

Acorns, Oak Trees, and Our Son's Grave

While visiting their son's grave, Sue Bohlin meditated on the glory of the '2.0 resurrection body' that we look forward to.

On the one-year anniversary of [our son's death](#), my husband and I drove out to the DFW National Cemetery to find Curt's grave.

I have never been one to visit loved ones' gravesites. I always thought, "Why? They're not there. They're not in the ground, they're in heaven."

But lately I've been thinking differently about our bodies. They are more than just physical cases for who we are inside. We ARE our bodies, as well as our souls. Human beings are a unified creation of the material and the immaterial.

So I stood on the ground, thinking about this, above Curt's body. A precious body, the body I carried inside mine for nine months, and then carried in my arms until he learned to walk. The body of the boy I loved, and still do. The body of the man who looked so handsome in his Air Force uniform. The body that was placed in a casket to be buried a year ago while we honored him at his memorial service.

As I reminded myself that Curt's "body 1.0" is precious and dear, I thought back to the great privilege of teaching 1 Corinthians 15 and the "2.0 resurrection bodies" that await us.

When I taught that day, I held up an acorn from our front yard.



“An acorn is an oak seed,” I said. “It has the same DNA as an oak tree. Is the acorn the same as the oak tree? Yes . . . and no.

“They are stages of the same plant, they’re the same genetically, but of course they are different.

“What happens to an acorn? It gets planted in the ground, it falls apart and dies, then it sprouts new life . . . and eventually it is transformed into an oak tree.”

The buried acorn absorbs moisture from the soil and rain, and the outer husk softens. The bare seed inside is exposed, and things change. Little tendrils shoot out and start to grow down into the soil. The acorn falls apart, and that first stage basically dies, but the oak tree can’t come to life unless the seed dies. But a little acorn can become a HUGE tree!

The acorn can’t even begin to imagine the **size** and **power** and **majesty** and **beauty** of the oak tree. It can’t fathom becoming something big enough and strong enough for someone to build a treehouse in its branches, where kids can play. Mind blowing!

Our bodies are like the acorn planted in the ground. They get sick, weak, and they die. But that’s not the end, like the acorn falling apart in the ground isn’t the end.

We have the hope of experiencing a **new form of physical bodily existence** that is as different from our earthly bodies as the oak tree is different from an acorn.

1 Corinthians 15:42-44 says,

What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

Our natural body, our “Earth suit,” is subject to aging, disease and death. Like an acorn.

What a contrast with our spiritual body—our “New Earth suit”—which will be strong, vibrant, and glorious. Like a big, beautiful, glorious oak tree.

I love to meditate on the resurrection body, our spiritual body. We can see from the gospel records what Jesus’ resurrection body was like:

- Jesus’ body still had His wounds.
- It was physical. The disciples could touch Him; in fact He commanded that Thomas reach out and touch His wrist, and put his hand in Jesus’ side where the spear had pierced His chest.
- He could travel effortlessly and instantly, appearing and disappearing at will.
- He was able to pass through walls and doors.
- He could-and did-eat, drink, and talk.
- He handled material things (He wasn’t a ghost or an illusion).
- His resurrected body was more real, of more substance, than ours is.

His resurrected body was the oak tree compared to the acorn.

According to Randy Alcorn’s wonderful book *Heaven*, Curt is experiencing the intermediate heaven today. It’s unimaginably beautiful and glorious, but it’s not the still-future unification of heaven and earth where we will receive our resurrection bodies—and things will get even better.

Our “oak tree bodies” still lie ahead. And that sure makes me smile.

This blog post originally appeared at [Acorns, Oak Trees, and Our Son’s Grave](#) on July 10, 2025.

How Contagious Are You?

When someone shared their cold with Sue Bohlin on a recent cruise, it made her think about how contagious we can be in different ways, for good and for bad.

Halfway through my last cruise, I suddenly became aware of my throat. That's always my first sign of a cold, so I started popping zinc tablets every few hours to fight back. People share their germs on cruise ships, especially those with thousands of passengers; contagion is just a fact of life. I wasn't surprised.

Many people are now more aware of social contagion. Just like colds and flu, we can easily "catch" other people's feelings and behaviors and beliefs.

Like anger. Proverbs 22:24-25 warns us, "Do not make friends with a hot-tempered person, do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn their ways and get yourself ensnared."

Like entitlement. The proliferation of short "Karen" videos putting self-centered entitlement on full display seems to have made this obnoxiousness multiply.

While these two rotten character traits have proven to be socially contagious, what is deeply heartbreaking to me is the social contagion of teens (and even younger) identifying as transgender. Adolescence is hard and awkward for just about anyone, but when kids are addicted to social media and never put their phones down, the "trans disease" (for lack of a better term) sweeps through schools and classes and friend groups, picking up steam as it picks off youth struggling with who they are and afraid of who they are supposed to become.

Recently, when reading in 1 Samuel. I was struck by the people of Israel telling the last judge, Samuel, "Give us a king to judge us like all the other nations have." (8:5)

Well, what do you know? Social contagion in the Old Testament!

I have been especially aware of the power of contagion ever since our family doctor asked me once, "You live with two depressed men (my husband and our son), and depression is contagious. What are you doing to protect yourself?"

I laughed, "As it happens, I just got off a short cruise with my sister. Four solid days of joy and laughter and fun with no depression in sight." She said, "You need to do that regularly." (And I do. Which is one reason I am "the cruise queen.")

I didn't realize depression could be contagious, but it makes sense. Because a number of negative things can be quite contagious. As my other son, who owns several specialty coffee cafés in San Francisco assures me, critical speech and gossip can be contagious. Some of his baristas had absorbed bad habits from each other and it's heartbreaking.

