

# **“You Are Sending the Wrong Message to People About Dealing with Flawed Parents”**

Ms. Bohlin,

Your answer to e-mail [“How Do You Honor Deeply Flawed Parents?”](#) sends the wrong messages to readers. Despite dysfunctionality in the family one cannot be superficial to the very people that raised you. You seem to be saying “be nice” but don’t really mean it:

*“To give them honor means showing (not necessarily feeling) respect, letting them know you are listening and considering what they say. (And it does not necessarily mean following through!)”*

In short, you are implying deception in hiding one’s true feelings. How can people be compassionate to the world if they are lying to themselves about their true feelings toward their parents? That is truly deceptive.

*“And please remember that forgiveness is given, but trust is earned, so it’s entirely possible that you can release the woundings you sustained from them without ever, ever trusting them with your heart, because they don’t deserve your trust.”*

This statement is ungodly. This only allows for the heart to be confused and the heart will always be divided. Families will break up and more and more Americans will distance themselves from the family unit. Perhaps you need to carefully read the scriptures again. You are encouraging a false self and pretending to care for people even if one doesn’t mean it.

A human being must resolve the conflict and openly discuss what the issues are. Communication is essential in discussing problems.

Sorry, your helpful advice will only mislead people. You should suggest spiritual counseling for families. Unresolved issues lead to further breakup of the family unit. Parents are disconnected with their children and grandchildren. Please see that you correct your article with productive help.

Perhaps you haven't observed the horrendous woundings that deeply flawed parents can inflict on their children. Consider my friend Ann, whose father began raping her at age two and then invited his friends to have their way with her as well, all through her childhood. I suggest that being superficial with her father is the only way she can deal with a man who refuses to acknowledge and repent of his unspeakable sins against her.

I would suggest that being civil and cordial instead of erupting into a screaming tirade of anger and pain IS showing honor. Hiding one's true feelings can be a mark of maturity and wisdom. If you are feeling very grumpy and critical of someone that doesn't deserve it, hiding your feelings behind a choice to be civil is indeed loving and kind.

I don't think either of these cases are about lying to oneself about your feelings. It is choosing a higher road of self-control rather than giving into expressions of fleshly or tortured feelings.

I believe that God has given us great grace in His principle of Romans 12:18: "As far as it is possible, as much as it depends on you, live at peace with all men." Some people make it impossible to live at peace with them because of their hard, unrepentant hearts, so one needs to protect oneself with emotional distance. You cannot resolve issues in a family unless everyone is willing. The person who asked the original

question was talking about dealing with people unwilling to be humble and transparent enough to resolve the consequences of their flawed nature and behavior.

I hope this helps you understand my position better. I must stand by my statements.

Sue Bohlin

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## **“How Do You Honor Deeply Flawed Parents?”**

**I am very interested in reading about how to resolve “Honorable father and mother” with the fact that these people may have had huge and damaging flaws. Where can I read about that?**

You might Google the phrase “honoring your parents” for some insight. Below are some links I hope you find helpful.

But first, let me say that one aspect of honoring flawed parents is to understand that the best (or even only) way you might be able to honor them is from a distance, emotionally and physically. You can give yourself permission to do that.

To give them honor means showing (not necessarily *feeling*) respect, letting them know you are listening and considering what they say. (And it does not necessarily mean following through!) To give them honor means being civil and kind in your dealings with them. It does not mean trusting them. It does not mean placing yourself in harm's way. It means forgiving them, so that you are not carrying and paying for the emotional baggage of their treatment of you. And please

remember that forgiveness is given, but trust is earned, so it's entirely possible that you can release the woundings you sustained from them without ever, ever trusting them with your heart, because they don't deserve your trust.

Honoring flawed parents means you have healthy boundaries so that you know where you end and they begin. It means you learn how to protect yourself so that they can't steamroll over you; it also means you have realistic expectations about what they can and cannot give you or do for/to you. (You may need some help adjusting your expectations.) For instance, in our family there is a family member who has never, ever said the words "thank you." I mean, not even if you pass the salt, or do something they specifically asked! (I think this qualifies as "flawed," don't you?) It is unrealistic to expect that to change. It is an exercise in futility to expect anything different than a lifelong pattern of non-communication. Honoring this person means letting go of the futile hope to ever hear something as simple as "thank you," much less the more profound "I'm proud of you" or even "I love you"! Honoring this person means letting go of unrealistic expectations so we don't set ourselves up for continued disappointment and heartache. (An excellent book is *Boundaries* by Drs. John Townsend and Henry Cloud.)

