“My Girlfriend’s Parents Won’t Accept Me Because I’m Not Saved”

My girlfriend’s parents do not accept me because I am not saved though I have never put a foot wrong. I would like to know where Probe Ministries stands on this. As a footnote, she has a child which I have accepted as my own.

Thanks for writing. Although I do not know all the details of your case, there is actually biblical justification for your girlfriend’s parents reaction to you. The apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians as follows in 2 Corinthians 6:14-16:

> *“Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.’*

This passage clearly forbids believers to marry unbelievers. If your girlfriend is a Christian, then this could at least partially explain her parents’ reaction to you.

Of course, the good news is that you don’t need to continue relating to your girlfriend’s family as an outsider! After all, Christ died for you too! So why not repent of your sin, give your heart and life to Christ, and place your trust in Him for forgiveness, cleansing, and the free gift of eternal life? Of course, you must do so genuinely and sincerely and from the heart. But if you do, then you will (most

importantly) be an adopted son of God and a member of His family forever. In addition, if you sincerely give your life to Christ, it might also make you more acceptable to your girlfriend's parents. Of course, I want to be very clear, that you do not PRETEND to become a Christian in order to win their approval. That would be a very great sin in the eyes of God. However, if you genuinely and sincerely give your life to Christ and become a member of the family of God, then He may (as an added bonus) grant you the approval of your girlfriend's family as well. And even if He doesn't, you will still have the greatest good that any man can ever have/M a personal relationship with the Triune God, your Creator and Redeemer who loves you, and gave His Son for you. And what could ultimately be better than that?

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn

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"What About Believers Who Stop Believing in Christ?"

I saw your response to a question regarding Hebrews and the warning of falling away. The thing is, I've known people who stopped believing in Christ, and then were restored to faith. How does this go together with these verses? Even missionaries like Adoniram Judson, Isobel Kuhn and John Newton all had times of rebellion in their younger years. And so did I; even though I grew up in a Christian home, I denied my faith in Christ at age 17—I sort of lived as a "Secret Christian"

because of my Muslim fiancée at the time. At that time I didn't even know how bad it was. Because I wasn't born again or knew of repentance I never felt convicted of sins before. It's now been three years later, and I recently experienced a hatred for sin and a true faith in the sacrifice of Jesus (a faith beyond just mental acknowledgement). Does that mean I'm beyond hope?

I'm a little confused also because the verses you say refer to not true believers. My question also is, would a Jew really leave Judaism to become a nominal Christian at that time? I doubt one could say that they were nominal Christians who were in danger of falling away, when I know how much it means to leave one religion for Christianity in a country with mostly people who belong to false religion. To leave their faith to convert to Christ meant to sacrifice all—it would be like a Muslim converting and losing his family just by some superficial faith . . . that's why I feel like it didn't make sense to say the Jews who fell away were just superficial believers?

These are some very important (but also difficult) questions. We must honestly admit the difficulty, I think, as we nonetheless strive to understand (and believe and obey) what the Bible teaches. My own view is basically this:

First you ask: "I've known people who stopped believing in Christ, and then were restored to faith. How does this go together with these verses?"

If these people were true believers, and have been restored to genuine faith in Christ, then they are saved. If "eternal security" of the believer is true (i.e. once saved, always saved), then they were always saved (since first trusting Christ for salvation). If this doctrine is false, then it appears that they have been graciously restored to faith (and salvation). Either way, if they are trusting Christ for salvation (and their faith is genuine), then they are saved.

Of course, it's also possible that they weren't initially true believers at all. Sometimes people think they are Christians because they go to church, or believe in God, or because they have been baptized, or something else. But they may never have truly trusted Christ for salvation. One cannot lose what one never had. In this case, such people are not really saved at all until they truly trust Christ for salvation. And this may not actually happen until after some period of rebellion.

Indeed, you say of yourself, "Because I wasn't born again or knew of repentance I never felt convicted of sins before. It's now been three years later, and I recently experienced a hatred for sin and a true faith in the sacrifice of Jesus (a faith beyond just mental acknowledgement). Does that mean I'm beyond hope?"

Of course you're not beyond hope! You have trusted in Christ for salvation and you are saved! But it doesn't sound like you were saved before this (even though you may have grown up in a Christian home). In other words, it doesn't sound like you ever really left the faith, because it doesn't sound to me like you were saved until recently. And the same would almost certainly be true of Adoniram Judson and John Newton. By the way, Christians continue to struggle with sin after salvation, but that is a different matter from completely abandoning the faith.

