Lessons From a Hospital Bed

In the last several months, both of my severely arthritic hips were replaced. In addition to the wonderful blessing that I am out of pain, the surgeries and recoveries were full of lessons pointing me to spiritual truths I am so very thankful for:



For a long time, I needed help getting in and out of my car. To be blunt, it was always noisy with involuntary gasps and screams of pain. And while my family and friends were so very glad to be of assistance, it was hard on them to witness me hurting so badly. Now that the pain is behind me, I keep hearing comments like, “Wow! It’s so great not to see your face contorted!” or, “Oh man! You’re not making the horrible sounds you used to make when you were getting into the car!” I told my husband the other day, “I have a feeling all that was a lot worse than I had any idea.” He nodded his head, “Oh yeah. It was bad.” While I am truly sorry that my sweet helpers had to see and hear what they did, it touches me that their compassion ran so deep. I have a new appreciation of what “rejoicing with those who rejoice, and weeping with those

who weep” (Romans 12:15) looks like, and how powerful it is to enter into another person’s highs and lows.

We have an amazing community group who love each other incredibly well. The night before my first surgery, they prayed over me. One of the men, with a twinkle in his eye, admonished me: “Sue, you may think this surgery is about getting a new hip, but it’s not. It’s about the people you’re going to meet and minister to in the hospital. I just want you to remember—it’s not about you, OK?” I know he said it to make me laugh, but his counsel bounced around in my head during both hospital stays. It allowed me to stay aware of the various people who came into my room, from doctors to nurses to housekeepers to the people delivering meal trays, praying, “How can I bless and encourage this person today, Lord?” It really WASN’T all about me!

I had heard from three different doctors, “You have two bad hips and they both need to be replaced.” But I didn’t sense the timing was right, especially with the expense of such huge surgeries and recovery. I learned yet again the importance of trusting God’s timing; in February I turned 65 and crossed the amazing Medicare threshold, which covered basically everything. God’s provision has been a huge part of this “adventure,” including an exceptionally generous outpouring of gifts to a GoFundMe campaign for an expensive stem cell treatment that we had hoped would replace surgery, but it didn’t. I learned again that the Lord is Jehovah Jireh, the God Who Provides (Genesis 22).

This adventure provided minute-by-minute practice in developing an “Attitude of Gratitude.” During the first surgery, it seemed that every time I turned around there was another reason to say, “Thank You, Lord!” From the marvelous shock of waking up in the recovery room in no pain, to walking on my walker a couple of hours after surgery, to the joy of being able to stand again for the simple pleasure of brushing my teeth and washing my hands at the sink, to the delicious

hospital food, to the lovely flowers friends brought, to the blessing of being able to fall back asleep after every nighttime "visitor"—I was immersed in nonstop thankfulness.

The day after my second surgery, the Director of Food and Nutrition visited me to check on how the hospital was doing with the quality of the food and service. We had a delightful visit in which I was able to tell him about my immersion in thankfulness during my first hospital stay, but unfortunately I wasn't able to remember a lot of the things I was thankful for because pain meds made my brain fuzzy. "So," I pointed to my journal next to my bed, "this time I brought my gratitude journal so I could record the many blessings despite the pain meds. And your food is one of them!" The director grinned and said, "Ah, so that's where the joy is coming from!" I loved that I was able to recognize a brother in Christ, and that he was able to recognize the connection between gratitude and joy.

The second surgery was a challenge for the surgeon because my hip bones are deformed from polio. I learned that there wasn't enough hip bone to anchor the new socket with screws, so she had to use surgical cement. She has high hopes that it will hold, but warned me that if the cement doesn't work over the long haul, "We'll be in big trouble." So I started praying that the Lord would literally hold me together. Some of my astute friends pointed out that that is Jesus' job in Colossians 1:17: "In Him all things hold together." The context is all of creation, so He can certainly handle one little hip!

I've already shared some of the other lessons I've learned in this adventure, about how to handle fear by sharing it with others and inviting the Lord into it and how to handle unexpected grief.

But I'm pretty sure there are more lessons ahead. I just pray to keep my eyes open so I don't miss any of them.

Next Day Addendum:

I was right about there being more lessons, and I remembered one of them this morning as I easily stood up from my scooter to grab the coffee beans and mug from the cabinet for my morning cup of wake-up juice. After several years of not walking or standing because of the pain, I got out of a number of habits. Now I have to remind myself, "Hey! You can do _____ again!" I need to renew my thinking about what I can and can't do, and in order to make these new ways of thinking permanent, I need to *practice* thinking differently. That's how we experience spiritual transformation as well. One of my favorite verses is Romans 12:2, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. . ." We are transformed by intentionally submitting how we think and interpret life to the authority of God's word. But we have to *practice* new ways of thinking in order to be transformed (as opposed to a momentary flicker of a thought).

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/lessons_from_a_hospital_bed on November 13, 2018.

"Why Are Children Born Blind?"

I have asked the question of why children are born blind. I get no satisfaction from any of any religious explanation. The fact of the matter is that the Almighty can see but these little children cannot. It is cold comfort to hide behind some doctrine when an innocent child will spend his or her life in

darkness.

It’s a great question. In fact, God considered it such a good question that it is included in the Gospel of John:

> As [Jesus] went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”
>
> “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. . . .” (John 9:1-3)

So the first answer of why babies are allowed to be born blind is so that God can put His goodness and His power on display through the person’s life.

I can imagine that an immediate response might be, “How sadistic and egocentric can you get? Why would a good and loving God allow such pain and distress just to set Himself up to get glory?”

And my response would be, “When we start to understand God as He really is, as majestic and powerful and beautiful and most of all GOOD, we stop pushing back at His actions that reveal His character. Just like we don’t raise a fist at the sun and scream, ‘How dare you shine so brightly that I can’t look at you without hurting my eyes?! How dare you pour such radiant light into the world that it lights everything up? Stop being so shiny and bright!'”

Another answer is that in the scope of eternity, there are many worse things than being physically blind. It would be far worse to live a life disconnected from God, refusing His invitation to the abundant life Jesus came to give, and enter hell with perfectly working eyes.

I do realize that this may seem callous, which is why I need to tell you that as a survivor of polio paralysis since I was

eight months old, I have lived my entire life handicapped. I may as well have been born with a disabled body like a baby born blind. So this question is not a hypothetical, theoretical question. This is my daily life. And I have seen God "display His works in me" (John 9) in many ways not *despite* my handicap, but *because* of it. My very weakness is what allows His strength and joy to shine through me in the weak places.