Finally, let me share with you the insight of Dallas Willard in *The Divine Conspiracy*:

*To honor our parents means to be thankful for for their existence and to respect their actual role as givers of life in the sequence of human existence. Of course in order to honor them in this way we need to be thankful for our own existence too. But we also will usually need to have pity on them. For, even if they are good people, it is almost always true that they have been quite wrong in many respects, and possibly still are.*

*Commonly those who have experienced great antagonism with*

*their parents are only able to be thankful for their existence and honor them, as they deeply need to, after the parents have grown old. Then it is possible to pity them, to have mercy on them. And that opens the door to honoring them. With a certain sadness, perhaps, but also with joy and peace at least. One of the greatest gifts of The Kingdom Among Us is the healing of the parent-child relation, “turning the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers” (Mal. 4:6).*

Hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

Honor My Mother And Father? How Should I Treat My Abusive Parents?

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/biblestudies/questions/parentingandfamily/honormymotherandfather.html>

What Does It Mean to Honor Your Parents? (in this case, when a parent has dementia)

[http://www.newhopenow.com/ask/honor\\_parents.html](http://www.newhopenow.com/ask/honor_parents.html)

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**See Also:**

[“You Are Sending the Wrong Message to People About Dealing with Flawed Parents”](#)

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# “Your Bethlehem Star Article

# is Wrong"

Your Bethlehem Star article is out of date. Check out [www.BethlehemStar.net](http://www.BethlehemStar.net). Also, they recently discovered there were 2 Sejanuses to correct the date. Finally, check out *The Case for Christ* by Strobel.

I did indeed write the [Bethlehem Star article](#) well before Rick Larson and his Star model became better known.

However, I have come across it many times since then though I have never had the pleasure of seeing him personally.

He hasn't convinced me.

1) He is correct that the Bible indicates that stars are for signs but it is very obscure as to what kind of signs. Psalm 19 only says the heavens declare God's glory. The following verses he quotes don't change the context. God's glory is not the same as historical information.

2) The Romans 10 passage he refers to as obviously indicating that the stars communicated the "gospel" to Israel is a huge stretch for me. I just don't see how he arrives at that obvious conclusion.

3) You mention Lee Strobel's *Case for Christ* as apparently affirming something about Larson's theory. I found no references to the Star, Wise Men, or Magi. Bethlehem was only discussed as it relates to the massacre of the innocents by Herod. However what I did find was on page 101 where Strobel mentions that Herod died in 4 BC and his interviewee, John McRay from Wheaton does not correct him.

4) From my quick reskimming of the website, Larson still does not engage the very reasonable possibility that the star was the shekinah glory of God and has nothing to do with actual astronomical events. This is still the most reasonable

explanation to me. Other Christian astronomers I have consulted don't give Larson's idea much credit.

5) Larson embarks on a rather naturalistic, modernist explanation that is not necessary and despite his confident proclamations otherwise, has not firmly established Herod's death in 1 B.C.

6) It's interesting to me that the quotes he gives on the website while congratulating him for his scientific and reasonable approach, no one explicitly says they agree with him. I would think that if they had said they agreed with his theory, it would be quoted on the website.

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin, PhD

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## **“The Pope's Inflammatory Remarks about Islam”**

**How would you access Pope Benedict XVI remarks in his lecture on Faith, Reason and the University: Memories and Reflections? and Islamic reaction? What was the essence of his lecture that infuriated the Islamic World?**

Thank you for your question regarding the Pope's comments on Islam and the resulting violent response from the Muslim world.

Not being a Roman Catholic, I do not usually read the Pope's speeches. However, given the worldwide outrage by Muslims, I

thought it important to understand what has caused such an intense reaction to his lecture at the University of Regensburg.

The speech was rather academic and mostly focused on the relationship between faith and reason in the Christian tradition. In it, the Pope gave quotes from the Byzantine Emperor Manuel II to a Persian Muslim during the siege of Constantinople in the late 14th century. The exact quote of the Emperor is "Show me just what Mohammed brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached." The Emperor went on to argue that spreading any religion by the sword is by nature unreasonable.

