“My teacher is encouraging me to question my beliefs”

Dear Sue,

I hope I can word all of this correctly and in the most concise manner possible. Thomas Aquinas of Renaissance times said one must question what he believes rather than accept things blindly. This was the whole mindframe of the rebirth from the dark ages. My mother of modern times says she doesn’t question her faith because she wants to stay strong in her beliefs. I agree with Aquinas. Whatever is in quotation marks in this letter is an excerpt from my history teacher’s e-mails to me. He wrote, “The first step in believing something for yourself is figuring out what you believe versus what others have told you to believe.” He said I should decipher “propaganda from purpose.” He studied different religions alongside Christianity such as Buddhism, Islam, and Hinduism, and even though he didn’t buy into them he realized that they were all promoting the same basic ideas: “The golden rule is in every major religion.” Major religions all include the idea of the flood and most promote a moral system for promotion. I know I’m kind of jumping around but I hope you’ll still be able to figure the labyrinth of my mind. He wrote, “Doubt is the seeding ground of wisdom.” It drives people to find out about their faith and strengthens their beliefs. He points out the seeming contradictions in the Bible. Here come some more quotes! “The last line of the Lord’s prayer is an addition by a monk. .. Luke 19:45-48, Matthew 21:12-16, and Mark 11:15-18 show Jesus turning over the vendors at the temple after His Triumphant entry into Jerusalem.”

I agree with Aquinas.

I do too, which is why I'm glad I was able to catch up with you in the bathroom at church where I could use the wall to illustrate the point that it's the strength and credibility of what we believe in, rather than the strength or fragility of our faith, that matters. That's why it's okay to question Christianity: it can MORE than hold up under scrutiny. Just like that wall was more than adequate to stand up to me pushing against it.

> *He wrote, "The first step in believing something for yourself is figuring out what you believe versus what others have told you to believe."*

That's true. Part of growing up means examining our beliefs that sit in our head like canned goods sit on the shelf of our mind, and we decide which ones we're going to keep and which ones we're not. Once you believe to keep the "can" of a belief, it becomes yours instead of your parents' or your teachers'. HOWEVER! The most important question is not, "Do I believe it, or was I merely taught to believe it?" but "Is it true, regardless of whether I believe it or not?"

> *He said I should decipher "propaganda from purpose."*

Who can argue with that? The bottom line question, again, is "Is it true?" And how can we know if something is true or not, apart from information from "outside the box" (the box being the world and our human experience)? That's why we as Christians depend on revelation: God is giving us information from His perspective, outside the box. That's a big way (and the ultimate way) we know whether something is true or not.

> *He studied different religions alongside Christianity such as Buddhism, Islam, and Hinduism, and even though he didn't buy into them he realized that they were all promoting the same basic ideas: "The golden rule is in every major religion."*

There’s a big difference between all religions sharing a particular element (e.g., the golden rule) and all religions promoting the same basic ideas. We can find some truth in every religion, but that doesn’t make the religions themselves true because they don’t correspond to reality. Only Christianity corresponds to reality.

I think it’s interesting how many people can “study” world religions and come to the conclusion that they’re all basically the same. Eastern religion is radically different from Christianity: the concept of reincarnation and karma is vastly different from the concept of one birth, one death, then judgment.

Furthermore, Christianity says “There is no way anyone can get into heaven on their own because only the good and perfect and holy can get in.” Other religions, if they even believe in a heaven, depend on their own good works. Christianity says, “We are dead in our sins and separated from God.” Other religions say, “Our efforts can overcome our sin.” Christianity says, “Jesus Christ is the only way to God.” Other religions say, “There are many ways to God.” Christianity says, “Christ living inside you is your power source and allows you to live a live pleasing to God.” Other religions say, “You’re on your own” or, worse, the New Age religions promise the lie, “You ARE god!”

> *Major religions all include the idea of the flood and most promote a moral system for promotion.*

First of all, the fact that major religions all have a flood story/myth/legend says something powerful about it being a real event! What’s significant to me is that the flood story as recorded in our Bible is the one that Jesus endorsed when He quoted from that Bible, when He talked about Noah as a real person.

