

Virtual Christian Magazine

Hope And Encouragement
For The Real World

"Confess faults to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous one avails much."
—James 5:16 (Modern King James Version)

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Spank the Book—Heal the Heart

By John Fox

Childhood can be a time of hurt or healing. Sometimes the smallest of actions can make a world of difference.



DUE TO TRAGIC CIRCUMSTANCES, I lived from age 9 to age 12 in a Baptist children’s home located outside Greenwood, South Carolina. The name was Connie Maxwell Children’s Home; we called it Connie Mack. It was the safe haven I needed after an abusive past. My stay there gave me some special experiences that continue to shape my adult life more than 30 years later.

I can still see the hundred-year-old brick library surrounded by lanky pines shading the road bisecting the campus. The swimming pool was nearby. So were the new administration buildings, some sagging old farm buildings—and the unit where I lived. It was a two-story ranch called Cox Cottage. Each unit had “cottage parents.” Ours were Mom and Pop Holmes. I liked them. They were a loving couple in their late 40s. Sometimes they were given time off, to get away for a night or weekend. Then the retired parents came—they were the dreaded disciplinarians of the 5 a.m. roll call. One special lady, Miss Willis, zealously embraced two beliefs: the Bible and the gospel of liver! Blah!!

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Blah!!*

Our lives were regimented, but we were cared for. I discovered my gift of music. I composed my first songs. And I smoked my first cigar—yuck! I quit long ago!

I also endured my first fistfights. I got into some trouble, and some bad things happened to me. After all, we were at Connie Maxwell because our families were not working as normal ones do. Our dormitory-style bedrooms were full of troubled kids—like me.

But I treasure my three years there. I was safe and loved—and I was blessed to benefit from one of the most profound positive parenting moments of my youth. I learned this from the hands of Bill Clyburn.



Connie Maxwell had three farms. As residents, we helped to raise chickens, cattle and vegetables. All kids were required to work after school and during the summer. Mr. Clyburn was overseer. He was boss. He was king. And his word was law. I vividly remember my first time picking strawberries. The work was backbreaking. I hated it! The field seemed to stretch to the horizon! But I remember thinking, “If I eat the big red ones and pick off the green ones, then I won’t have to do this anymore!”

Well, that worked about like eating the blueberries. One hoped one wasn’t caught when the guilt was obvious! When one was caught, the penalty was immediate. Once I saw Mr. Clyburn sitting on his throne—an elevated chair with tall legs in the middle of the berry patch. He apparently saw one of the kids “hooking,” which was sneaking a bite. Mr. Clyburn called the culprit over to him; then he proceeded to discipline him right there, on the spot. Remember, this was 40 years ago! As I stared, I silently hoped I never ran afoul of Mr. Clyburn—he was mean!

Later, I met his grandson. We became fast friends, sneaking treats when “Granddaddy” wasn’t looking. Somehow, we never got caught. And we always sat together in the front seat of the old pickup when Mr. Clyburn let the oldest kids shift gears and steer.

One day, I got into trouble. I don’t recall why. Mr. Clyburn took me inside his little house. I was scared. Out came the wide belt, and I knew I was “gonna git it.” Yet I can still hear his voice.

“Son, I could spank you. But you see that book there?”

I swallowed back my tears and nodded, looking where he pointed. There, on the old couch by the front door, was a book.

“Now I can spank you or I can spank that book. And when I do, you better cry out like I did spank you, or you will get it!”

Well, he spanked the book, and I cried out. And I didn’t know why he let me off. But he did. And I never forgot it. Many years later, as a young parent with two small children, an event caused me to remember and replicate his mercy.

One Saturday afternoon, I was napping. My children were then about 4 and 6. They were downstairs making a terrible racket. (I called it quibbling.) Finally, the noise level escalated where I could no longer sleep. I was aggravated, and I had had enough. So I stomped downstairs to find the kids playing by the baby grand piano. “What’s going on?” I demanded.

My daughter, the youngest, responded, “The...piano bench...it—uh—hit me!”

“You mean to say that the piano bench jumped up and hit you.”



“Uh huh!”

Well, I desperately tried not to laugh, but while I knew it to be a lie, I was confronting a totally different issue at the time. Camouflaging my mood with a gruff voice, I cried, “Wait here!” Then I sprinted up the stairs.

By that time in life, I rarely spanked, usually resorting to other means. And I never used a belt, only my hand. But I was sick of the sibling quibbling. I wanted them to get along. So I grabbed a belt and came back downstairs. When the kids saw me, their blue eyes widened. They were in trouble and knew they were “gonna git it!”

“So let me get this straight. The piano bench hit you?” They both gulped and nodded.

“You didn’t provoke it?” They shook their heads.

“Alright then,” I exclaimed. And at that moment, I started wailing...on the piano bench! Now their eyes bugged out. I am sure both thought Daddy had lost his mind!

