

# “Can Christians Practice Buddhism?”

Dear Mr. Zukeran,

As I was searching the net for local Buddhist temples I came across Probe's website and came to [your explanation of the differences between Jesus and Gautama](#). It was very eye opening, and I've never heard it explained that way before. I was raised in a Christian home but am also interested in Buddhism. Do you think there is a way for Christians to also practice Buddhism? Or is that not possible?

Generally speaking, Christianity and Buddhism are built on two different worldviews. So at their foundations they teach contradictory positions. Northern Buddhism usually adheres to a pantheistic worldview while Southern Buddhism and schools like Zen Buddhism teach atheism. Buddhism may have some teachings that agree with Christianity such as some of the ethical teachings, but at the basic level the two have contradictory teachings.

For example, what happens after death? Most Buddhist schools teach reincarnation while the Bible teaches “It is appointed for each person to die once, and then comes the judgment” (Hebrews 9:7). Jesus taught His disciples to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.” Buddha taught to relinquish all desires. The Bible teaches that life is found in a relationship with God through Christ. Buddha taught life is about the emptying of the self. Buddhism teaches that man is basically good and the answer to man's problem is enlightenment. The Bible teaches that man is sinful and the answer to his problem is not within him but in a perfect savior who died for his sins, Jesus Christ. So at the foundational issues, the two systems are contradictory.

Can a Christian study about Buddhism? Sure, but as in all things, one must be discerning and measure all teachings with God's word, the Bible.

Thanks for your question.

Patrick Zukeran

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## **“Can You Rebut the Google Video ‘Zeitgeist’?”**

**Please have someone watch the Google video “Zeitgeist” (<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=5547481422995115331>) and provide an answer to this. If you have any energy to do this, you will be activating it from a deeper source. Please. Someone tell me why I should believe—or you for that matter!**

I just finished watching the movie as you requested of someone at Probe Ministries.

I took several pages of notes but eventually stopped because the information and misstatements flowed much too rapidly. I stopped about 2/3 of the way through. But I watched till the bitter end.

Let's start with the attack on Christianity. A quick Google search of Horus, the Egyptian Sun god whom Jesus and almost all other “savior” types are supposedly modeled after, is misrepresented in the film. He was the Falcon god and only later became known as the Sun god. [<http://www.touregypt.net/featurestories/horus.htm>] Nothing is said about being born on Dec 25th or having twelve disciples, or being born of a virgin, or dying and being raised three days later.

Sirius has never been known as the supposed star of Bethlehem, another astrological reference touted in the film. They also mention that somehow the Southern Cross constellation played a role in identifying the time of Jesus' birth. That's impossible since the Southern Cross is only visible in the Southern Hemisphere. Israel is simply not far enough south to ever have The Southern Cross visible. I have seen it once, from the Equator off the Galapagos Islands.

They summarily dismiss the testimony of Roman historians Tacitus and Pliny the Younger who only speak of the Christ, not Jesus. They also show a quick list (where is that from?) of numerous 1st century historians who say nothing about him. Well, of course! Christianity was barely on anybody's radar screen in that first century. Nero just found them a convenient scapegoat for the burning of Rome precisely because there were so few and hardly anybody knew much about them. Josephus is a reliable historian in just about everything he writes about 1st century Judaism. The forgery spoken of is known, but it is a forgery of added phrases in a reliable entry about Jesus. What was added was Josephus' claims that this Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah. Other entries about Jesus say nothing about that. Also the film ignored the entries in the Jewish Talmud about Jesus from their perspective. Even critical historians today DO NOT dispute that there was a real man Jesus of Nazareth who his followers claimed was the Messiah.

The 9/11 conspiracy talk is also out of line. For online versions of a *Popular Mechanics* article debunking many of the conspiracy myths of 9/11 see:

[Debunking 9/11 Myths: About the Airplanes](#)

[Debunking the Myths About the 9/11 Attack on the Pentagon](#)

[Debunking the 9/11 Myths: Special Report – The World Trade Center](#)

These *Popular Mechanics* editors consulted scientists, engineers, and other experts. They are neutral. Their list of experts is impressive. You'll find evidence against conspiracy contentions about the collapse of the towers, what hit the Pentagon, and why fighters did not shoot them down.

You can also check this out:  
[www.minutemanreview.com/9-11-myths-debunked/](http://www.minutemanreview.com/9-11-myths-debunked/).

