The Epstein Files: 3 Important Ways For Christians to Respond Biblically

The release of the Epstein documents has sparked outrage, confusion, and intense public debate. While the world often responds with anger, speculation, or political blame, Christians must respond to the Epstein files differently—Biblically. Scripture provides a framework for understanding both human depravity and God's justice. Here are three biblical responses believers should consider.

1. Jesus promised that shameful and evil things like the Epstein files would be brought to the light.

> The Bible states, "For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open." (Luke 8:17)
>
> Also, "Accordingly, whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in the inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops." (Luke 12:3)



Epstein, his grandiose lifestyle, potential co-conspirators, and the revelatory atrocities committed and recorded in the shadows against God's image bearers, away from public view for years, eventually found their way to the light, where all could see and witness. The Epstein files highlight the true condition of the human heart apart from faith in Jesus Christ.

2. The Epstein Files affirms Biblical truth regarding the depths of human depravity.

“Pagans gonna pagan.”

Jeremiah 17:9 exposes the truth about the fallen and corrupted condition of humanity:

> “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. . .”

Ecclesiastes 9:3 states, “This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that the same event happens to all. Also, the hearts of the children of man are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead.”

The temptation to look down our noses at people exists, as the world self-righteously exposes the Epstein files by exclaiming, “Well, *I* would never do such a thing!” But humility can allow this revelation to serve as a painful reminder that every single one of us has a heart so equally deceitful and desperately wicked that it required the torture and death of God’s Son, Jesus Christ.

Apart from the breathtaking grace of God, each of us has the capacity to do what is being revealed in the Epstein documents. Romans 8:17 reminds us that “nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh.” The Fall broke every human being so much that the only good things in us come from the *imago Dei*, the image of God imprinted on us. And only the regenerated heart can transform us into people who wouldn’t think to engage in the kind of behaviors the Epstein Files are revealing.

3. The Epstein Files highlight the dark side of the love of money, power and idolatry.

Like the partridge that gathers a brood that she did not hatch, so is he who gets riches but not by justice; in the midst of his days they will leave him, and at his end he will be a fool. (Jer. 17:11)

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. (1 Tim. 6:10)

The files tell the story of the rich and famous seeking to rub shoulders with other rich and famous people. The thing that drives the attraction to celebrities might be the hope that fame and fortune will rub off on an insecure heart and fill it with vanity and emptiness. What a reminder that we are all born with a God-shaped hole in our hearts that nothing but God Himself will fill and satisfy.

Hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

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"I Stopped Believing After

Visiting an Atheist Webpage; Can God Forgive Me?”

I accepted Christ but then I went to the atheistic page that convinced me and I stopped completely believing for a few days. Later, I realized it was a mistake and repented. Can God forgive me? Am I apostate? Hebrews 6:4-6 is why I’m afraid.

Thanks for your letter. Hebrews 6:4-6 is a highly disputed passage with a variety of interpretations on offer. Fortunately, however, I do not think that we really need to delve into any of these in your case. The sort of sin that is in view in Hebrews 6:4-6 appears to be a very willful and determined apostasy from Christ. It appears to picture someone who, in spite of numerous spiritual benefits experienced, nonetheless turns his back on Christ and utterly rejects Him forever. In other words, the passage seems to suggest that anyone who has committed this sin will never turn to God again in repentance. Their heart has been (or is) irrevocably hardened against God and they will not repent.

But this is clearly not you! As you say in your letter, you realized that you had made a mistake and you thus repented and turned back to God. Sometimes atheist websites can seem convincing and a believer might be temporarily fooled by them, so to speak. But for a true believer, this will be very temporary indeed (as again, your own case shows). For the true believer has the witness of the Holy Spirit within him (or her) self—and this witness testifies to the truth of Christ with all of the authority of God himself!

