

# “What “Does Eating Christ’s Flesh and Drinking His Blood Mean?”

In John Ch. 6, Jesus says, “Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood you have no life in you,” and that He has eternal life. Can you either give me a good explanation of what this means or point me toward some good resources to learn from?

Thanks for writing. Commentators from different denominations and traditions differ on what this passage means. Some believe that Jesus is here referring to participation in Holy Communion or the Eucharist. But I don’t believe that this is His intended meaning, for it would clearly imply that eternal life is received purely through a ritualistic act – and this is quite at odds with the entire testimony of the NT. Indeed, in this very passage Jesus repeatedly emphasizes the necessity of faith (John 6:35, 40, 47).

I agree with one commentator who wrote, “Flesh and blood here point to Christ as the crucified one and the source of life. Jesus speaks of faith’s appropriation of himself as God’s appointed sacrifice...”. In other words, through faith in Christ we participate in all the benefits of His substitutionary sacrifice for our sins. And through such saving faith we receive the free gift of eternal life.

If you haven’t yet visited Bible.org at <http://www.bible.org>, I would highly recommend this site. They have loads of information about the Bible from a conservative perspective.

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn

Probe Ministries

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# “What About Us Women Not From Venus?”

This question is sent in response to the article [“Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus.”](#) Are all women relationally oriented? What about the introverts out there? What about the goal-oriented women?

Being an introvert myself, I have had to work at caring for other people and reaching out, as God commands. I naturally want to do things by myself and for myself. When I get stressed out or upset, I withdraw from people into my “cave.”

I am also goal-oriented. I cannot multi-task. I can only focus on one thing at a time. My motivation is achieving the goal. I strongly dislike group projects.

My fiancé is the opposite of me. He is very relational, loves to be around people, talks a lot, and is not as goal-oriented.

In my experience, there are many people like us. How can this be explained? If God designed woman to be relational, then why am I (and many others) not wired that way?

Great questions.

I do think that at our core, women are relationally-oriented, which you will probably see once you have children and the concept of “family” becomes much more important to you. Particularly in American culture which has been so steeped in feminism, women’s mindsets have been shaped to be more male-like, and there are more and more women saying the same thing as you.

When Ray and I give our “Mars/Venus” lecture, we run into

couples like you and your fiancé from time to time, where it looks like somebody switched the labels. <smile> But the interesting thing is, you guys still find each other! There is still a beautiful complementarity to the male-female relationship where each person's strengths and weaknesses are balanced by the other person's strengths and weaknesses.

Sometimes people become independent and self-reliant not because of their gender but because of their family dynamics. That doesn't change what it means to be a woman at the core of your being, though. Your experience of being independent and self-reliant is going to be different from a man's experience. And honestly, they are both a challenge to living as God wants us to—depending fully on HIM instead of on ourselves. Being fiercely independent can be a curse; it's a way of digging our own cisterns (Jer. 2:13) instead of going to the source of Living Water in complete dependence and neediness. But you didn't ask that question, so I'll get off my soapbox now! <grin>

I'd be interested in having this discussion with you a few years down the road after you're married and hopefully have children. I wonder if you would still see yourself as not being relational anymore. If you think of it, pop back in and let me know, OK?

Warmly,

Sue Bohlin  
Probe Ministries

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# **“Is It OK to Look Down My Girlfriend’s Top?”**

Im a 17 year old male and have been going out with my girlfriend, who I truly love, for almost two and a half years. We are both Christians and have set boundaries that will ensure that sex will only happen after marriage (which could be a possibility for us in a few years). She is a modest girl, unlike the many around who have no problem showing too much skin. I know it is wrong to look at females dressed like this and do my best to keep my eyes off (which I have become pretty good at). I have been trying to determine whether it is OK by God, for me to look at my girlfriend when she wears a top that can be seen down. She is OK with it and appreciates that I don’t look at other girls that way. Is it OK for me to look at the one girl I love in this way as long as it is not lustful and I don’t get addicted to looking at her. I don’t want to be sinning. But, if it’s OK by God I want to be able to enjoy looking at the wonderful girl he has sent to me (God gave her to me after I stopped masturbating). Looking at her helps me to not look at other females when they pass by which is great, but is it OK to look at her this way before marriage.