Jesus went on to say immediately after the above statements that He was the light of the world. The juxtaposition of these two details, I believe, is making a statement: that things that exist in the physical realm point to corollaries in the spiritual realm. Blindness comes in various forms, physical and spiritual and emotional and intellectual, but Jesus is the light that makes all the difference with those kinds of blindness.

I do think it's easier to grasp this truth when we cultivate an eternal perspective, remembering that our life on earth is but a short breath compared to the bulk of our existence that will happen on the other side of death. Blindness, for believers in Jesus, is limited to life on earth. All physical maladies will be restored to perfection in the New Heavens and the New Earth, which means no blindness, no lameness, no illness of any kind in the next stage of life.

You might ask, "But what about babies born blind who don't become believers in Jesus? What is the point of their blindness then?" It seems to me that the promise of healing and wholeness through a relationship with Jesus could be even *more* appealing to someone born blind. It might be the very best way for them to come to the place where they trust in Christ.

One final comment, addressing your statement that "the Almighty can see but these little children cannot."

There was a time when the Almighty restricted Himself to a human body while living on earth, leaving all His power and privileges behind in heaven when He took up residence in a young girl's body. I believe He experienced an even worse kind of blindness than merely physical blindness as He hung on the cross, absorbing all the sin, all the dysfunction, all the sickness, and all the brokenness of life in a fallen world into Himself for three hours. He was so immersed in the horror of a sin-sick world, I believe, that He could no longer "see" or sense His Father—because that's what sin does, it separates us from God, and the Bible tells us that He actually BECAME sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). No wonder He felt lost in sin's blindness. (Thus crying out "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?")

So I would respectfully submit that Jesus, the Almighty, very much knows what the deepest kind of blindness feels like. He is Emmanuel, God with us—God who understands what it's like to be human and live in a broken world. Including blindness.

I do hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

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What Do You Regret?



Years ago I encountered a word of wisdom: "At the end of our lives, what we will regret is far more about what we *didn't* do, than what we did." And then recently, in a conversation about what "youngers" want to learn from "olders," a colleague said he wanted to know what we regret so he can learn from our lessons the wiser way (observation) instead of the hard way (personal experience). So I've been asking.

The answers fell in these categories:

Missed Time and Opportunities

- I regret not spending more time with my parents and immediate family when I could.
- I regret not asking enough questions of my parents and grandparents when they were still here. There is so much more I would like to know from them.
- I regret all the time I wasted looking for a man, dating and fretting over relationships. If I had it to do over, I would invest my time and energy differently. I would spend more time in study of the Word, pour into and serve more freely in ministry and take mission trips! I would've trusted God more and Matthew 6:33.
- I regret not making Christ-centered connections earlier in my life.
- I regret not making connections to Christian organizations (including the church) earlier, and not

getting help understanding the Bible.

- I regret not having a mentor.
- I regret not going to the Holy Land sooner.
- I regret not taking advantage of the opportunity to sightsee when on business trips.
- I regret letting work consume me. I regret not traveling because work was too big a part of my life.
- I regret not getting counseling to help me process and grieve my father's murder.
- I regret not learning as much as possible when I had willing teachers. The thought of sitting in a room with peers discussing a book sounds like heaven now, but in school it felt like torture. I did not appreciate the luxury of education then, and now I would LOVE to go back to school for another degree.

Seeking to Please People Instead of God

- I regret spending so much of my younger life being a people pleaser and carrying around burdens that weren't mine to carry.
- I regret being motivated by pleasing people instead of God—even godly people. People can counsel us, but we shouldn't put them in God's place.
- I regret worrying more about what people thought of me than worrying about what God thought of me.
- I regret "performing" for others instead of being true to me.
- I regret all the times I silenced myself at church in order to be the good pastor wife. I didn't even realize how it was slowly poisoning me.

Parenting

- I regret not spending time with my kids instead of trying to provide more things for my kids.
- I regret the time I wasted doing menial tasks that really didn't matter instead of sitting down longer with

my boys. I also regret being too quick to speak and argue when they were teenagers. I wish I had been calmer and sought out conversation instead of confrontation.

- I regret wanting my little ones to be perfect in EVERYTHING they did instead of letting them just be kids, and spending way too much time on the daily tasks of housekeeping instead of using my time wisely to nurture them and being their spiritual leader and teaching them more about Jesus instead of making sure each toy was in place. Also being so strict on them when they were young and not realizing I couldn't control their reactions; that I needed to teach them how to react. Oh, and I used to yell at them as a young mom (because that's what I was taught) but I learned to control my reactions because I don't like to be yelled at, and to speak softly and with respect to each of them, using "sir" and "ma'am" with them as I do today with my grandchildren.
- I regret believing the lie that you should let your kids choose their own religion.
- I regret not creating a family culture when my kids were small.
- I regret not getting counseling for our son when he started into a downward spiral in middle school.
- I regret destroying my relationship with our then-13 year old son because he was failing in school and I was so afraid for his future! I reacted in such destructive ways until a pastor of mine told me, "Dear one, there is no vacancy in the Trinity. The position of the Holy Spirit has been filled!" That began a very long walk back toward a forgiven and reconciled relationship with that now 39-year old son who graduated from college, was in the army for almost 7 years and is now a sergeant in a police force and married with four kids. Thank You Lord Jesus for your grace and mercy toward us all. You are infinitely better at your job than any of us ever could be.

Relationships

- I regret “mind-reading” what I thought others believed about me and reacted as if those beliefs were true…only to go to reunions years later, find out what people actually thought… and realized I could have had a way cooler high school and college experience had I just asked people outright what they thought instead of assuming instead.
- I regret so much than when I saw evidence in my first marriage that something was wrong, I did not fervently ask God to show me what was wrong. I regret it took me over twenty-five years to question red flags in the marriage. I regret not holding my husband accountable for decisions he made, especially financial decisions, and for not pursuing accountability with other believers. I regret that I did not question why, in our Christian culture, submission is confused with inferiority-and therefore a woman can’t question any major financial decision her husband does in secret without accountability to his wife.
- I regret every single time I asked a newly married couple when they would have kids. Infertility gives perspective.
- I regret not standing up to an abusive teacher in high school and not reporting him, and I regret years of thinking I was just a bad kid.
- I regret being mean to my wife and kids.
- I regret not asking my husband to help me more with the kids and the house. I didn’t ask, and then I got resentful for him not doing what I never asked him to do. I regret shutting him out of my heart and big chunks of my life.