The bottom line, I think, is this: anyone who is willing to repent of their sin and turn to Christ for forgiveness and

salvation cannot have committed this sin. For the person who has committed this sin is irrevocably hardened against God and will never again be brought to repentance.

One final note. As believers it is important for us to grow in our understanding of the riches of our faith. Although some believers are called by God to engage with the material on atheist websites, the Lord always prepares such believers exceedingly well beforehand. Personally, I would encourage you as a brother in Christ to stay away from the atheist websites. The fact is, these sites are utterly wrong in their denial and rejection of God. They will not encourage nor build you up in your faith. Instead, I would recommend daily reading (and actually studying) your Bible, getting involved with a good Bible-believing and Bible-teaching church (and small group), and reading good works of theology and Christian apologetics. Take the time to carefully read something like John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, for example. And for apologetics, read the articles on the Probe website (www.probe.org) – and check out the material as well on William Lane Craig's site, Reasonable Faith (www.reasonablefaith.org). Don't waste your time—I say this in all seriousness—with atheist websites. Rather, go deep in your study of the Bible, Christian theology, and Christian apologetics. You won't regret it!

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

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“Is It OK for Christians to Dance?”

What about Christians and dancing. Is it OK to dance?

Well generally I say yes, within reason.

First, I see no specific prohibition against it in the Scriptures. That means it is an area of freedom for us as believers in Christ. Now as Paul discussed our freedoms in Christ in Romans, Galatians, and Corinthians, we exercise our freedoms IN Christ. That is to say to His glory, with all appropriate considerations due. Does it edify? Does it offend others? Will it serve my witness for Christ or hinder it?

As with all choices, examining one’s motive is essential. If someone dances in order to arouse and seduce a person they’re not married to, that would be wrong. (There *is* a place for that kind of dance, in the privacy of a married couple’s bedroom, per the Song of Solomon.) The way one dresses while dancing matters too; a number of people can’t watch *Dancing With the Stars* because of the revealing costumes.

Further, we want to consider what kind of dancing is in view. I take my wife swing dancing and country dancing from time to time. We find it great exercise, a fun way to express ourselves and get to know each other better. Further it is an expression of art. That glorifies God doesn’t it?

Last, we have examples in the Bible of those who danced. David is probably the most famous, but there are others.

If you want to read more, consider this article by Probe founder Jimmy Williams: The Christian and the Arts.

It is a more broad examination of the believer to the arts in general – as you can see by the title. But there is a section on music and dance. It should help, I think, in getting you in a good framework from which to approach the question for yourself.

Thanks for writing!

At your service,

Paul Rutherford
Research Associate

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"What About an Inter-racial, Inter-faith, Same-sex Marriage?"

Dear Mrs. Bohlin,

What is your position and/or your church's position on inter-racial marriage? And the same on marriage between religious faiths? How would you advise me to respond to a relative who has stated intentions to marry an atheist, of the same sex and of a different racial and ethnic background?

I agree with my church's position on inter-racial marriage, which is that biblically there is no prohibition against it—the prohibition is about believers in Christ marrying

unbelievers. realtruthrealquick.com/interracial-marriage-christian/

Concerning inter-faith marriage, that depends on your definition of inter-faith. Some make a distinction between Christian denominations and say, for example, that Presbyterians shouldn't marry Episcopalians. I don't think that is inter-faith, that would be *intra*-faith marriage. But when we're talking about, for example, a Christian marrying a Hindu, that is clearly prohibited in scripture, in both the Old and New Testaments. The children of Israel were instructed never to marry any pagan neighbors, and we are told in 2 Cor. 6:14 not to be unequally yoked, believer to unbeliever.

Concerning your relative: is s/he a believer in Jesus? Then I would ask them how they are dealing with the Bible's teaching not to marry a unbeliever, and the Biblical pattern of marriage as strictly between husband and wife (with no exceptions). Most of the time, people who do what they please regardless of what the Bible says, do so because they don't know what God has said in His word . . . or if they do, they dismiss it for a variety of reasons, all because they want what they want. There is a heart of rebellion there. If your relative is a believer, the biggest issue is the authority of the Bible and their refusal to submit to it.

