

"I'm Interested in Grad School in Intelligent Design"

Dear Dr. Bohlin,

Thank you for your reply to my earlier letter, and yes I am interested in graduate school. I am under a little pressure though, as I am an older student with a wife and two sons. At this time it seems I will have to pursue some type of professional or graduate school in order to use my degree to any extent. I am still trying to decide what I want to be when I "grow up." I am tired of school simply because of the continual attacks on my beliefs. I would very much like to pursue further schooling if I could find a school and professors that are a little more user friendly. I would like to hear more of what you have to say along the lines of Intelligent Design professors. As a matter of fact, I can't wait. I was ready to drop out this week, but between your letter and my counselor's advice I have managed to hit my last two exams in full stride and I feel renewed about school. Thank you again and I hope that you have more good input for me.

I'm glad to hear that a few things came together to encourage you. If nothing else the list of professors below could better help direct you and fashion your goals. They may also have other suggestions for you.

Here are a few names to research for possible graduate school.

- *Mike Behe is professor of Biological Sciences at Lehigh University.*
- *Scott Minnich is associate professor of microbiology at the University of Idaho.*
- *Dean Kenyon is professor of biology at San Francisco State University.*

- *Paul Chien is professor and Chairman of the Biology department at the University of San Francisco.*

Behe, Minnich, Kenyon, and Chien are fellows of the Discovery Institute's Center for the Renewal of Science and Culture. You can find a short bio for each at www.discovery.org/crsc/fellows/index.html.

I don't know anything about these guys need or desire for graduate students but I do know that Minnich has an active research program utilizing graduate students. Behe has cut back some of his research to focus on promoting intelligent design, so I'm not sure where he is at in being able to support graduate students. If you haven't read Behe's *Darwin's Black Box* you should do so ASAP.

I also understand your plight as an older graduate student with a wife and two kids. I started my Ph.D. program in 1983 when my boys were 1 and 3. It is difficult and you can't devote the lab time that other single students can but because I knew this was where God wanted me and my wife was fully supportive, God supplied our needs. I also made sure my boys received scheduled time with Dad that I protected almost at all costs. For years I took them out individually for breakfast on Saturday mornings which they loved. We rarely had "important" conversations but time alone with Dad at least every other week helped let them know that they were important to me. In retrospect I could have scheduled a little more time. I also scheduled my nights in the lab. Everybody knew Dad wasn't home on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. This helped keep me from disappointing them with random evenings away from home. I could schedule long experiments on those days and keep disappointments to a minimum. I also stayed away from the lab on Sundays except for occasional quick trips for maintenance of ongoing experiments. It's tough but can be done. But total support from your wife is essential. The long term demands on your time put a big strain on her and she needs to believe

this is what God wants for you and your family.

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“How Do I Approach a Carl Sagan Fan?”

Dear Dr. Bohlin,

I'm a pastor that is meeting with a young man who is planning to marry a young lady that is a member of our church. This young man, who is in his twenties, said that he believed in God—much like Carl Sagan. He seems to have a postmodern view of truth, but my question is, how can I read up on the spiritual views of Sagan? Do you know any websites or critiques on Sagan? I read your article "[Contact: A Eulogy to Carl Sagan](#)"—what would be the best approach to this young man?

It sounds like you have a rather sticky situation on your hands. Believing in God “like Carl Sagan” means little more than a deistic belief in some kind of super intelligence that helped order our universe but has no personal involvement with it or you and me. Sagan had a profound dislike for any theistic belief, particularly Christianity. His novel *Contact* brings this out much more strongly than the movie adaptation.

My concern would be that the young man is saying some things to help smooth things out with his bride-to-be, but is potentially hostile to her beliefs. Sagan basically believed Jesus was a good man but not God (page 167-173 of the Pocket edition of the novel *Contact*). The character of Ellie Arroway

is basically Sagan personified, so these seven pages will give some insight into his thinking. It's about twelve pages into Chapter 10 if you find a different edition). My fear is that he would eventually ridicule or otherwise try to undermine her faith with science and skepticism.

I would ask him if Sagan was a hero of his and do his ideas about God and religion coincide with Sagan's. If yes, does he hold the same disdain for Christianity and clergy (yourself) as Sagan did? This will perhaps force him to come a little cleaner and bring a little more understanding to the situation. He should be concerned with devaluing the belief system of the person he says he loves. If your intuition is correct about his taking a rather post-modern view, he should be sensitive to this. After all, truth is impossible to know so if it's true for her great, what's it to him?

