“Is it a sin for a married couple to masturbate during sex?”

Is it a sin for a married couple to masturbate during sex? In many cases a woman can’t get an orgasm without proper stimulation.

If a married couple is making love, then nothing they do together is considered masturbation. It’s all part of holy sex. (Masturbation is self-pleasure by oneself.)

You’re right, most women can’t have an orgasm without stimulation, which is how God planned it, I think. . . .the idea being that her husband would be the one to give her pleasure that way. The Song of Solomon even has a verse about the wife asking her husband to do exactly that: “Let his left hand be under my head, and his right hand embrace me.” (SoS 2:6).

Nothing a married couple does in the marriage bed is sin as long as it is mutually acceptable and it doesn’t involve anyone else (for example, porn movies or fantasies that involve another person). I think God intends for us to experience far more freedom and enjoyment than a lot of people think! May I suggest you get an EXCELLENT book for married women called *Intimate Issues* by Linda Dillow and Lorraine Pintus. Absolutely the best book on the subject for women out there, I think. Please also see our article What’s God’s Plan for Sex in Marriage?”

Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“Is Lust Justification for Divorce?”

I have a question. In Matthew 5:27ff. Jesus says that if a man lusts after a woman he has already committed adultery in his heart. Then, in v. 32 Jesus indicates that sexual immorality is the only justification for divorce. Is, then, lust justification for divorce? If so, what degree of lust is justification for divorce? Or, if it is not Jesus’ intention to allow divorce for lust, please substantiate this position. Thanks.

Good question!

The bottom line answer to your question is no, lust is not grounds for divorce.

If you look at the context of the Lord Jesus’ remarks about lust in Matthew 5, what you see is that He is “pulling back the rug,” so to speak, on outward sins to expose the underlying problem, which is sin in the heart. Murder doesn’t start with murder; it starts with sinful anger in the heart (vv. 21-22). Don’t be as concerned about the proper words in taking an oath; be people of such integrity that your simple word alone will suffice and no oath is necessary (vv. 33-37). Instead of carefully measuring the retaliatory consequences of an offense against you, give in and don’t fight back (vv. 38-42). Instead of loving your neighbor and hating your enemy, love your enemies and pray for them (vv. 43-44).

The main point to all of these illustrations in the Sermon on the Mount is that a sinful heart lurks behind every offensive action. By shining the light of His perfection on our dark hearts, the Lord very effectively makes us aware of how short

we fall of God’s standard of righteousness. That’s why we need to receive Christ’s righteousness, since we have none of our own.

So the point about lust is made to expose the sinful motives of the heart, showing that even before one actually enters into an adulterous relationship, there’s a heart problem that’s just as serious in God’s eyes as acting on it.

But if the Lord had meant to set lust as an acceptable ground for divorce, He would have said so. He doesn’t play games with us to keep us guessing about what pleases Him. Personally, this makes sense to me, since a person can fall into the sin of lust for another person, and repent and receive forgiveness, without his/her spouse ever getting hurt. They don’t ever need to know about it; it’s a internal war of the one struggling with lust. As sinful creatures, we are going to struggle with various sins all our lives. But there’s still a big difference *in consequence* between fighting the internal battle against the sin nature and going out and *acting* on it.

Furthermore, engaging in sexual immorality is an external act that can be proven by witnesses and/or testimony. Experiencing lust is internal, and can only be judged by another without any proof. Only God can know whether someone truly lusts or not. Kind of hard to hold up in a court of law!

I hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“Do People Who Commit Suicide Go to Hell?”

A young man I know committed suicide. Someone remarked that if he was troubled that day, he is *really* troubled now because the Bible says he is in hell forever. Is this true? If so, can you give me Bible references to support it, likewise if it is false?

That is NOT what the Bible says. That’s what a lot of people think, but God isn’t one of them.

Trusting Christ is the only criterion for determining whether one goes to heaven or hell. If the young man had trusted Christ and committed suicide as the only way he could think of to make the pain stop, then he is with the Lord because of the security of the believer. For instance, Rom. 8:38-39 says,

“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, nether the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Nothing—including our own acts such as suicide—can separate believers (the context of Paul’s letter) from God’s love.