If the relative is not a believer, God's standards and commands are STILL given "that it may go well with you," (stated 8 times in Deuteronomy)—they function like guardrails on a treacherous mountain road. If we stay inside of the guardrails, we are protected from careening off the cliff to disaster below. But this person's relationship with God—or rather, the lack of one—is the most important issue. If they're not a believer, they probably don't care what God has said, mistakenly thinking that the Bible's commands and restrictions don't apply to them. But that's like thinking, "If I don't believe in gravity, I can do what I please and get away with it." No. No one gets away with trying to violate the

law of gravity . . . and eventually, they discover they can't get away with violating the law of God either. Their biggest need is salvation. They need to know that God's Son, Jesus, died for his/her sins, was buried and rose from the dead three days later so s/he could be reconciled to God. That need overshadows questions about who they want to marry.

I send this with a prayer that you will be able to speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15) to your relative, and he or she will have ears to hear.

Blessings,
Sue

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"How Do I Convince My Friends to Be Saved?"

I have some really good friends who claim that they are Christians but I know for a fact that they aren't saved and I'm not exactly sure how to talk to them about Christ and getting saved. I also hear some of them who claim to be Christians say that they are glad that their parents don't go to church because then they wouldn't be able to sleep in on Sundays. I have brought a couple of them to my church but they acted like they didn't like it. How should I convince them that they should believe in Christ?

My second question is this: I have a friend who always talks about Christ and how he has changed her life. But I know that she hasn't been saved. Do you have to be saved go to heaven?

Having an attitude of trying to convince people to believe in Christ will seldom be successful. There needs to be a sincere desire to seek the truth. Your time would be well spent demonstrating an attractive vision of the Savior through your life and be ready to discuss and answer their eventual questions. Those who are indifferent to Christianity—or even hostile—need to to see a dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ which faithfully follows 1 Peter 3:15: a life that sanctifies Jesus as Lord of their lives and is always ready to give an answer for the hope that they have and yet do so with gentleness and respect. Evidence and arguments will rarely make an impact unless there is an inquisitiveness first.

And yes, we must be saved to spend eternity in heaven. Be careful however, about being certain in judging someone's salvation. Even the greatest saints still sin and while there should be a pattern of good works to verify someon's salvation, we all go through periods of rebellion. Also, only Christ can judge the true condition of a person's heart.

If a person truly thinks they are saved and seeems to at least have a basic understanding of salvation through Christ, we should take them at their word until something incontrovertible happens that leads you to believe they have been living a lie. I'm just asking that you be careful in making these kinds of judgments and that as far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men (Rom. 12:18).

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“What Does the Bible Say About Tattoos?”

I have a few family members who have recently gotten tattoos. I was wondering if there was any mention in the Bible about this being a good thing to do or a wrong thing to do? I thought that at one time I read something about it being wrong. And if it is wrong how can I address the issue in a decent way to people I love and care for who are not Christians?

Actually, yes the Bible does address the subject of tattoos. Lev. 19:28 says, “Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves. I am the LORD.”

If your loved ones are not Christians, they may or may not care that God specifically addressed this issue in the Bible. If they do, knowing God said not to do it might be enough. If not, you might mention that there must be a good reason for God to forbid His people to permanently mark their bodies this way, and it turns out there are several.

1. To quote my brother-in-law, who became enamored of “body art” when he was younger and sports seven large tatoos on his body—which he now despises—”Permanent is a long, long time.” The majority of people who get tattoos regret it later.

2. Tattoos are exceedingly painful and expensive to have removed.

3. Some tattoo inks have metal in them, so if one’s health is threatened, an MRI can be complicated (and there can be some discomfort) by a tattoo.