I stopped, letting the moment sink in. Pointing and glaring at the bench, I announced in a stern voice, “Now let that be a lesson to you!” I looked at the kids, didn’t say a word; then I walked slowly up stairs. Once behind the closed door to our master bedroom, I collapsed in laughter! My adult children and I laugh about this to this day.



Bill Clyburn must have known about my past. The bruises had faded. But heart bruises take a lifetime to heal. And when he spanked the book, he began healing my heart. And many years later when I spanked the bench, I showed I had broken the cycle—one I was statistically destined to repeat. Bill Clyburn set into motion a ripple effect, which affected me and saved my children. His kindness now reaches out to you in the retelling of this story. He was a special man.

Now I don’t recommend running around taking out our aggressions on inanimate objects, it is no way to solve personal issues, but this incident was an example of the change in my life.

As one saying goes, we cannot go back and make a new start, but we can start now to make a new ending. Bill Clyburn helped me—and countless scores of others through the years and up through today—have a better ending. Now you are the recipients of his kindness. Like him, you may never know the good you can affect or the lives you change. Now you can, to quote the movie, “pay it forward.”

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we cannot go back
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So here is the moral of the story—love conquers hatred. The story of Bill Clyburn is a celebration of the power of love. He loved me. I learned from him and, in turn, I loved my children. The mercy of Bill Clyburn is passed on. So spank the book, heal the heart!

(Note: Proper punishment is biblical and is not an expression of hatred, but abuse is never appropriate. Our booklet [Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension](#) covers proper discipline in the chapter "[Bringing Up a Moral Child.](#)")

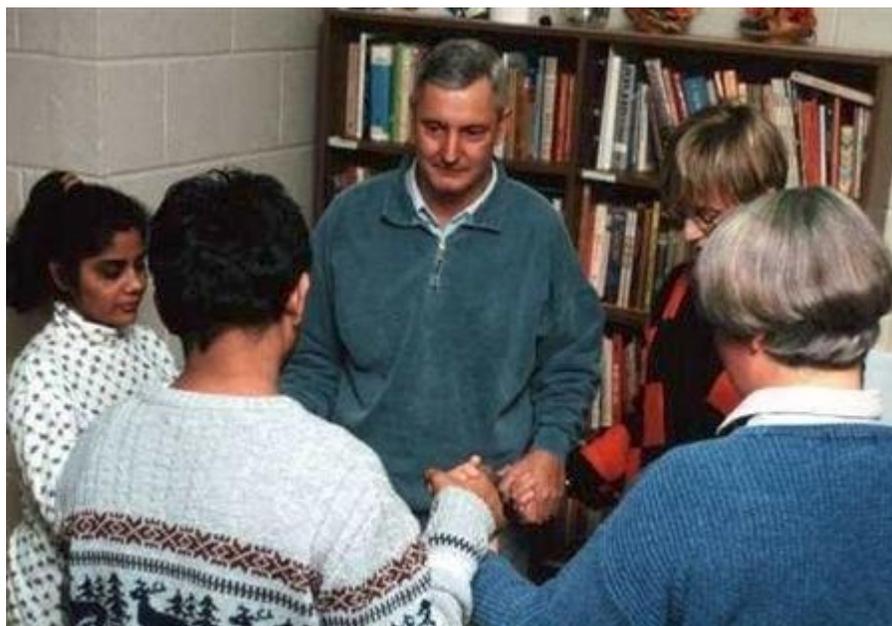
Further reading

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Your Responsibility in Healing

By Ed Dowd

We all have experienced health issues in our lives—as have many we know and love. But just what is our role in the healing process?



HERE IS A JUST A SMALL SAMPLE of the prayer requests we may receive in the church on a monthly, weekly, even daily basis in some instances.

“Thank you for your prayers for 19-year-old Sarah. Since being struck by a car, she has been through three surgeries. The healing process is going well, and Sarah thanks you very much for your prayers. It is always very encouraging to see God’s intervention.”



“Your prayers are requested for Elsie. After some testing, Elsie was informed that she has cancer. Elsie is 80 years of age and has asked for prayers on her behalf that God’s will in her life be done.”

“Prayers are requested for Betty. After much medical testing, Betty’s doctor recently informed her that she has Alzheimer’s. Please pray that God’s will be done in this situation.”

Many of you may be sick, recovering from surgeries, having tests performed to find out what is wrong or dealing with chronic pain and discomforts. Some ailments seem small, such as ringing ears or some other annoyance; others may be more severe, with chronic pain in the bones or life-threatening disease. Things like cancer treatment recovery and even the pain of a severe sprain can go on for a long time. Enduring physical ailments seems the norm in the 21st century. Everyone wants to be healed. Everyone wants his or her pain removed. Everyone wants to be restored to his or her once vibrant 16-year-old body.

