

# **“Jehovah is the Only Name of God!”**

*Posted on Probe's Facebook:*

Having just been looking at several sites including Wikipedia for God's name (which I already know from scripture) it never ceases to amaze me how wrong some people are. There is only one truth and God's name Jehovah is in the original scriptures over 7000 times. Jesus said in His Model prayer "Let Your name be sanctified." How can we sanctify it if we don't use it, as sanctify means "make known." God and Lord are just titles like king or judge or doctor. So unless you are going to be completely truthful then it would be better for none of these sites to say anything. People the truth is out there, it's up to you to do your own homework like I did.

The Name of God is not "Jehovah"! God revealed His Name to Moses in Exodus 3:14 as YHWH, popularly known as the Tetragrammaton or "the four letter name" which means "I AM" or "the eternal one" or "the self-existing one." The exact pronunciation of this Name was lost to history with the destruction of the last Temple in Jerusalem. It was uttered only once a year on the Day of Atonement. Although the Name appears thousands of times in the Old Testament, it was never spoken; instead Adonai was used in its place, which was a generic reference to God. Many English translations use LORD to show where the Name appears in the Hebrew text. The word "Jehovah" was coined by scholars around the 17th century through combining the vowels from Adonai with the consonants of YHWH.

More importantly than the actual pronunciation or even spelling of the Name was its meaning; in revealing His Name as "I AM," God declared that He cannot be identified with a name because that limits the eternal one to a finite and temporal

description. In ancient times a name denoted the character of its object, setting limits to it (Ecclesiastes 6:10), and gave the name-giver a particular power over the named, such as with the name God gave to the first human Adam which means man and positioned him at the pinnacle of creation; in turn Adam was responsible for naming all the animals which established his authority over them (Genesis 2:20). A proper name for God suggests a limitation to the finite world much like the pagan deities of Egypt. However, because God is eternal He remains outside of the cosmos and in control of it. A name sets a boundary to His eternal being. In other words, God's Name revealed to Moses was a Name that cannot be named or as it has been called "the ineffable Name." In the context of Exodus God was confronting and destroying the pagan Egyptians and their false gods, which all had names that represented particular aspects of the finite world: the sun, the moon, the underworld, the river, etc. God declared that He is different than those limited gods because He is Wholly Other, all powerful and eternal. He cannot be represented or personified by the cycles of nature.

Naming divinity in the ancient world made the gods personal, but extremely limited in their abilities and powers. The gods of paganism were personifications of nature; for example, Ra was the sun god that gave life, but his power did not reach to the underworld. Zeus controlled the sky, but not the sea which belonged to Poseidon. The gods did not ultimately rule the cosmos, but were subject to a universal principle of fate; not even the gods could escape their predetermined destinies.

YHWH declared Himself "holy" or different from the limited pagan gods. Yet, He was personal too in that He did not rule by caprice; His followers could pray to Him, reason with Him and even argue with Him as with any personal deity in the hopes that He would change His mind (Genesis 6:6; Numbers 11, 14:11-19). YHWH was both eternal and personal, a radical departure from the ancient pagan belief in limited gods and

unpredictable fate.

The New Testament embodies the fullness of this infinite yet personal God in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. God becoming man in John 1 was the equivalent of YHWH revealing His Name to Moses in Exodus 3. Just as the eternal one did the impossible by limiting Himself with a proper name, so through the incarnation God did the impossible in the minds of strict monotheistic Jews by becoming man (John 5:18; 10:33), a concept the Jews thought so blasphemous that they wanted to stone Jesus for claiming to be "the Son of God" a title he used to identify himself as God (John 10:36). Just as Jesus used "Son of Man" in order to show his complete identity with humanity, God chose self-limitation in emptying Himself and took the form of a man in Jesus Christ (Philippians 2:6-8).