I have no doubt there is a conspiracy, but it's a satanic conspiracy that is millennia old. These types of films—"Loose Change" is another older 9/11 conspiracy film—prey on fear and paranoia. There is much more that could be said about all their claims but I just don't have the time right now.

Friend, the Gospels are reliable: Jesus is the incarnate God who died for our sins and rose on the third day. Astrology is forbidden in the Bible, it's not founded on it. If you have a copy, read Lee Strobel's *The Case for Christ*.

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin, Ph.D.  
Probe Ministries

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## **“How Do I Help My Friend Get Unstuck From a Failed Relationship?”**

I have a friend who has been saved for about 8 years. She is a 30 year old single parent with an 8 year old daughter. She

broke up with the baby's father about 6 years ago. The problem bothering her is that she is still in love with him. She realizes this is not a man she can marry due to his lifestyle and the fact that he is living with another woman. This is the only man she has been sexually involved with. Moving on with her life has been a constant struggle. Her confession to me is, "I feel stuck." What do you recommend?

I suggest you encourage her to reframe her thinking about her daughters daddy. In our culture, we tend to elevate our feelings to the position of idols, and we feel like it would somehow be dishonest not to follow them. But feelings are just feelings, and they are not equally valid or wise. If shes still "in love with" a man she hasnt had a relationship with for six years, who had made it abundantly clear he doesnt care for her, then its because she is still feeding the fantasy and the feelings with her thoughts. No wonder she feels stuck! She is stuck because she keeps feeding the feelings.

The problem is that we cant change our feelings by attacking them directly. Feelings are like the caboose on a train; they follow the engines. The engines are our beliefs/thoughts and our behavior. Redirect the engine, and the caboose will follow in a different direction.

I would suggest you help her write out on a sheet of paper two columns: the lies and stuck thoughts she believes, and the truths that would counter the lies. Such as:

Lies and Stuck Thoughts	Truths
I want my daughters daddy to come back	Hes not coming back. That chapter is over.

I have feelings for him	So what, theyre just feelings. I have to deal with reality.
I am stuck	God will help me get unstuck as I follow Him
I need him	Hes not available; I must get my needs met from God, through my support network of friends and family
I love him because I had sex with him	I must confess my sin of sexual immorality and renounce the emotional ties I have to him because of our one-flesh union

I would also suggest that you instruct her to imagine taking a giant roll of Saran wrap to her bundle of feelings and wrapping them up like leftovers that go in the fridge. Then put them on a mental shelf, and purposely engage in some activity that will help her replace her thoughts and feelings with something else. The biblical pattern for lasting change is to replace and displace the old with the new, but first we have to plan on what the new will be—such as a new hobby, new relationships, new habits that dont remind us of the old thing were trying to renounce. She may need some help with coming up with ideas for new things to add into her life.

Its also possible that shell say no, no, no to all that you suggest, giving excuses why none of those will work. Sometimes people dont really want to change, they just want to complain about their terrible emotional state and suck sympathy and compassion from those they complain to. If you discern that thats the route shes taking, then I would suggest that you tell her, You dont really want to be unstuck. So Im not going to talk about this situation with you. Then always change the

subject if it comes up.

Bless you for being a friend! I hope you find this helpful.

Cordially,

Sue Bohlin

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## **“How Do I Overcome My Hurts and Disappointments From My Church?”**

I have been a Christian for over 14 years. I love God very much, but I have become truly discontent with church. I have suffered from many hurts and many disappointments. I know this may sound childish but I have been badly hurt by people who say that they are trying to be more like Jesus.

When my husband and I lost our 4th child at 11 weeks, I was accused of having an abortion. I was told to “stay in my calling.” When I asked for the youth leader position I knew my call, my children (I have six) knew my call, but my pastor refused to acknowledge it. Over the next several years, more than a dozen different people took that position, and I cried each time the position went to someone else. I was told that I was not faithful enough.

I always was ready and willing to help where needed but was pushed aside. I am very outspoken and speak when God says to, which produces a lot of friction. I have been lied about, talked about and pushed aside. I have cried over so many lost

hopes and dreams.

I left that church, but am still suffering from the things that I endured. I feel like I don't fit in anywhere I go. I live in a small town and feel that no matter where I go my "reputation" precedes me. How can I overcome this? Or should I just wait and not go back to church? I can't move from this area.

I have been told I will do great things for God. That I am called. But I can't do it here. I am always under someone's microscope. Is there hope for me?

I am so very sorry to hear your story! My husband and I know personally how the wounds from one's church weigh heavily on the heart. You have my complete sympathy. I hurt for you, and I am asking the Lord to bring comfort and peace to you.