Consider also John 10: 28-19, which shows we are DOUBLY safe:

“I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand.”

Not even ourselves.

If the young man had not trusted Christ, then unfortunately he is in hell, but not because of suicide: it would be because of

his refusal to believe in and entrust himself to Jesus.

I hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“How Do I Help This Young Teenage Wiccan?”

My husband and I are taking care of a 15-year old girl while her dad and step-mom (who are Christians) are on vacation. However, she just recently moved in with them. Previously she was living with her mom in another state. We were discussing Christianity with her last night and asked her what she believed in. She stated she believed in reincarnation and Wicca. Also, she doesn’t believe in Satan which is really a contradiction. She says she went to the public library and checked out books on Wicca and studied them and she can cast spells. Of course, her dad and step-mom are not aware of her beliefs or that she practices Wicca. I searched your website using the word “Wicca” and read all of the articles so I understand some of what it is. However, I’m not sure what approach would be effective in ministering to her about Christianity and where to point out that Wicca is a false-religion. Are there other articles on your website with more information on Wicca specifically and how to minister to someone with these beliefs? What suggestions do you have? What scriptures can I point her to?

Whoa. You DO have your work cut out for you, don’t you?

If I were you, I’d go beneath the girl’s Wiccan beliefs to the

heart issues that drew her to Wicca in the first place. Wicca is appealing because it offers the lure of personal power, and it is particularly appealing to those who are feeling powerless. Which would seem to describe this young girl whose parents have divorced and she's being shuttled between them. . .? Personal power is the draw to be able to cast spells for those who perceive themselves as personally powerless.

Since she's a teenager, she's not interested in lectures, but longs to be heard and listened to. She's dying for real conversation with someone who honestly cares about her. So I would ask her, "Tell me about what drew you to Wicca in the first place. How did you hear about it? Tell me about the spells and why that's interesting to you."

Ask the Lord to open opportunities for you to tell her about what the true God is like—tenderly loving and kind. Wiccan teachers tend to bash the image they hold of the Christian God, not understanding who He really is. People who are drawn to a loving, kind goddess are really looking for the feminine side of God, which we can see in the Psalms and in Jesus' lament over Jerusalem. You may be able to ask her about her understanding of the Lord Jesus, and if she's open, you might be able to tell her about not only His personality and how He proved His love for her, but—amazingly—He promised (and delivered!) personal, supernatural power for those who trust Him! There is FAR more power in Christ living His life through us, empowering us supernaturally, than any spell or charm in any witchcraft book ever penned.

It's not surprising that she doesn't believe in Satan; Wicca doesn't believe in an evil entity. It's really about pantheism, with a non-personal deity that permeates everything. Unfortunately, not believing in Satan doesn't keep him from attacking people. Those who refuse to acknowledge a personal devil are more vulnerable to spiritual warfare than anybody.

I found a couple of articles on the web you may find helpful. The first is from Leadership U., Probe's sister site, on teen witchcraft.
http://www.leaderu.com/theology/teenwitchcraft.html

The second is from the Christian Research Institute on "Witnessing to Witches."
http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Estates/6535/wittowit.htm

I do hope this helps. I pray God will empower your words and let her see His love flowing to her through you.

In His grip,

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

"Why Do We Pray at All if God Already Has a Plan?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

If we look at what the Lord Jesus taught us about prayer, we see that it's about aligning ourselves with God's kingdom, with His values, and with His character. I like the word "align" because I think it accurately reflects what we need to do in light of the effects of the fall, when we were all plunged into a state of sin. This means we are out of alignment with God and prefer instead to indulge our own desires. Just as we sometimes have to take our cars into the shop to get our wheels realigned when they "want to" go in a different direction than the designers' intent, prayer is

about submitting ourselves to God, aligning ourselves with Him and His purposes. So prayer isn't mainly about telling God what we want so He can give us our heart's desire, it's supposed to be about submitting to His will even as we share our desires with Him, with the understanding that if He wants something different and better than what we want, we acknowledge that He has the right to do whatever He wants because He is God and we are not.