Your responsibility

Do we know what our responsibilities are in the healing process? There are things we need to do! What expectations should we have of ourselves and God when it comes to healing?

Whether we are sick or not, we do have a responsibility in the healing process. We must first recognize that when we are sick we need help—we cannot do it alone. We too often try to push through the pain, but healing comes through God. We need His help. With chronic or severe illness, we need God more than ever! God is the source of our healing. God created our bodies and knows how they work. Doctors can move things around and work on us, but even they don’t know what all our body parts do. But God does. While it is not wrong to seek medical help, we need to understand that the doctors are only helpers—not healers.

Everyone wants to be healed. Everyone wants his or her pain removed.

David records an insightful concept regarding God as our ultimate healer. “Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases” (Psalm 103:1-3).

God not only has the power to heal us physically; more importantly, He can forgive our spiritual shortfalls—our transgressions of His law. Thanks to Christ’s sacrifice, we can have access to the ultimate healing through a relationship with our Heavenly Father.

After you recognize that you need help...then what?

Once we recognize and acknowledge the need for God to be foremost in our life, we are to call upon the elders of the Church for anointing. James asks “Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord” (James 5:14)

Thanks to Christ’s sacrifice, we can have access to the ultimate healing, a relationship with our Heavenly Father.

It’s humbling to realize we need help, and so the instruction is to call upon the elders of the Church. The word *elders* in this verse is not a reference to the quantity of elders present, but rather to the office or position of an elder. We shouldn’t seek out as many elders as we can find in hopes that God would hear the prayer based on the number of ministers praying over you.



James further instructs the elders to use oil when anointing. Oil is symbolic of God’s Holy Spirit, the means by which God lives in us. Asking to be anointed is a demonstration of our faith in God. We mustn’t think that our ailment is too small. In essence, we would be saying we don’t want to bother God and Jesus Christ with our health issue, and therefore also saying that we have no need for God in this aspect of our life.

“Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God...casting all your care [distractions, anxiety, worries]

upon Him, for He cares [shows interest or concern] for you” (1 Peter 5:6-7).

We tend to worry over our ailments when we should be placing them on God. Turning our anxieties and worries over to Him allows us to be free of it so you can focus on others (1 John 4:7). God has interest and concern for us and wants to take those worries off our minds.

Healing occurs in God’s time

“Mr. Smalley died the morning of Nov. 1. He rallied some on Friday, and it appeared that he might survive this recent heart attack. But instead he got much worse, and God has given him rest from his many physical ailments. Mr. Smalley had stated that his health issues for the past several years helped him to focus on the Kingdom of God.”

It is important to remember that healing will occur in God’s time. If He chooses not to heal us now, then we will be made whole when Christ rules this earth (Ezekiel 37:1-14). There is no need to ask for anointing repeatedly for the same situation—implying that maybe He didn’t hear the first prayer. However, if conditions change or there is a new attack of the illness or if a great deal of time has elapsed, sometimes it is appropriate to get anointed again.

You may or may not be healthy, but everyone has a responsibility to show deliberately applied concern (godly love) for others.

God’s timing is perfect—which is difficult for humans to comprehend. We sometimes feel that we need to be healed NOW so we can keep on serving our brethren—certainly a worthy reason! But perhaps God’s will is best served with you in the condition that you’re in. This is a hard, but necessary realization to come to. God will absolutely heal you—but according to His will and in His perfect timing, not ours.

God can choose to heal us immediately. Or the healing can be some time period later. Paul no doubt anointed one of the disciples, Trophimus (whom he referred to as sick in 2 Timothy 4:20), but ended up having to leave him behind because of his disease. This is yet another reminder that God performs healing—Paul was an incredibly righteous man and one whom God used miraculously to do His work, yet his friend was left unhealed at least at that time.

Everyone's responsibility

“Mrs. Schultz has recently undergone treatments for intestinal cancer. The Schultz family appreciates the many kind expressions of support they have received. It has been very encouraging for them to know that they are not alone in this trial.”



all of us.

We should not be alone in our trials. We are in this together. In Ephesians 6:18 we read that we should be “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.” Godly love is about deliberately applying concern for others—something we must not forget. You may or may not be healthy, but everyone has a responsibility to show deliberately applied concern (godly love) for others. In the case of sicknesses, practicing godly love is the responsibility of

There is an interesting event that occurred in Jerusalem. During the time of Christ, there was a healing pool. Occasionally the water in this pool would roil or in some way be disturbed. Though not explained in Scripture, God evidently had given power to an angel to stir the water of this pool. The first person to step into the pool after the stirring of the water would be completely healed. We read in John 5:7 the response that a particular man gave to Jesus when he was asked if he wanted to be healed. “The sick man answered Him, ‘Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming another steps down before me.’”

No one was there to help him into the pool. Think about how frustrated this man was! The water was stirred, but due to his sickness, he was not fast enough to be the first in the water. This man needed help.

