

“Why Didn’t God Just Not Create the People Who Wouldn’t Believe in Him?”

I have a question about God’s omniscience versus the existence of hell. I know the Bible says (and I believe it) that God is good and loving, as well as holy and just. It also says that He is omniscient, knowing the end from the beginning, and knowing from eternity-past the choice that every human being that ever lived/will live will make – either to accept His offer of eternal life, or to reject it.

If both of these statements are true and biblical, my question is this: If God knew (even before creation) that millions of people would make the choice to reject Him (and thus end up in hell by their own choice), why did He simply not create them in the first place? I know this might sound simplistic, but why would He create all of those people who would ultimately reject Him and end up in hell, if He KNEW that would be their final and eternal destination? (A non-Christian friend of mine calls it “a cruel joke.”)

This is a tough question. I was tempted to write back and say, “We just don’t know,” and ultimately that’s probably true. “Why” questions are about motives, and unless someone tells us, it’s awfully hard to read another person’s mind. . . especially God’s! But as I thought more about it, I realized that I COULD pass on the observation that our choice is a precious thing to God because choice is the foundation for true love. If God didn’t create the people who wouldn’t choose Him, then that would be the equivalent of removing the choice.

At any rate, He did, and He knows what He’s doing, and I guess we just need to trust Him.

I think we need to see the Lord as reluctantly letting people

choose hell instead of gleefully sending them there. He doesn't want ANYONE to perish (2 Peter 3:9), but some insist on it. That's not cruel on His part, it's a way of supporting our choices.

Nonetheless, the bottom line is that it's a mystery. Non-believers aren't going to trust His heart when they don't trust anything about Him in the first place, are they?

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What About Dr. Laura's Views on Gays?

Are you wondering why I omitted any mention of Dr. Laura's position on homosexuality [in my article ["Why Dr. Laura is \(Usually\) Right"](#)]?

There's a reason.

When I first wrote this article three years ago, Dr. Laura's perspective on homosexuality was changing, and I hoped that her views would become more and more biblical. I didn't want something I was hoping would change, to be part of a static web document. I am glad to say her views *have* changed. . . and she has been persecuted for it.

Several years ago, she listened to the rhetoric and followed the party line, proclaiming that people are born gay. Some researchers tried (unsuccessfully) for a decade to prove a genetic component, if not a cause, for homosexuality. Apparently believing this explanation for same-gender attraction, she said that she thought something goes wrong

somewhere along the way, producing unnatural homosexual desires. She got blasted for calling homosexuals “biological errors,” which was a twisting of what she actually said. On the StopDrLaura.com web site one can listen to her “famous ‘error’ quote”:

“What I did say is that when an individual is not so drawn to a member of the opposite sex, in biology that’s some kind of error.”

There is a huge difference between saying that some kind of error has produced unnatural desires in a person, and that the person who holds those desires *is a biological error*. It’s interesting to me that she was just taking the genetic-basis-for-homosexuality theory to a logical conclusion, but she got nailed for her political incorrectness. That’s because it is currently unacceptable to suggest that there is anything unnatural about homosexuality. From a purely biological standpoint, however, individuals cannot reproduce without sexual intercourse with members of the opposite sex, so she is merely being consistent with the reigning scientific paradigm.

From what I have heard her say on her program, it appears she recognizes that there is a moral element to homosexual behavior, at least conceding that for gays and lesbians who call themselves religious, any homosexual activity is sin. She has also been criticized by the gay and lesbian community because she believes children need both a mother and a father, so gay or lesbian couples should not adopt babies or young children because it is making a deliberate choice to deprive a child of one or the other. (Although she has supported gay couples adopting older children who wouldn’t be in a family otherwise.)

I grieve for the heat Dr. Laura has taken because of her pro-biblical, non-PC stance. And I have to say I’m proud of her.

Sue Bohlin

August 2001

[Back to Article](#)

The Clash of Two Worldviews

November 4, 2001

The image of a plane slamming into the World Trade Center is indelibly imprinted in our minds. It was more than just an evil act—it was a horribly accurate illustration of the crash of two worldviews.

America works because it was built on the foundation of the Christian worldview, and because we have been richly blessed by God. But for the Arab world, much of it living a seventh-century lifestyle, trying to enter the modern world hasn't worked. Importing the goodies of America's prosperity—things like jet planes, e-mail and McDonald's—is easy. Importing what it takes to produce these things isn't. America is blessed with things we take for granted—a free market, accountability in our political systems, and the rule of law. These things work because they are based on a Christian worldview.

The founding fathers embraced the Christian beliefs in both the intrinsic value of the individual as God's image-bearer and the sinfulness of fallen man living in a fallen world. So they wisely set up checks and balances that allowed self-expression and self-government to flourish while at the same time setting limits to restrain the sin nature. Our political system splits power between the executive, judicial and

legislative branches. Our free market system results in the benefits of competition. America's political and economic systems work because they are based on a Christian worldview. The Islamic worldview doesn't see man as fallen and sinful, just weak, misled and forgetful of God. There is no room for individual freedom or expression, and we see this in the lack of development of Islamic science or technology or creativity.

The rule of law is such a part of America that many of us don't know what it is. It means we are a nation of laws rather than men; we are governed by laws rather than by individuals. It means no man is above the law. This comes from a biblical worldview that teaches all men are fallen creatures who cannot be trusted to govern well unless they submit to a transcendent authority. In an Islamic worldview, where there is no concept of separation of church and state, political leaders can and do demand submission to themselves. They ARE the law.

Many Muslim leaders hate the West because the decadent pleasures of Western culture are luring the faithful away from Islam. Of course, many Christians share this abhorrence for the culture's indulgence in immorality, pornography, sexual perversion and divorce. But regardless of whether it's the positive strengths that are a result of our foundational Christian worldview, or the negative worldly pleasures that result from abandoning it, our current war on terrorism is the result of a clash of worldviews. Which is why it won't be solved easily or anytime soon, and we need to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus.