4. On a more spiritual note, God may not want us to permanently mark our bodies because it is disrespectful to the body He fashioned and gave to us to steward. The fact that a

tattoo cannot be undone (completely) reflects the sad truth that some decisions are one-way and we box ourselves into a corner. Tattoos make a statement physically, but God intends that the purity and beauty of our LIVES make the statement, rather than "I was young (or drunk, or on drugs) and did this to myself." (Yes, I am biased, I will cheerfully admit. <grin>)

Now, the New Testament doesn't repeat this prohibition, and it's not a moral issue like sexual sin or lying or stealing which are still wrong and forever will be, so I don't think it's a sin anymore. Many people believe this is an area where we have Christian liberty, the freedom to do something that used to be prohibited.

I hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries
August 2001

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Several e-mails arrived shortly after this article was posted, pointing out the fact that this prohibition against tattoos was part of the Levitical code, but Christians do not live under the Old Testament laws. Otherwise, we would be sinning to:

- Shave off beards and sideburns
- Wear crew cuts
- Wear linen/wool blends
- Not take a bath after intercourse
- Circumcise baby boys on any day other than the eighth
- Attend church sooner than 33 days after the birth of a baby

I appreciate being shown the need to explain the fuller picture.

The person who wrote merely asked if the Bible said anything about tattoos, and it does, and I pointed out some good reasons for that prohibition. However, it is also true that we do not live under Old Testament laws, and most of the Levitical prohibitions and requirements no longer apply because we live under a new covenant of grace. (I hasten to add here that the *moral* prohibitions, such as those against any kind of sexual activity outside of marriage, including homosexuality, are still firmly in place.)

Thus, while the Bible did prohibit tattoos in the Old Testament, it is not a sin to get one today. Dumb, maybe, but not sinful. <grin> (That's a joke. Please don't send me e-mails if you have one and like it. You have complete freedom in Christ to do anything He gives permission for you to do.)

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. . .And then this appeared in "Dear Abby," which I thought was well worth sharing:

Dear Abby: You have printed letters about tattoos, so I thought you might get a kick out of my experience. Two summers ago, my sister "Julie" confided that her daughter, "Whitney," had decided to get a tattoo before returning to college. Julie was upset about it, but could not change her daughter's mind because Whitney is on a full scholarship and didn't need anyone's approval. Julie asked if I could talk Whitney out of it, and I racked my brain trying to think of something to say that would sway her. A few weeks later, our families got together to celebrate Julie's 50th birthday. Whitney was there with her boyfriend. After we all had enjoyed ice cream and cake, I took Whitney and her boyfriend into the living room and popped in a videotape of a party my husband and I had thrown during the disco craze of the 70s. There we were in our leisure suits, gold chains, permed hair, platform shoes and having a great time.

Whitney and her boyfriend were rolling on the floor with laughter. They couldn't believe that "look" was actually the craze at the time. "Yes," I said, "that was the style. But as times changed, styles changed, and what was once 'in' was soon 'out.'"

At that moment, Julie and her husband walked into the living room dressed in retro clothes and wigs. They were followed by Grandma and Grandpa, who had applied fake tattoos to their arms and shoulders. Whitney was stunned to see her conservative grandparents so out of character.

It was then that we reminded Whitney we had been able to buy different clothes and change our hairstyles when the fad was over, but tattoos are forever.

Disco clothes and wigs: $85
Fake tattoos: $30
The look on Whitney's face: priceless!

(To date, no tattoos for Whitney.)

Signed,
Creative in Las Vegas

Dear Creative: Your letter: a gem. Sometimes a picture is worth a thousand words. You made your point with an object lesson that was far more effective than any lecture would have been.

June 2003

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Addendum, September 2014
I'd like to add this YouTube video addressing the question of tattoos from my wise pastor, Todd Wagner of Watermark Community Church in Dallas, Texas:

See also "What About Body Piercing?"