We pray to communicate with God, because communication is an absolutely essential part of maintaining a relationship. And Christianity is about relationship with God, not rules and rituals. We pray because He invited us to ask Him for whatever we want, just like He invited Solomon to ask for whatever he wanted, and hopefully that kind of divine generosity and open-heartedness will call us to ask thoughtfully, like Solomon, with an awareness of how big and powerful and loving God is. We pray because we are and can do nothing without God and we need Him desperately. We pray because it reminds us that we are completely dependent on God like American astronauts are dependent on NASA to keep them alive up in space. We pray because it reminds us of our relative size and position before God.

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

Well, if you read the prayers of the apostle Paul in the New Testament, you see that he didn't spend a lot of time praying for things to go a certain way. He certainly prayed about his hopes and intentions, such as his desire to go into Asia to preach the gospel, but the Holy Spirit told him no, which he humbly accepted (Acts 16) because he lived his life in an attitude of submission and obedience. I think the wisest

course of action is to lift events and concerns into God's hands, telling Him what we would like and then yielding to Him about the whole thing. Which is the pattern we see modeled by the Lord Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane the night before He died. He poured out His heart to the Father, asking Him if there was ANY way to escape the cup of suffering before Him, but yielding by saying, "Yet not My will, but Thine be done." I think that cultivating an attitude of "Thy will be done" is the most important part of prayer. That goes along with Paul's admonition of how to pray in Philippians 4:6 when he says to "let your requests be made known to God." We don't demand, we offer our requests, leaving them in the hands of a God who knows what is best and loves us perfectly.

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

I hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin

Probe Ministries

"What Does It Mean to be

Filled With the Spirit?”

I need some clarification! What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit? I believe that it happens at the point of salvation, but many times in scripture it talks about people who are “full of the Spirit.” Is this filling a one time deal or something that can happen many times. I know that in Old Testament times the Spirit came and went upon certain people. But in our times (and since Pentecost), how would you explain this. Thanks so much for your time, wisdom, and ministry.

The best explanation I have seen (and which has worked for me experientially for many years) is that being filled with the Spirit means yielding to Him (the Holy Spirit) in full dependence so that we are out of the way and He can do His thing through us and in us. The verb tense in Ephesians 5:18 means “be continually being filled,” so it’s not a one-time event. It’s an ongoing discipline of submission.

I love the analogy of taking a hard, dried-up sponge and plunging it into a sink full of water. The sponge softens and soaks up the water until it is super-saturated. It is “filled with” water, right? But of course, a sponge can’t choose to jump into the sink like we can choose to open ourselves to the filling and empowering of the Holy Spirit. And this choice is a matter of will, not of emotion; the difference between operating in the flesh (our own power apart from God) and being filled with the Spirit is a simple choice to ask, “Holy Spirit, please fill me” with a submissive, humble heart. It doesn’t LOOK any different to someone else and it usually doesn’t FEEL any different to us, but it’s a real event. It can happen many times throughout the day. (I have shared this concept with my MOPS [Mothers of Preschoolers] group, and suggested they draw a line in the carpet with their shoe or draw an imaginary line across the kitchen floor, and step across the line to signify that they are moving from self-dependence to Christ-dependence and filling. One girl told me,

“Sue, you should see my house! There are lines all OVER the place!”)

The problem is that we default to the flesh; we keep gravitating toward doing things on our own and either rebelling against God or passively ignoring Him. We wake up “reset” to the flesh every morning. So we need to be filled again and again and again. Sort of like eating. We need to do it again and again and again!

I hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“How Is It Just for God to Put Our Sins on Jesus?”

How is it just for God to put someone’s sins on Jesus, making them sinless? I have heard the analogy of a judge fining someone, and then paying the fine on their behalf; but sin is surely really, really bad, and no court would allow a judge to die instead of a criminal who had been given the death sentence.

