“What Do You Think of ‘The Purpose Driven Life’ by Rick Warren?”

None of us here at Probe have any cautions or reservations about it.

Personally, I think it has become so popular because Rick Warren has taken “Basic Christian Living” principles and put them all in one place, in a highly accessible format. One of the best things about the book is its first sentence: “It’s not about you.” So his starting point is that the Christian life, the purpose-driven life, is about giving glory to God. It’s not about personal fulfillment or self-actualization—it’s all about God. That puts everything else into proper perspective.

The fact that this book appeals to both believers and unbelievers is exciting to me, because we are all hungry for truth and this book has it. It is steeped through and through with Scripture, and it’s well written.

Sue Bohlin

“Was John the Baptist Elijah?”

Was John the Baptist Elijah? John 1:21 and Matthew 11:14 appear to give different answers to this question.

To begin, the Lord had promised Israel that He would send them

Elijah the prophet before "the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord" (Mal. 4:5). When the Jews saw John, and heard his preaching, they clearly wondered if he might be the promised figure of Elijah. But why?

First, as Edwin Blum points out in his commentary on John, "John had an Elijah-type ministry. He appeared on the scene suddenly and even dressed like Elijah. He sought to turn people back to God as Elijah did in his day" (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, eds. John Walvoord and Roy Zuck [Victor Books, 1983], 274). Thus, when the Jews saw someone who dressed like Elijah and had a similar ministry as Elijah's, they rightly wondered whether he might in fact BE Elijah.

But John said he was not Elijah. And, as you pointed out, this seems odd because in Matt. 11:14 Jesus says of John, "And if you care to accept it, he himself is Elijah, who was to come." So what's going on here? Charles Ryrie comments on this verse, "Jesus is saying that if the Jews had received Him, they would also have understood that John fulfilled the O.T. prediction of the coming of Elijah before the day of the Lord" (*Ryrie Study Bible*, 1463). But of course the Jews did not receive Jesus at His first coming. Indeed, in the next chapter (Matt. 12) there is clear evidence of the rejection of Jesus by the Jewish religious establishment (vv. 22-45). Afterward, Jesus began to veil His message in parables (see Matt. 13:10-15). And later still, after the Transfiguration when the disciples ask Jesus why the scribes say that Elijah must come first, Jesus responds by saying, "Elijah is coming and will restore all things; but I say to you, that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished." Then the text goes on to say, "Then the disciples understood that He had spoken to them about John the Baptist" (Matt. 17:10-13).

Here's what I think is going on. John the Baptist would have served as the fulfillment of God's promise to send Elijah before the day of the Lord (Mal. 4:5) IF the Jews had received

Jesus as their Messiah. They did not, however, and so, as Jesus makes clear in Matt. 17:11, Elijah is still to come. Indeed, some commentators believe that one of the two witnesses mentioned in Rev. 11:3 may be "Elijah". Of course, as in the case of John the Baptist, this does not necessarily mean the literal, historical Elijah, but simply someone who comes in the spirit and power of Elijah and performs a similar ministry. At any rate, this is how I think we should understand the Baptist's response in John 1:21. He is led to deny that he is Elijah because God already knows that the Jews would reject His Son. Hence, as Jesus later affirms in Matt. 17:11, Elijah is still to come.

Hope this helps. God bless you!

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

"Do the Bible's Statements on Head Coverings Apply Today?"

I would like to hear your explanation of 1 Cor. 11:2-16 where it talks about woman wearing a head covering and if this applies to us today. And why.

Thanks for your letter. You've asked a rather difficult question about an extremely controversial and emotionally-charged issue. For what it's worth, I will offer my opinion (we don't have an official Probe position on this issue). But I certainly don't think I have any special insight into this issue.

Commentators point out that Paul offers a number of reasons

why women should wear head coverings in the church. First, it appropriately reflects the Divine order mentioned in vv. 3-6. Second, it is based on creation (vv. 7-9). Here Paul seems to allude to Genesis 2:18-24. Third, Paul mentions that the woman should wear a covering because of the angels. Apparently, angels observe church meetings and may be offended to witness the insubordination of wives to their husbands (in particular), or the rejection of the Divine order by women in general. Fourth, Paul offers an argument from nature (vv. 13-15). His point may be that just as a woman's long hair is her natural glory, and is given to her as a covering, so also it is her glory to wear a covering in the church as a symbol of subordination to her husband and/or to God. Finally, Paul seems to argue for women wearing head coverings on the basis of this being the universal practice of the church in the first century (v. 16).