Body

- I regret not memorizing more scripture before mom brain and autoimmune issues took my good memory.

- I regret not taking better care of my body, especially now that I'm pushing 60. It would have been so much easier if I had just worked at it a little bit each day.
- I regret not realizing you could have sculpted muscles at 80; if I had known I would have exercised more starting much younger.
- I regret not going to the dentist more when I was still under my mom's insurance.
- I regret piercing my belly button myself with a needle and an ice cube. Not really for any reason except for sure my daughter is gonna try it.

Spiritual Life

- I regret buying the lies of the culture rather than the truth of God.
- I regret being so afraid of not having enough money (which is really about not trusting God) that I squelched my husband's generosity.
- I regret not learning sooner that I need to depend on the Lord and not myself.
- I regret the sin of self-reliance.
- I regret not allowing scripture to show me what I was really like.
- I regret allowing sin to become an addiction that took joy from my life and replaced it with shame and guilt.
- I regret that I got in God's way many times . . . when God says in His word says, "I've got this all under control, I have a plan for your life, trust in me with all your heart, do not lean on your own understanding, rest in Me, Be still . . ." I have done the opposite more times than I can count. So instead of leaning in on Him and watching what He can/could do, I thought I could handle whatever was going on better and faster and tried and failed. (Still working on this, some of us take a little longer to learn.) God has shown me that even when I get in His way, He forgives, He still has a plan, He

is still in control, He gives me strength to sit back and wait on Him, that I can change my heart and let go, and trust Him and rest in Him. As His children, He will never let us go . . . Rest and wait on Him, His ways are always better.

- I regret not learning how to really capture my thoughts and rebuke them with scripture. I learned a little too late that I can choose, truly choose what is in my mind. So many things would have been different . . .
- I regret not attending a healthy Bible-teaching church when I was younger.

Of course, we can't learn all our lessons from other people's mistakes. One especially wise friend wrote, "I know that we can, with God's Spirit in us, learn to avoid many things, and wise counsel helps. But until I had matured more and understood the value of certain things and perspective on others, things older believers shared were often more in my head than taken to heart."

Some examples of regrets that just might have to be learned the hard way:

- I regret indulging and not grasping consequences of every big and little choice.
- I regret listening to legalistic people when I was more vulnerable to toxic religion.
- I regret blowing opportunities, self-imposed insecurity, bad decisions and choices.
- I regret getting upset over really insignificant things.

Finally, for a redemptive view of regrets, this wisdom from a believer who owns the truth of Romans 8:28, that God is able to make all regrets work together for good for those who love God and are called according to His purpose:

"Sue, I think if you live long enough you realize there is a step beyond regret, and it's thankfulness. Every regret that I

would have spoken of, God has used to change me and grow me. As I look back on them all, my heart is full of joy that God has been a part of my life for 47 years. He has brought me out of the mire and filled me up with acceptance of what it's like to live in this world and that He uses it all. And I thank Him for His goodness."

What do you regret?

This blog post originally appeared at
blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/what_do_you_regret
on Sept. 4, 2018.

From Fears to Tears

In a previous blog post, I'm Scared, Lord, I wrote about my apprehensions concerning my upcoming hip replacement surgery. My doctor was cheerfully confident that I would not experience the post-operative pain I was afraid of, but I was all-too-aware of my potential complications. As a polio survivor, I'm twice as sensitive to pain as those whose brains were not infected by the poliovirus. On top of that, I was extremely aware of the fact that my severely arthritic hips had become basically frozen, leaving me with a limited range of motion. I knew that the surgeon and her team would be moving my legs in all kinds of unnatural (to me) contortions during the surgery, and I was extremely concerned about how my muscles and ligaments might scream in protest once I woke up from surgery. So I was scared.

But when I shared my fears with God's people, hundreds of them graciously prayed for me, and the Lord swept away my fears

like blowing away smoke. Suddenly the fear was gone and I was graced with a very matter-of-fact willingness to just get ‘er done. It was amazing. I was held in my Father’s gentle and loving cuddle, and I walked in peace the remaining days until the surgery. Metaphorically walked, that is. I hadn’t physically walked for well over a year because of pain and weakness.

Well, it has now been over a week since my surgery, and every day I stand amazed at the healing grace and pain-control grace of my gracious Lord. Not a metaphorical standing, either. For the first time in two years, I am able to stand upright and pain free. I try to maintain an awareness of the huge grace in which I stand, marveling at the privilege of being able to once more stand at the sink to wash my hands or brush my teeth. My recovery has gone exceptionally well. I’m able to walk with the aid of a walker and each day the distance I can walk grows longer. Soon I’ll be able to go home from the inpatient rehabilitation facility I’ve been in—once we figure out how to get me into our car.

But I was not prepared for what kept happening in the therapy gym: tears.

I was flummoxed by the unbidden tears that sprang to my eyes the first time a physical therapist asked me to exercise my polio leg in the same way I had just moved my surgery leg. I knew I couldn’t; I don’t have the strength, and never have. My left leg was originally paralyzed when I got polio as an infant, and it barely functions. But I also live with the mindset of trying to do what people ask me to do, and the clash of those two realities rose up in sadness and frustration that leaked out my eyes. It was rather embarrassing. I didn’t know what was going on, I just knew my heart was a storm of unhappy feelings.

When the therapist asked me to climb a two-inch step and I didn’t have enough pain meds in me for that, the stabbing pain

in my surgery leg rose up through my body and exited through my eyes in tears again. It seemed that tears were just under the surface, ready to leak out at the slightest provocation, for two days.

I was so confused! What in the world was going on? Where were all these tears coming from?

It was my husband who provided the answer, and I thank the Lord for using Ray to bring clarity to my maelstrom of emotion. He texted me, “Honey, you have lived with decades of loss you have learned to manage. Now the loss is renewed and you now are reminded further of the loss in ways you haven’t dealt with for a lifetime. Polio sucks. I understand.”

That was it! The pain of loss is *grief*. I was grieving the impact of polio’s losses on my life yet again, this time with a freshly painful punch: polio is now interfering with my recovery from surgery. Other people can just use their other leg to support themselves and climb into a mini-van with its higher seats—no problem! I don’t have that choice. That’s a loss. When asked to do the same exercise with both legs, other people can do that, but I don’t have that choice. That’s another loss.