You ask, "How can I overcome this? Or should I just wait and not go back to church?" Not going back to church is not an option if you want to walk in obedience, since God's word tells us not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together (Heb. 10:25). The only way to overcome this pain is to forgive those who hurt and disappointed you. I suggest you make a list: ask the Lord to show you every person you are still hurting over, every person you are still holding a grudge about. Write down his or her name, along with everything they said or did to hurt you—or that you took as hurtful. (Sometimes, our perception is different from what people intended, but we can't know that unless we do a reality check with them. For your purposes, though, if you are still hurting, you are still harboring unforgiveness, and you need to deal with things as you perceived them.)

Before the Lord, remember that Jesus was tortured and crucified for every single one of those sins and hurts. He paid for them all. In His strength, release each of those offenses to the Cross, and let go of them. Forgiveness means



choosing to let go of our desire to make the other person hurt or pay for what they did, and the reason we can do that is because Jesus both hurt and paid for what our offenders did.

Sometimes, people hesitate to release the offenses because they so deeply want the other person to *understand* how much they hurt us. We have no control over making another person understand; but we can know that Jesus understands. He was there, receiving into Himself, everything that happened to us. (Remember what He told Saul on the road to Damascus? Every time he persecuted Christians, Jesus said he was persecuting HIM.) Not being understood, not receiving compassion from One with a full knowledge of what happened and how much it hurt, is not an obstacle to us forgiving because Jesus does understand, and His heart is filled with compassion.

I do hope you will get before the Lord and forgive those who hurt you. Otherwise, you will be stuck in pain and the temptation to wallow in self-pity.

One other thing that I wanted to mention, which I wonder might not be a major cause of your difficulties: you said, "I am very outspoken and speak when God says to, which produces a lot of friction."

Uh-oh.

I understand the importance of obeying God. However, people who see themselves as outspoken can be blunt to the point of being needlessly insensitive and abrasive. I'm not saying this is true of you, since I don't know you—but I am just making an observation based on years of watching people. Since you say your outspokenness produces a lot of friction, do you think it's possible that you have set yourself up? Is it possible that you have been prevented from serving where you feel called because the friction you cause disqualifies you as a leader? Consider what the Word commands us about what we say and how we say it:

*Speaking the truth in love. . . (Eph. 4:15)*

*Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. (Eph. 4:29)*

*There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing. (Prov. 12:18)*

*She opens her mouth in wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. (Prov 31:26)*

Let me just ask you: as the mother of six children (bless your heart!!), how prone are you to give a lot of responsibility to a child who causes friction among his or her siblings? Why would it be any different for those in church leadership?

I am praying as I type that God will soften your heart and enable you to receive this letter, since I know it must be painful to hear that you might be responsible for some of the pain and disappointment you are experiencing. (Again: I do not know this is true since I don't know you.) I do pray that you will have grace to hear my words as coming from a sister who longs to encourage and bless, not to inflict more pain. Please invite the Lord to give you His perspective on my answer and ask Him for help to lay down any defensiveness and sort out what is true.

The Lord bless you and keep you today, \_\_\_\_\_.

Cordially,

Sue Bohlin

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# **“How Can I Make It to Heaven If My Boyfriend and I Play House?”**

Do you think you will go to heaven if you and your boyfriend stay together like married people? I mean everything, from having sex to going to church? Being faithful to one another? All I'm trying to do is see how can I make it to heaven.

I see married people everyday, getting a divorce. The Bible says “until death do us part.” Does a piece of paper matter when you love someone? Pastors, teachers, preachers, etc. marry people everyday and half of the time they're doing wrong, trying to tell us right from wrong.

I am SO glad you wrote!!

There are really two issues in your question: first, how can I go to heaven, and secondly, will “playing house” with my boyfriend when we're not married keep me out?

So let me address them both.

The heaven issue has nothing to do with being “good enough.” It has everything to do with Jesus Christ. See, the problem is that all of us are born separated from God. We are sinners and He is a holy God. (God is not responsible for our separation from Him; that's the result of the first man, Adam, choosing to rebel against God. Ever since, all of Adam's children were born as enemies of God.)

But God creates us for Himself and He hates our separation from Him as much as He hates our sin. So He provided a way to solve the separation problem. He sent His Son, Jesus, to earth

to live as 100% God and 100% man. After living a perfect, sinless life, Jesus allowed Himself to be crucified to pay the penalty for our sin. He is God-the-Son, but He was willingly separated from God-the-Father to take all of our sins on Himself. He died because of our sin, and then three days later God raised Him from the dead because the debt of our sin was paid in full. And He is alive today—unlike the founder of any world religion.