Negativity is contagious. Like wearing sunglasses indoors, a negative mindset can manifest in someone's words and even micro-expressions, coloring the thinking and reactions of those around them.

But you know what?

Gratitude can also be contagious.

Lightheartedness can be contagious.

Courtesy can be contagious.

Complimenting and affirming others can be contagious.

Generosity. Enthusiasm. Vulnerability, Laughter.

Even faith.

Contagion, it seems, can be bad . . . or beautiful.

Living With an Eternal Perspective

Sue Bohlin considers several ways to develop a way of seeing our earthly life as part of the much bigger picture that extends into eternity.

What Does It Mean To Live With an Eternal Perspective?

Years ago, after spending his whole life on the mission field, a career missionary made his final trip home on a passenger ship. One of the other people on his sailing was a celebrity, and as the ship made its way into the harbor, all those on board beheld a huge throng of well wishers at the pier with signs and instruments to celebrate the famous person's return.

The missionary stood at the railing, watching wistfully, knowing that not a soul was there for him. He said, "Lord, I've served You my whole life. Look at all the recognition and revelry for that famous person, and there's nobody here for me. It hurts, Lord."



He heard the still, small voice say, "You're not home yet, son."

I love this story that helps me keep in mind the big picture

that includes the eternal, unseen realm, and the long picture that extends into the forever that awaits on the other side of death.

The apostle Paul had a firm grasp on what it means to live with an eternal perspective. We can especially see this in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18—

So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

In these verses, Paul provides three aspects of an eternal perspective that kept him from losing heart, despite living with profound physical persecution and assault such as being hammered with stones, whipped by a cat-o'-nine-tails, beaten with rods, and shipwrecked. He knew what it was to go without sleep, food or drink, sometimes he was cold and naked. The man *knew* what it was to suffer! (2 Corinthians 11:23-29)

But Paul had a sort of spiritual periscope that allowed him to “see above” into the spirit realm while continuing to “live below” in this physical world. He saw the contrast between our bodies and our souls, how earthly affliction prepares us for glory, and the need to focus on the unseen and eternal rather than the seen and temporary.

Paul's Eternal Perspective

The apostle Paul showed us in 2 Corinthians 4 that he understood what it was to live with an eternal perspective. He understood that our bodies can be growing older and weaker on the outside, while our spirits are growing stronger, brighter, and more mature on the inside. I get that; as a polio survivor

who has also needed both my hips replaced, I am very aware that I keep getting weaker the longer I live in this compromised body. But I also know the beauty and glory of Jesus making me more and more like Himself, day by day, so by His grace I can keep growing in vitality and joy on the inside! I may have diminishing energy in my body, but my spiritual energy capacity keeps getting bigger!

Paul also understood that the hard parts of living in a fallen world, much less living with the pains and trials of persecution, are merely a “light and momentary affliction” compared to what’s waiting on the other side: an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. Even horrible pain on earth is still “light and momentary” compared to the infinite length and glory of eternity with Christ. We can see how the Lord Jesus modeled this understanding as He faced the cross, and Hebrews tells us that He “despised its shame” because He was valuing the glory of the joy set before Him (12:2)

And Paul understood that we can shift our focus from the visible and temporary things of this world, to the unseen and eternal things of the spirit realm. We have to work at seeing the unseen and eternal. We do that with the eyes of our hearts (Ephesians 1:18). We do that by training ourselves to view everything through the lens of God’s word.

I’ve been working at developing an eternal perspective for years. For me, it’s about connecting the dots between earthly things and heavenly things.

I look at earthly things and wonder, “How does this connect to the spirit realm? How does this connect to what is unseen and eternal?” For examples, look at my blog posts, such as Glorious Morning Glories [probe.org/glorious-morning-glories/], Back Infections and Heart Infections [probe.org/back-infections-and-heart-infections/], Cruise Ships, Roller Coasters and Attitudes [probe.org/cruise-ships-roller-coasters-and-attitudes/], and Blowing Past Greatness

[\[probe.org/blowing-past-greatness/\]](http://probe.org/blowing-past-greatness/).

Jesus' parables are the world's best examples of using the physical to provide understanding of the eternal. He was always connecting the dots between the things He was surrounded by—different types of soil, lost coins and sheep and sons, a wedding banquet—and explaining how these things related to the Kingdom of Heaven.

One of the most important prayers we can ask is, “Lord, help me see Your hand at work”—and then intentionally looking for it. For years I have kept a “God Sightings” Journal where I recorded evidence of God intervening in my life and the lives of others I have seen. I love to ask my friends and mentees, “Do you any God Sightings to share?” to help them identify the hand of God in their lives.

An Eternal Perspective on Suffering

As we talk about living with an eternal perspective, let's remember that we live in a permanent battle zone of spiritual warfare. We have an enemy who hates us because He hates God. He and his fellow demons continually attack us with lies and deceptions. Some are personal, but many of them constitute the cultural water we swim in.

When we forget that we live in a culture of anti-God, anti-truth, it's like going out in our underwear, needlessly exposing ourselves. Living with an eternal perspective means staying vigilant, donning our spiritual armor (Ephesians 6:10-18) and using it to fight back against the lies of the enemy.

Spiritual warfare is HARD. It means suffering. Sometimes physical, most often mental—because spiritual warfare is waged on the battlefield of the mind. But the suffering of spiritual warfare is temporary, because the vast majority of the believer's life will be spent in heaven where warfare of all

kinds will be a distant memory.

But for right now, suffering is still part of life, and developing and maintaining an eternal perspective really helps us remind ourselves of the larger truth. Romans 8:18 says that “our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.” Being faithful when we’re suffering means glory in the future.

My friend Holly has battled cancer three times on top of the horribleness of cystic fibrosis. She suffers literally every day of her life. Yet, with a beautiful, godly stubbornness, she reminds herself of what is true: “What if the worst thing happens? Oh wait, it can’t. The worst thing that can possibly happen to anyone is to die apart from Christ and spend eternity in torment. For me, to die means instant joy and relief in the arms of my Savior!”