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Cherishing Our Children's Gender

A wise friend of mine recently took her little boy for a walk down to the lake. Along the way she said, "Parker, let's look for frogs and toads. Mommy is so glad God made you a little boy so you could like yucky things like frogs and toads." When they got back to the house, his grandmother asked, "So how was your walk?" and Parker said, "Mommy's glad that I'm a boy because I like yucky things like frogs and toads."

Parker's mommy is a wise lady because she is supporting and cherishing her child's gender. That little guy is proud to be a boy and glad that he's a different gender from his mother. And you know what? As he grows up, he most probably won't struggle with homosexuality. One of the best-kept secrets in our culture is the good news that homosexuality can often be prevented through healthy relationships.

Homosexuality is really about gender identity confusion. Boys aren't comfortable being boys, and girls aren't comfortable being girls, and they grow up not fitting in because they have trouble accepting the way God made them. One of a child's basic needs is to feel loved and accepted and, well, CELEBRATED for who they are! This includes the fact that God chose little girls to be female and He decided that little boys would be male. As parents, we need to support God's wise choice of gender for our kids. They need to hear us say, "I'm so glad you're a boy! Boys are so neat." Little girls need to be celebrated for their femininity because girls are so special. Every child deserves to know that the gender that they are is a good, good thing, and we're so glad God made them that way.

One of the best ways we as parents can celebrate our child's gender is to understand and support the differences between

boys and girls. Affirm your kids in their maleness and their femaleness. Boys' tendency to be active and physical isn't a pathological problem; we need to channel it with grace, not shame it! Yes, girls are soooooo verbal and emotional—but those aren't design flaws, they're designed!

It's important for dads to support their son's masculinity even if he's not the stereotypical jock. God makes some boys to be artistic and sensitive because we need them! Can you imagine what King David must have been like as a young boy, out in the field playing instruments and composing songs and poetry? Boys like David need their dads to say, "I'm so proud of who you are, son." And girls really need their daddies to love and accept them and celebrate their femaleness. It's one thing for your mother to say you're a pretty princess, but a girl believes it when her father tells her.

One of the greatest gifts we can give our children is the security of knowing that when God made them, He "did good"—even if they like yucky things like toads and frogs.

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“What is a Biblical View of Transgendered People and Hermaphrodites?”

Hello, I would like to know the biblical insight on **transgenderism** [*Definition: appearing as, wishing to be considered as, or having undergone surgery to become a member of the opposite sex*] and other **sexual defects of the human body**. There are lots of issues like **hermaphroditism and inter-sexualism** [*a set of medical conditions*]

where the sex chromosomes, external genitalia, or an internal reproductive system are not considered "standard" for either male or female]. Please try to clear these issues up with sound doctrine.

There are really two issues here: 1) transgendered people and 2) the intersexed (new term) or hermaphrodites (older term).

The first is usually an emotional problem, not really a sexual one. The "transgendered" label reflects a sexual identity confusion and not a true condition. God doesn't create a person with the genitals of a male and the consciousness and heart of a female. In Genesis 1:26, the Bible says, "And God created man in His image, in His likeness; male and female He created them . . . and it was very good." In addition, 1 Corinthians 14:33 says that "God is not a God of confusion but of peace," so deliberately creating someone with self-contradiction appears to go against the very nature of God.

Maleness and femaleness are God's choice, determined at conception. But growing into one's masculinity or femininity and *embracing* it can be thwarted by very early events that prevent children from having a clear sense of their gender. Gender identity is a developmental issue, and it starts at birth. All the many, many layers of affirmation and validation of one's personhood that contribute to self-understanding (of which gender is a part) start getting laid down the moment one is born, and they go on hour by hour, day by day, for years in childhood. No wonder so many people think they were born gay, lesbian, or transgendered! They can't remember all the way back to birth when the messages they received about who they were, had yet to be delivered. In addition, some people perceive the messages of parents and family differently than what was intended, and those perceptions ARE their reality.

The biblical view is that [God's intent](#) for every male is to grow into masculinity, and for every female to grow into femininity. When that doesn't happen, the culture has come up with new labels to describe something new and different:

transgendered, transsexual. I believe God isn't affected by these new labels nor does He have to honor them: He sees the people behind the labels as His precious, broken children. It's only recently that the culture has tried to suggest that "a woman in a man's body" and vice versa is a variation of what is normal and right. The biology of sex alone tells us that homosexuality (under which these other categories of emotional/sexual dysfunction should be put) is not normal. The Bible tells us (Genesis 1:26) that God's intent is heterosexuality, with definite boundaries between men and women in both appearance and behavior. (I can give you more information on this concept if you want.)

I recently attended a national Exodus conference, a gathering of about 900 people who are walking out of homosexuality and those who minister to them. It was interesting to me to see people there who would call themselves transgendered, as well as transsexuals who had had sex-change surgery. They were at the conference because of a growing awareness that they had interfered with God's plan for their lives; God had revealed His intent for their gender at birth. They had been living as the opposite sex in a false self that was tragically far from what God had intended for them, and that explained why the great pains to which they had gone to fix their brokenness didn't bring the peace and relief they thought they would get through assuming a new identity and/or having surgery.

Concerning intersexed people (hermaphrodites), allow me to share what my friend Rev. Mark Chalemin (now serving as Education Director at Coaches Outreach) and I collaborated on to answer this question for someone else:

By definition a hermaphrodite is "a person born with both male and female sex organs." Within this definition there are three labels; true, female pseudo, and male pseudo. The first category is extremely rare with only 350-450 known cases. The second type, and the most common, is female pseudo resulting in 1 of every 14,000 births. The main cause

for this is a condition known as Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia. In these cases there is an overproduction of testosterone causing some "masculinized" features in the female. This does not mean that there is any real gender confusion. There is not. As with any female, her chromosome is XX. Any slight mutation, that may accompany is treated early by corrective surgery. The same situation may occur in baby boys with the same treatment. (There is a movement to stop this surgery, which is being called genital mutilation by some of those who have had it, and allow children's bodies to grow and develop naturally, even if they are different.) It seems that even with ambiguous genitalia, these kids "know" if they are intrinsically male or female.

