere in the Bible there was a statement to the effect, “It is better to cast your seed in the belly of a whore than spill it on the ground.” This alleged statement was a topic of discussion with some of my friends today, including one unbeliever who adamantly stated a preacher had told him that such a statement was contained in the Bible. I have previously attempted to research the existence of this very statement through computer searches to no avail (which was really no surprise to me). Can you comment?

There is no such verse in the Bible, although it seems to be a biblical “urban legend.” The reference to spilling one’s seed on the ground comes from Genesis 38:9:

> Onan knew that the offspring would not be his; so when he went in to his brother’s wife, he wasted his seed on the ground in order not to give offspring to his brother.

I like the way David Guzik explains this passage in his commentary:

> When Onan’s brother died, the levirate custom of that time (which was codified into law in Deuteronomy 25:5-10), was that if a man died before providing sons to his wife, it was the duty of his unmarried brothers to “marry” her and to give her sons. The child would be considered the son of the brother who had died, because really the living brother was acting in his place. This was done so that the dead brother’s name would be carried on; but also, so that the widow would have children who could support her. Apart from this, she would likely live the rest of her life as a

> destitute widow. Onan refused to take this responsibility seriously; he was more than happy to use Tamar for his own sexual gratification, but he did not want to give Tamar a son that he would have to support, but would be considered to be the son of Tamar's late husband Er. Onan pursued sex as only a pleasurable experience; if he really didn't want to father a child by Tamar, why did he have sex with her at all? He refused to fulfill his obligation to his dead brother and Tamar. Many Christians have used this passage as a proof-text against masturbation; indeed, masturbation has been called "onanism." However, this does not seem to be the case here; whatever Onan was doing, he was not masturbating! This was not a sin of masturbation, but a sin of refusing to care for his brother's widow by giving her offspring, and of a selfish use of sex.

(From www.blueletterbible.org)

Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

P.S. I have received emails from people *absolutely convinced* that they had heard such a verse in church at some point in the past. I promise, having personally read every word of the Bible several times over, there is no such verse. But there *is* such a thing as faulty memory. . .