Another example of this is in the second chapter of Mark, which begins with Jesus preaching inside a house. The house was so packed with people that people couldn't even get near the door. The determination of a certain paralytic and his four friends should encourage us to remember that we all have a part to play in the healing process. In verse 4 Mark writes: “And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying.” The friends did not literally tear down the roof. Some houses had tile roofs, so they may have merely removed some tiles temporarily. And some houses at this time had a courtyard roof with a railing. Sometimes on the railing was a tarp, which provided protection from the weather and sun. So they may have just removed the tarp.

This paralytic could not have gained the presence of Jesus Christ without the faith of his friends. We, too, can help. Pray for others and do what you can to help them—it gets your mind off yourself. (Matthew 25:34-40).

The most important healing

Keep in mind the most important healing, which is the healing of the mind and the turning away from our “old nature” and looking to God as our source of life. Sure, it would be great if large

numbers of physical healings took place today. But God is interested in our recognizing the sin in our life and the effort we produce to overcome those sins. That is a miraculous healing that is occurring today!

Ask for our free booklet [Why Does God Allow Suffering?](#)

Confronting Loneliness

By Becky Sweat

When it hits you—here's how to deal with it constructively.



“**I** HAVE NO ONE TO TALK TO HERE, and I just feel so lonely and depressed,” sobbed a longtime friend while we were talking on the phone one day. Eight months earlier, her husband’s company had relocated them from Illinois to Florida. She was a graphics designer who had her own home business.

“Since I work out of my home and don’t have an office to go to, I was hoping our new church congregation would be a good outlet to make friends,” this woman continued. “But after all these months, we still feel like outsiders at church. Most of the people there already have their friends, and they pretty much stay within their cliques. Hardly anyone has made an effort to get to know us. When I try to initiate conversations with others, usually they only give me a couple minutes at the most, and then they’re rushing off to be with their group of friends. After church, I can pretty much tell you which couples are going to go out to restaurants together—and we’re never included.”

Many of us have encountered cliques and felt just as excluded, disconnected and lonely as my friend. But of course, there are many other types of circumstances that can bring on loneliness. You may be suffering the loss of a spouse by death or divorce. You may be shy and not feel confident interacting with others. You might be so busy with your career that you don't devote a lot of time to relationships. You may live in a remote area, far from neighbors, and not have many visitors. There may be unresolved issues or misunderstandings that have alienated you from friends and family. Perhaps your kids have grown up and moved away and that has left a terrible void in your life. And sometimes you can feel lonely for no apparent reason; you just don't feel like you can connect with the people around you.

You may be shy and not feel confident interacting with others.

“Loneliness touches everyone’s life to some degree,” observes John Woodward, Ph.D., one of the nation’s leading researchers on loneliness and a psychology professor at the University of Nebraska. He defines loneliness as “a feeling of isolation and separation from others.” It can result when a person is physically isolated from family and friends, or when a person is in a room full of people and feels totally disconnected. Loneliness can range from mild to severe and occur only occasionally or be a chronic problem.

Certainly God created us to be social creatures. All of us need a certain amount of “people contact.” (Some need more than others, depending on how extroverted they are.) So how do you cope if you’re in the unfortunate situation of feeling detached and lonely? Here are five suggestions for confronting this very heart-wrenching, yet common, human emotion.

1. Admit you are lonely

It may not be easy to admit you’re lonely. After all, we live in a society where popularity is celebrated and encouraged. To admit you are lonely can seem like you are conceding to being unpopular and unwanted. Yet it is important that you acknowledge to yourself how you are feeling. Doing so will help you figure out what you need to do to overcome this problem. If you don’t, you’re in effect saying these issues don’t exist, and then they won’t be dealt with.

You may also want to confide in a family counselor, pastor or other trusted person. Several months after my friend called me in tears, she phoned again to give me an update about her situation. She had made some friends at church! What had happened, she related, was “I picked out one of the ladies at church who I thought would be understanding; and without attacking anyone, I told her how I was feeling excluded. To my surprise, she told me that sometimes she feels left out too. That did wonders! After that, she made a special point of introducing me to people at church, getting me in on conversations and even inviting me and my husband to some get-togethers.”

Try to be friendly to everybody, but focus your attention on those who look lonely, withdrawn or “lost in the crowd.”

If your loneliness is related to particular circumstances you are dealing with—perhaps you just lost a loved one, you recently moved to a new area, or you’re struggling with “empty nest syndrome”—you might want to open up with someone who has been in a similar situation. That person may not only make a good sounding board, but may be able to help you figure out some ways to diminish the lonely feelings.

2. Be friendly

It sounds simple, but one of the best ways to combat loneliness is to be friendly and approachable. Others will be much more drawn to you if you smile when you see them, make good eye contact, focus on positive conversation topics and show a genuine interest in what they have to say. If you're in a room full of people and nobody's approaching you, then be willing to be the one actively seeking out others and starting conversations with them.



