

# **“We Only Learn from What We Experience in Life—Stop Judging!”**

**How can you be so sure of what you write? We only learn from what we experience in life. Expand your horizons, stop judging and embrace life. Peace.**

Dear friend,

How do you know that experience is the only source of knowledge? I would suggest that that is an unnecessarily narrow understanding of how we gain knowledge. I would also suggest that you do not live by this belief. Since you appear to be a student from your e-mail address, let me ask: Have you passed any history classes? You didn't *experience* the subjects of the classes; you learned about them a different way. Did you ever see someone do something unwise or dumb and choose not to do it? You learned without experiencing.

We suggest that there are four primary ways we learn things:

1. Experience: living through it (for example, getting burned by putting a hand on a stovetop or in a flame)
2. Reasoning: figuring things out (for example, logic—2 premises and a conclusion. “My husband earned his doctorate. Ph.D.s are earned in graduate school. Therefore, Ray went through graduate school.”)
3. Observation: watching (things always fall down, not up)
4. Revelation: being told from an outside source. Some things we can't know without being told. (for example, what God tells us in the Bible and through the person of Jesus Christ)

The reason you (correctly) discern confidence in our writing

is that our faith is based on strong evidence, and because we understand that there are other ways of knowing than experience.

If you truly are curious—as opposed to simply venting some steam—we have a couple of articles you may find interesting:

- [\*“Confident Belief\* by Rick Wade](#)
- [\*“How I Know Christianity Is True\* by Pat Zukeran](#)

Thanks for writing.

Sue Bohlin  
Probe Ministries

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## “How Can a Loving God Send People to Hell?”

**Did God create hell? If He did create it, then how can He be a loving God, yet send people to a place of eternal damnation?**

Yes, God created hell. Matthew 25:41 suggests that it was originally prepared for the devil and his angels. But unregenerate human beings will also be cast there.

We must not try to separate God’s attributes from one another. God is love, but He is also holy, just and full of wrath against sin. Because of His great love for us, God has provided His Son as a sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the world (John 3:16, etc.). Those who reject this sacrifice will not receive its benefits (including the forgiveness of sins). These will be justly punished by God for their sins, and the wages of sin is death. “Death” in the Bible carries the idea

of separation. Physical death is the separation of the spirit from the body (James 2:26). Spiritual death is the separation of a person from God (Ephesians 2:1-2). Eternal death (the Second Death, or Lake of Fire) is eternal separation from God.

I hope this helps.

Michael Gleghorn

Probe Ministries

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P.S. From Sue Bohlin:

We must also remember that God wants to save people He made in His image, and for whom Christ died, more than we want to be saved. 2 Peter 3:9 tells us that God is not willing that *any* should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance. It's not that a loving God SENDS people to hell, but that He sadly allows people to experience the horrible consequences of their refusal to trust Him.

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## **“Did the Jesus Stories Arise from Pagan Myths?”**

In his book *The Jesus Mysteries* Tim Freke speculates that the New Testament stories originated as pagan myth. Clearly there are very close resemblances to stories of Greek Dionusis and Egyptian Osiris, and others such as nativity stories, 12 disciples, ministry, miracles and message, last supper, crucifixion, resurrection, and return to judge man.

Bishops in the 4th century selected and revised the books of

the New Testament to be consistent with their agreed-upon orthodox doctrine. Some openly acknowledged the more than coincidental “Jesus” stories in pagan mythology. They explained this as the work of the devil trying to deceive the faithful by creating these myths years before the supposed birth of Jesus. This is far too much of a stretch for me to accept.

**If Biblical stories originated from pre-existent myth, how can we Christians reconcile this with our faith?**

Thanks for writing Probe Ministries. You raise some interesting issues that are still debated among scholars today. Although I am far from an expert in this area, the little bit of reading which I have done leads me to a conclusion roughly as follows.

First, it is true that some of the Mystery Religions and pagan stories arose prior to Christianity. What’s not always as clear, however, is the precise doctrinal content of these religions prior to Christianity. In other words, some of the doctrines which are very similar to Christianity did not arise until AFTER the origin and spread of the Christian church. Thus, while a particular Mystery Religion, etc., may have existed prior to Christianity, it may still have borrowed Christian themes, symbols and doctrines after the origin of the Christian church. In those cases, the doctrinal borrowing was done by the Mystery Religions – not by Christianity.