Finally, no, I do not think that a Jew would abandon Judaism to become a nominal Christian (except possibly under extreme duress). But people may become lax in their faith over time. And such people could potentially abandon their faith to return to Judaism. Note: I'm not saying this actually happens. But it could. And if it were to happen, then such a person might indeed forfeit salvation (if "eternal security" is false, which is debatable).

This is how I see the matter. I tend to think that eternal security is true, and that a believer cannot lose salvation.

But other disagree with this view and it is always possible that they are right and that I am wrong. Regardless, however, it is God's intention to save those who come to Him through His Son. And we are definitely secure in Christ. The only way a believer could lose salvation (if such a thing is even possible) is by committing apostasy and rejecting Christ, and then persisting in this rejection until overtaken by physical death.

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

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"What Is the 'Sin Unto Death'?" [Michael Gleghorn]

What is the sin unto death, according to 1 John 5:16-17? [If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life—to those who commit sins that do not lead to death. There is sin that leads to death; I do not say that one should pray for that. All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death.]

The passage does not tell us what sort of sin leads to death, nor does it tell us what sort of death is in view here (e.g. physical or spiritual).

In my opinion, it seems best to understand the "death" in view here as physical, not spiritual. We actually have examples in the Bible in which believers sinned so grievously that God

took their lives (see, for example, Acts 5:1-11 and 1 Corinthians 11:30 [in the context of verses 17-34]).

If your version of the Bible has the indefinite pronoun “a” before sin in these verses, you should know that this has been added by translators and need not be supplied in the translation. In other words, John is not necessarily talking about a particular sin. Rather, he is probably speaking of a category of sins which could (if committed) lead to physical death. This would be due to God’s judgment on the believer’s sin.

One final point. If this understanding is correct, it need not be understood to mean that the believer whose sin leads to physical death is therefore spiritually lost. The judgment would be upon the believer’s life in this world. It would not imply that such a believer also forfeits heaven. The believer so judged by God would still be saved. But he would probably be like one of those believer’s described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:15—”he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.” Such a believer is saved, but appears to have suffered the loss of all possible heavenly rewards. If this is correct, then salvation is not at issue here, but rather the loss of rewards that could have been earned through obedience. Of course, salvation itself is by grace through faith, and not by our works (Ephesians 2:8-9).

I hope this helps. This is basically how I would understand the passage in 1 John.

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

Posted March 12, 2014

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“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 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

"Are Calvinism and

Arminianism Both Biblical?”

Calvinism and Arminianism: is either one Biblical? Can they both be Biblical? Should the differences between Arminian and Calvinistic theology really be of that great of concern as long as both teach that the Lord is sovereign and we are all sinners and the only way to the Lord is through Jesus Christ and the atoning sacrifice He made on the cross?

You ask a very good question and (of course) who you ask will determine the sort of answer you receive. Yes; many Calvinists view Arminianism as “false doctrine” and are often very condescending in the way they discuss it. □(□□Of course, Arminians are also quite capable of being condescending toward Calvinists too.) Personally, I think this is unfortunate. This is a very important discussion and the competing viewpoints definitely have something to learn from each other.

Regarding your question, both perspectives view themselves as perfectly “biblical.” Adherents of either system will want to affirm that their view is most consistent with the teaching of Scripture. If they thought otherwise, they would change their view.

Of course, both systems cannot be correct in all the details (though they could both be wrong in *some* of the details). In this sense, they cannot both be “biblical” in the sense that they both get everything right according to Scripture. The disagreements between the two systems are significant and they cannot both be right in all the particular views that they affirm (although they could both be wrong in certain respects).

The differences should concern us (even though there is much in which both systems would agree). The differences are significant. Calvinists deny libertarian freedom; Arminians affirm it. Calvinists embrace a different definition of “total

depravity" than Arminians. Both groups disagree about the nature of election, the extent of the atonement, and whether or not a true believer can lose his/her salvation. These differences (and others as well) are significant enough to be of concern to all true believers.

At any rate, this is a huge and complex issue (as you've probably come to see). Let me conclude by recommending what I consider to be a really great book that deals with these issues (although the author takes something of a "mediating" position between the two). The book is called *Salvation and Sovereignty: A Molinist Approach*. It is written by the Baptist theologian Kenneth Keathley and was published in 2010. You can find the book on Amazon.