In either situation, the sexual identity, given by God, may perhaps reveal traits normally associated with the opposite sex. For example, the baby girl may grow up to be naturally more athletic or aggressive than the average woman, but she is very much a woman. Similarly, the baby boy may have a naturally heightened sensitivity and/or affinity towards the arts. Nevertheless, he is still very much a man.

What is God's take in all of this?

God views every individual as He made them. While He did not make clones, he did create males and females with certain unique sexual characteristics. He also intended for males to manifest primarily masculine characteristics, and for females to manifest primarily feminine characteristics, although both sexes reflect aspects of both the masculine and the feminine in varying degrees. Along with those traits, He has provided direction on how we are to relate to one another. There is no prohibition regarding a slightly more "masculine" female or a slightly more "feminine" man. God views them as he does anyone else, with love and delight, and He desires that they experience all the freedom all He designed them to have, within the boundaries of the sexual identity God gave to them. The fact that some

individuals are born with evidence of mutations in their sex-determining genes doesn't change their value in God's eyes any more than someone born with the mutation that causes cystic fibrosis or sickle-cell anemia.

You asked for sound doctrine; I can only respond with the wise and loving boundaries that God has established for sex (which is usually the issue here, right?). All sexual behavior is to be contained within marriage (see the many condemnations of fornication). Men are to act and appear as men, and women are to act and appear as women (Deuteronomy 22:5). Even those born with genital ambiguity are expected to submit to His boundaries. I realize this is a very politically incorrect perspective in a sex-saturated culture that declares sexual expression is a right for everyone. But it isn't. God wants every person, regardless of their genital or chromosomal condition, to submit his or her sexuality to Him and to glorify Him in whatever state we find ourselves.

I hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin

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I was moved by this email I received from someone who lives with the challenges of intersex every day, and wanted to share it here:

A pastor friend was removed from being a pastor due to the nature of his birth (intersexed) in having both male and female parts, but condition helped with surgery, now married with children.

I am at the foundational level of intersexed in being an XXY male, was 53 before learning of my condition, but had gone through the change of life and also excessive breast tissue for a male.

I am always offended when we as intersexed people are spoken of in the same breath with homosexuals or added to their agenda when those of us who follow Jesus are as much opposed to the gay lifestyle as any other who will not compromise God's Word to validate sin or lust. I also believe that a true Eunuch is one who is unmarried and celibate which is only for those with the gift to remain that way.

To this day I have never heard a sermon or teaching regarding hermaphrodites in the church—covered by the same grace but forced into the basement due to ignorance and an imposed shame for being “so born from our mother's womb,” something we had no choice about, unlike those acting on their homosexual feelings or those with a mental condition rather than a genetic defect which is temporary.

Your article about “transgendered” was interesting but I am more concerned about attitudes we encounter for being who we are which to me is just unique. Scars today only say that healing happened and no more open wounds. . . Just as Jesus is proud of His scars that say healing happened.

To me there is just the Natural man, Spiritual man and the carnal Christian, only three kinds of people on the planet with a variety of physical and mental differences. But attitudes we encounter as intersexed people would lead folks to think maybe there is an additional “type” who doesn't fit any mold or classification or addressed in scripture. But again the only problem I see is attitudes springing from ignorance; one can not love God without loving all the people of God, yet the subject is rarely if ever addressed completely to make us at least feel as if we fully belong among other people more normal than we are and that we are not freaks. The real us is spirit!

I also received this email:

Hi Sue,

Just read your blog on transgendered issues. Agree wholeheartedly. There is a third category that appears as XY = Female. This occurs due to a hormone receptor deformity that renders the fetus insensitive to androgen hormones. The degree of sexual formation differs between females with vagina and partially formed males—though not hermaphrodite. This category is considered Partial Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome (PAIS) and Complete Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome (CAIS). To your point, these children are fully female (perhaps extremely so) and there is no confusion regarding their design. Genetically, they test as XY, but physiologically they are female from birth. I should note that they are all sterile and many require a Y-V vaginoplasty to create a vaginal opening and open the musculature for the vagina itself. They also require hormone therapy to complete the appearance of a female (breasts), but remain without follicular body hair with the exception of their head. Most often, whatever gonads they possess are removed early due to the tendency to rapidly convert to cancerous tissue.

Again, I think your point is well made. God does things we may not anticipate, and sin corrupts the gene pool, but His design is male and female. We do not have the option to decide we do not like what he created us to be.

Updated June 2016

Harry Potter

How should wise Christian parents look at the Harry Potter phenomenon? Chances are your kids or grandkids are clamoring to read these incredibly best-selling books. And since only

the first of the four books (out of a planned total of seven) is out in paperback, buying these thick hardback books requires a considerable cash outlay as well.

There is a lot to be said in favor of these books:

- They are very well-written fantasy, and a pleasure to read. Even adults enjoy reading them to children—and to themselves. (In England, there is an edition produced especially for adults who are embarrassed to be seen reading a children’s book!)
- Because they are written for young boys, they captivate the imagination of almost *all* children.
- They tap into the poignancy of the powerlessness of children, which is a painful part of being young.
- They are full of real-life situations, ranging from the embarrassing to the hurtful to the scary to the satisfying, that real-life kids experience.
- They pit good against evil, with the good guys really being the *good* guys.
- They are getting hundreds of thousands of kids excited about reading.

But there’s one substantial difficulty with the Harry Potter series. They make sorcery and witchcraft enticing to the reader. And that is not consistent with a Christian worldview, where we are called to “take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ”[{1}](#). God gives us very strong and clear commands about witchcraft: it is a sin,[{2}](#) it is an abomination before God,[{3}](#) and the Old Testament penalty for sorcery or witchcraft was death.[{4}](#) The proscription against the practice of magic is continued in the New Testament.[{5}](#)

When Christians and other conservative people make this complaint against the Harry Potter books, one often hears a

condescending dismissal about the evils of censorship. No mention is made of the substance of the concern with witchcraft itself, which is a reasonable one.