Of course, this is not the universal practice of the church today. But should it be? Although I don't know for sure, I tend to think that the key issue in this passage (i.e. the timeless truth which applies to all believers at all times and in all places) concerns subordination or submission. In particular, the man must understand that Christ is his head. Just as Christ willingly subordinated himself to the Father (Phil. 2:5-11, etc.), so also should man subordinate himself to Christ and follow his example. Similarly, a woman should be submissive to her husband (Eph. 5:22-33). It's important to understand that this does not imply inferiority. Just as Christ is not inferior to the Father, so also the wife is not inferior to her husband, nor is woman inherently inferior to man. However, there is a Divine order, also reflected in creation, and men and women have different roles and different responsibilities in that order.

Thus, I tend to think that the timeless truth of this passage is that both men and women need to recognize and accept their God-ordained position and purpose in both creation and the

church. Just as it would be completely inappropriate for a man to refuse to subordinate himself to Christ, so also it is inappropriate for a wife to refuse to submit to her husband (or for a single woman to reject the Divine order, etc.). The head-covering was a visible symbol of such submission in the first century church. But I don't think that head-coverings are the real issue. The real issue is one of subordination to the will of God and an acceptance of the Divine order. In a sense, it's the distinction between the letter of the law—and its spirit.

At any rate, for what it's worth, that's my opinion.

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn

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See Also:

- "What Do You Think About Headcoverings for Christian Women?"
- Sue Bohlin's Blog Post: "Why I'm the Lady in the Hat"

"Apostle John: Senile Upon Writing Gospel?"

"Could John Have Been Senile When He Wrote His Gospel?"

1) Approximately how old would the Apostle John have been when he wrote his Gospel?

2) I assume he would have been very old; would his age have

affected the reliability of his Gospel and thus render it not very reliable, i.e by becoming senile because of old age [sic]?

3) What exactly are the effects of being senile?

4) Does everyone elderly become senile, or is it possible to be old and not senile?

5) Approximately what age do people usually become senile?

John was probably very young when Jesus called him to be His follower. If John was around 20 years old at the time of Jesus' death, and if Jesus died around 33 A.D., and if John wrote his Gospel around 90 A.D., then John would have been approximately 77 years old when he wrote his Gospel. This is a reasonable estimate.

There is no reason whatever to suppose that John was senile when he wrote his Gospel. The author of John's Gospel is clearly someone in full possession of his mental faculties. There is absolutely no indication that the author of this Gospel was senile. Please note: Deut. 34:7 says that even at age 120, Moses was still a vigorous man.

As for your questions about senility, I will leave you to explore that on your own. WebMD has a search engine which will allow you to research senility and old age. You can find it at: http://www.webmd.com/.

Hope this helps.

The Lord bless you,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

“What Do You Think of The Message Bible?”

I’ve seen some articles online claiming that *The Message* Bible is not true to the original Greek and that it is secretly part of the New Age Movement. I enjoy reading it and I have not felt that it is heretical. Do you have a comment?

Thanks for your letter. I’ve also heard some rather negative things about *The Message* Bible. However, there is at least one Probe staff member who also enjoys reading *The Message* – so you’re not alone there! I’m afraid that I personally don’t know much about it. I really doubt that it is part of the New Age Movement or Neo-paganism. Probably *The Message* is intended to be something more like a paraphrase of the Bible (like The Living Bible), rather than a translation (like the NASB or NET Bible). This CAN (and usually DOES) result in much more interpretative freedom for the one doing the paraphrasing (in this case, Eugene Peterson). Thus, the choice of words *may not always accurately reflect the Hebrew and Greek texts.* It’s important to bear this in mind. But this does NOT mean that it’s secretly purveying New Age philosophy.