Secondly, about promoting a moral system for promotion: what

is that but a system of human works? Why would we be surprised that all religions, which address the subject of morality, would talk about *good* works? Again, though, Christianity is completely different from all other religions in this department. It claims that there is nothing we can do to promote ourselves, to climb any ladder of goodness and morality because we are sinners. "Promotion" comes from accepting Christ's righteousness in exchange for our sinfulness. What a swap! That isn't found in any other world religion—what human would have thought it up???

> *I know I'm kind of jumping around but I hope you'll still be able to figure the labyrinth of my mind. He wrote, "Doubt is the seeding ground of wisdom." It drives people to find out about their faith and strengthens their beliefs.*

Doubt, if it means being openminded to finding or being reassured of the truth, may well be a seeding ground of wisdom. But I am concerned whenever ANY teacher holds up the banner of doubt as "freethinking" as if choosing to continue to believe your beliefs is closeminded and controlled. Please see this teacher as a threat to your faith. God may well be using him to help you build your faith at the same time, but know that the enemy uses disillusioned teachers to destroy students' faith all the time. It's not an accident; it's a deliberate attempt to spread the enemy's poison. It's a spiritual battle, and the teachers and professors are unknowing pawns being manipulated by the enemy in the heavenlies just as surely as if they were marionettes. And ironically, they *think* they're being "freethinkers!"

> *He points out the seeming contradictions in the Bible.*

There's nothing wrong with examining SEEMING contradictions. Usually they come from not seeing the whole picture.

> *Here come some more quotes! "The last line of the Lord's*

> *prayer is an addition by a monk.”*

And how would he know that?

> *“…Luke 19:45-48, Matthew 21:12-16, and Mark 11:15-18 show Jesus turning over the vendors at the temple after His Triumphant entry into Jerusalem”*

Right. Who said there could only be one cleansing of the temple? If John tells of one cleansing, and the synoptic gospels put a cleansing at another time, why does that make it a contradiction instead of an addition?

I’m so proud of you for not being afraid to face the questions. You have nothing to be afraid of. The very power of God is behind the philosophy and words of scripture, which assure you that what you believe is indeed the truth. It will always stand up to your study and hard scrutiny. What may not stand up are your assumptions about things that God never said in the first place, and that’s not a bad thing! (For instance: there are people who suffer with their desire to get up and dance to a great, moving, rhythmic song, but they believe—because they’ve been taught—that dancing is sin. But God never said it was! That’s a man-made rule that doesn’t stand up under the searchlight of “Hath God said. . .?”)

Hang in there! You have all the supernatural assistance possibly available to you!

Love,
Sue

“What About Body Piercing?”

In your latest Probe-Alert you had an interesting commentary on tattoos. I was wondering what your thoughts were about earrings, since they also change the body that God gave us. What about body piercing in general?

Great question!

Earrings are considered a common form of jewelry in the Bible, and there is no condemnation associated with earrings themselves. (Only the desire to adorn oneself with jewelry instead of a beautiful and godly heart, Is. 3 and 1 Pet. 3:3.) In fact, in Ezek. 16 the Lord describes how he treated unfaithful Jerusalem with tenderness and love, dressing her with fine garments and adorning her with all sorts of jewelry, including earrings.

But it’s not just earrings you wonder about, I bet. . . it’s pierced earrings, right? Well, ear piercing is addressed in the Old Testament in a positive way. If a master wants to grant freedom to his servant, “But if the servant declares, ‘I love my master and my wife and children and do not want to go free,’ then his master must take him before the judges. He shall take him to the door or the doorpost and pierce his ear with an awl. Then he will be his servant for life.” (Exo. 21:6)

Personally, I wonder if the Lord didn’t create earlobes just for decoration. . .??! <smile>

The important thing, though, for a New Testament Christian, is that we don’t live under Old Testament rules anyway, and we have freedom in Christ to do anything that He gives us permission to do. Since there is no prohibition anywhere in the Bible against pierced ears and earrings, then one needs to go by other Biblical principles. For instance, if a girl wants

to get her ears pierced but her parents say no, then the principle of children obeying their parents would dictate that it would be wrong in this instance.