Try to be friendly to everybody, but focus your attention on those who look lonely, withdrawn or “lost in the crowd.” This is especially good advice if there are cliques at church, work or school that make you feel excluded. “If you feel left out, chances are there are others who feel the same way,” says Mary Halpin, Ph.D., a family counselor in Deerfield, Illinois. “Reaching out to others who are lonely can help you relieve your own feelings of loneliness.”

Strive to be the kind of person who seeks connections with those of all social circles. It'll rid you of your loneliness and set the right example of not being cliquish—and you'll make others feel less lonely, too.

3. Cultivate new interests

Explore some new interests, hobbies and pastimes. Sign up for a class at your community college or community recreation center. Volunteer to be a tour guide at your city's art or history museum. Join a bowling league, garden club or bridge club. See if there's a book discussion group you can be a part of at your local library. If you have kids in school, get involved with the parent-teacher group. If you're interested in scrapbooking or antiquing, ask your network of acquaintances to see if there are people who can show you the ropes or want to get involved in these hobbies themselves.

One woman who recently moved to my community started a morning walking club to get to know new people and get some regular exercise. She invited mothers she met at her son's school events and told them they could bring their friends too. Each morning the ladies walk about five miles together, and they're all becoming really close.

Another woman I know overheard some ladies at her church talking about how they were interested in making homemade soap. My friend took the initiative to learn how to make soap on her own and then invited these other women to make soap with her one day. It turned into a monthly get-together where they make a batch of soap together, share a pot of coffee and have lunch.

Any of these kinds of activities can be ideal springboards for meeting new people and allowing you to develop new interests, which may serve as common ground with which you can connect with others.

4. Don't let long-distance friendships slide

Whether you've recently relocated to a new area or you have lots of friends who have moved to different parts of the country, don't let long-distance relationships fall by the wayside. Phone calls, letters, cards and e-mail messages from far-flung friends and family can go a long way in keeping loneliness at bay.



In many ways, it's easier than ever to stay in touch.

Nowadays, most phone companies offer unlimited long distance calling plans. You might want to pick regular days and times to call out-of-town friends and relatives each week. You may even want to consider getting an account with a social networking site like Facebook. It's an easy way to share photos with friends and keep up with what others are doing. And who knows, you may be able to reconnect with some long-lost acquaintances.

5. Draw close to God

Most importantly, seek God's help with your situation. If you think you are lonely because you're too shy, ask God to help you overcome this shortcoming. If you feel detached from others because of a misunderstanding that took place, ask God to give you the right mindset, strength and the wisdom to be able to go to your friends and talk things out. Take your concerns to God in prayer, and you will not feel like you are facing the tough times alone—because you truly won't be.

The fact is, sometimes God allows us to go through difficult, lonely periods to get our attention.

The fact is, sometimes God allows us to go through difficult, lonely periods to get our attention. It's when we are at our lowest points, when we feel that we have no one else to talk with, that we often seek God the most fervently. That's when we have the opportunity to sort out our thoughts and realign our priorities—to ensure that God is the number one relationship in our lives.

God will certainly help us get through lonely times, and He will provide us with the human companionship that we all need. But we need to make sure we are truly putting Him first. At the same time, we all need to remind ourselves that as long as we have a close relationship with God, we will never be completely alone.

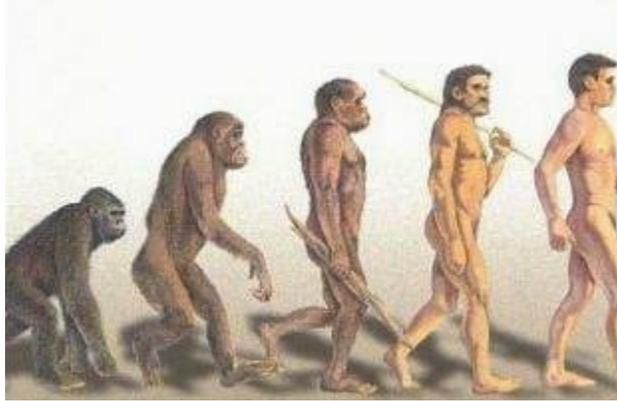
Further reading

For more encouragement in times of loneliness, read [The Good News](#) magazine.

10 Questions to Ask About Evolution, Part 3

By Dr. Allen Stout

Can science prove the spiritual realm does not exist? Can it prove that Darwinian evolution has occurred? Can evolution discover a purpose for your life? What does God have to say?



LAST TIME [WE EXAMINED](#) four fundamental issues about what science is and what it can and cannot prove about the truth of the Bible and the biblical accounts of two worldwide floods. We also addressed the assumptions involved in age dating methods. Now let's look at three more fundamental questions to ask.