Second, we have to ask, “Are these pagan stories history, or are they myths?” Although we may not always have all the evidence we would like, most scholars would readily acknowledge that there is no good reason for believing these stories to be anything other than myths. The Gospel stories, on the other hand, are firmly rooted in history. Additionally, when one looks very carefully at the alleged parallels between Christianity and pagan religions, what one typically finds is that the “parallels” are actually quite superficial. For

instance, one might find myths related to the cycle of seedtime and harvest, in which a god dies and rises ANNUALLY in conjunction with the pattern of "death" and apparent "rebirth" in nature. This is, in a sense, a mythological expression of what happens in nature each year. But the Gospel writers don't speak of Christ's death in these terms. His death is not an annual event associated with seasonal changes, it was a once-for-all-time event in which God reconciled the world to Himself through the death of His Son as a substitutionary sacrifice for the world's sins! For reasons such as these (i.e., the non-historical qualities of the pagan stories and their superficial similarities to Christianity), I think it's somewhat of an unwarranted leap to conclude that early Christians stole their ideas from these pagan beliefs and practices.

Third, Christianity arose out of Judaism, which was thoroughly monotheistic at the time of Christ. But these theories have early Jewish Christians borrowing from pagan, polytheistic beliefs, rather than from Jewish, monotheistic ones. Frankly, I find this thesis extremely difficult to swallow if, as the critics say, Christianity arose by purely naturalistic processes (as opposed to a unique set of supernatural events).

Finally, suppose that there are some pagan accounts which seem to resemble Christianity and which are earlier in time. Since most scholars agree that these accounts are mythological, not historical, what might we conclude from this evidence? Personally, I like what C.S. Lewis had to say. He said that these ancient myths, largely the products of poetic imagination, were essentially good dreams sent to the pagans by God foreshadowing the good things to come. What they had seen in these dreams ("through a glass darkly," as it were), God later did clearly and in history when He sent His Son to be our Savior. According to Lewis, the Gospel story about Jesus is "myth become fact." That is, the ancient myth has now become true history in the incarnation, death, and

resurrection of Jesus. This idea, in my opinion, has genuine merit.

As for the idea that bishops in the 4th century selected and revised the books of the New Testament to be consistent with their agreed-upon orthodox doctrine, this is simply false. We have manuscript evidence for the New Testament as far back as the early second century. No such revision occurred. There were, of course, selection criteria. But these were hardly arbitrary. The doctrinal content of the books did have to conform to the "rule of faith." But this insured the purity of the church's doctrine – not its corruption. Thus, many false and spurious "gospels" of the second century and later were rejected. But this was because they were not written by apostles (or companions of apostles), they did not conform to the "rule of faith," they had numerous historical and theological inaccuracies, and the church recognized them as inferior products which lacked any sign of God's divine authorship and inspiration, etc.

Thus, biblical stories did not originate from pre-existent myths. They are firmly rooted in history, as even extra-biblical historical sources and archaeology repeatedly confirm.

Hope this sets your mind at ease a bit.

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn  
Probe Ministries

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# **“Does Fornication Ruin Your Life Forever?”**

I recently had a child outside of marriage. Upon being brought up inside the church with a family who have strong Christian beliefs, I found pregnancy to be the most unhappy time of my life, with family sicknesses making me more stressed.

I knew what to expect from my family, with feelings of disappointment all round, but they have grown to be supportive and love my daughter. Although they seem to have accepted the new lifestyle I will lead, I myself cannot come to terms with things.

I constantly go over my mistakes, wishing I could rewind time. I would have done so many things differently. I've been going out with my boyfriend for a long time but I feel we have made so many mistakes. I love my boyfriend to bits and couldn't lose him after nearly four years of going out and don't want to make things sound like he is a mistake. Even more so, when I say I wish this situation had never happened, I feel like I am saying that I wish my daughter wasn't here, which isn't true because I love her to bits too!

I can't rid the shame I feel and felt throughout pregnancy. I read so many magazines that talked about happy expectant mothers-to-be and how to enjoy pregnancy and the blooming process. I cannot say I felt the same way. Right now I hate everything I have done and feel I have let my family down. I feel all the respect I built up over the years has amounted to nothing.