But apart from ear piercing, there is the subject of body piercing. There is no New Testament prohibition against it, and not even an Old Testament prohibition as far as I can tell. There IS a matter of common sense here, though. For instance, the advice columninst "Dear Abby" published a letter from a dentist not long ago warning people against tongue piercing. He said, "Our mouths weren't made to work with metal banging around in them," and that he had quite a number of patients who came in with several broken teeth. Fixing them with crowns is tedious and very expensive, he said, and in his opinion tongue piercing isn't worth it.

Speaking of which, I have a counselor friend who told me that in the beginning of this fad, someone did a study of those who had pierced their tongues, and discovered that 100% of these young people had been sexually abused. That's food for thought. (It's no longer 100%, of course, since now it's a matter of "fashion.")

The biblical principle that would cover body piercing (as well as tattoos), in my opinion, is 1 Cor. 10:23: "'Everything is permissible'—but not everything is beneficial. 'Everything is permissible'—but not everything is constructive." I would suggest that the Christian's responsibility is to ask the Lord, "What would YOU have me to do about this?" And then obey.

Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries



“The Story of a Couple Who Left an Abusive Church”

Dear Patrick Zukeran,

My wife and I are going through a bad experience in Church at the moment and your Abusive Churches: Leaving Them Behind article has/is really helping us. Thank you.

We are from a city in England called _____.

Three years ago we planted a church with another family, for about two years everything was going well and the church grew in numbers.

My wife and I were elders and my wife was also praise and worship leader. We gave our all to promoting the church even to the point of exhaustion, we were out at least four to five nights per week and as our Pastor taught we were sacrificing everything for the Church.

We met in a community centre and every Sunday we would be the first in setting up all the relevant equipment up, sound equipment etc. We would also be the last out after tidying up etc.

Our Pastor would at times bring us a teaching which was often a rebuke for not doing things according to what he thought was right. We would voice our concerns and opinions and be labelled unteachable and told everything he was saying was in the word of God and we should use it as the final authority in our lives. If we did not then we were rebelling against God.

We would often feel a heaviness in the atmosphere when in his presense. My wife would be told that it was up to her and her worship team to usher in the presence of God and would often be told that there was no anointing on her voice. She would often come home and end up in tears because she could not give anymore.

She led the service once with a broken elbow, another time with a collar around her neck she had pulled her muscles, we were always told we had to sacricfice family time for the church as this was honourable to God and we would be rewarded for our works.

Anyway after almost three years we decided to step down from our positions as elders, we just could not give anymore!!

We were told that we were breaking a spiritual covenant with the pastor and the first lady of the house (his wife) and this had to be done in a way that would cause the least amount of pain and disruption to the church.

I addressed the church and said that we were stepping down from Eldership because God had blessed our business and we did not have the time to serve them any longer, we told them that we did not want to hinder what God was doing and wanted to step aside so that God could raise up new elders to help carry the vision forward, it was very tearful and emotional because

we had planted this church and were about to step down from our position. It was also emotional because we were hurting for everything that we had been through, the constant rebukes etc. The Church applauded us for our service and on the outside everything looked ok, one the inside we felt/feel for the rest of the church and for the well being of the Pastor because he will not take any counsel and the church are absorbed by his character.

On one occasion in a meeting with my wife and me, he walked out because my wife and I said that we felt that the church as a body was not growing because everyone in our church, apart from two people were already Christians and we should concentrate on the lost. We were told that we were so insensitive and how could we hurt his feelings so much.

Anyway enough of our problems and experiences I expect you have heard all this before, again we would like to thank you for helping us through your writings.

See Also: "Probe Answers Our E-Mail":

- "What Advice Would You Give Someone Leaving an Abusive Church?"
- Another Story of a Couple's Heartbreaking Experience with an Abusive Church
- "Does 'Touch Not the Lord's Anointed' Mean that Abusive Pastors Can't be Challenged?"