The irony of the situation we find ourselves in today is amazing. We now have Muslims burning churches, threatening to kill the Pope, and destroy the west, because he implied that Mohammed advocated the use of the sword to spread and protect the Muslim faith. It is equivalent to punching someone in the face because they called you pugilistic.

Muslims certainly cannot deny that Mohammed admonished Muslims to pick up their swords for Allah's cause (see my essay [Islam and the Sword](#) at Probe.org). They also cannot ignore the fact that Islam conquered both the Persian and Byzantine Empires via warfare. Had it not been for the victory at Tours by Charles Martel, all of Europe would have fallen to the Islamic invaders.

When anyone in the west speaks against violence done in the name of Allah, Muslims are quick to equate the written word with "aggression" against Islam which then justifies all sorts of violent acts in defense of Islam and its Prophet. I can only hope that the media and our politicians will wake up to the double standard that occurs when words or ideas are equated with violent acts.



# “What’s Up With Animal Rights?”

My question is partially about the ‘animal rights’ movement that seems very popular these days. I was curious to know what you thought about the idea of giving animals rights. I have recently read a book about postmodernism and culture by Peter Augustine Lawler – it is not about animal rights, but he makes the statement that: “At the end of history, human distinctiveness is negated. The laughably incoherent ‘animal rights’ movement exists for a moment before the nonexistence of rights.” I don’t know much about the subject of rights, but I was hoping you could possibly recommend some book that touched on the subject from a Christian perspective – not necessarily animal rights, just the philosophy of rights in general- or maybe tell me what you think about what rights are and who has them and so forth.

Former Probe staff member Rich Milne authored an [article on animal rights](#). You are essentially correct that post-modernism dictates an equalization of rights between animals and humans. We are after all just another animal. Non-human animals should be treated no differently than we wish to be treated. Animal rights ethicist Peter Singer now holds a professorship of ethics at Princeton University and is continuing to humiliate himself with the logic of his own position by recently suggesting that bestiality was OK! What else can he say and remain consistent?

Not being a philosopher, I am not familiar with the literature on human rights, but Probe published a book with Zondervan in the 70s which is now out of print titled, *Human Rights and Human Dignity* by John Warwick Montgomery. Montgomery now has the rights to this book and he may have republished it so you may want to do a search on Amazon or elsewhere on the net to find it or a book like it.

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin  
Probe Ministries

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## **“What’s Your Position on Creationism?”**

Kerby,

Thanks for coming to the Worldview Weekend. I know you don’t hold to evolutionism, per se. But after the conference in Wichita last week, I was wondering, do you agree with the Bible’s chronology of the earth being older than the sun. That the record in Genesis (and Ex. 20:11) of the six days of creation are to be understood as ordinary days. Finally, do you agree with the idea of no bloodshed and disease before the fall of man? In other words, should I believe the Bible or what I have been taught?

The reason why I am asking is I know that I have compromised in these areas of Genesis and lead many down a road of disbelief because of that.

Please send me your answers with Biblical references.

Thank you for your e-mail. You might want to visit the Probe web site ([www.probe.org](http://www.probe.org)) and read two articles. One deals with [different views of science and earth history](#). The other deals with [why we believe in creation](#). I think these two will help you think through the issues and would accurately represent the perspective of all of us on Probe Ministries staff.

Thanks for writing.

Kerby Anderson  
Probe Ministries

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## **“What Do You Think About Headcoverings for Christian Women?”**

Sue,

I am intrigued by this article “Should a Christian Woman Wear a Headcovering?” by Daniel Botkin (enclosed by mail and also available online [here](#)) about headcoverings, and it makes sense to me, but I would really like your input as a woman.

I read the headcoverings article with a huge smile across my heart. Its an excellent article! . . . And I couldn't agree more.

Before I go further, though, let me first state that Probe does not have an official position on this issue; my answer is about me and my response to this issue. For six years or so I struggled with the plain command of scripture [*1 Cor 11:10 Therefore the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.*] and finally gave in. I just

could not get around the phrase “because of the angels,” which has absolutely nothing to do with cultural- and time-bound practices. So, about a year ago, I started wearing hats to church. Recently, I purchased a couple of scarves which I also use as a headcovering in worship and for public prayer.

It's been interesting the strong response I've received from men, who absolutely love to see a woman in a hat, even though they usually don't know it's not a fashion statement for me. They just know something strikes them as very, very right about it. What startled me was the effect on ME: I have so enjoyed feeling so feminine! I have also enjoyed experiencing the peace that is the fruit of obedience.