Yet "Jesus" is not the Name of God and "Christ" (the chosen one) of course is a title. Jesus means "salvation" and although He was the incarnation of God, He was still limited and still a man, like us in every way except for sin (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus of Nazareth was not superman and had no special magic powers or abilities. All that He accomplished was through faith in his Father God and by the power of the Holy Spirit (John 14:10). Jesus is the name of a man, who identified himself as "I AM" (John 8:58). He was the God/Man who humbled himself in death, bringing salvation to humanity, and because of His suffering it is the name of Jesus that God exalts above every Name (Philippians 2:8-11). And only through calling on the name of Jesus does humanity experience salvation (Acts 4:12). The exaltation of Jesus Christ makes the whole debate over the proper Name of God a moot point, since it is the name of a man that is greater than even the Name of God.

It is therefore biblically inaccurate, linguistically mistaken and theologically impossible to make reference to "Jehovah" or "Yahweh" as the Name of God. It is best that we abandon the entire use of the name Jehovah and simply return to the word

LORD in our English translations wherever the Hebrew reads YHWH with the understanding that this is “the ineffable Name” that means “the eternal self-existing one,” who is Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and who remains forever present with us through the Holy Spirit.

Lawrence Terlizzese, Ph.D.

Posted Aug. 2013

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## **“From Flat Earth to Lot’s Daughters—Major Questions on God”**

*Several very broad questions that have plagued many through the years were asked by young lady from the U.K.:*

- 1) The Bible reflects that we live on a flat earth, does it not?
- 2) Why did God allow such terrible violence in the Old Testament?
- 3) Why does the bible degrade the women unequal to men?
- 4) The Bible says that women should not have authority over man or teach in 1 Timothy 2:12? Isn’t that God being [unfair] to women?
- 5) Why did Lot offer up his daughters to be gang raped? Why did God allow Lot’s daughters to later have sex with their father? I don’t understand why a loving God will allow this?
- 6) Was God being evil when He killed all the firstborn in Egypt?

Hello \_\_\_\_\_,

Thanks for your letter. Please allow me to briefly respond to your questions in the order in which you asked them:

1. The Bible nowhere teaches that we live on a flat earth. While some might say that the Bible's use of poetic language implies such a thing, this would be to seriously misread and misinterpret biblical poetry.

2. This is a question related to the problem of evil. Please see response #5 below.

3. The New Testament teaches that men and women are equal in Christ. Paul writes unequivocally, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). Both men and women are made in the image and likeness of God and, hence, have intrinsic worth and dignity (Genesis 1:27). But this equality in worth and value before God does not mean that men and women have the same function in the world or role in the church.

4. So I don't think that 1 Tim. 2:12 is teaching that women are not equal to men in worth and dignity before God. Paul has already taught that they are in Galatians 3:28. Rather, this verse shows that men and women have different roles to play in the body of Christ. The sexes have different roles and responsibilities. Hence, women (and not men) are honored with bringing children into the world (and thus Eve is called the mother of all the living in Genesis 3:20). Further, they are encouraged to teach other women (Titus 2:4) as well as children. This verse (and others like it) speaks to that authoritative teaching ministry of the church (when it is gathered together as the church, with both men and women present) which God has committed to men. It does not mean that a woman cannot instruct men in all sorts of arenas (including college and university settings, etc.) outside this special

teaching function in the church. Paul is speaking to a very limited area of teaching in the church which God has given to men. Women have other teaching functions in the church and (as I said) they can also teach all they want outside the church. But God has entrusted what we might call the "pulpit ministry" of the church to men.

5. This also, it seems to me, is a question which can be subsumed under the problem of evil. I think the correct answer to questions such as this is, first, to point out that such behavior contradicts (and is contrary to) God's revealed moral will. In other words, it is sin. All human sin must be laid at the feet of human beings, for these are the ones committing such vile acts. God does not force man to misbehave and do evil. Rather, mankind freely chooses such abominable behavior. God, indeed, is the One who has graciously provided a way of escape for all men in Christ. And hence, all men and women are called upon to repent of their sins and place their hope and faith in Christ for salvation. Those who refuse to repent and place their trust in Christ for salvation will be held fully accountable before God for their sins. This is a situation that we are all strenuously called upon to avoid by fleeing to the refuge (in Christ) which God has graciously made available to all men and women. But those who refuse God's free offer of salvation in Christ will be held fully accountable for all the sin and moral evil which they have committed.