“Why Don’t You Appreciate Herbal Medicine?”

I read an article written by Mr. Zukeran on alternative medicine and was wondering just how much time he really put into researching herbs and ancient medicine before he began to write. It sounds like the typical raised eyebrow “suspicious of anything that doesn’t come out of the AMA or Good Housekeeping Magazine” approach.

There is a tremendous amount of research that has been done and is being done with herbs, and Mr. Zukeran’s dismissal of herbal therapy implies a lack of scholarship, not a good apologetic. I’m a Christian and have a great appreciation for herbal medicine as well as other alternative approaches. I owe my life today to a diet change that included a vegetarian way of life for nearly a year, along with herbal therapy. I also have in my library The Yellow Emporers Book on Internal Medicine, along with Hyppocrates works, and simply because one came from Greece and one came from China I do not necessarily reject the ancient Chinese approach any more than I would reject Pythagorus or Archimedes mathematical axioms and theorems simply because Pythagorus and Archimedes belonged to “Mystery Schools” and were pagans. Their mathematical formulas and proofs form much of the basis for modern science and engineering.

You seem to be throwing the baby out with the bathwater in your blanket condemnation of a vast area of human research in the area of medicine that spans many thousands of years in an attempt to stay orthodox in your religious views.

I notice that Mr. Zukeran has a degree in theology. That does not necessarily qualify him as an expert in alternative medicine. You would do better in defending the gospel to carefully research your topics, and have someone who is well

qualified in an area to write on that topic, instead of someone who demonstrates a manifest lack of expertise on the subject.

Thanks for reading the article and your comments. I stated in my article, "… complementary therapies provide important insights into maintaining good health." I also stated in my section on Herbal Medicines this: "Some herbal treatments are costly and provide no enhancement. However, some herbal supplements have shown some promising benefits. Herbal treatments may prove to be helpful additions to conventional treatments. Herbs like ginseng have shown to be beneficial for Type 2 diabetes, for example. Herbal preparations are sometimes less potent in dosage than prescription drugs and may be less toxic." So I do not dismiss herbal therapies, I state there are some that have shown to be beneficial while there are others that are costly and have not proven to fulfill the promises they make. I think you would agree with that.

In 1998 Representative Tim Harkin passed a bill to enlarge the National Institute for Health Office to include a department to study alternative medicines. Dr. Steven Straus was placed in charge of the department. Dr. Eisenberg at Harvard Medical School also has created a department to study alternative Medicine as well. So the AMA, American Medical Association and other government research groups are doing research on Alternative Medicines. I think a person would be wise to look at their conclusions when deciding on an alternative treatment. Much research has been done and as I stated in my article, some herbs were shown to be beneficial while others were found not to be. There is very little proof that life energy therapies are beneficial.

It is true, my degree is in theology and I focus on the theological and worldview aspects of alternative medicine. I rely on medical experts for the medical studies. I have interviewed one of the leading authorities on my radio show on

this subject, Dr. Donal O'Mathuna, whose conclusions I repeat. Let's not throw out the good, let's just be discerning. I am sure you would agree with my conclusion, that there are some benefits to alternative medicine but there are also alternative therapies that are not beneficial and should be avoided. A Christian should be discerning when looking at alternative Medicine.

Patrick Zukeran
Probe Ministries

"How Can Computers Be Used to Share the Gospel?"

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

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

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

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

> *I have been using computers and the internet to share Jesus for over 10 years. We in Campus Crusade have found it to be extremely effective. I have several suggestions.*
>
> *1. Visit Tony Whitaker's excellent Online Evangelism guide at www.web-evangelism.com/*
>
> *2. For stories and statistics over several years, visit my personal website at www.seabourn.org. Specifically, visit my newsletter archives on that site. Many newsletters tell stories. For compilations of responses and statistics, see the End of Year Reports for 1999 or 2001.*
>
> *3. For a broad overview of what Campus Crusade is doing to use the Passion of the Christ movie for online evangelism, see www.seabourn.org/newsletters/0401/thepassion.html.*
>
> *These are some initial ways for you to explore. There are many, many more.*

Hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

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“How Are We to Give to the Poor?”