Fantasy vs. Real-World

Many people impatiently respond, “But it’s *fantasy!* It’s only make-believe! Nobody’s going to really *believe* that this stuff is true!” But the author J.K. Rowling revealed in *Newsweek* that she gets “letters from children addressed to Professor Dumbledore [headmaster at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, the books’ setting], and it’s not a joke, begging to be let into Hogwarts, and some of them are really sad. Because they want it to be true so badly they’ve convinced themselves it’s true.”[\[6\]](#) She answers those letters herself.

I think it’s important to point out that there is an important difference between the fantasy magic of the world of Harry Potter, and the real-world magic that is condemned in the Bible. The fact that J.K. Rowling doesn’t believe in witchcraft except as presented in the centuries-old British myths is important; she honestly isn’t hoping to draw children into the world of the occult (from everything I have read about her). Unfortunately, that doesn’t mean it won’t happen. Some people are going to be more sensitive to the draw of the occult, just as some people’s bodies are going to be more sensitive to alcohol. The only responsible choice for both kinds of people is complete abstinence.

Connie Neal has written a book, [*What’s a Christian To Do with Harry Potter?*](#). I really liked the way she explains the distinction between fantasy magic and occult (real-world) magic to kids: The magic in *Harry Potter* is make-believe, but the real-world magic in our world ALL falls in the category of “Dark Arts” magic, and those who play with it or pursue it are making themselves vulnerable to a very real evil spirit like Lord Voldemort. There is no such thing as everyday or good magic. Supernatural power that doesn’t come from God is all

evil. Kids can understand those kinds of boundaries.

Some people have likened the Harry Potter books to C.S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia*. While they are both fantasy literature, one is designed to create a thirst for Jesus and for heaven, and the other may create a thirst for power and manipulation. C.S. Lewis writes from a strong Christian worldview; J.K. Rowling writes from a naturalistic worldview that includes magic as a fact of life but excludes God. And by making witchcraft and wizardry so appealing, Harry Potter may be an alarmingly attractive door to the occult for some readers.

Can Harry Potter Be OK?

Is it possible to read the Harry Potter books without stumbling? If one's discernment filter is well-exercised and in place, yes. But is it wise? That depends on the individual—and it should definitely be a decision each parent makes for his or her own children. If we can watch *The Wizard of Oz* with our kids and not conclude that the presence of a couple of witches will send our kids into the occult, then we can practice the same discernment about Harry Potter.

Hoping the Harry Potter phenomenon will just go away is about as practical as wishing away Christmas. You know your child; for some children, trying to keep them away from the books will only tempt them to read the books on the sly. In some cases, I believe it would be wiser for a parent or teacher to intentionally use them as a teaching tool to help develop children's "discernment muscles."

Just as we would never send children out to play in the street alone, it's a different story when we take their hands to walk them across the street, teaching them about safety in the process. In the same way, I would suggest that handing a Harry Potter book to a child to read on his own is the spiritual equivalent of sending a child out to play in the street. Or

worse, sending her out into a minefield. However, it can be an invaluable experience for a parent to read the book out loud, stopping to ask questions that will help a child recognize the spiritual counterfeits that comprise witchcraft.

For example, there are several incidents of conjuring, where witches and wizards wave a magic wand and instantly produce things like food for a banquet. Conjuring is a counterfeit of the way God creates *ex nihilo*, out of nothing. Casting spells, such as speaking the word "Lumos!" to make one's magic wand become a light source, is a counterfeit of God's ability to speak things into existence.^{7} Bewitching cars to make them fly and ceilings to twinkle like the night sky is a counterfeit of Christ's ability to do miracles like walking on water and feeding the 5,000 with five loaves and two fishes. Harry's invisibility cloak should be pointed out as make-believe, but God is always and true-ly with us even though He's invisible.

Despite the witchcraft in the Harry Potter books, there are clear moral lessons that can be discussed. Children can understand the painfulness of discrimination as they are encouraged to think through the emotions of being despised simply because one's parents are non-magical Muggles. They can identify the ugliness of arrogance and pride displayed by Harry's Muggle family and his school tormentor, Draco Malfoy. The author has done a magnificent job of portraying the evil of Harry's arch-nemesis, Lord Voldemort, and children can be encouraged to talk about what makes evil, evil. This would provide an excellent opportunity to teach them that God has a plan to put an end to evil forever, and He proved it by disarming Satan at the cross.

A Final Warning

The Harry Potter books have a lot going for them, but there is potential spiritual danger in the way they make witchcraft so appealing to some people. There is not a clear-cut answer to

this question because it is a modern-day “disputable matter.” (See 1 Cor. 8 and Romans 14.) Some people will have freedom to read the books and see the movie without it violating their conscience; others cannot do that. I think it’s important for those with freedom not to boast about their freedom or look down their noses at those who choose not to get into Harry Potter, and it’s equally important for those who have been led to avoid Harry Potter not to judge those who haven’t been led that way.

Notes

1. 2 Corinthians 10:5
2. 1 Samuel 15:23
3. Deuteronomy 18:10-11
4. Exodus 22:18
5. Galatians 5:20
6. “The Return of Harry Potter!” *Newsweek*, July 10, 2000, p. 58.
7. Genesis 1:3

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Worldproofing Our Kids (commentary)

A mother camel and her baby camel are talking one day when the baby camel asks, “Mom, why do I have these huge three-toed feet?” The mother camel answers, “So when we trek through the desert your toes will help you stay on top of the soft sand.” A few minutes later the baby camel asks, “Mom, why do I have these great big long eyelashes?” The mother camel says, “To keep the sand out of your eyes on trips through the desert.”