6. Now, as to God's killing the first born of Egypt, we must bear in mind a few things. First, as the Author and Giver of life, God has the right both to give and take life as He sees fit. Indeed, He does this all the time. But according to the Bible, physical death does not end our personal, conscious existence. Rather, our existence continues into the afterlife. And if (as I believe) all those that die before reaching an age of moral accountability before God (whatever that age might be) are saved, this sovereign act of God would have brought many of these people to a much better place—a

place of everlasting joy and peace in the presence of God—a place they might never have seen had they been permitted to live out their days on earth. [See also our article [Do Babies Go to Hell?](#)] Secondly, all these deaths could have been avoided if Pharaoh would have yielded his own arrogant will to God’s and let God’s people go free (as he was repeatedly told to do). Pharaoh witnessed several miracles of God and was given repeated opportunities to obey and let God’s people go. Unfortunately, he refused—with the result that both he and his people were made to endure several more plagues until he finally relented and allowed God’s people (whom he had enslaved, after all) to go free. It’s always important to bear in mind the “much-bigger” picture of what we read in the Bible.

I hope these answers prove helpful to you in your ongoing spiritual pilgrimage. Each of these answers could be (and has been) developed at much greater length by Christian scholars—and I would encourage you to explore such answers in articles and books. But this is all I can say over email, for time is very limited.

God bless you \_\_\_\_\_!

Shalom in Christ,  
Michael Gleghorn

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## **“What About ADD and Medication for Kids?”**

My son has ADD. It’s a real struggle and at this point in time I am not wanting to put him on medication. Others have felt that medication would help him. I know Christ has given us a

promise of a sound mind which we pray daily and also for the mind of Christ. I want to do what is best for him and am starting to get confused because with everything we are doing his struggles don't seem to be letting up for him and I would hate to have let him struggle especially in school unnecessarily. What are your thoughts on this issue of ADD and medication?

We have an [e-mail answer about chemical imbalance](#) that you may find helpful.

Also, the Lord has given me great peace about the validity of the analogy between the physical assistance I need as a polio survivor to use a cane for walking and an electric scooter for large places, and the physical (chemical) assistance that a weakness in brain chemistry needs in order to function well. There is no shame in using my cane to help me walk, and there should be no shame in using chemical assistance in using meds to help your son's brain function better. Part of God's charge to Adam and Eve was to exercise dominion over the earth, which includes research and development of technology. I bet you didn't anguish over giving him immunizations when he was a baby, which was also the outworking of that same charge to have dominion over the earth.

When I helped in classes at my kids' school, there was one little boy whose mom put him on Ritalin and whose dad, who said "No kid of mine is going to take that sissy stuff!", wouldn't give it to him when he was caring for the boy. This precious little boy told me, "I wish I had my 'smart medicine.'" The meds made it possible for him to concentrate and to do much better in school (and thus feel better about himself).

I don't see any contradiction between having the mind of Christ and taking medication that enables your son to be clearer and not have to struggle so to EXPERIENCE the mind of Christ. One is a spiritual issue and the other is physical. If



you get nothing from this e-mail other than a sense of permission to give it a whirl and see if it helps, great! <smile> You can always take him off it later. It's not a sin issue, it's a "let's try and see if this works" issue. . . which, in my experience as a parent, is how much of parenting works since kids don't come with manuals!

Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin  
Probe Ministries

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## **“Should I Be Concerned About Sarah Young’s ‘Jesus Calling’?”**

What do you have to say about *Jesus Calling* author Sarah Young? I'm seeing and hearing about red flags from several other reputable Christian sources such as Lighthouse Trails and Worldview Weekend.