I think that *The Message* could be a great resource for reading, but I don’t think it would be best for studying the Bible. If your goal is devotional reading, it’s probably great. If your goal is to get (as best you can) at the original meaning of the text, you’re better off reading the NASB or NET Bible. Of course, it’s best of all if you can read Hebrew and Greek! But not many people can. At any rate, there’s certainly nothing wrong with reading *The Message*. And if you like reading it, more power to you!

Hope this helps a bit.

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

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“Will God Punish Me Forever for My Mistakes?”

I am so depressed right now because I feel all the mistakes in my past mistakes are so many that I won’t have a good future.

I’m 29 years old and I had 2 abortions before I was 20. Two years ago I slept with my boyfriend even though I was already a Christian; we went our seperate ways because of this. (He’s also a Christian.) I have been single ever since and I have been told that I am being punished for all my sins. Does this mean because of what happened in my past I will never find peace, joy or fullfillment? Does this mean God will never trust me with a relationship again? Will I have to pay for the rest of my life?

Will He refuse to forgive me since I made the mistakes when I was already a Christian? I have been so tormented by all this and I am in constant pain—my heart aches. I really don’t know what to do, I have prayed and asked for forgiveness, don’t know what else to do. All I feel is guilt, guilt, guilt.

Oh, you precious girl! I have such wonderful news for you!! Your flesh and Satan have been doing a number on you, pouring guilt and self-condemnation onto you all this time . . .when God has been standing there, extending grace and mercy and complete forgiveness to you, wanting you to receive it, but

you haven’t been able to see it.

How do I know this?

Because of “the Christian’s bar of soap,” 1 John 1:9–”If we confess our sins [and you have, over and over and over, right?], He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness.” Note that God does two things when we confess: 1) He forgives us, which means He sends them away forever, and 2) He cleanses us of ALL unrighteousness, making our souls clean and pure as snow. What’s missing for you is the decision to consciously RECEIVE His forgiveness and cleansing.

Are you being punished for your sins? Well, consider this: there is a difference between punishment, which includes wrath being poured out on us, and the consequences of our choices, which is loving discipline. Romans 8:1 says that there is NO condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because the Lord Jesus took all of the Father’s condemnation on Himself on the cross. So God is not punishing you. Are you experiencing consequences for your sinful choices? Maybe in the beginning. But from what you describe to me, with peace, joy, and fulfillment eluding you, it sounds like you have your cup upside down, which is preventing you from receiving any new blessings from God because of the mistaken belief that you are still under condemnation.

No, beloved sister, you will not have to pay for the rest of your life. What God wants is repentance, and you have already done that. Scripture says that godly sorrow leads to repentance (2 Cor. 7:10), but there is a worldly sorrow, fed by our own flesh or by demonic forces in temptation, that leads to death. And that’s where you’ve been living, hasn’t it? Camped out in a living death?

I would love to lead you in a prayer to receive God’s forgiveness and cleansing. May I also suggest that you do

something physical to make it more real: lift up your arms, palms up, like a small child ready to picked up by her daddy: *Dear Father, I want to turn my cup right-side up and receive all the forgiveness and cleansing You have for me. I make a choice today to open my heart to You and let You love me, let You forgive me, let You cleanse me from all unrighteousness. Thank You for exchanging my sin for Jesus' righteousness. Thank You that Your word is true, that because I have confessed my sins, You are faithful and just to forgive me of my sins and cleanse me of all unrighteousness. I receive it in Jesus' name.*

From here on out, every time the old feelings of condemnation and guilt pop up (and they will, because they have become a habit), go back to the Father and thank Him again for forgiving you and cleansing you, and tell Him, "I do not accept those false feelings of condemnation and guilt, but I do receive Your grace, and thank You for loving me, Abba!" It may take awhile for your feelings to catch up with the truth of your decision to receive God's grace, but that's OK. They will. Feelings follow beliefs and actions like a caboose follows the engine of a train.

The Lord bless you this day, _____, and I pray that you will hear the love in your Father's voice and see the love in His eyes as you receive His truth through this email!

Warmly,

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

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“Where Do Historians Refer to the Earth’s Darkness During the Crucifixion?”

I need some help finding where historians refer to the fact that the sky got totally dark and the stars came out when Jesus was crucified. I remember reading something from Julius Africanus, I think it was, who mentioned this fact, but now that I am looking for it I can’t find it. Didn’t Tacitus refer to Julius’ comment also?