Would he ever come to church with her?

What about children, how should they be raised? As skeptics or in the church?

I agree with your suspicion I sensed from your message. These kids need some hard questions asked of them. What are her thoughts? Does she think she can convert him? This rarely works out, but if this is her intent, is she ready to follow the prescription in 1 Pet. 3:1-2? Most women find this difficult even with a saved husband who has wandered away.

There is a potentially fatal divergence of basic world views which will affect nearly all aspects of their future lives. Maybe they just need to wait a little longer and give each other some time to explore these differences before committing to marriage.

Well, I have said a lot for someone who has little knowledge of the individuals involved.

Hope this helps.

Let me know if I can be of further assistance.

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“Will I Go to Hell For Getting Divorced?”

If I get a divorce, does that mean I will spend eternity in hell? I am saved so I don't think I would be forgiven for it. I know that if someone gets divorced and then gets saved then they will be forgiven but I am saved so I'm supposed to know better. And I think the only acceptable reasons for divorce are abuse or infidelity and neither are true in this case. So does that mean I have to spend the rest of my life with someone incompatible just to avoid the lake of fire??

Sorry to be so intense but I really need to know, and could you use specific evidence from scripture to explain your point? Thanks.

Bless your heart. I can only imagine the pain that would bring you to the point you're at.

No, divorce does not send anyone to hell. Refusing to be reconciled to God through Jesus is the only thing that sends anyone to hell. If you have been saved by trusting in Jesus, you have been sealed to Him through the Holy Spirit, and your eternity is secure. (We have a few articles on that subject that I think you will find helpful:

- [“How Can I Know I'm Going to Heaven?”](#)

- ["Can a True Believer Commit the Unforgivable Sin?"](#)
- ["I Fear I Have Committed the Unforgiveable Sin!"](#)

Back to your question: consider what the Lord Jesus said about divorce in Matt. 19:3-8-

Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?" "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate." "Why then," they asked, "did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?" Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery."

Yes, God's intention is for our marriages to be forever. However, because God is good and because He understands the wickedness of the human heart, he allows for divorce; note His reason: "because your hearts were hard." He knows that being married to a person with a hard heart is like a prison sentence, and He provides a way out. I think the issue is more remarriage than divorce. If nothing has broken the marriage covenant, then when a divorced person remarries, he or she commits adultery.

So if your husband's heart is unrepentantly hard, know that divorce is God's grace in that situation. If it's YOUR heart that's hard, then the order of the day is confession and repentance, asking for His help to make it soft.

But please know, regardless of what happens, that divorce will

not send you to hell. Jesus forever indwells your heart through faith, and the Father would not send Him there!

I hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“We Want an Easy Way Out of Our Pregnancy”

Dear Sir/Madam,

With due high respect I've got a deep problem in my family, I hope you are able to help us. My wife and me have a unwanted embryo. She had a pregnancy test and unfortunately it was positive. Our embryo is 3 weeks old. In my country, Iran, “pregnancy abortion” is illegal and even if it is possible it will be very expensive. We are not ready for have a baby and both of us hate this. What should we do? We are looking for medicine and easy way for clear it. We are impatiently waiting for your efficient way to save us and improve our life with your guidance.

Dear _____,

I'm not sure how you found us, but we are against abortion because it is the murder of an innocent human being. I know it is distressing to find yourself pregnant before you are ready, but you and your wife do not have an unwanted embryo, you are growing a BABY who is in an early stage of development.

I don't know if it will make any difference to you, but I want you to know I regularly talk to women who had abortions, and

it traumatized them. The guilt and shame they carry is a huge burden. They can't get away from the fact that they murdered their own babies. Please reconsider your position.

There is no easy way to "clear" an unwanted pregnancy because it is a serious matter to take the life of another human being. This baby could not have been conceived without God's permission and blessing; He means for you to have him or her, love him or her, and trust Him to help you care for this precious life.

I pray God will give you a peace that will enable you to trust Him to get you through this time without doing something you will regret for the rest of your lives and for which you will have to answer to Him.