“How Do I Get Over False Guilt About Watching Profanity on TV?”

I had/have a conviction to not listen to TV profanity. So I bought a TV Guardian (a device which blocks out all of TV profanity). I was so happy, problem solved. However, I still sense a somewhat deep sense of guilt. I believe I am struggling with false guilt, because I am feeling guilty for doing something (using a TV Guardian) which I know to be godly and just. Is this a fair assessment? If so, how do I cure false guilt?

I applaud your desire not to expose yourself to profane language. That’s commendable. Further, you took steps to ensure. That desire is for holiness and let me affirm that.

The fact that you feel guilty about it is difficult for me to assess without knowing precisely what it is you feel guilty about, or why. Answering these questions will help you determine whether your guilt is in fact false guilt, as you put it, or just good old fashioned conviction from the Holy Spirit.

Probe’s president Kerby Anderson wrote an article on False Guilt which explores these very issues and can help you answer just such questions. Check it out. I pray it will bless you. I hope this is helpful

Praying for you,

Paul Rutherford

Thank you. Somebody else pointed out to me that maybe the problem is that I am remembering a little of the profanity. You see, I used to watch some of the same shows with no filter. God convicted me so I bought a TV Guardian. However, since I had already watched the shows without the Guardian I can still remember some of the curse words. What should I do?

Hi _____,

Allow me to "jump in" here and try to help you a bit. I think Paul did a good job of counseling you.

After reading your follow up to his response, I sense an uneasy pattern may be at work in you: a need to perform holiness for God and not mess up. This could be the root of the problem you are having—not understanding very fully the grace God offers.

Rather than focus on the curse words that you recall (or that fact that you recall them, which is no surprise, since God's forgiveness does not mean He gives us a lobotomy), it would be more fruitful to concentrate on the enabling of God's Holy Spirit for any believer to experience and live out holiness in our lives. It's a subtle shift to talk about, but profoundly different in effect.

How might this look in your situation? Try applying some biblical principles to your thinking:

> *• Make your mind up to fill it (your mind) with Scripture—the holy words of life. Read Scripture daily like your life depends on it (your spiritual life and health DO depend on it), but it's not to get favor with God. That's already yours if you put your faith in Him—Jesus took care of our relationship with His Father.*

> *• John 15:3-5 says, "Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As*

the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." So, if you have believed in Jesus to forgive your sin and keep you from everlasting punishment that we all deserve, you are clean. He said so. Act like you believe it and move on.

• Abide in Christ (live, breathe, think about, aim your life at and depend on Him for everything). This doesn't mean you lay down and expect Him to do your living out of faith for you, but it means you have no confidence in yourself to either care about sin or defeat it. It's He who works in you to make you holy. (Notice those two verses linked to above are back-to-back in the same thought. You cooperate with God's work in your life by letting Him work and doing your part.) Your job is to let him, to yield, to put to death (stop feeding) the flesh. Getting TV Guardian seems like a great step—but it's Christ who has to work out the memories, etc. for believers.

• Speaking of memories of images (sexual or otherwise), curses / cuss words, violence, ungodly things, here is something that is effective for me: give them to God to bury them, to take them off your mental screen or from your mental "hearing." I base this on the verse: "We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5). This applies a general principle to our own rebellious, fleshly thoughts that have gotten corrupted by things like bad language.

• Most of all, don't worry about it. "Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done." (Philippians 4:6,

NLT)

You seem to be obsessed with “doing it right” and “not messing up” (as I would put it). This is not trust, so it’s not God-centered or God-honoring—and it won’t work. Ephesians 1 says, “It was for freedom that Christ set you free.” You neither have to live in bondage to sin (like cursing) OR to having to keep the Law (keeping from cursing or thinking about those words). You’re free to rise above all of that by living a genuinely Spirit-led holy life—believe it and learn to live it. It takes practice and you *will* fail! Go back to God, ask forgiveness for this particular failure (you’ve already been saved from the penalty of sin if you believe Him for that) and start all over.