The historian Thallus, in A.D. 52, wrote a history of the eastern Mediterranean since the Trojan War. Although his work is lost, it was quoted by Julius Africanus in about A.D. 221. This is mentioned by Gary Habermas in his 1996 book, *The Historical Jesus* (pp. 196-97). Lee Strobel has a brief section on this in his book *The Case for Christ* (pp. 84-85). The historian Edwin Yamauchi quotes from a footnote by Paul Maier in his 1968 book, *Pontius Pilate*, as follows: “Phlegon, a Greek author from Caria writing a chronology soon after 137 A.D., reported that in the fourth year of the 202nd Olympiad (i.e., 33 A.D.) there was ‘the greatest eclipse of the sun’ and that ‘it became night in the sixth hour of the day [i.e., noon] so that stars even appeared in the heavens. There was a great earthquake in Bithynia, and many things were overturned in Nicaea.'”

This, at any rate, should help you track down the source from Phlegon if you like.

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

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"Why Don't You Cite Young Earth Creationists in Your Material?"

Ray:
I couldn't help but notice that ICR/Dr. Henry Morris and Answers In Genesis/Ken Ham aren't cited (or at least I did not see their viewpoints) in some of your material about creation/evolution. Are there points of disagreement? Do you take a stand beyond design that commits to either a young earth or old earth?

I do occasionally refer to writings from young earth creationists. The article on human fossils, for instance, comes directly from young earth creationist Marvin Lubenow's book *Bones of Contention.* I focus on intelligent design because it is an area that nearly all creationists, young and old earth agree on. At Probe we do not take an official position on the age of the earth question primarily because most of us here, including myself are undecided (see Christian Views of Science and Earth History) about this critical issue. I agree with Phillip Johnson that we need first to stand united against the current naturalistic filibuster in science by opposing the naturalistic approach to origins and then come back to the age of the earth question later.

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“What About the Ice Age?”

My son told his teacher that he was tired of learning about the Ice Age because there is nothing about it in the Bible and he shouldn’t have to learn about things that aren’t in the Bible. Any advice?

The quick and simple answer to your question is that yes, there was an ice age, but there is disagreement as to its extent, length of time, and actual time of occurrence. Standard old earth (this would include old earth creationists; see our article Christian Views of Science and Earth History) rendering concludes that there were several ice ages over the last 50,000 years with the ice advancing and retreating several times. Young earth creationists also accept an ice age but there was only one and it occurred much more recently (within the last 10,000 years) as a post-flood event.

The dilemma you write about can indeed prove difficult for young minds at times. They have difficulty drawing a distinction between learning about something and believing it is true. In my article How to Talk to Your Kids about Creation and Evolution I address this in section seven titled, “Responding to Evolutionary Theory.” I basically suggest you tell your kids that simply demonstrating knowledge about evolution is not the same as believing it. You can always phrase your answer this way, “According to evolution . . .” This way you can demonstrate you understand the material but not necessarily believe it. I also address this in the section “Cultivate a Teachable Spirit” in the article Campus Christianity.

I think you'll find both of these articles helpful.

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin
Probe Ministries

"Did God Direct the Man to Work for the Family and the Woman to Just Stay Home with the Kids?"

Did God really direct the man to work for the family and the woman just to stay home and take care of the kids? Please give supporting verses to your response.

The "big picture" principles are these:

1. God gave Adam the job of cultivating the garden. Work is an intrinsic part of man's design.

> *Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. (Gen. 2:15)*

2. Eve was created to be a helpmate to Adam; nurturing relationships is an intrinsic part of woman's design.

> *Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him." (Gen 2:18)*

3. Men are commanded to take care of their families:

> *But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. (1 Tim 5:8)*

4. Wives are commanded to take care of their families by caring for them:

> *Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to* ***love their husbands, to love their children,*** *to be sensible, pure,* ***workers at home****, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored. (Titus 2:3-5)*

5. The excellent wife in Proverbs 31 (vv. 10-31) did engage in home-based businesses, but her primary focus was on her home and her family. Note that she did not "just stay home and take care of the kids"—she had a broader range of interests and activities than that—but she kept her priorities straight.

Hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

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