I manage to navigate the losses of polio for months and sometimes years at a time without having to actively think about it, allowing me the luxury of not having to face my grief every day. But that luxury has been taken away today and I want to be real and honest about where I am. I live in a fallen world where the evidence of sin’s destructive impact on our world is everywhere. My grief, the pain of my losses, is part of that fallen world. But what is also part of that fallen world is God’s promise that He would never leave me or forsake me (Hebrews 13:5). He tells me He is “the LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness” (Exodus 34:6).

I remind myself of my new life verse that just seems to incredibly appropriate for one whose body is compromised: Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)

I cried today. I let the tears fall as the grief flowed. But then I chose not to lose heart, because this momentary, light affliction is producing for me an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison.

It's gonna be okay.

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/from_fears_to_tears on June 26, 2018.

I'm Scared, Lord

My daughter-in-love recently sent me a video of my son introducing their new Golden Retriever puppy to a swimming pool in which he coaxes little Judah, "Don't be scared! Bohlins don't get scared!"

. . . While I've been working on this blog post about being scared. Well yeah, sometimes we do.

For four years I've been living with the pain of severe arthritis and the late effects of polio (muscle weakness,

pain, and fatigue). In a few weeks, Lord willing, I will have hip replacement surgery. When my husband had his hip replaced, he was in excellent physical condition and his experience was as close to perfect as you can get.

But I'm in a different place physically. I haven't walked in a year. I haven't been able to stand up straight for a couple of years, and even lying flat in bed is extremely uncomfortable. My pelvis and hip joints have lost the flexibility that is a sign of good health, and I just don't know how my post-polio will affect recovery from surgery.

On top of this, I'm a pain weenie. It turns out that the poliovirus affected everything in my body, including pain receptors, and we polio survivors are twice as sensitive to pain as everyone else. So . . . yeah, I'm scared of what I will wake up to after surgery.

My fear level kept rising. It didn't help when people would ask, "Are you excited about your surgery? To get rid of the pain?" No! No, I'm not excited, I'm actually quite fearful of the post-op pain, and not knowing what to expect from physical rehab.

One thing I've learned in life, though, is that if we're focused on our fears and anxieties, it's because we're leaving God out of the equation. He gives no grace for "what ifs" and our vain imaginations of potential scenarios where any number of things could go wrong.

That's why worrying is a sin.

And the Bible says "fear not" 365 times.

So what do I do with my "scaredness"? [Note: Microsoft Word really, really wants to keep flipping "scaredness" to "sacredness." Not the same thing. Not by a long shot.]

I sensed the Lord nudging me to share it.

So I did.

And I discovered, once again, the power of prayer.

It started when I needed a CT scan for the robotic assistance of my surgery, but I couldn't lie flat on the table. The pain was unbearable. So I rescheduled the procedure and asked the surgeon to prescribe me some heavy pain meds to be able to lie down. I posted a prayer request on Facebook, asking for "lying flat grace." I was able to tell the CT tech that over a hundred people had said they were praying for me—and she could see with her own eyes the answer to their prayers as I was able to lie flat and remain still for the scan.



So I was doing my part, by confessing Psalm 56:3—"When I am afraid, I will trust in You," and reminding myself of the power of Philippians 4:6-7—"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

But, in obedience, I also shared with another large group of people that I was working daily on surrendering my fears of post-op pain and inviting the Lord into my concerns about what lies ahead. Just like with the CT scan. God blessed the others' intercession for me. To my delight, after I shared my struggle with fear, it was evident that lots of people

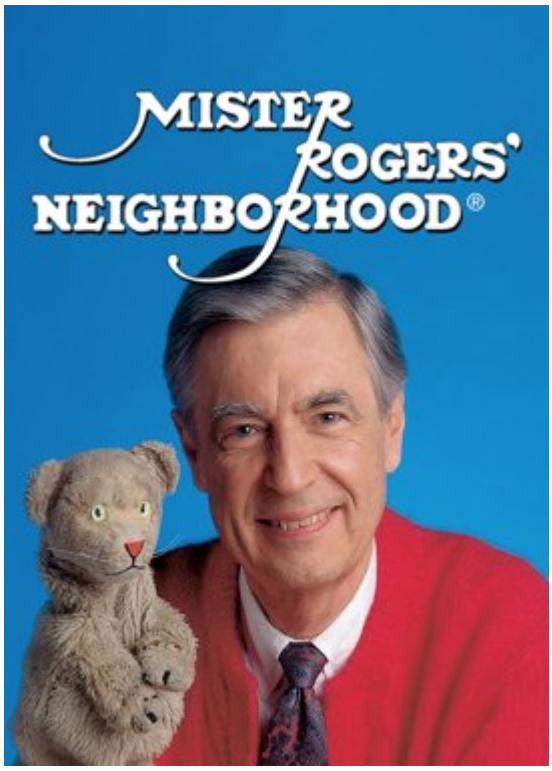
prayed—because the next day I realized that my fear had dissipated like letting air out of a balloon.

The bottom line of this "adventure with God" is that I am learning, yet again, the importance of trusting God and relying on the prayers of others to deal with my fears. The importance of not indulging in scary mental scenarios where pain is bigger than the presence of God Himself. And of choosing to throw myself wholly on the grace of God and keep speaking truth to myself:

It will be worth it.
This too shall pass.
God will help me and uphold me.
It's going to be okay because God is good.

This blog post originally appeared at https://blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/im_scared_lord on May 29, 2018.

Mister Rogers and the Hunger for God



"You've made this day a special day by just your being you. There is no person in the whole world like you, and I like you just the way you are." *—Mister Rogers, to every person as we watched his show.*

With the news that a documentary about Fred Rogers (Public Television's "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood") will be released this summer, and a movie about him starring Tom Hanks will be in production soon, there has been a good bit of buzz in social media recently. I keep coming across articles about him and links to videos that often move me to grateful tears for this amazing man.

"Mister Rogers" had a heart for children that is unlike anything I've ever seen. His TV program ran for 33 years, from 1968 to 2001. My children grew up watching Mister Rogers, and I often sat with them, equally enthralled by his gentleness, his predictable routines (such as changing out of his jacket into a cardigan sweater and a different pair of shoes *every single show*), and his ability to speak straight to the heart of the audience. Except it wasn't that we were part of his audience; Mister Rogers communicated in such a powerfully personal way, with such soothing, calm tranquility, that we knew he was speaking to US. Individually.