Ultimately, if you cannot get past this any other way, are you willing to give up the movies—even if your TV Guardian goes unused and you miss those fave movies? Giving them up could, for you, be part of putting the deeds of the flesh to death and picking up your cross to follow Him (“Then, calling the crowd to join His disciples, He said, ‘If any of you wants to be My follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow Me.'” —Mark 8:34)

Believe me as one who’s been asked to give up various things enough times in my 35 years of walking with Christ, when the Lord leads you to give something up, it’s well worth it.

I hope this provides some guidance. It goes deep. Read it and the Scripture passages many times, praying that the Lord will make things clear to you and apply them with others holding you accountable—share with mature Christians, your pastor, etc.

Praying with Paul for you, _____. Thanks for writing.

Byron Barlowe

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“Should We Give Our Tithes Directly to the Pastor?”

A lady in our church said that God said to give all of our tithes and offerings to the pastor for him personally. He gets a weekly salary and works outside the church. Something did not feel right to give my tithes directly to a man and not to God’s house per se. Am I wrong to feel not right in my spirit?

It’s a bit difficult to know precisely what to say in a situation like this, since I am not familiar with all the details. However, you may be right to feel some discomfort in your spirit about this. Suffice it to say that while the laborer is worthy of his wages (Luke 10:7), there should also be some structure for accountability. (Titus 1:7 indicates that those in church leadership are stewards over God’s flock, and 1 Cor. 4:2 requires that stewards be found faithful.) It seems to me that there should be a group of leaders in the church who wisely and prayerfully make decisions regarding the use and allocation of church finances. This is what the church seems to have already done by providing a weekly salary to the minister for his services. At any rate, it seems to me that money should be given to the church and then wisely distributed by a group of leaders in the church. From the money given to the church, then, the pastor’s salary would be paid, other church workers might be paid, missionaries might be supported, the poor might be helped, etc. This, it seems to me, is the wisest and safest way to handle the church’s resources. So without knowing all of the details in this particular case, I am inclined to agree with your assessment

of the situation.

Shalom,
Michael Gleghorn

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“Does God Hear African Prayers?”

I live in Nairobi, Kenya, and I have several questions about prayer. 1) Why does it takes such a long time to answer our prayers? I have been asking God to give me sponsors to go to Bible College and I have been fasting all the time. 2) Why do many, many people in Africa suffer so much more than white people? Does God hear African prayers?

You ask some very important (and very profound) questions. As I think about your questions, they seem to fall into two categories: 1. Questions concerning petitionary prayer (i.e. making requests of God, or asking Him for something) and 2. Questions concerning the problem of evil and suffering.

Concerning prayer, I can safely begin by saying, Yes, God does hear the prayers of Africans. But if this is true, you want to know why it takes God so long to answer your requests. Now as I’m sure you already realize, I really cannot answer this question—for God has not told me why He is waiting to answer your request. However, there are a number of things that can be said about why (in general) God may take a long time to answer a person’s request. First, of course, the answer may simply be “No.” Just as we wouldn’t give our children

everything they asked for, so also God doesn't give His children everything they ask for. Of course, if His answer to a particular request is "No," then we can (and must) trust that He has very good, loving, and wise reasons for answering in this way.

Second, God's answer might be "Yes; but you need to wait." This can be hard to hear, of course. But again, my children sometimes ask me for something (like a snack) to which my answer is, "Yes; you can have a snack. But not right now. You need to wait until after dinner." In the same way, God sometimes has us wait a while before giving us what we have asked for. In my own case, I prayed that God would provide a particular kind of woman to be my wife. I prayed nearly every day for ten years before He finally granted my request. So sometimes, God does intend to grant our request, but he first requires that we wait a while. We can learn a lot of important spiritual lessons about trusting God, being patient, persevering in prayer, and so forth, as we wait upon the Lord. I'm not saying this is easy. But God wants to develop us into certain sorts of people. And one of the ways He does this is by having us wait a while before He grants our request. After all, for many of us, if God granted our requests immediately, we wouldn't appreciate what He has given us nearly so much. By having us patiently and prayerfully wait upon Him for a time, before granting our requests, we often come to appreciate much more the blessings God has given us.