One ought to be skeptical when someone is writing a book telling you they have heard from Jesus and this is what He said. The popularity of Sarah Young's *Jesus Calling* also calls for scrutiny because millions are reading it and saying they have benefited from it. I have looked at the links you provided and here is what I think.

Their use of Galatians 1 to criticize the book is puzzling to me because Sarah Young does not offer another gospel. Paul was dealing with the Judaizers and those who were adding works to the salvation message. She makes quite clear that Jesus is her

Savior and as a former missionary she also is clear that salvation is by grace alone. This also comes across in many of the daily entries.

Sarah Young also makes no pretension to be adding to Scripture. She makes it clear that the Bible is the only infallible word of God. In the foreword to a follow-up book, *Jesus Lives*, she says she has written what she "heard" (quotation marks are hers) and has tried to make sure it aligns with Scripture. So she is careful to indicate she is not hearing the infallible Word of God and she checks what she eventually writes with the Bible. Each entry is followed by several Scriptures, and when Scripture is quoted in what she has written it appears in italics.

One of the links referenced 1 John 4:1 which admonishes us to test the spirits since not every spirit is from God. They did not mention the following two verses which tell us that we know a spirit is from God if "that spirit confesses Jesus as the Christ who has come in the flesh" (1 John 4:3). Sarah Young tests what she "hears" against the Word of God and she definitely believes Jesus is the Christ and came in the flesh. John also implies that we may sometimes hear from spirits that are from God! Why else would he admonish us to test them? If we never hear from God after the apostolic age, John should simply have said do not pay any attention to any spirit—it can't be from God. Testing is a waste of time if the authors from Lighthouse and Worldview Weekend are to be followed.

The gospel of John closes by telling us that Jesus did many more things that have not been written (and presumably said other things that were not written). So Jesus said some things that are not in the Bible. Since Jesus did not sin and He tells us He spoke only what the Father told Him to say (John 17:7-8), then there are words of God that were not recorded in Scripture. They are not in the Bible presumably because they were not intended for all people at all times. Similarly, I'm sure kings and leaders in Israel consulted prophets of God at

times for which we have no recording. It's reasonable to assume that often the prophets did indeed hear from God but didn't write it down. Again, there have been words God has spoken that we do not have in the Bible because they were not intended for all people at all times. But it was still communication from God. The links provided verses that clearly say we are not to add to the Scriptures. I agree. Sarah Young makes no claim to do so. Some will find what she has written useful and some will not. She may occasionally write something that is not clearly Biblical in character. Her admission that she tries to make sure what she writes is in accordance with the Bible indicates that she knows she is human, makes mistakes, and does not claim any sort of infallibility of her writings. Any Christian writer today should always recognize their own fallibility.

In John 15, Jesus calls His disciples "friends." Since this is in the Bible it's meant for all people at all times. Those of us who have fully accepted Jesus' death on the cross as payment for our sin and believe God raised Him from the dead are friends of Jesus. With my earthly friends I don't just know in my head they are my friends; I spend time with them, and yes, even converse with them. The canon of Scripture is definitely closed. Sarah Young does not pretend to be opening the canon back up again.

*Jesus Calling* is not for everybody. (The claims that the Jesus of *Jesus Calling* sounds feminine is more a problem of the writers than of Sarah Young.) The Triune God is the author of both masculinity and femininity. I would think He knows how to speak both languages (Isaiah 49:15).

Again, I was not impressed with the arguments put forth that what Sarah Young has written is somehow adding to Scripture, presents a false gospel, or that the only way God speaks to us today is from the Scriptures.

I have been using *Jesus Calling* and *Jesus Lives* as part of my

daily devotional time for a year and a half. My discernment filter is operational all the time, and I have not come across anything that concerns me.

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin, Ph.D.

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## **“Is “Lord of the Rings” OK for Christians to Read?”**

Some young people in our church are reading some books called *Lord of the Rings*. Are these books suitable for Christians or are they ungodly books like that Harry Potter series? Apparently the teens think they are “harmless entertainment” from what I understand and they really enjoyed the Trilogy (read all 3 books). Please give me at least a sort of detailed explanation on where you all stand one way or another.