After a little while he says, “Mom? Why do I have these big old humps on my back?” “To help us store water for our long treks across the desert, so we can go without drinking for long periods.” The baby camel answers, “That’s great, Mom. So we have huge feet to stop us from sinking in the sand, and long eyelashes to keep the sand out of our eyes, and these big humps to store water, but Mom?” “What?” “What are we doing in the San Diego zoo?”

We parents have a similar challenge in today’s culture. Our kids come equipped for an eternal, supernatural, transcendent kind of life—but they live in a world that doesn’t recognize it. We have the important task of worldproofing our kids—preparing them to be in the world but not of it, helping them avoid being squeezed into the world’s mold.

One way is to raise some basic questions that Lael Arrington suggests in her book *Worldproofing Your Kids*. One question is, Who makes the rules? We need to help our kids understand that there are only two answers to that question. Either God makes the rules, or man makes the rules. We can point out the orderliness of traffic patterns because someone else has decided that red means stop and green means go. We can talk about what it would be like if everybody made up their own traffic rules. We can watch videos together like *Alice in Wonderland* and *Lord of the Flies* that show what happens when anybody and everybody can make the rules.

Another important question is, Where Did We Come From? This isn’t about sex and the stork, but about creation and evolution. Either God made us because He loves us, or we are nothing more than an accident in an uncaring universe. My pastor has a routine with his kids. He asks, “How EVER did I get so blessed to be your daddy and get you for a son? His kids answer, “Because God gave me to you!” Jeff’s kids know God made them, and that they are God’s gift to their father.

A third question to talk about with our kids is, Why am I

here? We have the awesome privilege of casting a vision for them for their part in the larger story of life, one that involves a planning and purpose for their lives, a calling from God to play their specially designed and gifted part. We can tell our kids that there isn't anybody quite like them in the whole world, and God has a part for them that will bring joy and fulfillment because they're doing what they were created for.

Our privilege as parents is to teach our kids that they were created for God and for heaven, not for this world. Just like camels were created for the desert and not the zoo.

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5 Lies the Church Tells Women

[Note: This article is taken from J. Lee Grady's book *Ten Lies the Church Tells Women*. I do not subscribe to everything in this book, particularly the author's belief that there are no restrictions to women in the church. I do not agree that the office of pastor and elder are open to women, though I believe God has given many women, including me, the spiritual gift of pastor-teacher (which some find easier to receive when it's called "shepherd-teacher"). At Probe, we exhort people to be discerning in what we hear and read. Mr. Grady's book is firmly in the egalitarian camp, but as a complementarian who seeks to be discerning, I can recognize the truth of some of what he says without embracing what I believe is unbiblical. Please see the end of this article for other articles on the role of women I have written for our Web site.]

In this article I look at five lies the church tells women, inspired by the book by J. Lee Grady called *Ten Lies the*

Church Tells Women. {1} I'm not saying all churches say all these things, but there are certain pockets of Christianity where these lies are circulated.

Lie #1: God Created Women as Inferior Beings, Destined to Serve Their Husbands.

The first lie is that God created women as inferior beings, destined to serve their husbands. Those looking for Scripture to back up their beliefs point to Genesis 2:18, where God makes a "helpmeet" for Adam. "See?" they say. "Helpers are subordinate to the ones they help, which proves women are here to serve men." This ignores the times in the Psalms (10:14, 27:9, 118:7) where God is praised as our helper, and He is certainly not inferior or subordinate to us!

Lee Grady points out, "[I]t is a cultural bias, not a spiritual or scientific principle, that women were 'made' for the kitchen or laundry room. This is the most common form of male chauvinism, a burden placed on women by selfish men who want someone to wash their dishes." {2}

This view that women are inferior to men is not biblical, but it has infected the church from the beginning.

The Greek culture into which the early church was born viewed women as "half animal," unworthy of education, to be kept quiet and kept locked away, obedient to their husbands. In Jewish culture it was considered inappropriate for a man to even speak to a woman in public—including his own wife. A woman speaking to a man who was not her husband was considered to be giving evidence that she had committed adultery with him, and could be divorced. You can imagine the scandal Jesus caused when he regularly sought the company of women and talked to them, and taught them, just as he did men. Or when he allowed prostitutes to talk to him or pour perfume on his feet. {3}

Eve was not created to be Adam's servant, but his honored and respected wife and co-regent, fashioned to rule over creation with him. We see another picture of God's intention for the first Adam and Eve in our future as the church. The bride of the Second Adam, Christ, is created and is being fashioned to reign with Him forever. [{4}](#)

Lee Grady says, "Jesus modeled a revolutionary new paradigm of empowerment by affirming women as co-heirs of God's grace." [{5}](#) Paul continued this completely new, respectful view of women by inviting women to share in the ministry of the gospel and the church, and by teaching the equality of husbands and wives in the marriage relationship (although there is a biblical distinction of roles).

When God created woman, He didn't create an inferior being, He created what He delights to call "the glory of man." (1 Cor. 11:7)

Lie #2: A Man Needs to "Cover" a Woman in Her Ministry Activities.

The second lie is that a man needs to "cover" a woman in her ministry activities. "In many cases, leaders have innocently twisted various Bible verses to suggest that a woman's public ministry can be valid only if she is properly 'covered' by a male who is present. Often women are told that they cannot even lead women's Bible studies or prayer meetings unless a pastor, deacon or some other man can provide proper oversight." [{6}](#)

One woman was told that she could not start a backyard Bible school class in her neighborhood during the summer unless her husband agreed to be present at each session and teach all the Bible lessons. Her church elders said she could plan each day's crafts and make all the snacks, but a man had to conduct the "spiritual" aspects of the outreach since he is the proper "covering." [{7}](#)

It is disturbing to think of the implication of this belief. When we, as women, use our spiritual gifts and respond to God's call to minister in various ways (within the biblical restrictions for women) without a man present, is our ministry less legitimate and valid than a man doing the same work? What if a woman with the spiritual gift of evangelism senses the Holy Spirit directing her to speak to the cashier at the gas station, and there's no man around? On a personal note, when I am speaking at one of Probe's Mind Games conferences, do my lectures lack legitimacy or truth because the male Probe staff members are busy teaching in other rooms?