Third, God might be willing to grant a particular request immediately, but does not do so because we are harboring unconfessed sin in our hearts. We all struggle with sin in many ways. If we don't confess our sins, but continue to pursue that which the Lord hates, He may think it better not to grant us our request.

There are other reasons why God might not immediately grant a request as well. Some of these you can find in my article "Problems and Promises of Petitionary Prayer." I think you

would find this article helpful, especially the last two sections on “Qualifying Christ’s Promises.”

Having said all of this, however, I want to reiterate that I do NOT personally know why God has not yet granted your request. Whatever the reason, we all need to learn to trust in the wisdom, love, and goodness of God toward us in Christ, whether He grants our requests quickly, slowly, or not at all. He has very good reasons for doing things as He does and we need to learn to trust Him.

Now concerning your second question, why so many people in Africa suffer so much more than white people, I must (once again) honestly confess that I do not know. This would be yet another instance of the problem of evil and suffering in the world. How can we reconcile the existence of an all-good, all-loving, all-powerful God (like Christians believe in) with all the evil and suffering in the world?

Now I want to be clear, Christian philosophers and theologians have proposed very good answers to questions such as these. But these answers essentially aim to show that God can have very good, morally sufficient reasons, for allowing the evil and suffering that He does—even if we have no idea what those reasons are. As you can see, therefore, these answers (even if they’re successful) will not be able to explicitly tell you why so many people in Africa suffer so much. Unless God tells us the answer to such a question, we simply do not know. And it would be dishonest for me to tell you otherwise.

Having said this, however, I do like what the Christian philosopher William Lane Craig has to say about such matters. He, along with many others, points out that there is a very strong statistical correlation between the amount of suffering in a particular area of the world and the number of people coming to Christ for salvation. That is, he observes that in those places where there is a lot of suffering, there are often a lot of people coming to Christ for salvation. But in

that case, one of the very good reasons that God might have for allowing suffering and evil, is that it ends up being a very effective means of moving men and women to give their lives to Christ that they might be saved. And this, it is crucially important to note, ends up insuring THEIR ETERNAL WELL-BEING.

In this respect, it's important to bear in mind that this life is not all there is. People will continue to exist after they die physically either in fellowship and communion with God in heaven, or eternally deprived of such fellowship and communion in hell. If God knows that more people will freely repent of their sins and turn to Christ for salvation if He allows suffering to enter their lives, then (somewhat ironically) the most loving thing He can do is allow suffering to enter these peoples lives. For by doing so, God knows they will repent, trust in Christ for salvation, and be saved. And this means they will have all eternity to enjoy God, without any pain or suffering. If you would like to read more on the problem of evil, here are some links to articles you might find helpful: 1. The Problem of Evil, 2. Christ and the Human Condition, and 3. The Value of Suffering. My colleague Sue Bohlin has also provided her speaking notes for a message When God Says No: Reasons For Unanswered Prayer at Bible.org.

At any rate, a great deal more could be said about the questions you have raised, _____. For the questions you have raised are very profound questions. But hopefully, this brief answer will give you some help and comfort as you continue to wrestle with these issues. As I have said, I really cannot specifically answer your questions. These are questions which no one knows the answer to but God—and it's very important to honestly say so. However, the Christian tradition does offer genuine wisdom in thinking through questions of this sort. And I've tried to share a bit of that with you in this letter.

Michael Gleghorn

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"Should I Be Concerned About Sarah Young's 'Jesus Calling'?"