After talking through the gospel with friends, this seems to be a big sticking point. How can a murderer seemingly get away with what he’s done and go to heaven, while Johnny Average gets punished—solely on the basis of whether he accepts Jesus? It is loving on God’s part to give everyone the chance of salvation, and it is just for him to punish unrepentant sinners, but how is it *just* for God to forgive a repentant sinner, who though repentant still sins?

I think you might be confusing “just” with “fair.”

Justice is about making sure that someone pays the penalty for a wrongdoing. Fairness is about treating people appropriately and right.

It is *just* for God to insist that someone pay the penalty for sin. It wasn’t *fair* for Jesus to pay that penalty Himself, because that’s about grace, not justice. Someone has said that justice is getting what we deserve, mercy is not getting what we deserve, and grace is getting what we don’t deserve. I find those distinctions very helpful.

It is just for God to forgive a repentant sinner who continues to sin (that would be all of us!) because all of our sins, those committed before salvation and all those committed after salvation, were all paid for at the cross. Maybe I can help with the “sticking point” with a very simple word picture: we are all standing at the bottom of the waterfall of God’s love and grace. Those who refuse to turn to God in trustful dependence, receiving His forgiveness and salvation, have their cups upside down and therefore can’t receive what God is pouring out on them. Those who have trusted Christ have turned their cups right side up, and can receive what God is offering.

One of the most amazing truths about the gospel is that our sins are transferred to Jesus, who paid for them at the cross, and His righteousness is transferred to us. It is the most absurdly unfair transaction in the history of all creation, but it’s true. Love does things like that.

Hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin

Probe Ministries

“You Mislead People About Jesus and Allah”

Hi—I’m a Muslim from UK. I visited your site and found you to be a misleading person who is blinded by faith most probably passed down the family. You say that Jesus is god then that means that you don’t believe in one god but you believe in two gods, Jesus and his father (god forgive). And if Jesus was god why were the Romans able to overpower him, how can the god who created everything be overpowered by a few measley people?

I hope you do your research thoroughly in the future and look at and review religion with the same eye you look at yours, and if not look at your own religion with the same critical eye you look at others. Please don’t forget your initial duty is the search for truth not the enforcement of your own religion. Please don’t lie in order to achieve a genuine good purpose or you are opposing your own fundamental beliefs.

Hope allah guides to the correct path. Please search for the truth the real truth.

Thank you for writing. I want to honor you for your deep respect and love for God, which is very evident in what you write. I understand why you want to defend your perspective on God.

However, God has revealed certain things about Himself to us that Islam does not accept, but that does not mean they are not true. I share your belief in one God, not two Gods. The idea that God could have three persons and still only be one God is so outrageous it HAS to be a divine idea—how could mere mortals think it up?!

Let me try to explain. Do you believe in water, and steam, and ice? I bet you do. They are all comprised of the H_2O molecule. Do you believe in three different H_2Os? I bet you don't. You probably believe in one H_2O molecule that takes three different forms. This isn't a perfect analogy to God, but it's closer than anything else I can imagine.

The Bible teaches that Jesus is God, the Father is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, but they are not each other and they are not three separate Gods. I have no idea how this can be true, but it's what the Bible teaches and it is what Jesus said. Jesus was 100% God, but left heaven to become 100% God AND 100% man at the same time. He wrapped Himself in human flesh and became one of us. The purpose for this was to die for our sins because we cannot possibly overcome the penalty for our sin and make ourselves perfect—and God requires that people be perfect to enter heaven.

The Romans did not overpower Him: He allowed them to take Him because that was the divine plan from before creation. There is a huge difference. Even when He was on the cross, He said that if He wanted, He could call a legion of angels to come take Him off but that wasn't the plan, so He didn't.

I assure you I have done my research. I tell you, most respectfully, that it is Islam that has gotten off the path of truth. Muhammad listened to Christians and to Jews but chose to believe only what he wanted to believe about Jesus and about what the Bible says. The Bible says that Jesus is fully God and fully man, but Islam says that is a lie. Jesus said He would die for our sins and then come back to life in three days—and He did. He is alive today. Where is Muhammad? He is dead. Jesus is far more than just a prophet; He is actually God.