I started out wearing lace doilies or some other kind of headgear when I was in Catholic grade school. In the 60s and 70s, there was a wholesale dropping of the headcovering in almost all Western churches (with the rise of feminist thought, and I think they are related). I never even thought about how quickly 1900 years of church history were overturned in a mere decade until I couldn't come up with a single good reason to disobey scripture.

So there you have it! Thanks for sharing the great article with me!

Sue Bohlin

**Hi Sue!!**

**Your response was such a blessing and encouragement to my wife and me! Thank you so much for taking the time to read it and respond. Because of your response actually, my wife went out and bought a couple of scarves today! ☺ Well thank you for your faithfulness and may the Lord continue to guide you in His word and in His love.**

**See Also:**

- ["Do the Bible's Statements on Head Coverings Apply Today?"](#)
- [Sue Bohlin's Blog Post: "Why I'm the Lady in the Hat"](#)

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# **"Why Can't God and Satan Settle Their Differences?"**

Why do not all the religions of the world pray to God asking him and the Devil to get together and settle their differences? It is widely held that God answers prayers.

This type of praying would surely head the list of really important things to pray for. I believe it is written at one time God and the Devil were very good friends existing in Heaven together. I also believe it is written while they were living together they had a big argument. The devil lost, and was tossed out. Would not the World be a better place if they improve their relationship?

I am thinking of all the people killed during the Crusades, the 30 years war, the Holocaust, the Civil War, the list is endless. I am also thinking about future babies, who will be born in the future, with their souls, not subject to future damnation. At least their chances would be better.

I believe God has written "blessed are the peacemakers." Would it be too much to ask for this? I have seen no answer to this question, your answer would be appreciated.

Interesting question!

I don't think it would do any good to pray that God and Satan

get together to settle their differences for several reasons:

1. God is 100% good; Satan is 100% evil. Good and evil cannot peacefully co-exist, because good will eventually destroy evil.

2. We need to read the Bible as our only resource on what is true in the spirit realm because God gave us this information (as revelation). From what we can gather of what the Bible says about angels and demons, these powerful spirit beings do not have the capacity to repent as we humans do. They don't even understand what it is like to be forgiven and accepted back into friendship with God. Thus, to ask for Satan and the demons to change is like praying that black become white or negative become positive. It won't happen.

3. God already knows what the future holds, and He has told us a certain amount of that information. He has declared that at the end of time, He will throw Satan and the demons into a lake of fire for all eternity. What God has declared and has recorded in scripture will not change because God already knows what He will do.

God cannot improve his relationship with Satan because Satan cannot and will not become other than what he is. And just as the nature of sunlight is to destroy mold, and the nature of boiling water is to destroy harmful bacteria, the nature of God's holiness is to destroy rebellion and sin. They cannot be reconciled.

Hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin

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# **“Will Computers Take Over Humanity to Produce Spiritual Machines?”**

I would appreciate hearing your views on *The Age of Spiritual Machines* by Ray Kurzweil. If you've not yet seen it, this is a rather disturbing book which was brought to my attention at a recent dinner I attended on campus last month. During the dinner conversation I heard discussion between Dr. Rita Colwell (Director of the National Science Foundation) and Larry Smarr (Director of the National Center for Supercomputing Applications) that really took me by surprise. To hear some of today's most influential scientists discussing the reality of software taking over humanity within the next century was a more than a little disturbing. Their consensus seemed to be that “the software takeover is inevitable.” The discussion was prompted by a recent article by Bill Joy in *Wired* Magazine titled “Why the Future Doesn't Need Us.” You can read the article online at <http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/8.04/joy.html> (Bill Joy is the cofounder and Chief Scientist of Sun Microsystems).

I'd really appreciate some clear thinking from a Christian-minded perspective on this subject.

Thank you for your e-mail about “The Age of Spiritual Machines.” I have not read this article by Ray Kurzweil, but plan to do so in the future. That is an ominous statement about software taking over humanity.

In the meantime, I thought I might forward a portion of my recent book on a related subject. In *Moral Dilemmas*, I have a chapter on technology and address the issue of computers and the computer revolution. Here is section I wrote on the interface of computers and human intelligence:

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Fourth, computers should not replace human intelligence. In *The Society of Mind* Marvin Minsky, professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, says that "the mind, the soul, the self, are not a singly ghostly entity but a society of agents, deeply integrated, yet each one rather mindless on its own." (Richard Lipkin, "Making Machines in Mind's Image," *Insight*, 15 February 1988, 8-12). He dreams of being able ultimately to reduce mind (and therefore human nature) to natural mechanism. Obviously this is not an empirical statement, but a metaphysical one that attempts to reduce everything (including mind) to matter.