Not only that but my personal dreams have been affected. By now, I always imagined I'd have a big house, be well into my career and be married with a good Christian man. Instead everything is the total opposite and I feel I no longer have a

purpose to serve or way to enjoy life. I feel I've ruined everything. I'd never have thought I'd have ever been in this situation. I saw it happen to friends of mine also in church previously and had deep sympathy for them. But going through it yourself is 100 times worse.

I feel alone, hopeless, depressed, and unloved. My boyfriend wants us to get married, go back to church and get our lives back on track but I don't know how to because all I feel is constant pain and reminders of what I've done. After all, the baby has to be a reminder and I can't forget her. I feel like my mistakes will affect my life forever.

I also feel a slight anger in all of this with myself, my boyfriend and certain friends. I can't understand why I had to be made to be everyone's gossip and selected out of all the girls in the world to be made an example of. I feel so hard done by, especially more so as I was trying ever so hard to change and that was when I was hit with the news. I still hear a couple of my friends talking of their fornication and can't help but feel angry that they are not being frowned upon by the church as people are none the wiser of their goings on, which I know is bad for me to feel, but I am full of all kinds of emotions right now.

When will the sun shine for me? I can't take much more of these cloudy days?!

Very unhappy.

You have touched my heart with your letter. I am so sorry for the pain you are going through, but I have *such* good news of comfort and HOPE for you! I have a dear friend in our church who was in your exact shoes. God is using Ellen so mightily now, and blessing her life so much, that when people make a list of who is most used by God in our church, she's right up near the top—and that is no exaggeration. I asked her to write a response to your letter, which follows my remarks.



One thing I want to share is that a mark of maturity is the ability to distinguish between a bad choice you have repented of, and the grace of God giving us good things even as a result of that bad choice—like your precious daughter and your boyfriend. You can say that you sinned, that you made a bad choice, and still embrace the goodness of God in giving you two wonderful people who love you, and they don't cancel out each other. That's what grace looks like: God continues to bless us even though we don't deserve it. He's such a good and loving God! He is inviting you to enjoy His blessings with a smile on His face—all you have to do is decide to “turn your cup right side up” to receive the joy of those blessings.

Also, I strongly encourage you to forgive yourself. That's really about embracing God's forgiveness, which He has already given you if you have trusted Christ, but 1 John 1:9 says God not only forgives us, He *cleanses* us from all unrighteousness. Make a decision to “turn your cup right side up” to receive His cleansing, which will wash away the guilt and, in time, the shame you carry.

Enjoy the letter that follows from someone who is praying for you and absolutely understands you.

In His grip,

Sue Bohlin

Dear friend,

When I read your email today I could truly sense the sadness and hurt in your heart. I have prayed for you many times today already. I am deeply sorry for your heartache. But I have a message of hope for you: God loves you desperately and He is a God of second, third, and fourth chances. His arms are outstretched to you, just waiting for you to accept His love and forgiveness.

I could understand your pain because my story is similar to

yours. I, too, grew up in a strong Christian home. I trusted Jesus as my Savior when I was five years old. I remember that night clearly, my Mom and Dad had shared with me in God's word that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). That included me. I was a sinner. But, God loved me so much that He provided a way for me to spend eternity in Heaven. He sent his only Son, Jesus, to be born of the virgin Mary, live a sinless life and then die on the cross for all the sins I had (and ever will) commit. Then He was raised from the dead on the third day! The Bible says in Ephesian 2:8-9, "For by grace are you saved through faith, it is a gift of God, not of man, so that no man can boast." By placing my faith in Jesus alone, not counting on anything that I could do, I could spend eternity in Heaven. If you have never made the decision to trust Jesus as your Savior, you can do that right now. It is not enough to know the information, you must receive it as your own.

I did that when I was young, but as I got older, I began to drift away from the Lord.

I, too, got pregnant outside of marriage. I, too, felt like it was unfair that all the other girls who I knew were sleeping with their boyfriends didn't get "caught." I felt the course of my life was altered forever. It wasn't the way I had planned my life. But, I can tell you, I know now that it was a situation that God allowed for my life so that He could be glorified.