With concern,

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

"Our Kids Have a Problem with Anger"

I read your commentary, ["Supernatural Parenting."](#) I have 5 and 7 year old boys and a 9 year old girl and we have a family problem. I call it easy provocation to anger which is antithetical to the fruits of the spirit including patience. Do you know of any other resources to call upon supernatural power to meet the demands of parenting in this regard?

One of the things I would encourage you to remember is that there is no spiritual maturity without emotional maturity, and part of being a child is immaturity. So a big part of your

family problem is simply developmental angst that comes from having kids!

I do want to suggest, however, three books:

- *Boundaries with Kids* by John Townsend and Henry Cloud
- *Parenting with Love and Logic* by Foster Cline and Jim Fay
- *The Heart of Anger* by Lou Priolo. It has a workbook as well.

As you trust the Lord to be patient in you as you deal with your kids and model His patience to them, these books will provide sound, biblical wisdom in practical parenting techniques. I really wish I'd had them when my two were growing up!

I hope this helps.

Warmly,

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“Is a Marriage Ceremony Necessary?”

I have been embroiled in a recent debate over the evils of cohabitation and sex before marriage. Another Christian agrees that fornication is a sin, but he doesn't believe that two “committed” people living together should be considered fornication. In his mind, fornication is wanton sexual promiscuity with no commitment or sincerity. You know Spring Break sex. ☐ ☐

He believes that if two people intend to spend the rest of their lives together and have pledged themselves to one another, God sees their hearts and doesn't require legality or ceremony.

I explained that this would be true if two people were stranded on a desert island with no opportunity to participate in the process. However, in America, it is our custom and law to have a ceremony, even if it is only between us and a justice-of-the-peace, and we have maximum opportunity to engage in this custom. If we choose not to then we are not recognized as husband and wife by the state. Since we, as Christians, are bound to obey the authority that God has placed over us, such a non-recognition by our culture and authorities would amount to a non-recognition by our God.

Unfortunately, though, he doesn't want to listen to what I consider sound reason. He demands scriptural proof that a ceremony is necessary for a marriage blessed by God. Do we have any other argument that may satisfy him?

God says in Genesis 2:24, "A man shall leave his father and mother and cleave unto his WIFE and the two shall be one flesh." What changes a man into a husband and a woman into a wife? Only a wedding ceremony.

God says in Hebrews 13:4, "Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge." What defines a marriage bed? A place where a husband and a wife sleep.

So what makes for marriage? A social ceremony in the presence of witnesses who are there to support and ratify (in a social sense) the public commitment of two coming together to become one. The role of witnesses in the formation of social contracts is a biblical principle. (Just do a word search for "witness" in any Bible software program.) No matter where you go in the world, wedding ceremonies occur in the context of

community (witnesses) because a marriage creates a new social unit that becomes part of the community.

Two unmarried people who are “committed” to each other in their hearts are still unmarried people, and their sex is fornication. It’s God’s definition that matters, not ours. Fornication, by His definition, is sex outside of marriage.

Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“How Do We Explain the Spirit to Children?”

Recently I attended the viewing and funeral of a dear Christian sister. One of her sons has two little children, a boy four years old and a girl two. They explained to them that Grandmother is asleep but her spirit went to be with our Lord Jesus Christ in heaven. They seem quite comfortable with this.

At the viewing celebration the mother asked me a question. She said, “My son asked me what is the spirit. How do I answer him?” This really made me think about how we can explain this type of Christian understanding to little children in a way they might be able to understand, yet will not seem frightening, confusing, or spooky to them.

Thank you for your help and your web site.

Probably the best way to explain the spirit to children is by saying that it’s the part of us that thinks and loves and talks and chooses. That part is invisible and on the inside,

just like our body is visible and on the outside.

I would also use an analogy with a visual aid by picking up a glove and showing them how lifeless it is when just lying on the table. But when you put your hand in it and start to move your hand, the glove “comes to life,” even though you can’t see the hand. Our spirit is like the hand—it’s what makes our outsides move and talk and love. So the children’s grandmother went to heaven, leaving her body on earth, the same way that you can take your hand out of the glove and leave it behind on the table.

Does this help?

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“How Does the Bible Show Abortion is Murder?”

In my “Introduction to Ethics” class, the topic for the night was abortion. As the discussion progressed, people all around me were saying that an abortion is good to do under any situation (rape, too young, the woman’s choice) and I argued my point on that abortion is murder. I stated that the Bible had claimed to that statement also. The teacher then told me that I have to prove to him and the class that the Bible says abortion is murder. Can you help me with verses, or anything I could possibly use to make my point valid?