I am working on a topic for a Men’s breakfast on “giving to the poor.” Do you have any articles on this specific topic? I am not looking at giving in general—i.e. to the local church or biblical ministries. My topic is specifically “giving personally to the poor.” Are we as believers commanded to share with the poor? Is that any difference between poor “believers” and poor “non-believers”? Do we give to the poor to help them or to grow in our own walk with the Lord?

Thank you for your questions and for writing Probe.org. I want to speed you on your way with some input, links and rhetorical questions of my own to get you thinking. We pray your teaching / challenge / presentation goes well.

Your question, and it’s understandable why you ask it, kind of sets up a false dichotomy that we’re all prone to these days. The notion that teaching on giving in general is somehow separate from teaching on giving as individuals seems like an American, 21st-century presumption. Why wouldn’t one inform the other? The church, after all, is made up of Christians, one by one. So teaching to the church at large is teaching to each believer—the doing (giving) just sometimes gets done through an organization.

I don’t know of any overtly direct commands on giving in the New Testament. However, as you can see below, there is much taught on the topic, which takes generous giving of several kinds for granted.

That should free you up to teach or lead discussions, if you buy into it. Pray and pick from all of the teachings to share. That’s why I’m including some of the links on giving in general, below. Here’s another good place to start with

Scriptures and Bible study tools. Another set of Scriptures are here.

What's more, it may be that your church has a very institutionalized way of giving. It could have big, church-wide or denominational programs for giving to the poor, to missions and other things commanded by God. This is okay in and of itself, but has a way of taking the individual out of the mix. Wasn't Jesus teaching disciples and followers rather than an institution? Too easy to cop out on our own responsibility or hide behind programs that way.

That's why the other links are there, about our own personal heart attitude in giving. Kerby Anderson talks about this and other issues in A Biblical Perspective on Giving (especially the final two parts).

Also, what about people in our lives who need help, who need money in particular? Yesterday, a friend of mine was in serious need. First, I bought him lunch. I spent hours driving on miles on icy roads to get a huge amount of money to lend him. Today, I gave a bit of cash. I kept remembering the Scripture "But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?" (1 John 3:17). I am not like this—I always have better things to do and naturally wonder why people let things get so bad. The Spirit of God was leading me in God's gracious way to see a fellow believer and human made in His image which is so different than my own fleshly way. It was the most fulfilling day I've spent in months, by the way.

Your query about whether Christians are different than unbelievers in this sense leads me to say, yes, when it comes to choices in general, I need to prioritize the brother and sister over the stranger. Ideally, I help all of them or lead them to help. But God's Name and reputation is at stake, according to John in his first epistle (1 John), when it comes to how we treat one another in the family of God. So again,

fellow Christians are top priority—even while following after God's heart for the poor and oppressed in general.

What do you do when confronted with a panhandler or needy relative or friend? Not an easy answer. I need to ask myself:

- *IF I give, will I give gladly or grudgingly?*
- *How is God speaking to me these days about my own need to give?*
- *Am I giving already as a way of life or would it be just an impulse?*
- *Do I have anything to give the guy that will not put me or loved ones in great need or danger—where does wisdom come in to speak to me?*
- *Does he seem like he sincerely needs it or is he making a living on the street begging rather than working—is biblical discernment playing a role?*
- *Is it okay to ask that or do I feel guilty for even wondering?*

Believers have to wrestle with deep issues of Lordship (is God really in charge of my own money and things?) and stewardship (how exactly should I use what I've been given?—and it's ALL been given) and discernment (learning to know what's bad, questionable, good, better, best) well ahead of time or we're bobbing on the water when it comes to decisions in the moment.