I pray that God will allow you to see that this is true. Why don't you ask Him? Ask the one true God if it's true that Jesus is God. If you have the courage, I challenge you to read

the story of a faithful Muslim who discovered this truth about Jesus: www.answering-islam.org/Testimonies/athanasios.html

God bless you, and lead you into all truth.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

"You're Mistaken About Islam"

Hi there Sue,

I was sent a copy of your article A Short Look at Six World Religions. Having studied most of them in school years ago, and then in seminary, I had a pretty good knowledge of things, but as with many things, I haven't really thought about the Hindus or the Buddhists for some 30 years! While you read this note, keep in mind that I am a born-again Christian, who lives in Spain, works in Spain and Morocco and is professionally dedicated to translating texts (English/Spanish and a long list of etc.) so I do know a bit about languages.

I found the Moslem part interesting, but I do disagree about a thing or two. One must consider two things before getting into Islam….its founder married a rich widow, so by the time he was 20, he was married, and had no need to work (unlike us and the rest of humanity at that time), so he dedicated his time to meditation and searching….for God I would imagine. He entered into contact with Judaism, and with the early years of Christianity. Therefore, when you start looking at the Koran and the Moslem faith, there are many, many things that are taken out of Judaism….no pork, no shellfish, and a long list of etc, etc. When you see them praying, they use a string of beads just like a rosary! And there are also many, many

aspects that are from the early Christian faith. (Remember that the first Christians were much more Jewish in their thinking that most of us could ever be!)

As I said at the beginning, my work is 100% dedication to translation and there is a clear translation problem with Allah/God when it comes to Islam. The word God for us who speak English is fine, but if you speak Spanish, the word is Dios, and if you speak Arabic, it is Allah (when written in English format, and if it is in the Spanish format, it is Al). Saying that the Moslems do not believe in the same God as us Christians do is totally mistaken. The whole problem stems from a translation error. In Spain, most of the "modern" Moslems, when they say their prayers in Spanish, the use the word "Dios", and not the word "Al." Today, when it comes to translating, it is considered correct to not translate proper nouns in a text, therefore, when the Koran was translated into English, you translated everything, and the Arabic word Allah was made to sound English and therefore considered to be another god. (To give you another example….I live in Seville in southern Spain, but here in Seville, the name of the city is Sevilla, and most people want the city to be called Sevilla, and not Seville. Does this mean that Seville is one city and Sevilla is another? No, of course not) This is the same problem with God and Allah. How many born again Christian use the word Jehovah to describe the God of Abraham? Does that mean they are two different Gods? Of course not. Is the God of the Old Testament different from the God of the New? One again, of course not!

If you consider for a moment that Allah is not Yav nor God, then you are pulling the rug out from under the feet of the many missionaries who have spend years trying to take Christianity to the Moslems.

After being raised in the US in an active, church-going Christian family, and having lived abroad for 30 years, I have discovered that the western version of Christianity has become

altered over the centuries to adapt to cultural implications of various nations. Our beliefs have incorporated heathen beliefs and customs, which are accepted, but are about as far from the truth as can possible be! (sorry about so many examples) We exchange presents at Christmas, and have a tree and the like, including Santa Claus, who was a saint. Where did it all come from?? First of all, Christ was not born on December 25. Based on the Bible description, and knowing weather conditions in the Mediterranean, I am sure that it was more like March or April, and according to my studies, historically, the Wiseman visited Christ about July, so really, the best time of the year to have Christmas would be July, but change the business world on that point! Then, we have a tree….that all comes from the pre-Christian beliefs in northern Europe and England…the druids used to think that the (oak) trees died in winter because the gods left, so they decorated them to get the gods to come back….and they did, in Spring! Over the years, pine trees were decorated, and then people started bringing them into their houses, and the like. If you get down to the bottom line, then if you want to really celebrate Christ's birthday, then we'll have to throw out the heathen tree! The celebration in December 25….it is only 4 days later than the celebration of the coming of winter, a heathen practice in Stonage (UK). Personally, I would rather celebrate Christmas and gift giving in July, with no strings attacked, but then business is business!!