Even before I learned he was an ordained Presbyterian minister, I sensed there was something deeply spiritual about

his message and the way he communicated respect, genuine caring, and encouragement to his "neighbors." As Jonathan Merritt wrote in *The Atlantic,*

"Fred's faith surfaced in subtle, indirect ways that most viewers might miss, but it infused all he did. He believed 'the space between the television set and the viewer is holy ground,' but he trusted God to do the heavy lifting. The wall of his office featured a framed picture of the Greek word for 'grace,' a constant reminder of his belief that he could use television 'for the broadcasting of grace through the land.' Before entering that office each day, Rogers would pray, "Dear God, let some word that is heard be yours."{{1}}

I once heard a wise man say that since we are made in the image of God, everything we do and say either tells the truth about God, or it tells a lie about God. It seems to me that Fred Rogers showed millions of children what Father God is like. I am especially reminded of God's own statement about Himself in Exodus 34:6:

> The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth . . .

For decades, Mister Rogers demonstrated **compassion**: for people with different skin than his, for people with disabilities, for people going through hard times, and especially by showing unrelenting respect for children—their fears (such as haircuts and being sucked down the bathtub drain) and their pains (like divorce), and their celebrations.

Grace was a huge part of Mister Rogers' worldview. He bestowed dignity and value on everyone because of his belief that all people deserve dignity and appreciation as God's creations, made in His image. Who know how many little hearts God healed through the song "It's You I Like"? In fact, when Joan Rivers had him as a guest on the Tonight Show, you can see grace wash over her like the warm blessing that it was:

God is **slow to anger**, and His servant Mister Rogers showed an amazing degree of patience and self-control in his shows. He always moved and spoke slowly and deliberately, as an antidote to the barrage of "Hurry up, hurry up!" children often hear from their frazzled, impatient caregivers.

God **abounds in lovingkindness and truth**, and apparently so did Mister Rogers. One of his quotes:

> "There are three ways to ultimate success:
> The first way is to be kind.
> The second way is to be kind.
> The third way is to be kind."

This is a great quote, but countless people report that Fred Rogers *lived* it. He was the epitome of kindness—to everyone. One journalist reported a typical scene when he walked on the streets of New York:

> ". . .but every time [the show's producer Margy Whitmer] turned around, there was Mister Rogers putting his arms around someone, or wiping the tears off someone's cheek, or passing around the picture of someone's child, or getting on his knees to talk to a child. Margy couldn't stop them, and she couldn't stop him. "Oh, Mister Rogers, thank you for my childhood." "Oh, Mister Rogers, you're the father I never had." "Oh, Mister Rogers, would you please just hug me?" {{2}}

In the wake of the #metoo movement, ugly truths are emerging about certain celebrities. It's good to be able to highlight one of the good guys, who shone his light to the glory of God as he nourished the souls of millions of children and anyone else who watched his TV show.

I think we are all hungry to know that we are loved, especially by God. I look forward to meeting him in heaven one day. I will close with this story I found on Facebook that powerfully expresses Mister Rogers' legacy:

“A good portion of my pro-bono work is defending abused children. It’s a cause close to my heart. In the course of my work I met a man who was an adult survivor. You wouldn’t have known it looking at him. He was this gigantic Polynesian guy. Wild curly hair. I think of him every time I see Khal Drogo on GoT. He was counseling some of the little kids, and doing a fantastic job of it.

“I visited his home to get his opinion on something and I noticed a little toy on his desk. It was Trolley. Naturally curious, I asked him about it. This is what he told me:

“‘The most dangerous time for me was in the afternoon when my mother got tired and irritable. Like clockwork. Now, she liked to beat me in discreet places so my father wouldn’t see the bruises. That particular day she went for the legs. Not uncommon for her. I was knocked down and couldn’t get back up. Also not uncommon. She gave me one last kick, the one I had come to learn meant ‘I’m done now’. Then she left me there upstairs, face in the carpet, alone. I tried to get up, but couldn’t. So I dragged myself, arm over arm, to the television, climbed up the tv cabinet and turned on the TV.

“‘And there was Mr. Rogers. It was the end of the show and he was having a quiet, calm conversation with those hundreds of kids. In that moment, he seemed to look me in the eye when he said ‘And I like you just for being you’. In that moment, it was like he was reaching across time and space to say these words to me when I needed them most.

“‘It was like the hand of God, if you’re into that kind of thing. It hit me in the soul. I was a miserable little kid. I was sure I was a horrible person. I was sure I deserved every last moment of abuse, every blow, every bad name. I was sure I earned it, sure I didn’t deserve better. I *knew* all of these things … until that moment. If this man, who I hadn’t even met, liked me just for being me, then I couldn’t be all bad. Then maybe someone could love me, even if it

wasn’t my mom.

“‘It gave me hope. If that nice man liked me, then I wasn’t a monster. I was worth fighting for. From that day on, his words were like a secret fortress in my heart. No matter how broken I was, no matter how much it hurt or what was done to me, I could remember his words, get back on my feet, and go on for another day.

“‘That’s why I keep Trolley there. To remind me that, no matter how terrible things look, someone who had never met me liked me just for being me, and that makes even the worst day worth it to me. I know how stupid it sounds, but Mr. Rogers saved my life.’

“The next time I saw him, he was talking to one of my little clients. When they were done with their session, he helped her out of her chair, took both of her hands, looked her in the eyes and said: ‘And remember, I like you just for being you.’

“That, to me, is Mr. Rogers’ most powerful legacy. All of the little lives he changed and made better with simple and sincere words of love and kindness.”

1. www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/11/mister-rogers-saint/416838/
2. www.esquire.com/entertainment/tv/a27134/can-you-say-hero-esq1198/

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/mister_rogers_and_the_hunger_for_god on May 1, 2018.

Why Every Christian Student Needs Mind Games

You've probably heard or read that the vast majority of young Christians are leaving the church after they graduate from high school. But they don't have to "graduate from God" after they get their diploma.

There are several reasons young adults leave the church, and many of them jettison their faith as well. The biggest reason is that their questions and doubts—which started in junior high school—were not answered by their parents or youth leaders.

Another reason is that they don't believe Christianity is true. Immersed in a cultural brine of religious lies and deceptions, they don't know what the truth is and why biblical Christianity blows the false ideas and religions away.

A third reason is that they caught their unbiblical beliefs and practices from their parents and other adults in the church. It turns out that Mom and Dad were almost as pickled in the cultural brine as their kids!