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

The real question is, “Does looking down my girlfriend’s top so I can help myself visually to her breasts, help me or hinder me in my walk with God?” Another important question is, “Does it honor her?”

I would suggest that helping yourself to the breasts of a girl you are not married to is 1) outside the boundaries of marriage, which is the only place where you have a right to gaze at a woman’s breasts, and 2) very effectively pulling your attention off God and holy thoughts, and thus is NOT helping your walk with God.

You may intend to marry your girlfriend, but nothing can guarantee that it will happen until you've said "I do." Couples often break up before marriage despite their hopes and intentions. Furthermore, it is VERY unusual for 17-year-old couples to end up marrying each other, which means that the chances are, you've been looking down the top of another man's future wife, and there is some girl out there that you WILL marry, hoping that you will keep your eyes and all other body parts to yourself as you wait for her.

I know I've been very blunt here, but in the interest of giving you direction that will best help everyone involved, both now and in the future, I want to encourage you to exercise self-control in where you look, and don't deliberately put yourself in a position where you are able to look down anyone's top.

Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin  
Probe Ministries

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## **“Why Can't God Just Destroy Those Who Reject Him Instead of Sending Them to Hell?”**

Why can't God just destroy people who reject him, cause them to cease to exist instead of sending them to hell where they are tortured for eternity? I know they cannot be a part of God or heaven since God is perfect in all ways, but why not end their existence entirely or just keep them separated for eternity instead of sending them to hell for eternal torment?

Thanks for your question. It's a good one. The Bible indicates that those who reject the sacrifice of Christ for their sins must pay for their sins themselves. This certainly seems fair and just. The problem comes when we ask why a person who has committed a finite number of sins should be punished forever and ever. This, I will admit, sounds unfair. But the Bible tells us that God is perfectly fair and just. So how can we reconcile this apparent discrepancy?

Some say that any sin committed against the infinitely holy God is worthy of eternal punishment. In other words, it's not so much the number of sins committed that determine the duration of the punishment, it's rather the fact that they have sinned against their Creator, the infinitely good and holy God. To sin against such a One as God deserves eternal punishment, these people would say.

This may be true, but my own view is a bit different. Think about it this way. Through Adam, all human beings are born with a nature that is inclined toward sin, rebellion and disobedience against God. When someone trusts Christ for salvation, they are "born again" as a child of God. They receive the Holy Spirit and will one day be completely freed from the presence and power of sin. The one who rejects Christ, however, will never be free from the presence and power of sin. Thus, the one who rejects Christ will never cease sinning. Even in hell I imagine that men and women will curse and blaspheme God. If this is so, then eternal punishment is just because such people never quit sinning against God. Indeed, the longer they are punished, the more their debt increases.

This, at any rate, is my own opinion about the justice of eternal punishment. I hope it helps a little bit.

The Lord bless and keep you,

Michael Gleghorn

# **“How Can an Omnipresent God be Around Sin and Evil?”**

**If God is a perfect God who cannot be in the presence of sin because He is so holy, then how can He be an omnipresent God if there is all kinds of sin going on in the world and if there is a hell?**

Good question! God cannot look WITH FAVOR upon sin and evil, but He can certainly be in the presence of sinners. This is proven by God's omnipresence (as you noted), the incarnation of God the Son, and even God's continued (if temporary) interaction with some of the fallen angels (including Satan – e.g. Job 1-2, etc.).

The limitation is not on God. Sometimes we have this image of God as needing to back off from sin and evil because He can't allow Himself to be in its presence (rather like Superman avoiding Kryptonite because it weakens him?!). But we would suggest it's more like the reaction of mold in the presence of bleach, or of anything combustible in the presence of fire: God's holiness is so consuming and so purifying that unless He restrains Himself (and that only for a time), nothing impure and unholy can remain in HIS presence. It affects the creature, not God.