Like [Joni Eareckson Tada](#), my friend Chris has lived with quadriplegia for almost fifty years. What comes to mind when I think of Chris is two words: “sweet joy.” Because of his eternal perspective, Chris knows his suffering is temporary, and he chooses not to give into self-pity. People are drawn to him like honey because of how he radiates Jesus.

And then there’s me. I’ve lived with a disability my whole life. As a polio survivor, I have walked every step with a [very noticeable limp](#). Living with an eternal perspective means that, by the grace of God, I know I will receive a beautiful, strong, perfectly healthy resurrection body in heaven. My polio days are limited, but my resurrection body days will be unlimited! Meanwhile, I get to see God use my disability for His glory and others’ good in ways I never would have imagined. It really is okay!

Remembering the Long View

Another aspect of living with an eternal perspective is focusing on the reality that our time on earth is short, especially compared to the never-ending life on the other side of death.

One of my favorite questions is to ask, “A hundred years from now, when you are face to face with Jesus in heaven, what do you want to be glad you chose today? Indulging your flesh and doing whatever you think will make you happy right now, or making choices that honor God and bless other people?”

Probably my favorite question remains an essential part of my eternal perspective: passing everything through the grid of the great question, “In the scope of eternity, what does this matter?” [probe.org/in-the-scope-of-eternity/]The frustrations of traffic? Not getting our way? A loved one who does not know Christ? The answer determines what is worth getting upset about, what we should just let go, and where we should be investing time in prayer.

We can remember the long view by pre-deciding now that we will use our earthly days fully, engaged in ministry, as long as God gives us breath.

Years ago, my view of living with an eternal perspective was shaped by the story of a lady who decided to start college in her 70s. When they asked her why she would do such a thing when her life was basically over, she said, “Oh no! It’s not over! I’m preparing for the next part of my life in heaven! The more equipped I can get on earth, the more ready I’ll be for what the Lord has for me on the other side!”

Another lady was homebound because she was so disabled. She got the word out that every afternoon, her home was open for anyone who needed prayer. Some days it was like there was a revolving door, so many coming and going! She had a vibrant

ministry in the waning days of her life because she was determined to use her remaining earthly days fully, to the glory of God.

One of my friends is a TSA [Transportation Security Administration, part of the U.S. Government] agent at a major airport. She diligently reminds herself daily that every traveler who comes through the security line is infinitely valuable because they are made in the image of God, and Jesus died for them. She showers kindness on them because they are so important. One of her co-workers, for whom work is just a job where he punches a time clock, once told her, "In twelve months you'll stop being nice to everyone." We don't think so. (Especially since she's already had this job for several years.) She works at maintaining an eternal perspective, seeing the unseen.

In the time you have now, live well, to the glory of God. Keep reminding yourself that everything we do now has an eternal impact. Our choices, our behaviors, our words, ripple into eternity. Which is why we need to seek to do everything for the glory of God.

Eternal Perspective is What God Sees

As a mom of littles, Nicole Johnson was feeling sorry for herself when she met with a friend who had just returned from Europe. She writes,

"My friend turned to me with a beautifully wrapped package, and said, 'I brought you this.' It was a book on the great cathedrals of Europe. I wasn't exactly sure why she'd given it to me until I read her inscription: 'With admiration for the greatness of what you are building when no one sees.'

"In the days ahead I would read—no, devour—the book. And I would discover what would become for me, four life-changing truths, after which I could pattern my work:

“1) No one can say who built the great cathedrals—we have no record of their names.

“2) These builders gave their whole lives for a work they would never see finished.

“3) They made great sacrifices and expected no credit.

“4) The passion of their building was fueled by their faith that the eyes of God saw everything.

“There’s a story in the book about a rich man who came to visit the cathedral while it was being built, and he saw a workman carving a tiny bird on the inside of a beam. He was puzzled and asked the man, ‘Why are you spending so much time carving that bird into a beam that will be covered by the roof? No one will ever see it.’

“And the workman replied, ‘Because God sees it.’[\[1\]](#)

Living with an eternal perspective as we make choices and invest our time to glorify God is like building a cathedral that we won’t be able to see finished.

It means living with the long view in mind, aware that the things we can see, hear, and feel are temporary, but the spiritual realm is permanent.

An eternal perspective means that the things you do that no one sees but God—the unseen and eternal—*they matter!*

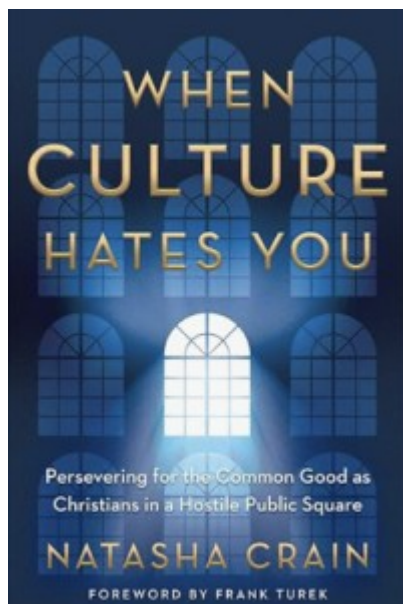
God tells us in Isaiah that our purpose in life is to glorify Him (43:7). Paul puts a point on this in 1 Corinthians 10:31: “Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”

And that’s the key to living with an eternal perspective.

Notes

Impose Values

Natasha Crain warns Christians in her new book, *When Culture Hates You: Persevering for the Common Good as Christians in a Hostile Public Square*. She begins by talking about the hostility Christians often face when they articulate a biblical perspective on cultural issues. We shouldn't be surprised since Jesus warned us, "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you" (John 15:18).