Keathley's book is one you definitely want to read if you're concerned about these issues. Personally, I think his particular version of a "Molinist" approach offers the best way out of the labyrinth. I hope you find it helpful.

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

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"Does God Cause Bad Things to Happen?"

On Facebook my cousin asked me this question: "You know how they say everything happens for a reason, whether good or bad? Some people say that God has nothing to do with what happens in our daily lives, so He is not the one to blame for things

going bad. But isn't it possible that bad things happen because God wants them to happen, because of His overall plan? For example, a woman gets raped and has a baby. Since God chooses when and where you will be born, is God to blame for the woman's rape so that baby would be born?" How would you respond?

Your cousin has asked about something that has perplexed Christians for a very long time. It actually marks a significant division between Christians theologically. Who is responsible for what happens on earth? Some believe God ordains everything that happens. Some believe He knows everything that will happen but He doesn't always cause it (especially sinful things). Still others believe God doesn't know everything that will happen in the future, so He can't be blamed in any way.

The Bible indicates that God is sovereign over the world and nothing happens apart from His plan. Daniel 4:35 reads, "All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and [God] does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, 'What have you done?'" In Isa. 45:7 God says, "I form light and create darkness, I make success and create disaster; I, Yahweh, do all these things." Typically when God brings disaster on people, it's as punishment. However, some hard things He brings our way are for the sake of discipline, to strengthen our faith and lead us into the way of righteousness (see Heb. 12:3-13). Even Jesus "learned obedience through what he suffered" (Heb. 5:8).

What God isn't to be blamed directly for is our sin. If we sin, we are responsible. Sometimes God lets us go in our sinful ways so that we learn to obey, but that doesn't make Him blameworthy for the sin we commit. So, somehow God is working out His plan, which includes some bad things, yet we are responsible for what we do.

Regarding the example given, since it is hypothetical only a hypothetical answer can be given. Let's assume that the woman hadn't done anything provocative herself, and that she hadn't knowingly put herself in a bad situation (although other people can't excuse their sin against us because of what we do, we can put ourselves in situations where there is a good chance we will be sinned against). This kind of situation is especially perplexing. There is no way of knowing directly why God would allow rape to occur. Will it change her life and point her in a different situation? What will the child grow up to accomplish? What will it mean in the lives of family and friends? God, through one act, can accomplish several things in several people's lives. In hindsight she might be able to look back and see some good that came out of this evil, but that doesn't always happen.

The wonderful thing about being in a relationship with God is that terrible events aren't the end of the story. Too often people use the word "ruined" to talk about the life of someone who has suffered terribly. I think of ruined as meaning *ended*, no good anymore for anything, destroyed. But we aren't forever ruined by disaster. Slowed down, re-directed, changed deeply maybe. But if we are willing to rest in God as sovereign over us and trust Him, we can let these things help shape us and guide us in the way God wants us to go. Difficulties come our way "that we may share [God's] holiness," the writer of Hebrews says. "For the moment, all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it" (12:10,11).

None of this excuses the sin. I can't do something bad to you and then tell you to just accept it because God must've wanted it to happen. God doesn't need our help to guide people into righteousness!

I think that people usually want a very short answer to the question, is God to blame or not? Either yes or no. But I

don’t think simple yes or no answers are typically sufficient for understanding. The issue has to be put into a bigger context. For example, when thinking about a tough football coach I had a long time ago, if I only think about whether he was to blame for letting that bigger player knock me silly in a round of “bull in the ring,” I would miss the whole point and misjudge him. He wasn’t being mean; he wasn’t trying to hurt me. He was making me learn how to be aware and be ready so I would be a better football player. Similarly, what God does (or allows to happen) has a reason or many reasons. The only way we can fully profit from it, though, is by being in a good relationship with Him through Christ and allowing ourselves to be shaped by it. I hope you and your cousin is in such a relationship with Him.

Thanks for writing.

Rick Wade

Posted Sept. 26, 2012

“What’s My Purpose in Life?”