But Probe offers a great way to push back on these reasons.

Our summer Mind Games camp is a total-immersion, life-changing week of instruction in worldview and apologetics designed to build students' confidence that Christianity is true, and why Christianity is true. We lay the foundation of three major worldviews to give them understanding of how other people think and why Christianity is better because it matches reality. Then we teach them why they can be sure that God exists, why the Bible can be trusted, and how we can know that

Jesus is God and the only way to heaven.

After these basics, campers learn how biblical principles apply to issues they need to grapple with: truth and grace about LGBT, how faith and science work together, why a good God allows pain and evil, the value of suffering, how to watch a movie with their brains turned on, genetic engineering, understanding Islam, and more.

But it's not just lectures. Plenty of free time is built into the schedule for processing what they've learned and developing friendships with other campers. The relationships that students form at Mind Games is one of their biggest takeaways. With a max of 40 participants, everyone can enjoy connecting to other campers, and many of the friendships endure year after year.

The biggest reason for leaving the church is unanswered questions and doubts. Probe staffers assure students that Mind Games is a safe place to ask any question—anonymously—and address any doubt. Many of the questions campers come with, are answered during the week in our lectures and discussion times. Whether in large group or the many opportunities for one-on-one conversations with Probe teachers, campers have many ways to get help wrestling with obstacles to their faith.

For over twenty years, Mind Games alumni have grown into leaders on campus, in public service, in the military, and in the church. The fruit of their time with us is "fruit that lasts" (John 15:16).

Mind Games Camp 2026 is June 14-20 at Camp Copass in Denton, Texas, in the Dallas/Ft. Worth area. Some scholarships are available. Check out videos and much more information at Probe.org/mindgames.

Can you think of a high school student who doesn't need Mind Games?

We can’t either.

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What It’s Like to Live with a Disability



As a polio survivor since I was an infant, living with a disability has been my “normal.” But, like most polio survivors, I just gritted through the limitations and inconveniences, trying to keep up with everyone else.

I’ve been thankful for the opportunities to speak to children about what it’s like to live with first a limp, and now the need for a scooter to get around, as several months ago I stopped being able to walk. My favorite thing to tell them is, “I am not my polio leg. I am *me*. You connect with me by looking in my eyes. When you see someone in a wheelchair, please look in their eyes, because that’s where the person *is*.”

In a world of increasing bullying and growing coldness toward other people, and in the hope of allowing compassion to grow, I’m hoping that you might find it helpful to know what it’s

like to live with a disability. My disability is physical; I don't really know what it's like to live with an emotional disability, or an intellectual disability, or even a physical disability that is invisible but all-too-painfully real, such as deafness, cystic fibrosis, or debilitating pain. But some things are still true across the board.

In no particular order, here are some things I hope you find helpful in order to show more grace to folks like me.

Everything takes longer. The smallest personal care chores, like showering and getting dressed, or even fixing a cup of coffee, are harder and they consume time. (I'm still learning this, and apparently I'm a slow learner because I'm so optimistic by nature that I keep forgetting how long things really take.)

Life is permeated with frustration. On my first flight after losing the ability to walk, the American Airlines software wouldn't let the gate agent change my seat from the back of the plane. Strapped into an aisle seat that barely clears the arm rests of row after row of fellow passengers, being taken to my seat was hard. And embarrassing.

Obstacles abound. In a wheelchair or scooter, barriers like stairs and sand proclaim, "You can't go here."

Social activities are restricted. If a building isn't handicap-friendly (and having just two steps is enough to do that), there's no point even to trying to attend. Things are much better in the U.S with the Americans With Disabilities Act, but I won't ever be able to travel to Belarus again; the former Soviet states are so handicap-hostile that you almost never see a soul in a wheelchair. Many just don't leave their home.

People stare. Children are (quite understandably) curious about anything and anyone different, but still, the stares from both kids and adults silently shout, "You don't fit in.

What's wrong with you? You're a freak."

Am I invisible? On the other end of the spectrum, it's amazing how few people will make eye contact with someone in a wheelchair or scooter. *Hey! I'm still here! Ready to interact with you!* Sometimes, waiters ignore patrons with a disability, not even asking for their order.

Extreme weather is a nightmare. Rain and snow are enemies of mobility equipment, especially anything with electronics. I lost my first scooter to rain in Cozumel. That was hard, losing my only means of mobility in a foreign country.

Bathrooms. Many bathrooms don't have stalls big enough for a wheelchair or scooter. In private homes, bathroom doorways aren't wide enough to get through. I'm sure you can imagine what a challenge that presents!

It's expensive. The tools and assistance we need are not cheap: walkers, canes, grab bars, widened doorways, raised toilets, and ramps—not to mention wheelchairs and scooters—are costly. You probably can't guess the price tag on an adapted car or van that allows a disabled person to drive.

Losses. We are continually facing the next "one more thing" we used to be able to do. And it hurts.

Other people's self-centeredness. I love to cruise; it's a perfect vacation for mobility-challenged people. But it is just staggering how many people will wait with me for an elevator and then rush inside to claim their place. It literally only takes a few seconds for an elevator to fill with too many people for there to be room for my scooter. Naturally, no one will look at me until the doors close.

May I make some suggestions for responding to those of us with disabilities?

Please don't . . .

Please don't try to fix us or shame us for being where we are. Some people have been asked, "What's the prognosis for _____?" When told it's progressive, some people have heard, "Well, it will be as long as that's your attitude!"

Please don't "help" us without asking. Some people have been grabbed by the arm to steer them or attempt to give support. I've had taxi drivers suggest that I shift my weight to my barely-functioning polio leg because it made sense to them. Please, just let me figure out what I need to do to make things work.

Please don't assume it's God's will to heal everyone this side of heaven. If that were so, Paul would not have been given his thorn in the flesh and told God's grace was enough, and His power is perfected in weakness. (2 Corinthians 12)

Please don't assume our disability is because of unconfessed sin. Plenty of us have asked, "What did I do wrong?" and God, one way or another, has given us John 9 grace. "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him." (John 9:3)

Please don't try to explain what God is up to. Nobody knows the specifics of God's plan to bring good to us (and our families, and our friends) and glory to Himself. Let's just trust His goodness and give up on offering explanations.

Please don't try to make us feel better about our disability. Don't start any sentence with the words, "At least . . ." It's not comforting. It's minimizing.