One of the significant criticisms from non-Christians, and even from Christians, is the claim that Christians should not impose their views on others. We also hear that Christians should not seek power. We are told that getting involved in politics harms our witness and can disrupt unity in the church. And we are told that Christians should not be partisans.

To evaluate those objections, she proposes slavery as a test case. Here are her five key statements using those objections: (1) Christians shouldn't have worked to end slavery because we shouldn't have imposed our views on others. (2) Christians shouldn't have worked to end slavery because that involved seeking power to do it. (3) Christians shouldn't have worked to end slavery because getting involved with a political issue

harmed our witness. (4) Christians shouldn't have worked to end slavery because it disrupted unity in the church. (5) Christians shouldn't have worked to end slavery because Christians shouldn't have been partisans.

Would we accept those objections today? We would reject such reasoning and can see how we shouldn't have applied such arguments two centuries ago. We were called to speak truth then and are called to speak truth today.

This blog post originally appeared at pointofview.net/viewpoints/impose-values/ on March 13, 2025.

When Gratitude and Grief Hold Hands

Sue Bohlin has discovered that the ongoing habit of giving thanks for God's many goodnesses has mitigated her grief in her son's death.

It's been five months since [our son took his life](#) and we were thrown into a sea of grief. I can tell people are still praying for us because God's deep and beautiful grace is holding us up.

The day after Curt died, I was struck with the thought that a gigantic wall of awful grief was going to hit me. Hard. I knew that wall. It slammed into me the first time when our firstborn baby Becky died on her eighth day of life. It slammed into me again almost two years ago when [a third of my tongue was cut out](#) because of cancer. So I know how to recognize the unbidden, overwhelming feelings of loss and deep sadness.

But a second and comforting thought chased down the chilling first thought: *The Lord carried me through those times of great grief in the past, and He will carry me again. I don't need to fear the grief monster because my God is bigger than the grief monster. Thank You, Lord, thank You.*

That immediate prayer of thankfulness arose out of a 50-year-long habit that God impressed on me as a college student as I struggled to reconcile why a good God would let polio cripple me. I learned probably the biggest lesson of my life: that He wants us to give thanks not only **IN** all things (1 Thessalonians 5:18), but **FOR** all things (Ephesians 5:20). For a deeper dive, I invite you to read my blog post "[Giving Thanks for EVERYTHING?](#)"

I couldn't possibly know back in those early days of my walk with Christ how the habit of giving thanks as a way of life would shape how I could handle the unthinkable loss of a second child decades later.

Giving thanks as a daily habit began as a step of obedience, but then it grew to become an intrinsic part of my everyday life—to the point that I shoot up many more "thank You" prayers than "please" prayers. And that has never been so true as it has been these past five months.

ALL of my "please" prayers for Curt, as he struggled for years with a deep, dark suicidal depression I could not begin to imagine, have been turned into "thank You" prayers. Every day I tell the Lord how grateful I am that my son is experiencing a level of joy he couldn't have imagined any more than I can imagine the pain of his mental illness. I thank Him for the massive sense of relief that is Curt's daily life in heaven. I thank Him that his hearing loss has been replaced with perfect hearing. I thank Him that Curt's love of music, which was devastating because of that hearing loss, has been ratcheted up to enjoy new kinds of beautiful music (so I read in stories of those who have been allowed a glimpse of heaven). I thank

Him that my son's deep suffering is only a memory for him now, and he has all eternity to look forward to whatever God will allow him to do. I thank Him that Curt can look forward with clear eyes and unskewed thinking, to the next stages of his new life on the other side.

Every day I thank the Lord that I *know know know* where my son is, and that he is more alive today than he ever was on earth. I thank Him for the beloved family and friends who graduated to heaven before Curt, with whom he is enjoying restored fellowship and laughter and hugs. I thank the Lord for how real heaven is to me.

And because He has taught me how to turn hard truths into a "thank You," I know what to do with the pangs of loss that inevitably strike me every day. When I see Curt's handwriting on my recipes from the tweaking we did together when cooking, a fresh wave of missing him washes over me . . . and I'm able to say, "Thank You for all the help he gave me in the kitchen over these past 17 years of his living here." When Ray and I wince at needing to find caregivers for our dog Lincoln when we go out of town—something we never needed to do because Curt never went anywhere—I'm able to say, "Thank You that he was our built-in dogsitter for all those years."

When I see his computer components gathering dust in a corner, or when we need computer help, I'm able to chase the pangs of missing him with, "Thank You for the gift of having an IT genius in our home all those years."

It might be easy to scoff and think, "You're just sugar-coating this horrible loss of your beloved son. Get a grip and face your grief squarely instead of trying to paint it with rosy colors."

But I am not a stranger to grief. I've endured a number of very big, very painful losses. I seek to be honest and authentic in this hard place we are in, but my reality is that

gratitude softens the blow of grief. The Lord demonstrates His goodness to me in so many ways every day, I can't help but see them because I've grown more sensitive to recognize what I call His "hugs and kisses." Those hugs and kisses are one way He comforts me in this hard time.

Because gratitude and grief CAN hold hands.

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/when-gratitude-and-grief-hold-hands/ on December 17, 2024.

The Pope Got It Wrong. Breathtakingly Wrong.

Sue Bohlin reacts to Pope Francis's recent statement that all religions are roads to God, providing a biblical answer to this false teaching.

Recently (9/13/2024) Pope Francis told a Singapore audience of youth from different faiths that all religions are equal, all different paths to God.