Bottom line is: the heart of God is for the poor and oppressed. If I am seeking to love God and obey Him, to be like Him and reflect Him to others, I will care about the poor. If I honestly don't care, I need to ask Him to put that into my heart and change me. I need to meditate on all those Scriptures that tell me He cares for the poor and needy and wants me to. Meanwhile, I need to give by faith and participate in the changing.

Giving can look like writing a check to the Red Cross or, often better, a biblically-oriented relief group like

Samaritan's Purse. Or it may be overtipping when witnessing to a waitstaff person. Or it could be just giving an (anonymous?) cash gift to someone who's hurting financially or who needs something they can't afford right now. It may be through the offering plate. Any way it's given, it needs to be out of a heart given over to God fully. This article offers good perspective on it: Developing a Giving Heart at Bible.org (note: this is part of a series that looks very promising to me on a trusted Web site).

These links may help as well:

- *Giving Can Improve Your Health; Science Says So (what's wrong w/it being good for us?)*
- *Charity and Compassion: Christianity Is Good for Culture (I can do my part to change culture, not just the one I'm helping right now)*
- *"What's the NT Understanding of Tithing?"*

I hope this helps. Please let me know how it goes if you get a chance, will you?

Blessings,

Byron Barlowe

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"What Does It Mean to be

Filled With the Spirit?”

I need some clarification! What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit? I believe that it happens at the point of salvation, but many times in scripture it talks about people who are “full of the Spirit.” Is this filling a one time deal or something that can happen many times. I know that in Old Testament times the Spirit came and went upon certain people. But in our times (and since Pentecost), how would you explain this. Thanks so much for your time, wisdom, and ministry.

The best explanation I have seen (and which has worked for me experientially for many years) is that being filled with the Spirit means yielding to Him (the Holy Spirit) in full dependence so that we are out of the way and He can do His thing through us and in us. The verb tense in Ephesians 5:18 means “be continually being filled,” so it’s not a one-time event. It’s an ongoing discipline of submission.

I love the analogy of taking a hard, dried-up sponge and plunging it into a sink full of water. The sponge softens and soaks up the water until it is super-saturated. It is “filled with” water, right? But of course, a sponge can’t choose to jump into the sink like we can choose to open ourselves to the filling and empowering of the Holy Spirit. And this choice is a matter of will, not of emotion; the difference between operating in the flesh (our own power apart from God) and being filled with the Spirit is a simple choice to ask, “Holy Spirit, please fill me” with a submissive, humble heart. It doesn’t LOOK any different to someone else and it usually doesn’t FEEL any different to us, but it’s a real event. It can happen many times throughout the day. (I have shared this concept with my MOPS [Mothers of Preschoolers] group, and suggested they draw a line in the carpet with their shoe or draw an imaginary line across the kitchen floor, and step across the line to signify that they are moving from self-dependence to Christ-dependence and filling. One girl told me,

“Sue, you should see my house! There are lines all OVER the place!”)

The problem is that we default to the flesh; we keep gravitating toward doing things on our own and either rebelling against God or passively ignoring Him. We wake up “reset” to the flesh every morning. So we need to be filled again and again and again. Sort of like eating. We need to do it again and again and again!

I hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“I Heard a Radio Teacher Say Not to Go to Church Anymore”

I’ve been listening to a family radio talk show. The minister is saying on his show that you are not to go to church.

He said and I quote, “The Bible tells us that for 2000 years after the death of Jesus on the cross those who believe in Jesus were to go to church. But now we learn from the Bible that God is no longer saving people through the ministry of the churches. The church age has come to an end.

“Fact: God commands in his law book the Bible that the true believers are to leave their churches. This is because God is calling his righteous judgment upon all the local congregations as God prepares for Judgment Day, which is almost here.”

My questions for you are:

1. How does this guy know that God does not want you to go to church?
2. Why would he say that? Isn't one of the Ten Commandments "Keep holy the Sabbath day" and therefore means go to church?
3. How does he know that Judgment Day is almost here? Only God knows that, right?