But please do stay sensitive to God's leading on how to encourage us. One of my pastors asked me if I'd like to run a marathon with him in heaven, when we'll both have healthy, strong resurrection bodies. Now that was encouraging! Several friends have asked, "Would you allow me to bless you by bringing your family a meal?" (Then they affirmed me for not giving into my old pattern of "Oh, I've got this, thanks"

independence.)

Please do let us know if you see Jesus shining through us. Many of us deeply, desperately want the difficulties and suffering of living with a disability to be sculpting in us "an eternal weight of glory, far beyond all comparison" (2 Corinthians 4:17).

And please do smile when you make eye contact with us.

Because we're not invisible.

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/what_its_like_to_live_with_a_disability on March 6, 2018.

Oprah: America's Beloved False Teacher

After her star turn at the Golden Globes Sunday night, Oprah is the media darling once again—and the hope of America? Sue Bohlin blogged about Oprah's spirituality when her daily TV show ended.

May 24, 2011

Tomorrow is the last episode of the Oprah Winfrey show on network TV. Oprah will be throwing her considerable energies and resources into her own cable network (OWN: The Oprah Winfrey Network). But she has left a huge footprint on the culture and on the hearts of minds of millions of loyal fans.

People have said for years that they wished Oprah were their

next door neighbor or their best friend. And for good reason: she is winsome. She is open and transparent. She is incredibly generous. She not only asks the questions you would ask of her guests, she has the power to draw some of the most powerful and influential people to her stage, ranging from U.S. presidents to Billy Graham.

But she is so much more than a talk-show host. She sees herself as a teacher, and she certainly has used her pulpit to teach and preach—worldwide, as evidenced by the outpouring of love and attendance at her recent tour of Australia.

The problem is that what she's teaching, both personally and through the spiritual gurus she has brought into the limelight, is poisonous. It not only keeps unbelievers in the dark, but she has the power to draw undiscerning, untaught Christians into her spiritual gravity field of heresy.

Oprah is a false teacher of postmodern religion, an a la carte spirituality where people pick and choose their beliefs from a cafeteria line of offerings. She started out with a strong foundation in the Baptist church, but over time she drifted into unbiblical New Age beliefs. She mentions God a lot, but she defines Him in her own way. She has become a Christian-flavored pantheist, one who believes that an impersonal god, ("however you choose to describe him") is a universal force or energy. She embraces karmic destiny from Zen Buddhism. She helped launch "The Secret," the best-selling book promising that wishing will make it so through "The Law of Attraction"—the belief that you attract whatever you think about, whether good or bad.

And she enthusiastically proclaims religious pluralism: "One of the biggest mistakes humans make is to believe that there is only one way. Actually, there are many diverse paths leading to what you call God."

One of Oprah's buddies is Marianne Williamson, a teacher of *A*

Course in Miracles. In 2008, on her XM Satellite Radio show "Oprah and Friends," listeners were offered a year-long course of study on this book which was channeled from a demon. At the same time, she and author Eckhard Tolle offered a webinar featuring his book *A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose* (the link takes you to a Probe article providing analysis of the book). This book is Eastern mysticism, which is incompatible with biblical Christianity, but many Christians can't tell the difference.

Oprah's response to a question about reconciling *A New Earth* with her Christian background was not only eye-opening, but it also shows her point of departure from biblical truth:

> I've reconciled it because I was able to open my mind about the absolute indescribable hugeness of that which we call 'God.' I took God out of the box because I grew up in the Baptist church and there were, you know, rules and, you know, belief systems indoctrined. And I happened to be sitting in church in my late twenties . . . And this great minister was preaching about how great God was and how omniscient and omnipresent, and God is everything. And then he said, 'And the Lord thy God is a jealous God.' And I was, you know, caught up in the rapture of that moment until he said 'jealous.' And something struck me. I was thinking God is all, God is omnipresent, God is—and God's also jealous? God is jealous of me? And something about that didn't feel right in my spirit because I believe that God is love and that God is in all things. And so that's when the search for something more than doctrine started to stir within me.
>
> "And I love this quote that Eckhart has, this is one of my favorite quotes in chapter one where he says, 'Man made god in his own image, the eternal, the infinite, and unnamable was reduced to a mental idol that you had to believe in and worship as my god or our god.'
>
> "And you know, it's been a journey to get to the place where

> I understand, that what I believe is that Jesus came to show us Christ consciousness. That Jesus came to show us the way of the heart and that what Jesus was saying that to show us the higher consciousness that we're all talking about here. Jesus came to say, 'Look I'm going to live in the body, in the human body and I'm going to show you how it's done.' These are some principles and some laws that you can use to live by to know that way. And when I started to recognize that, that Jesus didn't come in my belief, even as a Christian, I don't believe that Jesus came to start Christianity. So that was also very helpful to me.
>
> Well, I am a Christian who believes that there are certainly many more paths to God other than Christianity.

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). That's either true, or it's false.

And not even "the divine Miss O" can get around that. Please join me in praying that she will return to the Lord of truth—and please stay discerning about anything and everything Oprah says. If God doesn't agree with it, it's false. And it's dangerous.

Addendum, post-Finale show:

In the hour-long sermon of her farewell show, Oprah was consistent with her values and her perception of herself as teacher. It was filled with her inspirational "you can do it" rhetoric that has endeared her to us for 25 years.

She did address the spirituality issue. She said that when people ask how she lasted, how she did it for 25 years, she answers, "My team—and Jesus." She added, "Nothing but the hand of God has made it possible." Her life is permeated by awareness of God's presence and grace in her life, but she has been deceived by the lies of the enemy. She said, "People want to know, which God are you talkin' about? The same one you're

talkin' about: the alpha and omega, the omniscient, the omnipresent, the ultimate consciousness, the source, the force, the all of everything there is, the one and only Gee Oh Dee. That's the one I'm talkin' about."

This description of her God is a combination of the biblical God (alpha and omega, omniscient, omnipresent) and the impersonal divinity of pantheism (the source, the force, the all of everything there is). Note that "the one and only Gee Oh Dee" is not the way God reveals Himself to us in His word—as Father, Son and Spirit.

Oprah invokes her memory of Jesus as a warm and fuzzy throwback to her childhood, like a beloved teddy bear that you love but keep on the shelf as a reminder of younger days. She's not dealing with the Jesus who insisted He is the only way to the Father!