Through an interpreter, he said,

"If we start to fight among yourselves and say my religion is more important than yours, my religion is true and yours is not, where would that lead us. It is okay to discuss, because every religion is a way to arrive at God. Analogously speaking, religion is like different languages to arrive at God. But God is God for all. And if God is God for all, we are all sons and daughters of God. 'But my God is more important than your God.' Is that true? There is only one

God, and each of us is a language, so to speak, to arrive at God. Muslim, Hindu, they are different paths. Understood?"^[11]

As the spiritual leader of the Catholic Church's 1.3 billion adherents, the pope is responsible for speaking truth to his flock. Not only is this statement heretical, it is a slap in the face of the Lord Jesus Christ—Whom the pope presumably worships and serves. If all religions lead to God, why did Jesus leave heaven to become a human being? Why did He submit Himself to the excruciating suffering of His passion and crucifixion? Why did the sinless, perfect God-man die? What's the point of His resurrection?

No. Different religious paths do not all lead to God. The pope is wrong wrong wrong. Those who believe what he's saying, trusting in their false religions, will remain enemies of God; their sin will forever separate them from God. This breaks my heart. Even as I type this, I pray for God to open the eyes of those embracing this Satanic lie so that they will turn in faith to the one true God.

Those who believe the "all religions lead to God" deception often invoke the story of the six blind Hindus who encountered an elephant. One felt its side and said, "An elephant is a wall." Another felt its leg and said, "An elephant is a tree trunk." A third felt its tusk and said, "An elephant is a spear." The fourth felt its trunk and said, "An elephant is a hose." The fifth felt its tail and said, "An elephant is a rope." The last one felt its ear and said, "An elephant is a fan."

The point of this allegorical story is that each person's encounter and description of the elephant in radically different ways is like the various world religions. None of them should claim to have the corner on truth because they all

have different perspectives.

But this view leaves out the larger picture: an elephant is an elephant—not a wall or tree or spear or hose or rope or fan. And the Creator of the elephant has communicated with us the very nature of the “elephant.” He has revealed capital-T Truth about reality, and He has been clear in how mankind is to relate rightly to Himself. This blind Hindu story leaves out the very important aspect of revelation, when Someone outside the limitations of our “blindness” as finite creatures, tells us things we cannot know on our own.

Which leads us to the ultimate reason why the Pope is so very wrong. The “Creator of the elephant,” Jesus the Son of God, came to earth as a man and made astonishing truth claims about Himself: “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” (John 14:6)

If all religions led to God, why would Jesus say He is the ONLY way?

He also claimed to be Yahweh, the covenant God of the Old Testament. “Before Abraham was, I AM.” (John 8:58).

He claimed for Himself attributes that are only true of God Himself:

Eternal “Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.” (John 17:5)

Omnipresent “For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.” (Matthew 18:20)

“Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20)

Sinless “Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me?” (John 8:46)

Accepted worship “And those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, ‘You are certainly God’s Son!’ (Matthew 14:33)

Then He said to 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.” Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:27-28)

Able to Forgive Sins And Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” (Mark 2:5)

“For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little.” Then He said to her, “Your sins have been forgiven.” Those who were reclining at the table with Him began to say to themselves, “Who is this man who even forgives sins?” (Luke 7:48-50)

Judge of All Men “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice...” (John 5:24-28)

Jesus claimed to be God; He claimed to be the only way to the Father. He backed up these claims by fulfilling prophecy about the promised Messiah. And most phenomenal of all, He said He would die and rise from the dead three days later—and He did it.

We can believe Him when He says He is the only way. We *should* believe Him.

The Pope is massively, terrifyingly wrong. All religions do not lead to God. Jesus is the ONLY way.

1. <https://ethosinstitute.sg/every-religion-is-a-way-to-god/> Accessed 9/17/2024 ?

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/the-pope-got-it-wrong-breathtakingly-wrong/ on September 17, 2024.

What You CAN Say to Someone Who's Grieving

When we [lost our \(believing\) son to suicide](#) last month, we received hundreds of cards and Facebook notes assuring us of people's care and sympathy. What a blessing!

So often, people just don't know what to say in the face of horrific loss and pain, and it's easy to say the wrong thing. One of my favorite-ever blog posts is "[What Not to Say When Someone is Grieving](#)."

But I want to share ideas on what has been truly comforting and supportive, because some of the comments we received are how "the God of all comfort" (2 Corinthians 1:3) blessed us, and I hope you find them helpful for crafting what YOU can say to someone in pain.

Bottom line key: what really comforts and encourages us (because we're still making our way through grief) is communicating LOVE. Nothing encourages like the power of love. If you're really crunched for time, scroll to the end for the two most powerful notes we received.

Cards

I am sad and so sorry for all the pain you are experiencing. I'm praying for your peace in the midst of the anguish. With love for you and appreciation for your faithful witness.

May you both feel the hope that anchors our souls—even in dark days and weeks.

I am so sorry for the grave loss you are suffering. I am lifting you up in prayer and asking the Holy Spirit to intercede for you in this time when words are not enough. I ask God to make His nearness evident to you in the coming days and that His peace would surround and carry you moment by moment. May the Lord bless you and keep you.

There are no words sufficient to convey my deep sympathy for you. Having said that, I know that Curt is now experiencing what those of us who remain can only look forward to—complete fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ and all the saints who have gone before. You both remain in my heart and prayers.

Praying for an extra measure of God's presence and peace in the days ahead.

We love you and we feel your pain and wish we could bear some of it for you. We lift you up to our Father's grace!

We know that Curt is fully healed and rejoicing with Jesus over the indescribable gift of glory! Still, we cannot fully fathom the deep emotions you are going through. Just know you are and will be in our prayers.

Facebook notes

I will be in prayer asking the Lord to tenderly hold you both in His hands and ease your pain and your grief.

May the Holy Spirit minister to you and meet your needs in ways beyond we could even ask or imagine.

My heart is breaking for you. I'm so sorry. Love you all.