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

We really ought to have an article on the Lord of the Rings trilogy. . .

It was written by a solid Christian, J.R.R. Tolkien, with a strongly Christian worldview. It is a tremendous blessing that something so biblical in its understanding has received the attention from Hollywood and the movie-going public that this trilogy has, and it has triggered further interest in reading the books that inspired the movies. We are completely behind

the *Lord of the Rings* books.

I would like to point you to a helpful article by one of my personal heroes, Gene Edward Veith, who wrote an essay on LOTR in *World Magazine*:  
[www.worldmag.com/world/issue/12-08-01/national\\_1.asp](http://www.worldmag.com/world/issue/12-08-01/national_1.asp)

Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin  
Probe Ministries

Published July 2004

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*Addendum, Feb. 2013:*

Our friends at LeaderU.com created a marvelous Special Focus with the release of the LOTR movies that features links to excellent articles:

[Lord of the Rings: True Mythology](#)

Is *Lord of the Rings*, the most popular in the UK of all works in England's great literary legacy, based in pagan myth or Christian themes—or both? Dig into the story behind the stories and their master storyteller in our Special Focus.

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## **“Are Dreadlocks OK for a Christian?”**

**Is it okay for a Christian to wear dreadlocks?**

The answer to this question will depend on the motive of the person wearing the dreadlocks. Why are they wearing them and

what are they saying by it? This approach applies equally to any style of dress. There is no Christian haircut or clothing style. There are only Christians who wear clothes or wear their hair in a particular way for a certain reason. It might be a good way to start off a conversation with someone who wears dreadlocks by asking why he or she wears their hair that way. Generally, dreadlocks represent a person's close connection to Reggae music and Rastafarianism; but not necessarily, since in our society people adopt certain trends and styles simply for the novelty and then are on to the next fashion. Clothing, like food, should not be a source of contention for Christians. Romans 14 tells us that every believer is responsible before the Lord for their actions and that because we have the Holy Spirit, we will be able to make the right choices that are pleasing to the Lord.

Lawrence Terlizzese, Ph.D.

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## **“What’s the Difference Between Lesbian Relationships and Heterosexual Marriage?”**

How are the dynamics of lesbian relationships different from a marriage's? A lot of marriages have issues and “skeletons in the closet” too. So just generally speaking, how are they different? Maybe more drama, more desperation in lesbian relationships? And what is the fundamental reasoning you have reached that may cause the difference?

Ever since you wrote, I have been thinking about your question and talking to people with lots of experience, including a dear friend who was a gay activist for decades and in a long-term relationship with another woman for twelve years.

The core problem is trying to force a same-sex relationship, where the God-designed complementarity is missing, into a marriage-like relationship that is designed for balance. There isn't any. The strengths and weaknesses of male and female are simply missing, so all you have are the same strengths and same weaknesses.

For example, we women are created to be relational; men are more task-oriented by design. Together, this means that things get done in a context of people's hearts mattering. In lesbian relationships, it's ALL about the relationship. And since a part of lesbianism is a deep core of insecurity, women are driven by fear to protect the relationship at all costs, lest the other one even *think* of leaving. This means binding the other to oneself with gifts, favors, music, shared everything including finances, and constant contact throughout the day (and panic when the other doesn't respond immediately).

I have a ball consisting of magnets that fit and hold together by magnetic attraction. The orientation of the pieces in relation to each other matters because some pieces are drawn to each other, but if you flip one of the pieces, the magnetic polarity causes them to repel each other. You can make them touch, but you have to apply some kind of force to hold them together. God designed males and females to be attracted to each other and to hold together naturally, like the north and south poles of magnets, in large part because of our differences. When same-sex couples try to forge an intimate, romantic/sexual relationship, it's like two north poles or two south poles of a magnet, so they have to use some kind of force to keep them together. This is why manipulation is the glue of emotionally



dependent relationships. One long-time lesbian said, "We don't have partners, we have prisoners."