8. Can science prove that Spirit, angels and evil spirits don't exist?

Scientists recently postulated that the universe is made up of about [95 percent "dark" energy and "dark" \(invisible\) matter](#). They have never observed it directly, but they observe its effects on what they can observe.

The Bible reveals that spirit is also invisible, not observable directly by man or his scientific instruments, and therefore is a mystery to scientists. They may reject or ignore it, but science cannot disprove the existence of spirit (Romans 1:19-20) or of angels and demons, which are spirit beings (Hebrews 1:7, 14). They should be at least as open-minded about the existence of spirit as they are about the existence of dark energy!

The existence of God's Spirit and angels is revealed by God in the Bible. "God is Spirit" (John 4:24). "The first man was named Adam, and the Scriptures tell us that he was a living person. But Jesus, who may be called the last Adam, is a life-giving spirit" (1 Corinthians 15:45, Contemporary English Version).

Spirit is the power of God (Acts 1:8; Romans 15:13, 17-19; 2 Timothy 1:7), much like electromagnetic energy is the power of the universe.

We don't know how many people have seen angels, but the times recorded in the Bible when they have shown themselves to men are definite evidence of their existence (Daniel 8:15-19; John 20:12). If a famous scientist said he or she had seen angels or demons today, he or she would be laughed to scorn and discredited as a scientist (1 Corinthians 2:14). Spiritual blindness, deception and much of the evil in the world are overwhelming evidence of Satan and demon spirits (John 8:44; 2 Corinthians 4:4; 11:3, 13-15; Ephesians 2:2-3). Scriptures reveal that they are angels who rebelled against God (2 Peter 2:4). (See [Is There Really a Devil?](#) for a full biblical explanation).

Scientists could prove the existence of God and the spirit realm through observation of the effects (evidence) and logic, similar to the way they discover invisible forces such as electromagnetic energy, electricity and dark energy and matter. Intelligent design scientists use observation and logic to do just that.

But the adversary of man and God blinds scientists who are biased against God and the Bible (Revelation 12:9; 2 Corinthians 4:4). Though they may ridicule and distort the truth, they cannot disprove the existence of spirit and spirit beings. Such evidence as true faith, miracles, answered prayers, fulfilled prophecies, the "fruit of the Spirit" (the manifestation of godly virtues in the lives of people who have God's Spirit dwelling in them), etc. are all manifestations and proofs of the workings of God's Spirit (see Hebrews 11:6; John 3:2; 1 Kings 18:30-39; Matthew 1:20-23; Galatians 5:22-23).

9. What evidence does science have that proves living organisms gradually evolved from simpler to more complex forms of life, changing into different more advanced species through mutations and natural selection or that man evolved from lower life forms as proposed by Darwin and his followers?

Evolution theories date back to ancient times. Anaximander (611-547 B.C.), a Greek philosopher, developed a theory that man evolved from fish. Charles Darwin (1809-1882) published his theories in his books *Origin of Species* in 1859 and *The Descent of Man* in 1871.

Since then great progress in the science of biology and molecular genetics has revealed that DNA is the genetic material accounting for the highly complex design and development of every living cell and organism, and that DNA is what transfers hereditary characteristics from one generation to the next.

DNA is a long molecular chain made up of two polynucleotide strands, bearing a four-"letter" biochemical code for the genetic blueprints of every living organism. Scientists abbreviate the four molecular letters of this code as T, C, A and G. These four basic molecules encode the sequence for amino acids in the manufacture of thousands of different proteins and other components of cells, and provide coded instructions for building and assembling cells into complete organisms including humans.



Scientists could prove the existence of God and the spirit realm through observation of the effects (evidence) and logic, similar to the way they discover invisible forces such as electromagnetic energy, electricity and dark energy and matter.

How much genetic information does it require to create a perfect bacteria or a human? A human cell has about a thousand times more DNA than bacteria. Human cells have 23 sets of paired chromosomes containing approximately 3 billion nucleotide pairs (6 billion code letters) on its DNA, which if stretched out would be about 3 meters in length, all of which is cleverly packed into each tiny cell.

Scientists have determined the human DNA genome has about 30,000 genes, which carry the design code for all the proteins, enzymes, etc., essential as building blocks of cells, tissues, organs and secretions of the body. In addition to the 30,000 genes, more than 80 percent of the DNA is in noncoding regulatory sequences (regulating the process of turning genes on and off to provide what's needed during various stages of development, growth, activities and adaptation to changes in the environment, etc.).

As stated in *Biology: Concepts and Connections*, by Campbell, Mitchell and Reece, "The sheer quantity of DNA in our cells is truly astonishing, but consider what is contained in the approximately 3 billion (paired) nucleotide human genome. Every nucleus in every...somatic cell contains a full inventory of instructions for building and maintaining a complete human being" (2000, p. 230).