May the Lord be so near, may you cherish your wonderful memories with you son, and may the hope of heaven bring comfort in the deep pain of loss.

No words can adequately comfort—but I am so deeply sorry and I pray for sustaining comfort until the promised reunion.

I am heartbroken for your loss but so grateful for your hope that you will see Curt again.

Oh Sue, words fail. May the peace that passes understanding come to you, Ray and the family quickly.

Words are inadequate in the midst of such tragedy. Love and prayers for you and your family.

Oh dear friends, we are crushed by this news but we know God's grace superimposes us in our most difficult moments. We are praying for you in this difficult time and know your future reunion with Curt will erase this present sorrow.

Oh, Sue! I am weeping with you. I am praying for you right now. May the Lord comfort you as only He can. One day, death will be forever defeated and all will be made new. Come quickly, Lord Jesus!

I am asking the Lord to help you feel His presence and strength in tangible ways and that the hope of heaven comforts you. Sending you so much love!

My heart grieves with you, Sue and Ray. May God's loving presence comfort and sustain you as He did for me four years ago when I received similar news about my son. I'm thankful we grieve but not without hope. My prayers are with you now and in the days to come and I send you my love.

We lost our son to suicide two years ago, so when I tell you my heart aches with you I know whereof I speak. I pray that

the Lord sends you comfort. I pray that the Lord holds you in his loving arms. I pray He gives you whatever strength you need. I love you sweet sister in Christ.

—

Lord, we ask for Your comfort to envelop our beloved Bohlin family in their time of unimaginable sorrow. Please grant them strength to face each day and the peace that surpasses all understanding.

Surround them with love and support, and let them feel Your presence even in the darkest moments.

Help them to find solace in the memories of their son and to lean on one another as they navigate this painful journey. May they feel Your everlasting arms holding them close, providing hope and healing in the days to come.

In Your merciful name, we pray. Amen.

—

I wish I could give you a huge hug right now. My heart aches for you and Ray.

My heart breaks for you both. May you experience God's supernatural peace surpassing all understanding ... in such an un-understandable moment.

I have no words. Only tears.

Our hearts are breaking for you! God is faithful, yes but this is HARD.

Oh Sue & Ray, what words are there for this? May you be swamped with God's tender mercy. I pray that the structure you have built upon the firm foundation of Christ, day after day & year after year, now be a sanctuary for you. May many take note to see & know that Jesus is enough for unspeakable times.

Devastated & heartbroken for you all. He was such a sweet soul and he will forever have a piece of my heart. Grateful he is in the arms of Jesus and no longer in agony. Praying the Lord's peace washes over your pain.

Oh Sue. My heart is shattered on your behalf. May you be comforted by ways that only the Lord can offer. I love you SO MUCH. I am approaching His throne for you and your family.

I know God is so near and grieving along with you and Ray! I pray that you can submit all your steps and words to him and let him heal you the only way our amazing God can. I am sending so many hugs.

Oh Sue! I cannot imagine the depth of pain coupled with the hope of heaven. Lord, preserve my dear friends through their deep loss, sustain them with your mighty hand, extend peace and rest as they reflect on sweet memories. Hold them close Lord.

The Most Powerful Notes:

How my heart hurts for you as you bear this great loss. You have been so faithful to love and care for your beloved son all these years. Now you can rest in knowing he is in the arms of Jesus now. May the God of all comfort carry you and sustain you in the difficult days to come, and may He fill you with joyous memories you can cherish in the midst of the grief. You are incredible parents and I'm sure that very few will understand the burden and sacrifice you have carried for so long. Rest now in peace knowing he is with Jesus and your loving work is complete

—

My eyes have been glued to this page for 30 minutes, unsure of how to start such a note,

I know words can fail at such a time, but loving prayer does

its most urgent work. You both are loved by so many and I know that heaven's gates are flooded with the prayers of the body of Christ. My prayer tonight is that the God of all comfort would comfort your hurting hearts.

Please know that your tears are mingled with family and friends who love you so. I am thankful to be in that number.

With my note comes my love,

Loving and compassionate words can't *fix* grief, but they most certainly can bring comfort in the hard coldness of the pain of loss. I hope you find this helpful the next time you want to say something that communicates your heart.

This blog post originally appeared at

blogs.bible.org/what-you-can-say-to-someone-whos-grieving/ on
Aug. 24, 2024.

Suicide Has Hit Our Family

Sue Bohlin shares her heart in the wake of her and her husband Ray's son taking his life.

Last week our beloved 44-year-old son Curt took his life.

He had struggled with severe suicidal depression for 26 years, hating almost every day of his adult life and wanting God to take him home to join his sister Rebecca. His depression and anxiety crippled him to the point of moving back in with my husband and me in 2008. He often shared with us his anguish at life in a fallen world, living in a broken body.

Curt eventually lost most of his hearing as the result of serving on the flight line in the Air Force, but when he was honorably discharged he was told it wasn't bad enough to warrant disability benefits. The loss of his hearing meant losing his touch with music, which he loved. It also meant losing touch with his community in online role-playing games, so he lost his sense of belonging and purpose.

His life was very painful. After staying his hand multiple times over two decades, God allowed him to take his life and instantly enter the heaven he had longed for, for so very long.

Some themes have been rolling around in my head since the news of his passing.

First, our grief is mitigated by the relief on Curt's behalf that his suffering is over. When I told my husband the news delivered by a police detective, his first words were, "We've known this day might come for 26 years." We have lived with the darkness of his depression and anxiety for a long time, which included the ever-present threat of suicide because he always thought of it as his ticket out.

Second, God's grace is stronger than I have ever experienced in my entire life. It feels like He has tucked me in the shadow of His wing (Psalm 57:1). I have buried a child before; I know the brutality of grief, but God is holding it back. I winced to realize that a hard, heart-wrenching grief awaits me, but then I reminded myself that He will carry me through those days just as He's carrying me now. And I appreciated my friend who gave me "permission to not be okay" when those days come.