I say that because what I came to understand was that I was living my life according to how I thought it should go and doing whatever I wanted. I know now that getting pregnant was God's way of shaking me by the shoulders and saying, "OK, you did it your way, but I have a better plan for your life. Follow Me now." I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that my precious daughter was a gift from God, not a punishment, to gently push my life back on track. All children are special, but I feel that she saved me from even more

potential bad choices had I not become a mother when I did.

I now want to fast forward my life for you eight years. I did marry my boyfriend and we will celebrate our 8th wedding anniversary next month. Our daughter is 7 1/2, and our son is 2 1/2. We are very involved in our church where we serve in the High School ministry. I have shared my testimony several times with many girls. My story, by the grace of God, has been beneficial to many people. I have girls who ask me to keep them accountable for their behavior with their boyfriends. They ask me advice, and God speaks to them through me. Not everyone knows my story, not everyone remembers how my husband and I started out, but, for some, it is a blessing. Maybe God allowed this in my life so I could share my story with you. Maybe there is another girl who you will be able to bless with your story some day.

Satan is the father of all lies and would have loved for me to think that I messed up, so why bother with church, God, or anything like that. He wants you to believe that as well. All your negative thoughts about yourself and situation come from Satan, not God.

God, on the other hand, is the Father in Heaven who loves you so much and wants to pour out blessings on you. Choose to accept His love. Choose to live in His forgiveness. He wants the absolute best for your life. His plan for your life is perfect. While it is hard to understand why He allowed this in your life, focus your attention on Him. Get to know Him. Listen to praise music and praise God. Allow Him to fill you up. Let God fill the void in your heart. After all, He is the only one who can. Although my husband is a wonderful, fun, sweet, caring man who loves the Lord, if I look to my husband to fulfill all of my needs I will be disappointed. Only God can fulfill my deepest needs and desires. He made us that way.

My story did not turn out great because I married the father

of my baby, my story turned out great because I let God lead me and love me. Not all girls in our situations end up marrying their boyfriends, and they can still have a wonderful life and relationship with God.

Some women who have had sex outside of marriage end up with so much guilt that they can't enjoy a sexual relationship when they do get married. That is not what God intends. Sex is a gift to married couples, and God meant for it to be enjoyed, guilt-free. Pray that when you do marry, you will let God take away your guilty feelings so that you can enjoy an intimate relationship with your husband as God intended. I would encourage you to abstain from sex until you do marry. You can start over.

I would also encourage you to go back to church. Hold your head up high when you walk in the door. God loves you. The creator of the universe cherishes you! He is proud to be your Heavenly Father.

While changing your thinking will not be easy, it can be done. Trust God, pray that you can believe the wonderful things about yourself that He thinks about you. Pray with your boyfriend. Thank God for your precious daughter. Thank God that he shook your shoulders, too! This can be a turning point in your life. Choose to let yourself be loved by God and His people.

I will continue to pray for you, your boyfriend, and your daughter. May the Lord bless you abundantly. If you would like to correspond further, I would be happy to.

By His Grace Alone,

Ellen

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# **“What’s a Good Book to Give to a Seeker?”**

My coworker seems to be searching about religion in general. She is a single mom and I want to provide her a book to gain insight into Christianity and how it will change her life. Something that is simple and easy to read. Do you have any recommendations?

Yes!! Lee Strobel’s excellent book *The Case for Christ*. Your coworker doesn’t need Christianity. . . she needs Jesus. Strobel was a hardened atheist, a journalist for the *Chicago Tribune*, who chased down experts who could talk to him about Christ. It not only is very convincing, it’s a wonderful way to walk through his steps toward placing his faith in Christ himself.

I’m glad you asked!

Sue Bohlin  
Probe Ministries

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# **“People in Hell DIE, Not Suffer Forever!”**

In answer to the e-mail question [“Are People in Hell Isolated and Alone?”](#) The bible clearly states that the wages of sin is DEATH not eternal life, be it in heaven or hell as you think. Malachi 4:3 plainly says they shall be ashes under our feet. In Is.1:28 “...and they that forsake the Lord shall be consumed.” Is.66:17 says “...shall be consumed together, saith the Lord.” Rev 20:9 “...and fire came down from God out of

heaven, and devoured them.” Rev 20:14 “And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.” Doesn’t say second life but second death. You should look up some of the Greek and Hebrew words that have been translated into hell, that would make it more clear to you.