Glad you asked!

The perspective that abortion is murder depends on two points:
1) The Bible condemns murder (taking the life of another human

being), and 2) The unborn baby is a person—a human being.

Point #1: What is murder?

Exodus 20:13, usually translated “Thou shalt not kill,” one of the Ten Commandments, actually means “Thou shalt not murder.” (There is a difference. Taking the life of another person in war, for example, is not the same thing as murder.)

Point #2: The humanity of the unborn

1. Both Hebrew and Greek (the languages of the Bible) do not make a distinction between pre-born and born babies. Whether they live inside or outside the womb is not important as to their value or personhood.

2. For You created my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from You when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in Your book before one of them came to be. (Ps. 139:13-16)

This portion of scripture is written about the unborn baby.

*3. The Lord called me from the womb;
from the body of my mother He named me. (Is. 49:1)*

The prophet Isaiah says he received God's calling and naming while still in the womb.

4. Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. (Psalm 51:5)

The psalmist states that he was a spiritual being from the point of conception. This isn't saying that he sinned while in the womb, but that he recognizes that from the earliest part of life, he was a sinner.

5. Now the word of the Lord came to me saying,
“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and
before you were born I consecrated you; I have
appointed you a prophet to the nations.” (Jer. 1:4-5)

Jeremiah declares that God knew him, consecrated him (set him apart), and appointed him a prophet before he was even conceived! From God’s perspective, Jeremiah’s humanity began even before conception.

6. At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town
in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah’s
home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s
greeting,
the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with
the
Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: “Blessed are you
among
women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I
so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As
soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby
in
my womb leaped for joy. (Luke 1:39-44)

The unborn John the Baptist had a physical reaction to the
presence of Mary and ESPECIALLY her unborn Child. At this
point, Jesus was probably only a week- or two-old embryo.
(Scripture tells us that as soon as the angel Gabriel spoke
to Mary about God’s plan for the Holy Spirit to overshadow
her and conceive the Messiah in her and she consented, she
hurried to see Elizabeth, who lived about 70 or so miles from
Nazareth.)

I believe that these verses indicate that abortion is murder,
but all you can do is offer the light they provide. Some
people who don’t want to believe that abortion is murder or
that an unborn baby is anything more than a “potential human

being” can and will refuse to accept it. (Remember what the Word says in Jeremiah 17:9–“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”) Your job is to pray for God to open the eyes of the hearts of the others in your class, humbly offer the truth, and leave the results to God.

Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“Where Can I Get Christian Movie Reviews?”

There are two excellent Web sites that provide Christian reviews of movies:

1. Movieguide

www.movieguide.org

2. Crosswalk Movie Reviews

www.crosswalk.com/fun/movies/

There is also a conservative movie review Web site you might want to check: www.screenit.com

Kerby Anderson
Probe Ministries

“What’s the Difference Between Gambling and Investing?”

Can you explain the difference between gambling and investing?
Thanks in advance.

Thank you for your e-mail and question about the differences between gambling and investing. There are a number of Christian authors who have addressed this issue (Norm Geisler, Tony Evans, Gary North, etc.).

Briefly let me say that there are some similarities, and there are people who get addicted to high risk investing just like gambling. So I would acknowledge there are some similarities between the two.

But the key issue is that there are some striking differences. Investors research an investment with the goal of lowering the risks and making a wise investment. Gambling is all about risk and the odds cannot be lowered by further research (except for those who can modify the odds of blackjack by card counting or something like that).

The goal of investing is to build up a company and portfolio. Even if it’s done selfishly, it still can have a positive effect on the company and the economy. Gambling takes money out of the capital economy. It doesn’t contribute to job creation, etc. As I argue in [my transcript on gambling](#), gambling actually hurts a local economy and increases social costs (abuse, neglect, bankruptcy).

Most investing is done with discretionary income and with

certain limits (amount of stock that can be bought on margin, debt load allowed by a lender, etc.). Most gambling is not done with discretionary income. Money that should go for food, rent, clothing is often risked in a "get-rich-quick" scheme.

So while I would acknowledge that investing and gambling have some similarities, the differences make the difference. If you are interested, I would encourage you to read some additional material by some of the authors I mentioned.

Thanks for writing.

Kerby Anderson
Probe Ministries