Third, the one attribute of God that comforts me more than any other is His sovereignty. A good and loving God is in control. He chose the day of Curt's birth, and He chose the day of his death. We've been clinging to Psalm 139:16, "All the days

ordained for me were written in Your book before one of them came to be." Our son did not die a single day earlier than God had planned for him. And He prevented Curt from following through on all the times he planned to take his life since the first time when he was 17. God ordained for our daughter Rebecca to live for eight days, and He ordained for Curt to live for 44 years.

Fourth, God keeps pouring out His goodness on us every time we turn around. We have been inundated with people wanting to help us with everything we need from money for funeral expenses, to food and paper goods, to willing hands to prepare our home for family coming in for his memorial service. And that includes being willing to clean out his room and haul away all the furniture that reeked of body odor. In case you don't know, severely depressed people usually don't care about personal hygiene, and both our son and his room stank from weeks, sometimes months, of going unwashed. It was a source of sorrow and frustration to us, but we loved him in his mental illness and just lived with it.

Fifth, there is the blessing of *not knowing* so many things. I don't know what he was thinking when something flipped and he went from offering to cook lunch for the family visiting us, to leaving our home intent on stepping off an overpass. I don't know what he was thinking or feeling on that walk. I don't know what his last seconds were like, and I am most grateful that we didn't have to identify him at the medical examiner's office. I don't know so many things, and I am so glad. I can leave all those questions in the Lord's hands, and I can ask him when I see him again-if it matters at all by then.

And that brings me to the most important idea that has marked these days: HOPE. Hope is future-facing faith. Not wishful thinking, like "I hope it doesn't rain on my picnic." Biblical hope is certainty. Hebrews 6:19 calls biblical hope "an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast." God has used this

horrible time to reveal that He has been working in the background to strengthen my future-facing faith. When I say I have hope to be reunited with my son, it's not a wish. I am 1000% certain that he is in heaven and that my husband and I, our other son Kevin, and his wife Lauren will join him there.

I had the privilege of leading Curt to put his trust in Jesus Christ when he was three years old, watching him grow in his faith over the years, watching him bear the spiritual fruit that proved his faith was real. I know he's in heaven, because to be absent from the body is to be at home with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8). Our dear friend Dave commented on my Facebook post, "I am heartbroken for your loss but so grateful for your hope that you will see Curt again." That's when I had the lightbulb moment and I replied, "Thanks for using the word HOPE. Future-facing faith. My hope about seeing Curt is as strong as my view of Ray this very minute. Who is sitting three feet from me."

Curt's first week in heaven: it felt like he was just on the other side of the invisible wall separating earth from heaven. Maybe it's the special bond between a mother and the child she bore, maybe it's something spiritual, I don't know. But the reality of my son's new home makes heaven closer to me than it has ever been. My husband Ray has said for years that heaven is more real to me than anyone he knows. Part of it is knowing our baby Rebecca is there, part of it is longing for my new body untouched by polio and cancer.

Curt's suicide is not okay. Murder is sin, even the murder of oneself. But Jesus' statement on the cross, "It is finished," meaning "It is paid in full," covered every one of his sins, including taking the life God gave him. With God's begrudging permission, apparently. I trust the Lord with it all.

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/suicide-has-hit-our-family on July 16, 2024.

Worldview Deficiency

Kerby Anderson addresses the very sad and dire lack of a biblical worldview in the majority of people claiming to be Christians.

Over the last few months, I have been doing some interviews on books that document (in one way or another) a lack of moral behavior among evangelicals. If you read articles in *Christianity Today*, *Ministry Watch*, or *World* magazine, you see other examples.

As the authors document what is happening in the evangelical world, I always like to bring us back to why. The “why” question is probably more important than the “what” question. Why aren’t Christians acting like Christians? Of course, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Christians are supposed to be different than the world, but there is abundant evidence that they are very much like the world around them.

Each year, George Barna posts [The American Worldview Inventory](#). His most recent report shows that very few Americans (including evangelicals) have a biblical worldview. About four percent have a biblical worldview with four percent more with a variety of different worldviews. The dominant worldview (encompassing 92 percent) is the worldview of syncretism.

The classic definition of syncretism is that it is an amalgamation of different religions, cultures, or schools of thought. In the Christian context, it is an acceptance and even affirmation of a diverse set of beliefs that aren’t biblical. That is best illustrated by the fact that a majority (58%) of American adults don’t believe in absolute truth and instead believe that moral truth is up to the individual to

decide.

You would hope pastors might be able to correct some of this theological confusion. But George Barna found that less than a majority (41%) of senior pastors have a biblical worldview. And the problem is worse with youth pastors. Only 12 percent of them have a biblical worldview.

We shouldn't be surprised at what is happening in the evangelical world when we understand the why behind it.

The Eclipse Declares the Glory of God, v. 2024

Sue Bohlin is very excited to be the path of the upcoming total solar eclipse, where God shows off once again.

"The heavens declare the glory of God," Psalm 19 tells us. On April 8, 2024, millions of Americans will have an incredible opportunity to see His heavenly glory in a way most of us never have: through a total solar eclipse. On a path running from Texas to South Maine, observers on the ground will see the moon slip in front of the sun, blocking out all its light and dropping the temperature drastically (about 10 to 15 degrees Fahrenheit) and suddenly.