If we consider that the Bible is written with approximately 5 million letters, then the 6 billion code letters of the genetic master plan on the human DNA would, if written in a book, take more than 1,000 volumes the size of the Bible.

Improbability

What would be the probability that a monkey sitting at a typewriter could have written the Bible in any amount of time?

How much less would be the probability that particles of dust could come together into molecules and form a genetic code and then organize over millions of years into a chain of DNA of 3 billion paired nucleotides with a perfect design for building and maintaining the 70 trillion cells of a complete functioning human being with brains capable of scientific inquiry and designing complex computers and analyzing our own DNA? Then consider, what are the astronomical odds that all this came about through random mutations and natural selection?

Yet this is what many evolutionists believe as a philosophic tenet of their Darwinian faith. Richard Dawkins rejects any idea of design in nature, calling it just an illusion of design, for design would require a Designer.

He writes, "We live on a planet where we are surrounded by perhaps ten million species, each of which independently displays a powerful illusion of apparent design. Each species is well fitted to its particular way of life... We really need Darwin's powerful crane to account for the diversity of life on earth, and especially the powerful illusion of design..."

"We can deal with the unique origin of life by postulating a very large number of planetary opportunities. Once that initial stroke of luck has been granted...natural selection takes over: and natural selection is emphatically not a matter of luck. [We must ask: Not even the random mutations required for it to work?]

“Nevertheless, it may be that the origin of life is not the only major gap in the evolutionary story that is bridged by sheer luck, anthropically justified... Mark Ridley [*The Cooperative Gene: How Mendel’s Demon Explains the Evolution of Complex Beings*] has suggested that the origin of the eukaryotic cell...was an even more momentous, difficult and statistically improbable step than the origin of life...

Darwin himself recognized weaknesses in his theory from its many unproven assumptions, but this does not seem to dissuade his followers.

“Events like this might be explained by the anthropic principle, along the following lines. There are billions of planets that have developed life at the level of bacteria, but only a fraction of these life forms ever made it across the gap to something like the eukaryotic cell... The anthropic principle states that, since we are alive, eukaryotic and conscious, our planet has to be one of the intensively rare planets that has bridged all three gaps.”

Where are the proofs for the assumptions of this theoretical anthropic principle?

Dawkins continues, “Natural selection works because it is a cumulative one-way street to improvement. It needs some luck to get started, and the ‘billions of planets’ anthropic principle grants it that luck. Maybe a few later gaps in the evolutionary story also need major infusions of luck, with anthropic justification. But whatever else we may say, design certainly does not work as an explanation for life” (*The God Delusion*, pp. 139-141).

In summary he points out, “One of the greatest challenges to the human intellect, over the centuries, has been to explain how the complex, improbable appearance of design in the universe arises... In the case of a man-made artifact such as a watch, the designer really was an intelligent engineer. It is tempting to apply the same logic to an eye or a wing, a spider or a person.”

And why not? According to the scientific method, logic includes the natural universal principle of cause and effect that applies to all things equally, which only the supernatural can possibly defy.

Still Dawkins presses on. “If the argument of this chapter is accepted, the factual premise of religion—the God Hypothesis—is untenable. God almost certainly does not exist” (pp. 157-158).

When this appeal to luck and the so-called anthropic principle is weighed in the balance with the wondrous evidence of creation explained in the Bible and intelligent design books, we would say that the evolution hypothesis is untenable! (See [Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What You Believe?](#) for more on this, including a [list](#) of excellent scientific works showing the intelligent design of the universe.)

Illusions

If evolution is not true, why do so many scientists accept it? The answer in part is in the illusion of evolution fostered by man’s intellectual need to classify, explain and organize everything into neat categories. However, the main reason is, if there is a Designer and Creator, He is also the lawgiver and they reject those laws, therefore they must reject a Designer and accept evolution.

Then there is also an illusion created by the variations of living things in nature, which actually result from the multiplication of living organisms through the natural recombination of genes to

form many variations of the created kinds according to the laws of heredity described by Mendel and others.

Darwin observed that plant and animal breeders created new varieties and breeds by artificial selection and mating methods and postulated the same thing could occur in nature by natural selection, which is true. But it has never been proven that any higher life forms ever evolved from lower life forms.

Many theories have evolved attempting to provide evidence for evolution, such as the fossil record, biogeography (different species separated by geography), homologous structures (i.e., similarities in the design of limbs, wings and flippers), comparative embryology (similarities during development from an egg to birth), vestigial organs (i.e., tonsils and appendix, although these have now been found to be important immune tissues), the universality of the genetic code and similarities in DNA, etc. These all can contribute to an illusion of evolution, but prove nothing other than similarities of design, which one would expect if everything came from a specific Designer.