What do you have to say about *Jesus Calling* author Sarah Young? I'm seeing and hearing about red flags from several other reputable Christian sources such Lighthouse Trails and Worldview Weekend.

One ought to be skeptical when someone is writing a book telling you they have heard from Jesus and this is what He said. The popularity of Sarah Young's *Jesus Calling* also calls for scrutiny because millions are reading it and saying they have benefited from it. I have looked at the links you provided and here is what I think.

Their use of Galatians 1 to criticize the book is puzzling to me because Sarah Young does not offer another gospel. Paul was dealing with the Judaizers and those who were adding works to the salvation message. She makes quite clear that Jesus is her Savior and as a former missionary she also is clear that salvation is by grace alone. This also comes across in many of the daily entries.

Sarah Young also makes no pretension to be adding to Scripture. She makes it clear that the Bible is the only infallible word of God. In the foreword to a follow-up book, *Jesus Lives*, she says she has written what she "heard" (quotation marks are hers) and has tried to make sure it

aligns with Scripture. So she is careful to indicate she is not hearing the infallible Word of God and she checks what she eventually writes with the Bible. Each entry is followed by several Scriptures, and when Scripture is quoted in what she has written it appears in italics.

One of the links referenced 1 John 4:1 which admonishes us to test the spirits since not every spirit is from God. They did not mention the following two verses which tell us that we know a spirit is from God if "that spirit confesses Jesus as the Christ who has come in the flesh" (1 John 4:3). Sarah Young tests what she "hears" against the Word of God and she definitely believes Jesus is the Christ and came in the flesh. John also implies that we may sometimes hear from spirits that are from God! Why else would he admonish us to test them? If we never hear from God after the apostolic age, John should simply have said do not pay any attention to any spirit—it can't be from God. Testing is a waste of time if the authors from Lighthouse and Worldview Weekend are to be followed.

The gospel of John closes by telling us that Jesus did many more things that have not been written (and presumably said other things that were not written). So Jesus said some things that are not in the Bible. Since Jesus did not sin and He tells us He spoke only what the Father told Him to say (John 17:7-8), then there are words of God that were not recorded in Scripture. They are not in the Bible presumably because they were not intended for all people at all times. Similarly, I'm sure kings and leaders in Israel consulted prophets of God at times for which we have no recording. It's reasonable to assume that often the prophets did indeed hear from God but didn't write it down. Again, there have been words God has spoken that we do not have in the Bible because they were not intended for all people at all times. But it was still communication from God. The links provided verses that clearly say we are not to add to the Scriptures. I agree. Sarah Young makes no claim to do so. Some will find what she has written

useful and some will not. She may occasionally write something that is not clearly Biblical in character. Her admission that she tries to make sure what she writes is in accordance with the Bible indicates that she knows she is human, makes mistakes, and does not claim any sort of infallibility of her writings. Any Christian writer today should always recognize their own fallibility.

In John 15, Jesus calls His disciples “friends.” Since this is in the Bible it’s meant for all people at all times. Those of us who have fully accepted Jesus’ death on the cross as payment for our sin and believe God raised Him from the dead are friends of Jesus. With my earthly friends I don’t just know in my head they are my friends; I spend time with them, and yes, even converse with them. The canon of Scripture is definitely closed. Sarah Young does not pretend to be opening the canon back up again.

Jesus Calling is not for everybody. (The claims that the Jesus of *Jesus Calling* sounds feminine is more a problem of the writers than of Sarah Young.) The Triune God is the author of both masculinity and femininity. I would think He knows how to speak both languages (Isaiah 49:15).

Again, I was not impressed with the arguments put forth that what Sarah Young has written is somehow adding to Scripture, presents a false gospel, or that the only way God speaks to us today is from the Scriptures.

I have been using *Jesus Calling* and *Jesus Lives* as part of my daily devotional time for a year and a half. My discernment filter is operational all the time, and I have not come across anything that concerns me.

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin, Ph.D.

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