A dear younger friend of mine recently posted this question on a forum:

> “Do you feel that you have a great mission or purpose in life?
>
> “I do feel like I’m made for something more than this, but whatever it is I can’t reach it, or find out what it is. I do feel as though I have a great purpose or mission in life—I’m sure I do!!! Why can I just not figure it out?
>
> “Was I born in the wrong time? My roommate says that I’m

> like a young person who thinks they were meant for more. She says hardly anyone here has a great life of purpose and I just have to accept reality. 99% of the people are just normal people—that there are not that many characters, priests, prophets, or heroes.
>
> "Does everyone go through life never figuring out what their great purpose is? There has to be a purpose beyond just surviving. Roommate says that my problem is that I think I'm born to be a superstar, a saint or a hero. She thinks I'm just unrealistic, and what I expect from and of myself is unrealistic. I think she's a pessimist. I want to do something big. I don't want a mediocre life."

Similar to C.S. Lewis' argument that our longings correspond to God's plan for the fulfillment of those longings (such as experiencing hunger because food exists for us to eat, and experiencing fatigue because there is such a thing as sleep), I think my friend's longing for the something bigger and something more, her disdain for a mediocre life, is indeed shaped by God's call to love and serve Him in large and glorious ways. But we may have been waylaid by the "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life" gospel, since many 20th-century Westerners seem to have directed their focus to finding out this wonderful plan rather than on God Himself.

I don't see anywhere in scripture where we are called to find our purpose in life. I think God just wants us to obey what He's already given us. When we do a search for the phrases "God's will" or "will of God" in the Bible, we know for sure God wants us to do things like give thanks in all things (1 Thessalonians 5:18), be sanctified and avoid sexual immorality (1 Thessalonians 4:3), silence the ignorance of foolish people by doing good (1 Peter 2:15), and sometimes, suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong (1 Peter 3:17).

All the "one anothers" in the Bible are commands, so those are

God's will as well. So our purpose in life is to please Him through obedience, which should grow out of our awareness that He loves us and made us for Himself.

Because we are made in the image of God, our purpose in life is to put Him on display. We—our bodies, our minds, our humor, our gifts and talents—are a display case for the glory of God. I think the specifics of how we go about that don't matter as much as we seem to think they do. Desiring to be truthful and transparent in serving as display cases for the treasure within matters more, I believe.

According to John 15, it is the Lord's pleasure—and thus His purpose for us—that we bear *much* (as opposed to *some* or *more*) fruit in us. That means Christlikeness; that means the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control (Galatians 5:22). So whether we are engaged in paid work or evangelizing on street corners, changing diapers or driving in traffic, putting Jesus on display is the most important thing. To do that, we need to continually immerse ourselves in His presence and His word, and hang around His people who are also immersing themselves in His presence and His word.

Right along with spiritual fruit is the topic of spiritual gifts. Finding God's personal purpose for us will involve discovering which of the spiritual gifts He has given each one of us, and using them to build up the body of Christ and bless others. (They are found in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4 and 1 Peter 4.)

And finally, 2 Corinthians 2 offers a delightful word picture of Christ-followers serving as "a sweet aroma of Christ to God" the Father, as well as bringing the fragrance of knowing Christ to people who are either being saved or perishing. That, too, is part of our purpose in life. I think that if we focus on what God has already told us pleases Him, obeying the commands He has already given His children, we'll get to the

point of looking in the rear-view mirror of life and discovering, "Oh, *that* was my personal purpose! Cool!"

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/whats-my-purpose-in-life on Aug. 14, 2012.

"If Jesus Was God, Why Did He Cry Out 'My God, My God, Why Have You Forsaken Me'?"

If Jesus really claimed to be a god then why did he say on the cross, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"

Response #1:
Thanks for your letter. I find D. A. Carson's comments on this passage helpful. Like him, I think that Jesus is conscious of having in some sense been abandoned by His Father. This would doubtless be related to the fact that, on the cross, he was bearing the sins of the world, thus causing God the Father to turn away from His Son.

His cry, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me," addresses God the Father as "My God." This is really not odd on the lips of Jesus, for we elsewhere read of Him referring to the Father in this way (see John 20:17). In addition, as the God-Man, Jesus was not only truly God (God the Son), but He was also truly man. It does not strike me as odd, therefore, that the man Jesus should refer to the Father as "My God"—indeed, it would not necessarily even be odd for the Son to address the Father in this way. For although God is one, the Father is a

distinct person from the Son.

At any rate, this is essentially how I would understand Jesus' cry of dereliction.