Ephesians 5:21 says, "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." Out of respect for our own weaknesses and limitations, I believe that all of us who wish to minister to others should pursue an attitude of humble submission to the body of Christ. We need to submit our beliefs and methods (and content, if we're teaching) to trusted believers who can provide support, direction, and, if needed, correction. And anyone engaged in ministry needs prayer support, which some have called a "prayer covering;" although that is not a biblical term.

But there is no verse that says, "If a woman teaches My word, make sure a man is present so she will be covered properly." Paul's instruction that older women teach the younger women doesn't include making sure that someone with a Y chromosome is present! What underlies this erroneous idea that a man's presence somehow validates any woman's ministry is, intentional or not, a profound disrespect and distrust of women.

Lie #3: Women Can't be Fulfilled or Spiritually Effective Without a Husband or Children.

The third lie is that women can't be fulfilled or spiritually

effective without a husband or children. Some churches teach that God's perfect plan for every woman is to be a wife and mother. Period. Sometimes Christian women successful in business or some other professional field are made to feel unwelcome at a church, as if they are an unhealthy influence on "purer" women.

In some places, single women are prevented from leading home fellowship groups because they're single.[{8}](#) Others have been discouraged from running for political office or pursuing a graduate education because God's plan was for them to marry and keep house—even when God hadn't brought a groom into the picture!

Lee Grady says, "We must stop placing a heavy yoke on unmarried and divorced women in the church by suggesting that they are not complete without a man in their lives or that a husband somehow legitimizes their ministries."[{9}](#)

In some churches, women are routinely taught that the best way for them to serve God is to get married, make their husbands happy, and have children. They think this should be the sole focus of women's lives. And to be honest, when God has given a woman a husband and children, especially young children, focusing her primary energies and gifting on her family truly *is* the most important way she serves God in that season of her life. Children will not be impressed with how many Bible studies their mother teaches each week. And most husbands will be less than enthusiastic for their wives to go off on several mission trips each year when it means the home is falling apart and everybody's life is in chaos.

But women, even women with families, are given spiritual gifts that God intends for us to use to build up the body of Christ, both inside and outside our families. When we exercise those spiritual gifts and abilities, God delights to honor us with a sense of fulfillment. And usually that involves ministry in the church or in the world, as long as it's secondary to our

family priorities.

But not all women are called to marriage and motherhood. It is disrespectful to single Christian women to treat them as second-class women because they don't wear a wedding ring. It's heartbreaking and frustrating when a woman would love to be married, but God hasn't brought her to the man of His choice; it just adds unnecessary sorrow for the church to say, "Sorry, honey, without a man you don't have a place here."

Lie #4: Women Should Never Work Outside the Home.

The fourth lie is that women should never work outside the home. Women who take jobs are shamed and judged, because they can't please God if they do anything outside of being a wife and mother.

This is a hurtful lie to many women who don't have a choice about working or not. There are huge numbers of divorced and widowed women in the church who would much rather stay at home with their families, but they're the only breadwinners. And for many two-parent families, they honestly can't survive on the husband's paycheck alone.

This lie comes from a misreading of Paul's exhortation in Titus 2:4 for women to be "workers at home."

Paul wasn't calling them to quit their day jobs to stay home. Women in that culture had no education and usually no opportunities for employment. He was addressing a character issue about being faithful and industrious, not lazy and self-centered. This letter was written to the pastor of a church on Crete, a society known for the laziness and self-indulgence of its people.[{10}](#)

Before the 1800's and the Industrial Revolution, both men and women worked at home, and they worked hard. Whether farming,

fishing, animal husbandry, or whatever trade they engaged in, they did it from home. The care and nurture of children was woven into the day's work and extended families helped care for each other. There was no such thing, except among the very wealthy, as a woman who didn't work.

This lie completely ignores the Proverbs 31 woman, who not only took excellent care of her family, but also had several home-based businesses that required her to leave her home to engage in these businesses. I personally appreciate this biblical pattern because I had a home-based business and a ministry the entire time my children were growing, both of which took me out of the home sometimes. I was able to grow my gifts as my kids were growing, and now that they're both adults, I am able to use those gifts and abilities more fully with my new freedom to leave home.

On the other hand, an equally distressing expectation common to younger people in today's churches is that women should always work, regardless of whether they have children or not. Our culture has so downgraded the importance of focused parenting that many people consider it wasteful for a woman to be "only" a homemaker. It's sexist to say that a woman's only valid contribution to the world or the church is to be a homemaker, but both extremes are wrong and harmful.

Lie #5: Women Must Obediently Submit to Their Husbands in All Situations.

The last lie says that women must obediently submit to their husbands in *all* situations. This lie really grieves me deeply, because it is probably responsible for more pain and abuse than any other lie we've looked at in this article.

In Ephesians 5:22, wives are commanded to submit to our husbands. For some people, this has been twisted to mean the husband is the boss and the wife's job is to obey his every whim. That is a relationship of power, not self-sacrificing

love, as this marriage passage actually teaches. The wife is called to serve her husband through submission, and the husband is called to serve his wife through sacrificial love.

We have no idea how many women have been physically, emotionally, sexually, and spiritually abused by their husbands wielding the submission verses as a weapon. When they finally tell their pastor about their husband's rage-outs and physical assaults, they are often not believed, and sometimes they are told that if they would learn to submit the violence would stop. Then they are counseled that it would be a sin to separate and hold the husband accountable for what is a crime! Some abused women, who feared for their lives, have actually been told, "Don't worry. Even if you died you would go to be with the Lord. So you win either way. Just keep praying for him. But you are not allowed to leave."[{11}](#)

A comprehensive study on domestic violence in the church in the mid 80's revealed that 26 percent of the pastors counseled an abused wife to keep submitting and trust that God would either stop the abuse or give her the strength to endure it. About a fourth of the pastors believed that abuse is the wife's fault because of her lack of submission! And a majority of the pastors said it is better for wives to endure violence against them than to seek a separation that might end in divorce.[{12}](#) I respectfully suggest that separation *with the goal of reconciliation* is often the only way to motivate an abusive husband to get help.[{13}](#) Just as we cast a broken limb to enable it to heal, separation is like putting a cast on a broken relationship as the first step to enable change and healing. We see in 1 Cor. 5 that God's plan for unrepentant believers is to experience the pain of isolation in separation from friends and loved ones; why would it be unthinkable for the same principle to be effective within an abusive marriage?