Thank you for your letter. You are correct in noting that the fate of unbelievers is one of heated debate these days, even among professing evangelicals. My own difficulty with the thesis of conditional immortality stems from passages like Matthew 25:46, Revelation 14:9-11 and Revelation 20:10. It is difficult for me to see how these passages can be consistent with the denial of eternal punishment.

For example, in Matthew 25:46 Jesus states: “And these will depart into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” The same Greek term, *aionion* (eternal), is used to describe both punishment and life.

Revelation 14:11 reads in part: “And the smoke from their torture will go up forever and ever, and those who worship the beast and his image will have no rest day or night.” What troubles me about this verse is the concluding phrase, “those who worship the beast and his image will have no rest day or night.” Again, these unfortunate people appear to be enduring eternal, conscious torment.

Finally, in Revelation 20:10 we read: “And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet are too, and they will be tormented there day and night forever and ever.” The beast and false prophet are both human beings. And yet, along with the devil, they will endure eternal punishment. Furthermore, Revelation 19:20 states, “Now the beast was seized, and along with him the false prophet who had performed the signs on his behalf—signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. Both of them were thrown alive into the lake of fire burning with

sulfur.” Please note that this takes place prior to the thousand year reign of Christ (Revelation 20:1-7). And yet, when the thousand years are over, the beast and false prophet are still being tormented in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10). This lake of fire is the same place where all unbelievers are thrown in Revelation 20:15.

It’s true that this is called the “second death,” but does the Bible equate “death” with “annihilation”? How do you read Ephesians 2:1-2? The Ephesians were formerly “dead.” But does this mean that they didn’t have personal, conscious existence? Wouldn’t you agree that the Ephesians were spiritually dead (i.e. separated from the spiritual life of God)? And might this not also be what the Bible means by the “second death” (i.e. unremedied spiritual death results in eternal separation from God)? When the Bible speaks of death it does not mean “annihilation.” Rather, it means “separation.”

Physical death is the “separation” of the spirit from the body (James 2:26). Spiritual death is the “separation” of a conscious, living person from God (Ephesians 2:1-2). And the second death is the “eternal separation” of an unredeemed person from God (Revelation 20:11-15).

This, at any rate, is why it’s so difficult for me to embrace the doctrines of conditional immortality and annihilationism.

Hope this helps.

The Lord bless you,

Michael Gleghorn  
Probe Ministries

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# **“How was Salvation Achieved Before Christ?”**

**How was salvation achieved prior to the Resurrection of Christ and the spreading of Christianity?**

Salvation has always been a gift of God's grace, received by faith alone. While today believers look back to the death and resurrection of Christ as that which makes God's gift of salvation possible, before the time of Christ believers looked forward to the coming of a Savior. This Savior, or Deliverer, would be of the seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15), the seed of Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3; Gen. 15:6), and the seed of David (2 Sam. 7:12-17; see also Matt. 1:1-17). He was prefigured in the Passover (Exod. 12), the offerings in Leviticus 1-5, the Tabernacle, and the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16), just to name a few. Furthermore, He was prophesied by Isaiah, Micah, and many others. Thus, before the coming of Christ, the CONTENT of saving faith (i.e. what someone was to believe in order to be saved) may have been somewhat different (depending on the extent of God's revelation to that point in history), but the OBJECT of saving faith has always been God and His faithful promises revealed in Scripture. This is why Paul is able to hold up Abraham as a model of faith for the first century Christians in Rome (see Romans 4). As Paul points out, all the way back in Gen. 15:6 we read of Abraham, "Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness." In other words, Abraham was saved by grace, through faith, just as we are today.

God bless you,

Michael Gleghorn

Probe Ministries



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# “Why Do We Pray at All if God Already Has a Plan?”

For as long as I can remember, I've always thought that God has a purpose for everything. Everything happens for a reason, whether this event is good or bad. Is this a good assumption?