This is where you come in. You need to decide if you will pay the penalty for your own sin by being separated from God forever—here on earth and then forever in hell when you die. . . or if you will trust in Jesus because He loved you so much He paid for your sin. If you put your trust in Jesus instead of in yourself, your separation from God will be over and you will continue your friendship with God forever in heaven.

When Jesus was here on earth, He asked His followers, “Who do you say that I am?” He’s asking you the same question today. (If you want more information, I invite you to read my story of how I became a Christ-follower [here](#).)

Your second question is about marriage. There is a big problem: every day, as you have noticed, people say “do the right thing,” and then they turn around and do wrong. I think this breaks God’s heart. But I also think God understands that we are broken and weak people who desperately need Him to live right, but we desperately don’t want to surrender our wills to follow Him. We are often like rebellious, disobedient children, spoiled brats who constantly throw temper tantrums because we want our own way and don’t want to obey.

None of this detracts from the fact that God’s rules for marriage and family are the ones that will keep our marriages and families intact. And one of God’s rules is that we enter into marriage, which is where that “piece of paper” becomes important. It’s the ceremony before witnesses of making promises and becoming a new family unit that transforms two

single people into a married couple. If you talk to those who lived together before they got married, most of the time they will tell you that, even though it surprised them, things were just *different* after the wedding. It really does make a difference. (See also our article [“Is a Marriage Ceremony Necessary?”](#) )

I'm glad you wrote. Feel free to ask any further questions.

Sue Bohlin

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# “Does the Bible Say Man Will Live Forever on the Earth?”

**Does the Bible Say Man Will Live Forever on the Earth?**

Im afraid you heard wrong. The earth will not last forever. (Have you been visited by Jehovah's Witnesses lately?) From [www.crossroad.to/heaven/contents/earth\\_destroyed.htm](http://www.crossroad.to/heaven/contents/earth_destroyed.htm):

*The earth will pass away. Revelation 21:1-4, 1 John 2:15-17*

*The earth will be burned up. 2 Peter 3:10-13*

*God will shake and remove the heavens and the earth. Hebrews 12:26-29*

*The earth will be shaken, broken up, and split apart. Isaiah 24:17-23*

*The earth will perish like a worn out garment. Psalms 102:25-28, Hebrews 1:10-12 (quoting Psalm 102).*

The people God destroyed were evil. This is the same reason a

cancer doctor uses surgery, radiation and chemotherapy to kill cancer cells: they are harmful and destructive. See:

*Genesis 6:5 (the world before the Flood)*

*Genesis 18 (Sodom and Gomorrah)*

*Deuteronomy 5:13; 17:12, 17; 19:19; 22:21-14; 24:7 (God calls for capital punishment to “purge the evil” in His nation of Israel)*

Hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

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## **“Should a Single Christian Woman Use In Vitro Fertilization?”**

We have an unmarried, believing woman in our church who is considering in vitro fertilization. I believe this is against God’s intent for marriage and the family according to Genesis 2:21-25, and also Paul’s teaching about marriage in Ephesians 5:18ff. Your input with other Scriptures and your ideas would be much appreciated. Perhaps you can suggest a good book or pamphlet on this subject that we could give this woman who seems intent on her mission.

I am in full agreement with your reasoning.

In your discussion of Genesis 2 may I suggest including that the notion of the two becoming one flesh certainly includes the production of children that are a clear expression of this

principle. From two people has come one person or one (new) flesh. While the children of single parents are to be honored and supported in our culture once they are conceived, it is certainly not a part of God's initial plan. To deliberately plan on being a single parent from the beginning implies selfish motives. The child is a commodity, something to meet a need or provide something for the parent. The story of Hannah and Samuel in 1 Samuel 1 indicates that Hannah saw parenting as a gift and Samuel himself as a gift from God, not a right.

If this unmarried woman is going to seek parenthood via in vitro she will also need a sperm donor. That directly violates the one-flesh principle above since the sperm donor will not be her husband. This also creates a necessary "relationship" with this man as the father of her child. This is inherently unwise and creates the very real possibility of future disputes and tensions with no clear guidelines for resolution. She would be at the mercy of the court and that particular judge as to what relationship this man will have with her and her child. Even when the donation is anonymous, it won't necessarily remain anonymous throughout the life of the child. Children have been granted access to the identity of anonymous sperm donors who fathered them. Some men simply won't care. But what if he does? What if he desires to know something about the mother of his child as well as the child himself/herself?