All the lies we've looked at in this article are the result of twisting God's word out of a misunderstanding of God's intent for His people. The way to combat the lies is to know the

truth—because that’s what sets us free.

Notes

1. Lee Grady, *10 Lies the Church Tells Women* (Lake Mary, FL: Creation House, 2000).
2. Grady, 23.
3. George Byron Koch, “Shall a Woman Keep Silent? Part 1.” http://www.resurrection.org/shall_a_woman____part_1.htm.
4. Rev. 22:5, 2 Tim. 2:12.
5. Grady, 21.
6. Grady, 89-90.
7. Grady, 90.
8. Grady, 140.
9. Grady, 143.
10. “Even one of their own prophets has said, ‘Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons.’” (Titus 1:2)
11. Grady, 172.
12. Grady, 174.
13. I especially recommend Dr. Paul Hegstrom of Life Skills Learning Centers. He is a recovered abusive husband and pastor who wrote an excellent book, *Angry Men and the Women Who Love Them: Breaking the Cycle of Physical and Emotional Abuse* (Beacon Hill Press, 1999). His Web site is <http://www.lifeskillsintl.org>.

A Picture of Our Vulnerability

On the afternoon of Sept. 11, I was talking to a friend on the phone who said, "I'm afraid to leave my house. I'm afraid to drive down the street; I have these images of airplanes falling out of the sky and crashing into my car. I don't feel safe anymore." She's not alone. People are scared and angry at feeling like they're living in a war zone where their world could blow up at any minute. Just about the time that fears of hijacked planes slamming into buildings started to subside, new fears of anthrax have caused waves of anxious phone calls to FBI offices and police stations.

Many people resent the loss of our innocence and security, and that's completely understandable. But for the Christian, this is a poignant reminder that in actuality, we DO live in a spiritual war zone. We are in far greater danger of being attacked in spiritual warfare than we are of hijacked planes slamming into buildings. Scripture tells us we have a personal adversary who prowls around looking for whom he may devour. Satan's spiritual terrorism is every bit as real as earthly terrorism.

The president tells us to remain vigilant and alert. That's a good policy for dealing with spiritual warfare as well. We make it easy for the devil when we get lazy and complacent. Our political and philosophical enemies know how to generate "disinformation" to confuse intelligence agencies and mislead the American public. The problem is, we can't tell the difference between actual threats and false ones. Disinformation is just a fancy word for lying. And we need to be alert for the lies of our spiritual enemy as well. But in

the spiritual arena, we are in a much more powerful position because we can recognize Satan's lies if we know the truth, and God has already given us all the truth we need to know in the Bible. We have to read and study God's truth in order to recognize the lies of the enemy.

God has given every believer a supernaturally powerful set of defensive and offensive weapons we can read about in Ephesians 6. We have his assurance that it's not flesh and blood enemies we fight against, but spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. And God has given us everything we need to fight back; we need not be defenseless! Most importantly, we need to remember that we have God's Spirit within us to help us fight, even when we are up to our eyeballs in the enemy's flaming darts and scud missiles.

Whether we are facing the threats of terrorists within our own country, or the threats of invisible terrorists fighting us in the spirit realm, the same comforting assurance of God's word can help us stay secure: "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear." Put on your armor, pick up your sword, and fight back!

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"Help! My Doubts Scare Me!"

Dear Sue Bohlin,

Hello. My name is _____. I e-mailed Ray earlier too. Anyways, I was reading an e-mail discussion you had with somebody, who didn't believe in God. You said something in it about how it's not an intellect issue, but a heart issue. This is hard for me to accept. I'm ashamed admitting this, but oh

gosh its hard for me to admit. Maybe I won't. I could say that I don't believe in God, but that just sounds way too harsh. Have you heard of anybody who was a Christian, but then they began to have doubts and became agnostic? That's how I feel. I asked Jesus into my heart when I was younger (I'm 18 now), but for a long time I've just been so skeptical. I guess I'm not a Christian, because a Christian knows that he or she is one, and I don't. I don't know how to express what I've been going through lately. Everyday I think about my doubt and it depresses me. I'm not sure if I'll ever get rid of it and that scares me. I desire to believe in God so much, but it's hard. I have so many questions. I wonder why God doesn't show himself to me so I know for sure that He is there. I don't know. Maybe He has but it's just not enough. Maybe I don't have enough faith.

Another thing that really doesn't help me is some of the stuff that I have read on the internet. Different books that I've read about have caused me to have even more doubt. Have you heard of *The Bible Unearthed...*, or *The Jesus Puzzle...*? I haven't read any of them, but read reviews. Anyways, the second one I think denies that Jesus was a historical person. That really bothers me. Earlier today I was reading something on the web where this person was being critical of Lee Strobel (who wrote *The Case for Christ*). I really like that book (not done with it yet), but after what I read on the internet about it, I wonder if it really shows that Jesus was a historical person. I don't know. Maybe I just let other people's conflicting views on Christianity get to me too much, but after reading these things, I start to wonder if maybe they are correct on what they are arguing.

Anyways, to me, my problem doesn't seem to be a heart issue because I really would like to believe in God. I desire to believe in Him and live for Him, but it's hard. Is there something that I lack? Do I just not have enough faith? I don't know, maybe I don't. Well I think I've made this long

enough. If there's any advice you could give me I would appreciate it. Maybe you could pray for me. Thanks a lot.