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

Response #2:
My colleague Michael forwarded his reply to me. I have recently come across an intriguing, very different paradigm for understanding why Jesus would say these words, that I find myself thinking about a lot.

It could be that Jesus *felt* that He was abandoned by His Father because at the point He became sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21), He fully descended into the darkness and blindness of fallen and judged humanity—and sin makes us blind and deaf to the reality of God. At that point, like astronauts on the dark side of the moon experiencing being completely cut off from Mission Control, perhaps He couldn't have sensed that His Father's love for Him never changed (because God does not change; that's one of His attributes). As Michael has remarked to me, Jesus, as our sin-bearer, experienced "God-forsakenness" on our behalf. In other words, He experienced in some sense the same sort of "God-forsakenness" that those in hell will experience. He experienced the horrible reality of the consequences (or wages) of sin (Rom. 6:23).

The Lord Jesus could have cried out, "why have You forsaken Me" because that is the *effect* of sin on humanity—it can *feel* like God has forsaken us—but it doesn't mean He has. He had promised, "I will never leave you or forsake you" (Deut. 31:6,8).

Secondly, there is a very compelling observation about what has been called "the cry of dereliction" that was a major light bulb moment for me when I heard it: "My God, My God, why

have You forsaken Me?” is the opening line to Psalm 22. The Psalms are songs, so He wasn’t just quoting scripture, He was crying out the first line of a song very familiar to any Jews who were within earshot. And when we hear the first line of a familiar song, it’s like hitting the “play” button, and the rest of the song continues to play in our heads.

I think that when Jesus called out the first line of Psalm 22, he was reminding those around Him of the rest of the song, which not only makes it clear He was the fulfillment of the prophecies of crucifixion, but it unfolds into a song of trust and praise in Yahweh.

Anyone who knew Psalm 22 could have been struck by the fact that Jesus was a living picture, the very fulfillment, of the words of that song running through their heads:

> 6 But I am a worm and not a man.
> I am scorned and despised by all!
> 7 Everyone who sees me mocks me.
> They sneer and shake their heads, saying,
> 8 “Is this the one who relies on the Lord?
> Then let the Lord save him!
> If the Lord loves him so much,
> let the Lord rescue him!”
>
> 11 Do not stay so far from me,
> for trouble is near,
> and no one else can help me.
> 12 My enemies surround me like a herd of bulls;
> fierce bulls of Bashan have hemmed me in!
> 13 Like lions they open their jaws against me,
> roaring and tearing into their prey.
> 14 My life is poured out like water,
> and all my bones are out of joint.
> My heart is like wax,
> melting within me.
> 15 My strength has dried up like sunbaked clay.

> My tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth.
> You have laid me in the dust and left me for dead.
> 16 My enemies surround me like a pack of dogs;
> an evil gang closes in on me.
> They have pierced my hands and feet.
> 17 I can count all my bones.
> My enemies stare at me and gloat.
> 18 They divide my garments among themselves
> and throw dice for my clothing.

And yet there is a faith-filled insistence on praising the Father despite what the Son was feeling:

> 22 I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters.
> I will praise you among your assembled people.
> 23 Praise the Lord, all you who fear him!
> Honor him, all you descendants of Jacob!
> Show him reverence, all you descendants of Israel!

Verse 24 is especially powerful, since it would indicate that Jesus knew His Father had not abandoned Him even if He couldn't see or sense His presence:

> 24 For he has not ignored or belittled the suffering of the needy.
> He has not turned his back on them,
> but has listened to their cries for help.

I think it's very interesting that there is a completely different way of interpreting the Lord Jesus' plaintive cry on the cross. Compelling, even. I hope you find it helpful.

Sue Bohlin

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“Is It Wrong to Baptize in the Name of Jesus?”

Did the Apostles baptize wrong in the Book of Acts since they baptized in the name of Jesus?

There is a debate that says believers must be baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matt 28: 19) rather than in the name of Jesus only as the Book of Acts records. The Jesus-only people are also modalists which means they do not believe in the Trinity but in Jesus Only, hence they baptize only in his name. The confusion lies in the different formulas for baptism in Matthew and Acts. The solution is that either formula is acceptable since they are both Biblical. What is not acceptable is the modalist theology behind the Jesus Only belief that denies the personhood of the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Lawrence Terlizzese, Ph.D.

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