A booklet I can recommend is from the BioBasic series from Kregel Publications titled *Basic Questions on Sexuality and Reproductive Technology*. While this circumstance is not directly addressed, questions 5, 6, 7 and 13 do relate some of the principles I have discussed above. This booklet can be obtained from the Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity at [www.cbhd.org](http://www.cbhd.org).

I pray this helps.

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin, Ph.D.

President

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## **“Is Cremation Wrong?”**

**Is it wrong to cremate the body at death? Most of my family members were cremated.**

The practice of cremation is connected with pagan burial practices. Pantheists such as Buddhists and Hindus believe the body is bad and that the true self (sometimes referred to as the soul) is trapped in the body. Therefore, cremation symbolizes the deliverance from the prison house of the body and dissolving of the individual personhood. There are a few occurrences of cremation in the Bible but the reason is that the body was desecrated (1 Sam. 31:12). Under normal circumstances, Jews and Christians buried the body. For Christians the body is buried because the body is good and created and given by God (1 Cor. 6:19). We also await the resurrection of the body, which will occur when Christ returns and our bodies will be resurrected in their new glorified state (1 Thess 4:16-18).

Having said that, cremation is not the unpardonable sin. God will recreate the body no matter what state it may be in; that is no problem for Him. Burial is the Christian practice for the reasons I stated and as a general rule we want to honor God in our death and burial and not associate with pagan practices. However, there are times where cremation may be necessary or preferred and I am sure God grants grace in those circumstances.



I hope this helps.

Pat Zukeran

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# **“Why is Satan Mentioned Little in the Old Testament?”**

One of my religion professors brought this up when we were discussing Judaism.

She said that in the Old Testament there was no belief in Satan or the devil. I asked her about the book of Job. She then said that the Hebrew word used in Job that was translated as Satan is actually a word simply meaning adversary. So I looked up the original meaning of the word and sure enough, there it was. The word appears in many other places of the Old Testament but was never translated as Satan into the current English Bible. The word is even used to describe the Angel blocking Balaam's path in Numbers 22.

Mostly this just causes me to wonder why there seems to be so little mentioned of Satan (at least obviously and directly) in the Old Testament when compared to the New. Surely Satan was just as much a problem then as he is now.

Your professor is correct in that the “adversary” of the OT is just that.

Theologians often talk about “progressive revelation” regarding the unfolding of truth in scripture. Those living during OT times didn't know exactly how God was going to provide salvation for his people through the sacrifice of His

Son, but they did understand the concept of blood sacrifice and the need for atonement. Those living under the law had small glimpses of Satan's work, but it took the added information of revelation in the NT to give a more complete picture. It might also be noted that many of the concepts about Satan revealed by Jesus through the NT writers can be found in literature outside the Bible during the first century. As time goes forward revelation gives us a clearer concept of a fallen angel who leads a rebellion against God's reign and works to disrupt the work of the church.

Bible.org has quite a few files on the person and work of Satan that might be of interest to you. You can find this material at: [www.bible.org/topic.php?topic\\_id=12](http://www.bible.org/topic.php?topic_id=12). Here is a good article on Satan in the OT from that site: [Satan's Part in God's Perfect Plan](#). I hope that you find this helpful.

Don Closson

Editor's Note: See also the section "Angels in the Old Testament" in our [Angel Quiz: Origin and Background of the Angels and Demons](#).

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## **"Is Pole-Dancing for Exercise Okay for Believers?"**

Does Probe Ministries have anything in writing about not doing "pole dancing" like strippers do? A friend wants to do this (just for exercise, she says) but like [yoga](#), I think this is something that is far from Christianity. She refuses to believe it's anything other than "just exercise" but the whole

**format is sexual. Please help?**

Great question! Let's think about what the purpose of pole dancing is: pure eroticism. The point of it is to arouse the watcher. If anyone pole dances alone, I would think, it would be in preparation for doing it for an audience, right?

So is there any scenario in which that is acceptable? Absolutely! By a wife, for her husband, in total privacy. There is a biblical precedent for erotic dance of a wife for her husband in Song of Solomon 6. The privacy of a married couple is also, by the way, the only appropriate place for sexy behavior and clothing that would be immodest if worn out in public or for anyone else's eyes.

Hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

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