Arrrgggghhhhhh!!! This would be a good person for you NOT to listen to anymore. He doesn't know what he's talking about. The "church age" has certainly NOT come to an end. The Bible is just as true today as it's ever been, and it says, "…and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near." (Hebrews 10:24-25)

> *1. How does this guy know that God does not want you to go to church?*

He doesn't. He got an idea in his head that's not from God, because it contradicts God's Word. God will never tell us anything that contradicts Himself.

> *2. Why would he say that? Isn't one of the Ten Commandments "Keep holy the Sabbath day" and therefore means go to church?*
>
> *That is a very legitimate application of the commandment.*
>
> *3. How does he know that Judgment Day is almost here? Only God knows that, right?*
>
> *That's true; however, Jesus told us that we would be able to see the signs of the end of the ages, and a lot of people believe things are so bad in the world that we must be getting near the end. But we CANNOT tell the future.*
>
> *The apostle John writes, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from*

God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” (1 John 4:1) I think this radio preacher is one of them. I think it makes God wince to have one of His people directing others to do something that goes against His word and His heart.

I’m glad you asked!

Cheerily,

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“How Do I Find Someone to Mentor Me?”

Hello Ray!

I am not sure if you know who I am, but I was one of the participants in your singles conference at _____.

I just spent some time on the Probe website and was reading one of Lou Whitworth’s articles on being God’s man (king, warrior, mentor and friend).

I know you spoke to us about having a mentor in your life. Since then, I have heard two of our pastors and Chuck Swindoll speak about the need for mentoring as well. I am really trying to allow God’s will to direct my life and this subject keeps coming up. I believe this is a step He wants me to take, but I am not sure how to go about it. Would it be possible for you to help me find a mentor? If not, would you know someone who could help me?

Any assistance you could provide me is be sincerely appreciated.

Hi _____,

A mentor generally needs to be someone who is at least 10 to 15 years older and someone whose walk with the Lord you respect. Asking someone to be your mentor can be a little intimidating. But just asking if you can meet together to pray and enjoy some fellowship sounds a lot more doable to other men. Is there anyone you admire from afar? If no one comes to mind I would suggest inquiring of a pastor for suggestions. They often know of older saints who would be willing to enter into this kind of relationship but don't know of anyone interested.

It's a real problem in the church and there are a lot of men willing to be mentored but a shortage of those willing to share their life's lessons with someone younger (often for fear of not looking so good in the process—a mentor needs to be real enough to admit failures but also have a healthy view of their strengths). They have no model to follow themselves. All that to say it is not likely that this will be a quick and easy search. Above all pray for the Lord's direction and for Him to prepare someone even now.

I commend you for sensing this need and reaching out to try and fill it!

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“What Will Keep Us From Being Jealous About Others’ Rewards in Heaven?”

If Christians in heaven are given different amounts of rewards in heaven, what prevents us from being jealous over other people’s reward in heaven? I know that our body, mind, and soul all changed after we have got into heaven and that we should have no thoughts about jealousy. But if that is true, are we just like dummies, where we just think about good things? Are we prevented from thinking about jealousy in heaven? How can God prevent us from ever sinning again in heaven if He doesn’t mind control us, because Angels in heaven were once good, but Satan turned bad. How can an angel turn bad? If God wasn’t able to prevent angels from turning bad, how can He prevent people in heaven from turning bad without mind controlling them?

Boy, lots of questions! Let me do my best:

> *If Christians in heaven are given different amounts of rewards in heaven, what prevents us from being jealous over other people’s reward in heaven? I know that our body, mind, and soul all changed after we have got into heaven and that we should have no thoughts about jealousy.*

The best way to understand this that I have encountered is this: When we become a Christian, God gives us a new heart, and He comes to dwell in our spirits. Our spirits are the part of us that were designed to be indwelled by God, but ever since the fall of Adam, all of us were born with our spirits dead. At salvation they become alive.