Thank you so much for taking the time to send such a thoughtful and educational letter! You have obviously gained a great deal of perspective in your time in Europe, and I appreciate all the things you've shared with me.

I would like to address your comment "Saying that the Moslems do not believe in the same God as us Christians do is totally mistaken." If you re-read my reasons for this statement, they have nothing to do with the word for God in English and Arabic, and everything to do with the character of Allah and

of the God of the Bible. Because the article was written as a time-constrained radio transcript (aimed at a Christian audience), I was limited in what I could say. A strong case can certainly be made for the perspective that Muslims and Christians differ in our understanding of how God is revealed in the Bible and the Qur'an. I suppose it's something like the old story of the three blind men encountering different parts of an elephant: one felt its tail and said the animal was like a rope, the second felt its trunk and said it was like a tree, and the third felt its hide and said it was like a house. I do believe that because the Bible is inspired and the Qur'an is not, we can trust what the Bible says and must see the Qur'an as a man-made book that, as you point out, borrows from both Judaism and Christianity. Thus, one view of God is correct and the other, while containing some truth about God, is incomplete and incorrect.

You mention the work of Christians trying to evangelize Muslims (an amazing task!). I see a parallel between their calling and Paul's sermon at the Areopagus, where he invoked the unknown god the Greeks worshipped and suggested that he could identify that unknown god for them, taking them from what they already knew to unfamiliar theological territory.

It's always hard, when we're trying to fit a large subject into a short amount of time, to strike the right balance between simplicity and accuracy. To be honest, my statement about Allah not being the same as the God of the Bible was directed at the well-meaning people who mistakenly believe "we all worship the same God with different names: God, Allah, Brahman, Buddha. . ." Certainly, Islam and Christianity have many points of similarity, particularly in terms of the fact they are both monotheistic, but there are too many Christians who don't understand the huge and significant differences.

I really appreciated your comments about the cultural aspects of Christianity. I think it's a challenge to Christians in every culture, in every time in history: to stick to Biblical

Christianity and leave out what is cultural. As Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 4:6, "Do not go beyond what is written." A lot of people equate American (or Western) Christianity with Biblical Christianity, and they're not the same! You gave the excellent example of how we celebrate Christmas, by using imported pagan symbols and dates. I have also seen a difference in the way many American Christians view the use of alcohol compared to European Christians, and when one culture's taboos are imposed on another, misunderstandings occur and opportunities for bridge-building can be lost.

Thanks for sharing your thoughts with me.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

"What Will Keep Us From Being Jealous About Others' Rewards in Heaven?"

If Christians in heaven are given different amounts of rewards in heaven, what prevents us from being jealous over other people's reward in heaven? I know that our body, mind, and soul all changed after we have got into heaven and that we should have no thoughts about jealousy. But if that is true, are we just like dummies, where we just think about good things? Are we prevented from thinking about jealousy in heaven? How can God prevent us from ever sinning again in heaven if He doesn't mind control us, because Angels in heaven were once good, but Satan turned bad. How can an angel turn bad? If God wasn't able to prevent angels from turning bad, how can He prevent people in heaven from turning bad without

mind controlling them?

Boy, lots of questions! Let me do my best:

> *If Christians in heaven are given different amounts of rewards in heaven, what prevents us from being jealous over other people's reward in heaven? I know that our body, mind, and soul all changed after we have got into heaven and that we should have no thoughts about jealousy.*

The best way to understand this that I have encountered is this: When we become a Christian, God gives us a new heart, and He comes to dwell in our spirits. Our spirits are the part of us that were designed to be indwelled by God, but ever since the fall of Adam, all of us were born with our spirits dead. At salvation they become alive.

Now imagine that He plants a tiny seed of new life in our spirits at salvation. As we trust and obey Him, as we learn to love Him, as we pursue growth through prayer, Bible study, discipleship and submission, our spirit grows. Some people's growth is much greater than others who are content to coast along in spiritual mediocrity. (That has something to do with the differing rewards in heaven, too.) So our spirits can grow bigger and stronger inside. On the outside is our flesh, that part of us that functions apart from God—our own strength and power. This is the part of us where jealousy dwells (as well as other fruits of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21).