Hope this clears things up a bit.

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn

# **“Will Jesus Bear His Nailprints Forever?”**

**Sometime back I was told that Jesus will bear the marks of the nails on his hands and feet forever (eternity). Is there a scripture reference to back this up?**

There is no scripture that explicitly says Christ will bear His scars for all eternity. However, they are part of His resurrected body. After Thomas insisted that he would not believe unless he saw the imprint of the nails, and put his finger into the place of the nails, and put his hand into His side, John 20:27 records the Lord Jesus telling Thomas, “Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing.”

I believe that the scars on Jesus’ body are the most beautiful things in all of heaven, and we will want to fall down and worship Him and touch (and even kiss!) His scars with awe; they are excruciating proof of His love for us.

Sue Bohlin  
Probe Ministries

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# “Where Is the Spiritual Heart of Man?”

Some newly converted family members to the Church of God and I are in disagreement about the location of the spiritual heart of man. I believe it's hidden in the physical heart of man, but they believe the heart is in the mind. I cannot find many scriptures to concretely back up my theory since the heart and mind are used interchangeably in scriptures.

They presented some pretty strong arguments because the heart and mind are used interchangeably.

In the Bible, the heart is shown to have three capacities: to think (or believe), to choose, and to feel. The heart is really the “innermost part” of us to which David refers in Ps. 51. But it doesn't tell us about a link between the spiritual heart and any physical organ. Consider this; what happens to someone with a diseased heart who gets a heart transplant? Does the very essence of the person change because he's lost his old heart and received a new one? No.

Then consider what happens to the person plagued with Alzheimer's disease or stroke who has suffered brain damage. She has lost her previous capacity to think, choose and feel, but what happens at death? Wouldn't she enjoy full use of those capacities again, unhindered by an uncooperative brain? But even \*before\* death, does God no longer indwell the heart of a believer with brain damage? No, because He promised He would never leave us or forsake us.

I think, to be honest, that the question of the location of the spiritual heart of man is a moot one. It's like asking, “What color is love?” Instead of trying to pin down a physical location of a spiritual thing, perhaps our time would be better stewarded developing our hearts, as you so obviously

have!

The Lord bless you and keep you.

Sue Bohlin  
Probe Ministries

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## **“Is It Small-Minded of Me to Base Morality on Scripture?”**

A friend of mine and I were recently discussing different things and two things relating to scripture things came up. The first (what started the argument) was I asked whether morality could be determined by age; for example, we say that is wrong for a kid but OK for an adult. My view was, if something is wrong should it not be wrong for all? She is a Christian but made some comments I wasn't sure how to respond to. She implied that I “thought small” because after about thirty minutes of debate I realized my morality was based totally on scripture. When I said “moral” I meant biblical. She however was saying the Bible doesn't answer everything and it is up to society to decide, because as she pointed out not every one is Christian and I needed to see the whole picture. This sounds immoral to me and in arguing it (using the Bible) she asked what seems un-biblical, yet I was stumped she said that “If the Old Testament grew into the New Testament then who's to say it isn't still growing?” She almost seemed to be implying that 1) scripture is not a complete canon yet and 2) it should change based on society. This seems very un-biblical and wrong but I wasn't sure how to respond effectively.

Thanks for your e-mail. The two questions you brought up show a great deal of insight on your part. I would be honored to

help you work through these issues.

First, let's deal with morality. It's great that you base your moral behavior based on biblical principles. Unfortunately, not everyone is so wise. But even biblically speaking, there are some things that may be appropriate for some people that are not so wise for others. For instance, look at marriage. Wouldn't it be safe to say that a grown up married man is morally free to have sexual intimacy with his wife, but an unmarried teenage boy is not morally free to have sex with his girlfriend? Circumstances may determine some of our standards of behavior. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:23-33 that we are free to act the way we think we should (since we have been freed from the Law), but that we must first consider that our actions affect others. Christian morality is not based on a list of rights and wrongs, but on the law of love for one another. Sure, there are some things that are always wrong (such as murder), and some that are always right (such as love), but to say that every wrong is wrong for everyone is going to lead to trouble.