I am thrilled beyond words that by the grace of God, our home in Dallas, Texas is in the path of totality. All I have to do is go out in our back yard to experience this once-in-a-lifetime event! :::doing the happy dance:::

The glory of God isn't just seen, it's *felt* as well. Eclipse-chasers, and even those who have only experienced one total eclipse, report that at the moment of totality (when the moon

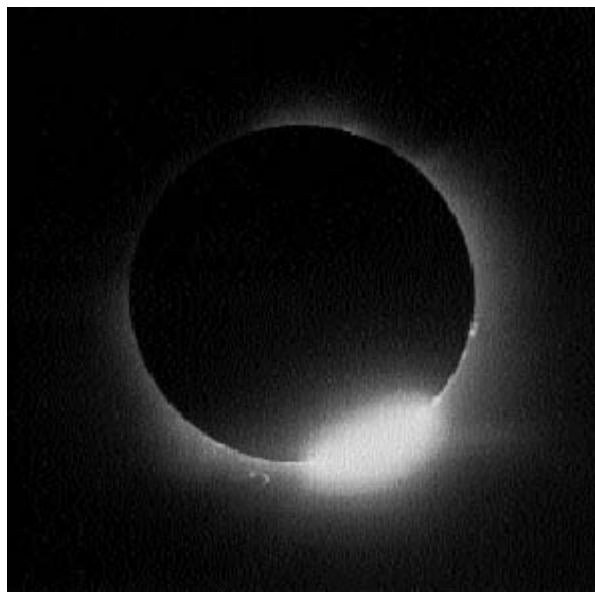
completely covers the sun, plunging the land into an eerie darkness), people break out with yells and shouts and applause. Many report the hair on the back of their necks standing up. And both locals and visiting astronomers are equally in awe—and often in tears. Like one's first in-person look at the Grand Canyon, it is deeply emotional to be thrilled by something much, much bigger than oneself.

Illustra Media's wonderful DVD *The Privileged Planet*, based on the book by the same name by Guillermo Gonzalez and Jay Richards [\[1\]](#), exposed me to the magnificence of a total solar eclipse. I will never forget the goosebumps at learning that the sun is 400 times farther away than our moon, but it's also 400 times larger. This means that both of these heavenly bodies appear to be the same size to us on Earth. This phenomenal "coincidence" also makes a total eclipse possible.

During an eclipse, **the heavens declare the glory of God** by

allowing us to see things about the sun we wouldn't be able to observe any other way, beautiful and gloriously resplendent. Just before totality we can see "Baily's Beads." Only seen during an eclipse, bright "beads" appear at the edge of the moon where the sun is shining through lunar valleys, a feature of the moon's

rugged landscape. This is followed by the "diamond ring" effect, where the brightness of the sun radiates as a thin band around the circumference of the moon, and the last moments of the sun's visibility explode like a diamond made of pure light. After the minutes of totality, the diamond ring effect appears again on the opposite side of the moon as the first rays of the sun flare brilliantly. These sky-jewelry phenomena are so outside of mankind's control that witnessing



them stirs our spirits (even on YouTube!) with the truth of Romans 1:20—"God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse."



A total solar eclipse offers so much more, though, than Baily's Beads and the Diamond Ring. At the moment of totality, the pinkish arc of the sun's chromosphere (the part of the sun's atmosphere just above the surface) suddenly "turns on" as if an unseen hand flips a switch. I knew God is very fond of pink because of how He paints glorious sunrises and sunsets in Earth's skies, but those fortunate enough to see a total eclipse can see how He radiates pinkness from the sun itself! ***The heavens declare the glory of God!***

But wait! That's not all! Along with the flare of the sun's pink chromosphere, a rainbow-like band called the "flash spectrum" appears when the sun is viewed through a prism! (You can google this to see pictures. The best ones are copyrighted so I can't show them to you here.) ***The heavens declare the colorful glory of God!***

For the few minutes of totality, the naked eye can see the sun's lovely corona (Latin for crown) streaming out from the sun. We can't see the corona except during an eclipse because looking straight at the sun for even a few seconds causes eye damage, and because the sun's ball



of fire overwhelms the (visually) fragile corona. This is another way that an eclipse allows us to see how **the heavens declare the glory of God.**

Astronomer Guillermo Gonzalez noticed details about eclipses that got him excited:

- During a total solar eclipse, the moon is just large enough to block the large photosphere (the big ball of fiery gas), but not so large that it obscures the colorful chromosphere.
- The moon and the sun are two of the roundest measured bodies in the solar system. (Some moons are potato-shaped!) So when the round disk of the moon passes in front of the equally round disk of the sun, the shapes match perfectly.
- He studied all 65 of the moons in our solar system and discovered that ours are the best planet and best moon for studying the sun during an eclipse. Because the moon fits so perfectly over the sun, its blinding light is shielded, providing astronomers with a view of the sun's atmosphere. We can discern finer details in its chromosphere and corona than from any other planet.
- Being able to study the flash spectrum during a total eclipse enables astro-scientists to determine the chemical makeup of other, distant stars without leaving Earth.

These facts of **the heavens declare the glory of God!**

Michael Bakich wrote of the 2017 eclipse in *Astronomy Magazine* blog,

This eclipse will be the most-viewed ever. I base this proclamation on four factors: 1) the attention it will get from the media; 2) the superb coverage of the highway system in our country; 3) the typical weather on that date; and 4) the vast number of people who will have access to it from

nearby large cities.{2}

I think this is true of the 2024 eclipse as well. Whether you are fortunate enough to be in the path of the total eclipse like me, or will only get to see 75% of the sun's surface covered by the moon (with eclipse glasses, of course!), this extremely important sky event will be proclaiming to everyone that **the heavens declare the glory of God**. May it make a lasting impression on us all that teaches us more about God's glory!

1. Guillermo Gonzalez and Jay W. Richards, *The Privileged Planet* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2004)

2.

<http://cs.astronomy.com/asy/b/astronomy/archive/2014/08/05/25-facts-you-should-know-about-the-august-21-2017-total-solar-eclipse.aspx>

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