Most lesbian-identifying women are plagued by a yawning "hole" in their hearts, either a mommy-shaped hole or a best-girlfriend shaped hole. Thus, the attraction, unlike with magnets, is the hope of getting an aching emotional need met. A friend of mine who has been walking with same-sex-attracted people for decades calls that aching emotional need "giant sucking funnels." Another friend referred to it as "two ticks, no dog." And one of my friends met a fifty-something woman at a gay bar who actually said, "I want you to be my mommy." They try to stuff other women into that hole, and it never works. That's because once a girl's legitimate developmental needs are not met at their appropriate stage in life, there is no way for another human being to fill such a large hole. But God can, and I have seen Him do it, through His people and through personal intimacy with Jesus.

My friends who came out of the lesbian community tell me that they've never seen healthy lesbian relationships. Women in long-term relationships present a well-crafted façade to the world. When the women split up, everyone is shocked, because there was one dynamic for public, and then the reality of what went on behind closed doors. Usually that means one person controlling the other, one person caretaking the other, and not a mutuality of equals. It's more a matter of a major power differential. The biblical concept of husband and wife as equals before God, each contributing something intrinsically different to the relationship, is missing in lesbian relationships. This is especially true for those who get into longer-term relationships, where there is usually an age gap because women are hoping to fix the mother-daughter brokenness inside them. One of my friends watched her mother get into what became a long-term relationship with another woman, and over the years has listened to her mother complain bitterly about the way she's treated. She is still saying, decades into



the relationship, "I'm miserable but I don't know how to live without her, so I'll just stay."

One day I was looking at a sculpture I have of a circle of friends, arms around each others' shoulders. It reminded me of the dynamic of a husband-wife marriage, where they are face-to-face in a circle of two as they get established as a new family unit in society, and then they enlarge the circle by bringing children into it. By contrast, lesbian relationships are like two lovers face-to-face in their "us only" circle of two, excluding all others, jealous of outside friendships and suspicious of all other relationships as a threat to the circle of two. The relationship is inherently sterile; they cannot bring children into the circle without engaging (one way or another) in God's "one male, one female" requirement for creating new human beings.

Another difference in the dynamics of husband-wife marriages vs. lesbian relationships is that when men and women work on getting emotionally healthier, bringing their marriage into alignment with God's Word, it strengthens the marriage and builds oneness between two very different, very "other" people. When two lesbian women work on getting emotionally healthier, it means de-tangling and disengaging from the enmeshment that defines their relationship and tries to erase the boundaries of who they are individually. If they bring their relationship into alignment with God's Word (Rom. 1:26), they will no longer be lesbian partners.

I do need to add a disclaimer, that there has been a major age-related sea change. What I've just said is true of women 30-35 and older, but some things are drastically different for younger women who identify as lesbians. Like the other people their age, they grew up in a far more sexualized culture than ever before, and they grew up in a world of ever-increasing approval of lesbian behavior (thanks to the proliferation of pornography, for one big reason). Many girls experimented in lesbian relationships and sex simply because of peer pressure

and the messages of the culture: “How will you know if you like it or not unless you try? You owe it to yourself!”

However, just like with their older counterparts, these relationships are still volatile, intense, drama-filled, and very difficult to extricate from. Jealousy and manipulation (especially guilt) are major dynamics. Regardless of the age, same-sex romantic and sexual relationships are not God’s intention or design, so they don’t work well.

You asked about my fundamental reasoning for my conclusions; simply observing, week after week after week for 14 years, what these girls and women report about their relationships and how hard it is to come out of a lesbian identity, is quite the education. Especially when I compare it to what I know of God’s word combined with the experience of enjoying a balanced, healthy marriage for 38 years.

Hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin

Posted April 2013

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## **“Let Me Tell You About How I Know God Has a Sense of Humor”**

I was reading Sue Bohlin’s blog post [Does God Has a Sense of Humor?](#), and I have something to add. My name, Talitha, is from Mark 5:41. It means “Little Girl.” My mother told me that when she was pregnant with me, God told her to name me Talitha. Oh, and the kicker? I’m five-foot, and 108 pounds, roughly. God

**DOES has a sense of humor!**

Love it! Thank you so much for sharing your story—and for making me smile!

Warmly,

Sue Bohlin

Posted Apr. 15, 2013

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## **“I Am the Male Victim of Verbal Abuse”**

Kerby,

I am the victim of [verbal abuse](#), a process that we are in counseling for.

I am a man. I was disheartened that one of the top searches for verbal abuse in Google comes from you, and every reference is to the woman being the victim. There is no explanation that this happens all the time from a woman against a man.

As a fellow Christian man, I hope that you will see how this hurts to read. I would like to recommend to you that you change the pronouns to he/she or his/her.

Thank you for your consideration and bless you for your call to this subject.

I am sorry for what is happening to you. I understand your reaction, but perhaps you missed the section in which I say:

*Frequently, the perpetrator of verbal abuse is male and the victim is female, but not always. There are many examples of women who are quite verbally abusive. But for the sake of simplicity of pronouns in this radio program, I will often identify the abuser as male and the victim as female.*

When I had June Hunt on my radio program last week, she documented that 95% of abuse is male to female. I recognize that abuse, especially verbal abuse, can be done by women.

Obviously, I could change some of the pronouns. [*Note from the webservant: and we have done so.*] Thank you for your email.

Kerby Anderson

Posted Feb. 26, 2013

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## **“Why Does God Allow Natural Evils Such as Tsunamis, Hurricanes and Earthquakes?”**

My question is about natural evils such as tsunamis, hurricanes, earthquakes etc. I feel like the problem of moral evil such as murder and stealing is solved by the free will defense but I haven't heard a good refutation of why God allows tsunamis and other natural events to take out huge villages and kill children.

The so called “natural evils” such as natural disasters are only evil from a human perspective. Tsunamis and earthquakes are normal and necessary occurrences in nature. We could not

live on planet earth without them. They shape the environment and contribute to an inhabitable planet. They are part of a normal cycle of nature, along with every other occurrence in nature such as volcanoes, floods and even disease and plague, which is God's way of maintaining balance in the ecology, necessary for human survival. These natural occurrences only become evil when humanity gets in their way. This sometimes has to do with human choices and "moral evil." For example building huge population centers on known fault lines and danger zones and not taking proper precautions in construction or having an efficient evacuation plan and warning system in place. Humanity cannot do away with the normal cycles of nature because we need a healthy natural environment to live. But we can adjust ourselves to nature in order to mitigate some of its more deadly effects on civilization. New Orleans is the perfect example of human arrogance, neglect and apathy in the face of known dangers from hurricanes. This city did not take the proper precautions in building a technological defense against hurricanes when it was known for decades that it was in danger of a disaster. The Netherlands is an example of a country that did take the proper precautions in protecting itself from flooding and goes on to survive without incident. So should we blame God for the apathy of New Orleans? This means there is not a strict separation between natural and moral evil and that they are more interwoven than we realize or care to admit.

Now, many times natural disasters are not the result of human choices. We have two options. First, it is a judgment of God. Second, we don't know why, other than saying God has a purpose in this disaster that we don't understand, which is certainly an acceptable choice; that is how the problem of evil is explained in the book of Job. I am not averse to saying natural disasters are a judgment from God. The Bible has no problem calling natural disasters judgments—floods and earthquakes are perfect examples. This does not mean that every natural disaster is a judgment. I am only saying

judgment is a possibility.

So there are three possible answers to your question. Natural disasters happen as a result of human choices. They are a judgment of God or they happen for a reason we do not understand.

Feel free to follow up on any of these issues with me if you like.

Lawrence Terlizzese, Ph.D.

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