John Piper makes a great point about how people (in this case, the 5000 whom Jesus had miraculously fed) choose their own Jesus, as I suggest Oprah does:

> Because the enthusiasm these people have is not for who he really is. This is so important for our day and for your life. People can have a great enthusiasm for Jesus, but the Jesus they're excited about is not the real biblical Jesus. It may be a morally exemplary Jesus, or a socialist Jesus, or a capitalist Jesus, or an anti-Semitic Jesus, or a white-racist Jesus, or a revolutionary-liberationist Jesus, or a counter-cultural cool Jesus. But not the whole Jesus who, in the end, gives his life a ransom for sinners. And if your enthusiasm for Jesus is for a Jesus that doesn't exist, your enthusiasm is no honor to the real Jesus, and he will leave you and go into the mountain.{1}

As I mentioned in my blog post, Oprah's point of departure from orthodoxy was hearing in church, "The Lord thy God is a jealous God." Instead of checking her reaction to this

statement with a pastor or someone more theologically taught then she, Oprah slammed the door on the fundamentals of Christianity and gave herself permission to pursue a god more to her taste. What a difference it would have made if she had allowed someone to assure her, "No, Oprah, God is not jealous *of* you. He is jealous *for* you! He loves you so much, He wants your full and undivided heart. Let go of your misunderstanding and embrace the Father who loves you more than you can imagine."

Instead, she has embraced a vague and impersonal divinity who is indistinguishable from the universe. In fact, one of the prayers of her life has been, "What would You—God—the universe—have me do?" The problem with this is that God and the universe are not the same thing. God is the creator of the universe. He is before, above, and outside the universe. The universe is part of His creation. There is no point in asking a part of creation what it would have her do, because the universe is a fellow creature of the Most High God along with Oprah.

Much has been made of her farewell words, "Until we meet again." But those were not her last words.

The final words of her finale were, "To God be the glory." And I truly do think she means it.

I think that Oprah is not evil, she's deceived. And I will continue to pray for her.

Note

1. John Piper, "The All-Providing King Who Would Not Be King," www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/the-all-providing-king-who-would-not-be-king.

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/oprah_america%E2%80%99s_beloved_false_teacher

Loving God Through Xmas Music?

From Thanksgiving to Christmas Day, the sounds of Christmas music are everywhere: stores, TV specials, many radio stations. Every year, the biggest oldies station in Dallas becomes “The Christmas Station,” this year starting in mid-November.

There are two ways to respond to Christmas music, I think. One way is to let it stream unfiltered into our hearts and minds as the background noise of our December lives. The other is to be intentional about categorizing what we hear, letting it all remind us of “the reason for the season.”

I suggest that Christmas music falls into four categories, and we can mentally tag each song with the appropriate category as we listen:

Songs About Weather
What do sleigh rides have to do with Jesus’ birthday? Nothing. But a number of songs we only hear in December are focused on northern-hemisphere weather. Key words are snow, cold, frosty, winter, and jingle bells (because they belong on sleighs, apparently).

Songs About Fantasy
All songs about Santa Claus, the Grinch, elves, and Frosty the Snowman belong in this category. Make-believe characters have nothing to do with the birth of the Savior, but we only hear them at Christmas.

Songs About “Xmas Feelings”
There are lots of songs invoking warm and fuzzy feelings about

Christmas, and being together, and good cheer. It's "the hap-happiest season of all," right? Other songs highlight what the singer wants for Christmas, ranging from a kid's two front teeth to the not-TOO-greedy "Santa Baby" song: a fur coat, a car, a yacht and a ring. Be sure to hang some mistletoe so you can score a kiss from somebody. (Except that given the current movement to expose sexual harassment and crimes, that might not be the best move right now.) I call these "Xmas Feelings" because although the songs are played at Christmastime, none of them have anything to do with the reason we celebrate Christmas in the first place. It's a totally secular feel-good holiday, so we can just X out the Christ of Christmas.

Songs About the Birth of Christ

Aaaah . . . *now* we're talking! Most songs about Jesus' birth are either Christmas carols, long venerated for the very good reason that they proclaim truth. We call them carols, but they're really hymns that celebrate the Incarnation, God leaving heaven to become man. Most carols show deep insight into the glorious mystery of the Incarnation. "Hark the Herald Angels Sing" proclaims, "Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, Hail the incarnate Deity." My favorite Christmas carol, "Joy to the World," exhorts us—and the whole world—to embrace the Savior: "Let earth receive her King, Let every heart prepare Him room, And heaven and nature sing. . ."

In addition to Christmas carols, some more modern songs teach biblical doctrine. "Mary Did You Know," written by Mark Lowry and Buddy Greene in 1991, elevates Jesus in a most worshipful way. "Mary did you know . . . when you kiss your little Baby you kiss the face of God? . . . This sleeping Child you're holding is the Great I AM?" Still gives me goosebumps. Every time I hear it.

The continual presence of Christmas music is a good opportunity to practice discernment with every song by asking, "Which category does this song go in?" Using biblical wisdom to think intentionally is one way we can love God with our

minds, as Jesus said is part of the greatest commandment (Luke 10:27). But then we can go on to a second step, which is to connect the dots between the songs and the Lord behind "the reason for the season."

When we hear a song about weather: "Lord, I praise You for being the creator of winter—and spring, summer and fall."

When we hear a song about fantasy characters: "Lord, I praise You for being real and true, and not make-believe like Santa or Frosty."

When we hear a song about Xmas feelings: "Lord, the longings of the heart for love and for home and for belonging are all met in You. Thank You for drawing me into relationship with You as the giver of these good things."

When we hear a song about Jesus' birth: "Lord, Happy Birthday! Thank You for leaving heaven and coming to earth to reconcile us with the Father. Thank You for this wonderful song that reminds us that You are Lord."

Bonus points for identifying "category error" songs that mix fantasy and truth. Examples: "Here Comes Santa Claus" mixes the made-up Santa and the True God:

"Peace on earth will come to all, if we just follow the light
So let's give thanks to the Lord above 'cause Santa Claus comes tonight."

Then there's "Up on the Rooftop":

Up on the rooftop
Click, click, click
Down through the chimney with
Good Saint Nick

Santa is not Saint Nicholas, a 4th-century Christ-follower in modern-day Turkey. St. Nicholas didn't come down chimneys with toys for good little girls and boys! Santa is fantasy; "St.

Nick” is real.

Happy singing . . . and thinking!

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/loving_god_through_xmas_music on December 12, 2017.