The implications, however, are profound. Besides lowering humans to the material process, it begins to elevate machines to the human level. One article asked the question, Would an Intelligent Computer Have a "Right to Life?" (Robert Mueller and Erik Mueller, "Would an Intelligent Computer Have a 'Right to Life?'" *Creative Computing*, August 1983, 149-161). Granting computer rights might be something society might consider since many are already willing to grant certain rights to animals.

In a sense the question is whether an intelligent computer would have a soul and therefore access to fundamental human rights. As bizarre as the question may sound, it was no doubt inevitable. When seventeenth-century philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz first described a thinking machine, he was careful to point out that this machine would not have a soul—fearful perhaps of reaction from the church. (Danny Hillis, "Can They Feel Your Pain?" *Newsweek*, 5 May 1997, 57). Already scientists predict that computer intelligence will create "an intelligence beyond man's" and provide wonderful new capabilities. (Robert Jastrow, "Toward an Intelligence beyond Man's," *Time*, 20 February 1978, 59). One of the great challenges in the future will be how to manage new computing power that will outstrip human intelligence.



The Bible teaches that humans are more than bits and bytes, more than blood and bones. Created in the image of God, human beings have a spiritual dimensions. They are more than complex computers. Computers should be used for what they do best: analyze discrete data with objective criteria. Computers are a wonderful tool, but they should not replace human intelligence and intuition.

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Thanks for writing. I will continue this discussion in the future.

Kerby Anderson  
Probe Ministries

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## **“Why Won’t My Sister Accept My Live-In Boyfriend?”**

Please help me answer this question?

I am a single parent (40 yrs old) of three children 16, 14, and 9. I have decided to live with my current boyfriend. I have taken all the pros and cons into consideration. So far it is going well. The only draw back so far has been my sister, her husband and 2 children. My sister and I are very close and spend a lot of time together. But since I have started dating again, 2 years with this one person (the only person I have dated by the way), I am not allowed to bring my boyfriend to her house. We are not allowed to do things with her children at all. I can understand that they would not want their children to spend the night or us to spend the night over there. I do not however understand why we can not spend time

together as a family as we have in the past. Going to Six Flags, etc.... We do not hug or kiss, we may on occasion hold hands. I understand this is a moral issue, living together.

Can you please explain why I can't spend time with my niece and nephew?

P.S. My family is Catholic. When I married the first time I married into a different church. My family is Catholic. I was married for 19 years. Been divorced for about 2 1/2 years and have been dating my current boyfriend for much of that time.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I'm sort of wondering why you're asking US instead of your sister. . .??!

My guess is that your sister is extremely uncomfortable with your choice of an immoral lifestyle and she is concerned that doing things together as if you were married might communicate to her children that immorality is okay. Many people are not confident that their kids can handle (or that they can teach) both the belief that "we love our family member" and "that family member is doing wrong things that we deeply disagree with."

I noticed you used the term "moral issue," but my guess is that your sister is thinking of it as an IMmoral issue. Which, to be blunt, it is. Living together outside of marriage is sin. You said you took all the pros and cons into consideration, but apparently you didn't, since you could not possibly foresee how other people would react to your choice.

I hear the hurt in your "voice," and I am sure that it weighs very heavily on you. Unfortunately, that's one of the consequences of making choices that do not align with God's intentions and commands for us. Sin causes pain and always ends up affecting more people than just ourselves. Your sister may be concerned about the effect of your lifestyle choice on

your children as well, since you are teaching them that living with someone you're not married to and not committed to is a good thing. As a mother, your sister may be concerned about the impact your children's attitude and perspective may have on HER children as a result of what you're modeling to your own kids.

By the way, I don't think this issue has anything to do with denominations. It's a people issue and it's a moral issue. You could substitute any mix of religious traditions and have the same heartbreak over this situation.

If you were looking for comfort, I'm sure this isn't what you were hoping for, but it DOES align with what the Word of God says. He grieves over your choice just as He grieves over the pain you are experiencing because of it.

I hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin  
Probe Ministries