Although rarely do I pray for gifts or anything to happen, it occurred to me that this is a pretty common practice. Last night my Bible-study group prayed for the safe trip of a friend to a missions trip in Europe, but lately, I've been wondering this... if indeed God has a purpose for everything, then if my friend didn't have a safe flight to Europe (really worried about my friend here), then God willed it and there's a larger purpose for that. This, for me, answers “why good things happen to bad people,” and I can accept that, but my real question is why do we pray at all? Why do we pray for certain events to steer a certain direction if God has a plan for it to go either way and it'll happen according to plan anyway regardless of what we ask? Does that make sense? .. or am I looking at this completely skewed? Please help.

*For as long as I can remember, I've always thought that God has a purpose for everything. Everything happens for a reason, whether this event is good or bad. Is this a good assumption?*

Yes, it is, because the Bible teaches us that God is sovereign—He is in control over everything that happens. Things may not be God's first choice, for example when we sin, but He is powerful enough that He can make good come out of evil.

*Although rarely do I pray for gifts or anything to happen, it occurred to me that this is a pretty common practice. Last night my Bible-study group prayed for the safe trip of a friend to a missions trip in Europe, but lately, I've been wondering this... if indeed God has a purpose for everything, then if my friend didn't have a safe flight to Europe (really worried about my friend here), then God willed it and there's a larger purpose for that. This, for me, answers "why good things happen to bad people," and I can accept that, but my real question is why do we pray at all?*

If we look at what the Lord Jesus taught us about prayer, we see that it's about aligning ourselves with God's kingdom, with His values, and with His character. I like the word "align" because I think it accurately reflects what we need to do in light of the effects of the fall, when we were all plunged into a state of sin. This means we are out of alignment with God and prefer instead to indulge our own desires. Just as we sometimes have to take our cars into the shop to get our wheels realigned when they "want to" go in a different direction than the designers' intent, prayer is about submitting ourselves to God, aligning ourselves with Him and His purposes. So prayer isn't mainly about telling God what we want so He can give us our heart's desire, it's supposed to be about submitting to His will even as we share our desires with Him, with the understanding that if He wants something different and better than what we want, we acknowledge that He has the right to do whatever He wants because He is God and we are not.

We pray to communicate with God, because communication is an absolutely essential part of maintaining a relationship. And Christianity is about relationship with God, not rules and rituals. We pray because He invited us to ask Him for whatever we want, just like He invited Solomon to ask for whatever he wanted, and hopefully that kind of divine generosity and open-heartedness will call us to ask thoughtfully, like Solomon,

with an awareness of how big and powerful and loving God is. We pray because we are and can do nothing without God and we need Him desperately. We pray because it reminds us that we are completely dependent on God like American astronauts are dependent on NASA to keep them alive up in space. We pray because it reminds us of our relative size and position before God.

*Why do we pray for certain events to steer a certain direction if God has a plan for it to go either way and it'll happen according to plan anyway regardless of what we ask? Does that make sense? .. or am I looking at this completely skewed? Please help.*

Well, if you read the prayers of the apostle Paul in the New Testament, you see that he didn't spend a lot of time praying for things to go a certain way. He certainly prayed about his hopes and intentions, such as his desire to go into Asia to preach the gospel, but the Holy Spirit told him no, which he humbly accepted (Acts 16) because he lived his life in an attitude of submission and obedience. I think the wisest course of action is to lift events and concerns into God's hands, telling Him what we would like and then yielding to Him about the whole thing. Which is the pattern we see modeled by the Lord Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane the night before He died. He poured out His heart to the Father, asking Him if there was ANY way to escape the cup of suffering before Him, but yielding by saying, "Yet not My will, but Thine be done." I think that cultivating an attitude of "Thy will be done" is the most important part of prayer. That goes along with Paul's admonition of how to pray in Philippians 4:6 when he says to "let your requests be made known to God." We don't demand, we offer our requests, leaving them in the hands of a God who knows what is best and loves us perfectly.

God is sovereign and yet when we pray it makes a difference. Jesus invited us to take His yoke upon us, which makes us not

only His companions but co-laborers in the kingdom. I think that praying keeps us connected to our Source, Jesus, so it is a way to keep on abiding in Him and allowing Him to abide in us. So we pray not to get what we want out of God like some cosmic vending machine, but to keep us connected to and dependent on Him, which is what we were created for in the first place.

I hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin

Probe Ministries

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## **“Is it Wrong to Speak of God as Jehovah?”**

Is it wrong to speak of God as Jehovah? I stumbled across a teaching regarding the Jehovah Witnesses and discovered that the word Jehovah is a wrong pronunciation of the Hebrew word YAHWEH. It could be that I misunderstood the statement. I am talking about your article, [Witnessing to the Witnesses](#).

Secondly, I would like to compliment you on the wonderful information that is available on your site. Your teachings are outstanding.

Thank you for your letter and your encouragement. It is good to see Christians studying the Word of God and learning to share their faith. Although Jehovah is not a word, it is not wrong to use it for God. Although mistaken, it was an attempt to address the God of Israel. Remember, the God of Israel has many titles, not just one. He is also called King of Kings, Lord of Lords, the First and the Last, the Rock, The Shepherd,

Father, I Am, Lord of Glory, etc... Jehovah was another one of the titles. Keep on studying the word and witnessing for Jesus.

Patrick Zukeran  
Probe Ministries

Please refer to related articles below.

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## **“Your Critique of Sociobiology Makes No Sense”**

Perhaps I have severely misunderstood your [critique on sociobiology](#), but as I interpreted it, it makes no sense. From the sociobiologist proposition that all human nature and behavior is shaped solely by evolutionary necessity (and what promotes reproduction and survival), it does not follow, as you have asserted, that any significant hope and meaning in life is precluded. I don't know what kind of a faculty member you were talking to, but the question you posed (“What difference does it make if I've reproduced once I'm dead?”) is an easy one to answer. The goal of humanity, as believed by sociobiologists, is to pass on its genetic legacy. No single organism is particularly important, but only the collaborative propagation of a species of its genes. Therefore, the difference of whether or not one has reproduced by the time of death is a crucial one. One who dies and leaves no offspring does not pass on any genetic legacy, and is truly, in an evolutionary sense, dead. Those who do leave offspring and die are able to, in an evolutionary sense, live on vicariously through the genes that they pass on to their young, and the genetic legacy continues.

In response to the philosopher's division of life purpose into 'small letters' (survival/reproduction) and 'capital letters' (ultimate meaning and significance, whatever that means), the sociobiological assertion is that survival and reproduction is the ultimate meaning and significance of life. I think one of your crucial errors is that you assume that knowledge of the cause and origins of human nature actually change the validity of human nature itself, and somehow make our ambitions less "lofty. Well, our nature is what it is and we do what we do. We love our children and spouses with all our hearts, and if we do so only for the sake of evolutionary efficacy, than so be it, but our feelings do not therefore become false and invalid. We at times act selflessly and help others at the expense of ourselves. But if this behavior is ultimately 'genetically selfish,' ostensibly helping others while really benefiting ourselves, than so be it, but these feelings are nevertheless meaningful. A principal proposition of sociobiology is that we have motives to act of which we are not always consciously aware. That does not mean they do not exist, and if they do exist, then following them does not make our lives inherently worthless.

Perhaps the sociobiological argument is not particularly aesthetically pleasing (which I think is really your main objection), but this is not by any means grounds for a scientific rebuttal.

Sincerely and respectfully,

\_\_\_\_\_, Ph.D.

I believe you are the first to question my critique along these lines. I will attempt to answer your objections in the body of your initial message.

*Perhaps I have severely misunderstood your critique on sociobiology, but as I interpreted it, it makes no sense. From the sociobiologist proposition that all human nature and behavior is shaped solely by evolutionary necessity (and what*

*promotes reproduction and survival), it does not follow, as you have asserted, that any significant hope and meaning in life is precluded. I don't know what kind of a faculty member you were talking to,*

He was the head of the department of ecology and evolution.

*but the question you posed ("what difference does it make if I've reproduced once I'm dead?") is an easy one to answer.*

To be clear, my question was "Once I am dead and in the ground (implying that in a naturalistic worldview since there is no afterlife, my life is absolutely over), what difference does it make to me NOW?"

*The goal of humanity, as believed by sociobiologists, is to pass on its genetic legacy. No single organism is particularly important,*

Precisely why I made my question very personal.