I know you don't know me, but I REALLY wish I could reach through this computer screen and put my arms around you and give you a big hug and tell you IT'S GOING TO BE OK!!!!!! It is so OK to have doubts, to wonder about where you stand spiritually, because, at 18, you are at the point you need to be—deciding for yourself what you should keep and what you should jettison of what you have been taught. You are an adult now but you probably don't feel that you have enough information to make an informed, committed adult choice about something as important as eternal destiny and one's relationship with God!

Good news—lots of other people are also in your shoes. But they don't ask for help, and bless you, you did, and there IS help for you!! There are good answers, and you'll be stronger and more confident for having voiced your doubts and questions, once you're on the other side of this spiritual crisis. It's OK, _____. . . .God is walking through it with you.

I guess I'm not a Christian, because a Christian knows that he or she is one, and I don't.

Well, no, actually that's not true. Many Christians have assurance that we are Christians, and many Christians fervently *hope* they are but they're not sure. That's an important issue all by itself: can we *know* we're saved and going to heaven? Can we lose our salvation? Our founder and first president, Jimmy Williams, addressed this issue in one of [his e-mails](#).

I don't know how to express what I've been going through lately. Everyday I think about my doubt and it depresses me. I'm not sure if I'll ever get rid of it and that scares me.

I wish you could see God's heart as He watches you wrestle

with your doubts and fears. He loves you so much (man, I feel like Monica on *Touched by an Angel* here!) and is very tender toward you as you experience these strong and scary emotions. I understand your fear that you'll never get rid of the doubt. But doubt is like darkness—you don't overcome it by pushing it away, you make it go away by bringing in light. As you seek light and truth and to know what is really true and real, God will show you the light. I am so grateful that you came to us at Probe instead of some New Age "all religions are the same" website!

I desire to believe in God so much, but it's hard. I have so many questions. I wonder why God doesn't show himself to me so I know for sure that He is there. I don't know. Maybe He has but it's just not enough. Maybe I don't have enough faith.

What's important isn't the amount or strength of our faith, but the *object* of our faith. God is strong enough to handle your doubts and to show you, in ways so intimate you will know it's HIM, that He is real and He loves you very much.

Another thing that really doesn't help me is some of the stuff that i have read on the internet. Different books that I've read about have caused me to have even more doubt. Have you heard of The Bible Unearthed..., or The Jesus Puzzle...? I haven't read any of them, but read reviews. Anyways, the second one I think denies that Jesus was a historical person. That really bothers me.

With good reason. Some of the best Christian apologetics books started out with the author's intention to disprove Christianity, and the facts overwhelmed the skeptics into belief. The entire world was affected by the life of Jesus Christ, in one way or another, but He didn't exist? Now THAT takes a lot of faith!

Earlier today I was reading something on the web where this

person was being critical of Lee Strobel (who wrote The Case for Christ). I really like that book (not done with it yet), but after what I read on the internet about it, I wonder if it really shows that Jesus was a historical person.

Did you know Lee Strobel started out as an atheist? I'm glad you're reading it; it was a wise choice. So is his second book, *The Case for Faith*. I found this statement from him in an interview online: "I have found that the testimony of history points compellingly toward Jesus Christ having returned from the dead in the ultimate authentication of His claim to be God. To me faith in Jesus is not blind or irrational. I have so much independent evidence that the New Testament writings are reliable that I would be swimming upstream against the evidence if I were to follow the teachings of the Koran or the Book of Mormon. The more I subject the New Testament to analysis, the more I pepper it with questions, the more I walk away utterly convinced of its trustworthiness."

I don't know. Maybe I just let other people's conflicting views on Christianity get to me too much, but after reading these things, I start to wonder if maybe they are correct on what they are arguing.

Just about every truth, especially those of eternal importance, will be countered with something counterfeit, because we're in a very real battle for our minds and souls. It's unfortunate that the counter-arguments can *appear* so compelling, but the issue is ultimate truth. Right now, you're on the right track in seeking truth and desiring to sort through the clamoring voices that attack it.

Anyways, to me, my problem doesn't seem to be a heart issue because I really would like to believe in God. I desire to believe in Him and live for Him, but its hard. Is there something that I lack? Do I just not have enough faith? I don't know, maybe I don't.

It's been said that the Christian life isn't hard, it's IMPOSSIBLE. You can't live for God in your own strength—not for any length of time, anyway, without burning out and getting majorly discouraged. The secret is to allow Jesus to live His life through you by yielding to Him. That, by the way, is one of the things that sets Christianity apart from every other religion: God inside us, offering to live His life through us, without any loss of our own individuality. But right now, the big issue is what to do with your head/heart conflict. Fortunately, there is a PERFECT book that I believe will make all the difference in the world to you.

It's called [*Making Your Faith Your Own: A Guidebook for Believers With Questions*](#) by Teresa Vining. I was privileged to read Teresa's manuscript and LOVED her book. One of its strengths is that she was in the exact place you are now, and she takes you through the questions AND the answers, and suggests you keep a journal as you work through the book so you can decide what you believe and commit to, and what you're not willing to. It is a terrific book on apologetics, and she is very respectful of the person with questions and doubts. I think you will love this book too.

Well I think I've made this long enough. If there's any advice you could give me I would appreciate it. Maybe you could pray for me.

I'd like to pray for you right now!

Father, I lift up _____ to You and I thank You for her intellect and her honesty in facing her doubts and questions. Thank You that You are not in the least bit troubled by them because You know You are real and true and able to take her through this time to a point where she will know beyond a shadow of a doubt that YOU ARE. I ask You to send her little intimate glimpses of You and open her eyes so she'll know it's You saying "Hi." I ask that You give her a peace when she's pursuing truth and give her an uncomfortable restlessness when

she's moving toward the darkness and deception that would seek to draw her away from You. Lord, I thank You for Your hand on _____'s life and on her heart and on her mind, and by faith I thank You for taking her to the place where she will joyfully serve You with all three. Lord, make her feel loved and protected and cherished by You.

In Jesus' name,
Amen.

Hope this helps, dear one!

Sue