Your friend has a point that not every issue is covered specifically in the Bible. But the Bible's principles can be applied to every issue. So, in fact, to think biblically is to think about the "big picture." Society is actually more interested in keeping order than in encouraging morality. Age, therefore, does make a difference about what a person ought to do; not because morality is relative, but because sources of weakness can be different in people.

The freedom that we Christians have to make decisions is kept in check with our biblically-minded discernment about what is best for others and ourselves.

To answer your second question: yes, the canon of Scripture is closed. The New Testament is not just a highlight in the evolutionary development of the Old Testament. It is the "New Covenant." It's called a covenant because Jesus Christ

fulfilled in person the “Old Covenant’s” purpose. Hebrews 1:1-2 points out that God has spoken in these “last days” in the person of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament is the inspired foreshadowing of Jesus. The New Testament is the inspired testimony to His life and works. The first few centuries of Christians had divinely guided criteria for evaluating the worthiness of a letter to be included in the New Testament. (For more on this, see [Don Closson’s article on the Web.](#)) Nothing society or anyone else can come up with since could come close to adding to what Jesus has already done.

Furthermore, Jesus is the Word of God. How can God’s very presence on earth be matched? His ascension into the heavens ended His earthly ministry. In the same way, His ascension also ended any speculation about another testament. (That’s why there can be no new New Testament.) When He spoke the words “It is finished” on the cross, it illustrates that there is nothing else to be revealed. All that is necessary now is the fulfillment of His New Covenant, with the ministry of God’s Spirit (through His church) and Jesus’ glorious return. Our job is not to write more books of the Bible in order to make it apply to society. Instead we need to take what’s already there and interpret it’s vital and timeless message to every new society.

I hope this helps with your questions. If you have any more questions or need some elaborating, please feel free to respond. Awesome questions! He rewards those who seek Him.

Kris Samons  
Probe Ministries

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# “Are People in Hell Isolated and Alone?”

My wife says that if you go to hell, you will be alone and not able to talk to anyone else. We tried to find an answer in the Bible, but we could not find a scripture that said that. I have also heard this from different people. Where is the proof?

Thanks for your question. I have also heard this many times myself. It's interesting to note that C.S. Lewis, the famous Christian apologist, once wrote something to the effect that “Hell is no one but yourself, forever and ever.” On the other hand, Jean-Paul Sartre, the famous French atheistic existentialist philosopher, once wrote that “Hell is other people.” But what does the Bible actually say?

Here are just a few passages to consider:

1. Isaiah 14:3-21: This passage is a taunt against the king of Babylon. What's interesting is the description of the king's reception in Sheol, the place of the dead. Notice such verses as 9-10: “Sheol from beneath is excited over you to meet you when you come; it arouses for you the spirits of the dead, all the leaders of the earth; it raises all the kings of the nations from their thrones. They will all respond and say to you, ‘Even you have been made weak as we, you have become like us.’” Thus, this passage seems to indicate some sort of communication between departed spirits in Sheol. How literally this should be taken is, of course, quite difficult to say. Additionally, it must be remembered that, strictly speaking, Sheol is not the same as Hell. In the Old Testament all the dead were believed to reside in Sheol, both the righteous and the wicked. Hell, on the other hand, is a place of eternal punishment only for the wicked. God could redeem a righteous man from the power of Sheol (Ps. 49:15), but there is “No

Exit" from Hell.

2. Luke 16:19-31: In this parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, we learn that Lazarus is received into "Abraham's bosom" at death whereas the rich man goes to Hades. "Abraham's bosom" is pictured as a place of both comfort and honor; Hades is pictured as a place of fire and torment. Strictly speaking, "Abraham's bosom" is not Heaven and Hades is not Hell, but each does seem to be a precursor of the other (i.e. Hades is a sort of pre-hell Hell—see Rev. 20:14). Although the rich man is not said to converse with anyone else in Hades, he does converse with Abraham! In the parable, the two men are able to speak with one another even though a great chasm prevents them from crossing over to one another. Again, it is difficult to know how literally such a parable should be read. Is it an actual description of the afterlife prior to one's final judgment? I'll let you come to your own conclusion on that one!