Now imagine that He plants a tiny seed of new life in our spirits at salvation. As we trust and obey Him, as we learn to love Him, as we pursue growth through prayer, Bible study,

discipleship and submission, our spirit grows. Some people's growth is much greater than others who are content to coast along in spiritual mediocrity. (That has something to do with the differing rewards in heaven, too.) So our spirits can grow bigger and stronger inside. On the outside is our flesh, that part of us that functions apart from God—our own strength and power. This is the part of us where jealousy dwells (as well as other fruits of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21).

It has been suggested that at death, our flesh disappears, leaving our spirits and souls (personalities) to enter heaven. (That would make sense, since our flesh is unholy and only holy things can be in heaven.) So there we are in heaven, with whatever level of spiritual maturity and growth we had attained at death. No matter how "big" our spirits are, there is nothing in those God-indwelled, God-built spirits that can be jealous like our flesh was. It's sort of like what happens after you have an appendectomy or a tonsillectomy—there's nothing there to get infected anymore, so you can't get appendicitis or tonsillitis. It's gone forever. Our flesh is "infected" with sin, so after the flesh falls away at death, there's no spiritual infection anymore.

> *But if that is true, are we just like dummies, where we just think about good things? Are we prevented from thinking about jealousy in heaven?*

Let's go back to my appendectomy illustration. Would you remember the pain of appendicitis after your appendix is out? Sure. Would you want your appendix back? Not usually! We'll remember feeling jealous like all our other sins, and we'll be delighted to be rid of the infection of our sin. It will be like returning to health after a long illness, except that it will be more like gaining a new dimension of health we have never experienced on earth. It's not that we'll be robots, unable to think anything but "happy thoughts". . . We will be free to ONLY think good thoughts and ONLY do good things, for the first time in our lives. That will be true freedom—to be

the people we were created to be, without the dragging, disgusting, difficult influence of sinful flesh.

Or, to give another illustration, have you ever had a shopping cart with a wobbly wheel that kept veering off course when you wanted to go straight? It takes a lot of energy to make it go in the direction you want to go because of that corrupt, wobbly wheel. In heaven, it will be like having four perfect wheels that always take you where your true self wants to go—in ways that always glorify and please God. And you!

> *How can God prevent us from ever sinning again in heaven if He doesn't mind control us?*

This is a great time to point to the Lord Jesus as the perfect example of what mankind was supposed to be. The First Adam sinned and became so much less than what God intended us to be; but Jesus, the Second Adam, showed us what Adam's character would have looked like without sin. How did God the Father prevent God the Son from sinning when He was on earth? He didn't have to: the very nature of God the Son was to do the will of God and GLORY in that obedience and fellowship with the Father. Just as the nature of a fruit tree is to bear fruit and the nature of a domestic dog is to love and be loyal to its master, the true nature of man is to love God and enjoy Him forever. When we're in heaven, all the things that prevent us from being the people God made us to be will have been taken out of the way, and we will be free to be who we really are. There won't be anything in heaven tempting us or influencing us to sin, because the part that is vulnerable to sin (our flesh) will be gone. Just like the inflamed appendix.

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The angels, like us, had the gift of choice, to serve and obey

God, or to rebel. God gave them the choice for the same reason He gave US the choice: because He wants to be freely wanted and pursued and loved, just like we do! They made their choice sometime between the creation of the world and the fall of Adam. They have been living with the eternal consequences of that choice ever since, either for good or for evil. When we're in heaven, we will be living with the delightful eternal consequences of our choice to trust Christ. It's not a matter of God mind-controlling us—it's a matter of God saying, "OK, the fight is over, now enjoy the freedom that comes with having made the right choice on earth. Your true heart's desire to BE good and DO good won't be compromised by your flesh here in heaven. Enjoy!" That's a long way from making us puppets. It's like my privilege as a parent to say to my about-grown kids, "I'm so glad you chose to spend the weekend here with us instead of out carousing with people bent on self-indulgence and destruction. I've made your favorite dinner and I'd like to take you to your favorite store and get you a gift. Enjoy the fruits of your wise choice!" That's not controlling my sons—it's lavishing love on them. You could ask them if they feel that their dad and I are controlling them, and they'd look at you like, "Huh?"

I hope this helps.

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