It has been suggested that at death, our flesh disappears, leaving our spirits and souls (personalities) to enter heaven. (That would make sense, since our flesh is unholy and only holy things can be in heaven.) So there we are in heaven, with whatever level of spiritual maturity and growth we had attained at death. No matter how "big" our spirits are, there is nothing in those God-indwelled, God-built spirits that can be jealous like our flesh was. It's sort of like what happens after you have an appendectomy or a tonsillectomy—there's

nothing there to get infected anymore, so you can't get appendicitis or tonsillitis. It's gone forever. Our flesh is "infected" with sin, so after the flesh falls away at death, there's no spiritual infection anymore.

> *But if that is true, are we just like dummies, where we just think about good things? Are we prevented from thinking about jealousy in heaven?*

Let's go back to my appendectomy illustration. Would you remember the pain of appendicitis after your appendix is out? Sure. Would you want your appendix back? Not usually! We'll remember feeling jealous like all our other sins, and we'll be delighted to be rid of the infection of our sin. It will be like returning to health after a long illness, except that it will be more like gaining a new dimension of health we have never experienced on earth. It's not that we'll be robots, unable to think anything but "happy thoughts". . . We will be free to ONLY think good thoughts and ONLY do good things, for the first time in our lives. That will be true freedom—to be the people we were created to be, without the dragging, disgusting, difficult influence of sinful flesh.

Or, to give another illustration, have you ever had a shopping cart with a wobbly wheel that kept veering off course when you wanted to go straight? It takes a lot of energy to make it go in the direction you want to go because of that corrupt, wobbly wheel. In heaven, it will be like having four perfect wheels that always take you where your true self wants to go—in ways that always glorify and please God. And you!

> *How can God prevent us from ever sinning again in heaven if He doesn't mind control us?*

This is a great time to point to the Lord Jesus as the perfect example of what mankind was supposed to be. The First Adam sinned and became so much less than what God intended us to be; but Jesus, the Second Adam, showed us what Adam's

character would have looked like without sin. How did God the Father prevent God the Son from sinning when He was on earth? He didn't have to: the very nature of God the Son was to do the will of God and GLORY in that obedience and fellowship with the Father. Just as the nature of a fruit tree is to bear fruit and the nature of a domestic dog is to love and be loyal to its master, the true nature of man is to love God and enjoy Him forever. When we're in heaven, all the things that prevent us from being the people God made us to be will have been taken out of the way, and we will be free to be who we really are. There won't be anything in heaven tempting us or influencing us to sin, because the part that is vulnerable to sin (our flesh) will be gone. Just like the inflamed appendix.

> *because Angels in heaven were once good, but Satan turned bad. How can an angel turn bad? If God wasn't able to prevent angels from turning bad, how can He prevent people in heaven from turning bad without mind controlling them.*

The angels, like us, had the gift of choice, to serve and obey God, or to rebel. God gave them the choice for the same reason He gave US the choice: because He wants to be freely wanted and pursued and loved, just like we do! They made their choice sometime between the creation of the world and the fall of Adam. They have been living with the eternal consequences of that choice ever since, either for good or for evil. When we're in heaven, we will be living with the delightful eternal consequences of our choice to trust Christ. It's not a matter of God mind-controlling us—it's a matter of God saying, "OK, the fight is over, now enjoy the freedom that comes with having made the right choice on earth. Your true heart's desire to BE good and DO good won't be compromised by your flesh here in heaven. Enjoy!" That's a long way from making us puppets. It's like my privilege as a parent to say to my about-grown kids, "I'm so glad you chose to spend the weekend here with us instead of out carousing with people bent on self-indulgence and destruction. I've made your favorite

dinner and I’d like to take you to your favorite store and get you a gift. Enjoy the fruits of your wise choice!” That’s not controlling my sons—it’s lavishing love on them. You could ask them if they feel that their dad and I are controlling them, and they’d look at you like, “Huh?”

I hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin

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Published November, 2001.