3. Revelation 20:10-15: This passage does actually deal with the eternal destiny of the unsaved in Hell. In v. 10, we see that Satan, the beast and the false prophet will all be there. In vv. 14-15 we learn that "death" and "Hades" (and presumably all their inhabitants), along with everyone whose name is not found written in the book of life, will be cast into "the lake of fire" (i.e. Hell). Thus, all the unsaved, along with Satan and his demons, appear to be ultimately consigned to the same place of punishment (see Matt. 25:41). But nothing is said about whether these lost souls will have any communication with one another, or even whether they will be able to see one another. In other words, just because they are consigned to the same place of punishment, it does not necessarily follow that they will have any opportunity to communicate with one another. It could be that Hell is analogous to a large number of prisoners, all at the same prison, but all separated from one another in something like solitary confinement! But I honestly don't know.

Thus, to answer your question (which is a good one!), I do not personally think there is enough scriptural evidence to reach a firm conclusion concerning whether or not those in Hell will be utterly alone and unable to communicate or not. I'm sorry I can't answer your question any better, but at least my answer is an honest one!

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn  
Probe Ministries

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## **“Bishop Spong is a Hero!”**

Dear Mr. Closson,

I have recently been introduced to Bishop Spong's works, and find them deeply affirming and inspiring! His claims are not speculative, but rather based in logic and a profound knowledge of biblical scholarship. For those of us who will not compromise our integrity with literal biblical interpretations and nonsensical, mythical stories, his works are a “special revelation.”

Our society is overflowing with thinking people who feel alienated from Christianity. Better the church embrace its alienated multitudes, than eventually dwindle into insignificance. The truth should never shy away from new ideas and open discourse. Because in the end, no matter what is said or done, the truth always prevails simply because it is the truth. If Christianity speaks the truth, it should stand up and embrace people like Bishop Spong and the rest of us. Show us the truth we are missing. Instead, I see Christianity

**shying away and hiding behind the security of premodern themes that require unthinking and unquestioning followers.**

**Just thought you might like to know.**

Thanks for the thoughtful response to my [essay on Bishop Spong](#). Your challenge to “show us the truth we are missing” is a reasonable request and one that I would like to respond to. But first I might suggest that one’s approach to the evidence regarding the deity of Jesus Christ or the authority of the Bible (or any religious claim) is greatly affected by the presuppositions one holds regarding the nature of reality itself. Dr. Spong is a product of the enlightenment and approaches the issue with a strong naturalistic bias. His view of biblical scholarship, along with the members of the [Jesus Seminar](#), is filtered through this naturalistic grid that not only rules out supernatural events but placing mankind’s “happiness” (often sexual) as the ultimate good. He is perfectly free to do this, but to claim that this is “Christian” seems to be like trying to place a round peg in a square hole. Whether or not people are alienated by traditional Christian beliefs seem to be beside the point. Jesus himself said that the path is narrow and that many who called him Lord were not part of his kingdom.

It would seem to be far more consistent for Bishop Spong, and others who hold to naturalistic presuppositions, to claim a naturalistic form of humanism and quit using the language and symbols of Christianity as a cover for their humanity-centered (rather than God-centered) ethics.

As for Bishop Spong’s profound knowledge of biblical scholarship, I do not challenge his knowledge of the Bible or his sincerely held convictions about it. I would merely point to the fact that there are those with equal or superior academic credentials who accept the traditional view of the Bible as supernatural revelation, and that it calls individuals to saving faith in Jesus Christ. These scholars

offer a thoughtful alternative to the ideas held by Spong and others of like mind. A couple of books that might interest you are:

*A Passion For Truth, Alister McGrath (InterVarsity Press, 1996)*

*Reasonable Faith, William Lane Craig (Crossway, 1994)*

Thanks again for your comments.

Sincerely,

Don Closson  
Probe Ministries