*but only the collaborative propagation of a species of its genes. Therefore, the difference of whether or not one has reproduced by the time of death is a crucial one.*

Not to the species but to me, but I no longer exist.

*One who dies and leaves no offspring does not pass on any genetic legacy, and is truly, in an evolutionary sense, dead.*

So what? My genes are not me, they are just molecules. If, as E. O. Wilson summarized in *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis*, The organism is just DNA's way of making more DNA, then I don't really matter anyway. And once I am dead and no longer exist (organism), nothing makes any difference to me since I do not exist. That is why the professor said that "ultimately"

it doesn't really matter. He got the gist of my question.

*Those who do leave offspring and die are able to, in an evolutionary sense, live on vicariously through the genes that they pass on to their young, and the genetic legacy continues.*

I don't live vicariously in my genes. They are now part of a new unique creature that combines my genes with a woman's genes in a new and totally unique combination. Even a clone would not be exactly "me" since mutations and recombinations would have occurred, erasing my genetic identity.

*In response to the philosopher's division of life purpose into 'small letters' (survival/reproduction) and 'capital letters' (ultimate meaning and significance, whatever that means),*

Some meaning for existence beyond the mere physical.

*the sociobiological assertion is that survival and reproduction is the ultimate meaning and significance of life.*

But as I state in the article, without some meaning for life that arises outside of ourselves, there is no meaning in small letters. If we are just molecules, then that's it! We are just molecules, nothing more can be said about us. How those molecules get arranged or persist or are annihilated is totally irrelevant to the ongoing history of the universe. Nothing cares and nothing therefore matters.

*I think one of your crucial errors is that you assume that knowledge of the cause and origins of human nature actually change the validity of human nature itself, and somehow make our ambitions less "lofty."*

How can this not be so? From Darwin to today, evolution is



said to be without direction and without purpose and we are mere accidents of history. This is not a conclusion of evidence, but of philosophy. For many it is a specific attempt to remove any form of God from the equation of who we are and where we came from. Once that is done we are free to make our own rules. When Richard Dawkins writes that Darwin made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist, he means it, at least partially, for the purpose of the freedom from any kind of imposed morality. Dawkin's watchmaker is not only blind, but totally without sympathy to whatever outcome comes about through natural selection. Specifically as to whether I reproduce or not.

*Well, our nature is what it is and we do what we do. We love our children and spouses with all our hearts, and if we do so only for the sake of evolutionary efficacy, than so be it, but our feelings do not therefore become false and invalid.*

Certainly it becomes false and invalid, because I am only being manipulated by my genes which have been formed by thousands of generations. I am not really choosing, just reacting according the program established by natural selection.

*We at times act selflessly and help others at the expense of ourselves. But if this behavior is ultimately 'genetically selfish,' ostensibly helping others while really benefiting ourselves, than so be it, but these feelings are nevertheless meaningful.*

How can they be "meaningful" if they are ultimately selfish and not altruistic at all? That's why Trivers adds the word "reciprocal" in front of the word because simple altruism no longer exists in a sociobiological world.

*A principal proposition of sociobiology is that we have motives to act of which we are not always consciously aware.*

*That does not mean they do not exist, and if they do exist, then following them does not make our lives inherently worthless.*

Certainly they exist, but their source is crucially important. If I pull the string on a Chatty Cathy doll and she says, "I love you," does she really love me? Of course not. But we are no different according to sociobiology. We are both complex arrangements of molecules uttering responses based on an internal program conditioned to respond to outside stimuli (pulling a string or gazing at our newborn's cute and cuddly face).

*Perhaps the sociobiological argument is not particularly aesthetically pleasing (which I think is really your main objection), but this is not by any means grounds for a scientific rebuttal.*

Indeed, it is not aesthetically pleasing, but sometimes truth is hard to take, agreed. But that is not my problem. There is no purpose beyond survival and reproduction which is merely an illusion perpetrated on us by our brains which has been constructed by natural selection to simply aid survival and reproduction, not to recognize truth. And our entire body doesn't really matter, just our genes which are simply reproducing themselves because that's just what DNA does. But DNA is just a mindless molecule with no purpose or goal or direction. How then can we have any?

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin, Ph.D.  
Probe Ministries