The system for scientific classification of living things plus the evolutionary tree of life created by scientists also presents a very graphic illusion of evolution. According to *Biology: Concepts and Connections*, "Decisions about classification often involve heated debate... Ever since Darwin, systematics has had a goal...to have classification reflect the evolutionary connections among species" (p. 305).

Species are often assumed to be the same as kinds in the Bible, but it should be noted that species in this artificial classification system do not specifically relate to biblical kinds. In most cases genera and families would probably relate closer to the Genesis kinds (Genesis 1:21, 24-27), whereas species are the many variations, like variations of the dog or cat kinds and Darwin's finches, classified as different species.

Scientists, now doing genetic engineering in the lab, are able to transfer genes from one kind to another, but this does not create new genes, which would be required for evolution to occur by natural selection. Natural and induced mutations, caused by radiation, chemicals, faulty transcription, etc., do cause changes, mostly damage or errors in genes, but there is also a backup system designed to correct errors. The change of just one letter of a gene code can have disastrous effects resulting in death or serious genetic diseases.

Some mutations have little effect, but the great majority of them are detrimental, resulting either in death, cancers or genetic disorders, but most aren't inherited. However, over 1,000 human genetic disorders, including cystic fibrosis and sickle cell anemia, are from mutations that are inherited. Some mutations have resulted in the loss of traits, such as hornless cattle, seedless oranges, etc., but none have ever been proven to evolve upward, adding new beneficial features, as proposed by evolutionists.

Is there a future destiny for you beyond death? God, who is eternal, offers eternal life to all mankind.

DNA analysis is now being used to determine how closely two species might be related. Humans are placed in the Hominidae family; and chimps, apes and orangutans in the Pongidae family by classical classification. Both families are placed in the primates order, but suppositions of evolutionary connections between humans and apes, said to go back to extinct fossils supposedly 4 to 5 million years ago, are still being debated (*Biology: Concepts and Connections*, pp. 309, 744, 747).

Fossils and a classification system do not prove progressive evolution from lower to more complex organisms as presumed by evolutionists. "Analysis of DNA found in mitochondria (mtDNA) of human cells indicates that mtDNA is extremely uniform in today's human population. Supporters of the monogenesis hypothesis maintain that such uniformity could only stem from a recent origin of modern humans" (ibid., p. 749).

The fact that many genetic traits of the various kinds of living organisms are shared, does not prove any evolutionary connections. The discovery of the highly complex DNA code for genetic traits reveals a highly intelligent design for all living organisms, which can only be accounted for by the unfathomable intelligence of the Creator who designed it (Psalm 139:13-16; Isaiah 55:8-9).

Though billions and trillions of each kind have lived and reproduced through sexual recombination of DNA, none are identical genetically (except for identical twins), nor have they upgraded into different kinds that are more advanced. Evolution is simply an illusion created by evolutionists.

Scientists have discovered that organisms can adapt to major differences in environmental conditions because they carry adaptive genes that can be turned on or off depending on need and environmental conditions. The very complex genes created in each kind and the laws of genetics created by God, and natural variation through sexual reproduction, eliminate the need for such changes to occur by the extreme improbability of evolutionary means.

Ecology, the interdependence in living things in nature, provides more clear overwhelming evidence of special creation by the Creator. The many highly complex components of a postulated first living cell could not have evolved and survived and mysteriously come together to form a living cell, any more than a tornado could sweep through a junkyard and put together a Boeing 747 from the scraps. Nor could the fragile first cell have survived until an interdependent biological ecology and environment had evolved to support it. And with the complexity of life's requirements, no living forms could survive waiting thousands or millions of years for all the essential functional components necessary for life to evolve and thereby survive.

Darwin himself recognized weaknesses in his theory from its many unproven assumptions, but this does not seem to dissuade his followers. Darwin devoted two chapters to one of his most vexing concerns—gaps in the fossil record. He wrote, "The number of intermediate varieties, which have formerly existed, [must] be truly enormous... Why then is not every geological formation and every stratum full of such intermediate links?



...This, perhaps, is the most obvious and gravest objection which can be urged against my theory” (*Origin of Species*, p. 280).

The lack of intermediate links in the fossil record has remained a centerpiece in the debate over origins for 150 years. “Darwin tried to explain the gaps in two ways: (1) the geologic record and fossil collections are imperfect, so it will be difficult to discover many transitional forms; and (2) despite so many known gaps at almost every stage of the evolutionary tree, new transitions are sure to be found (or, he argued, in rare cases, had already been found)...

“Worse still, from Darwin’s point of view, the lowest fossil-bearing rocks were filled with vast numbers of complex marine fossils that lacked any hint of their origin or transitional forms from one kind of creature to another. What is now called the ‘Cambrian Explosion’ was wedged into Darwin’s thoughts on gaps. Such a sudden appearance of so many different groups of marine invertebrates, Darwin lamented, was ‘inexplicable; and may be truly urged as a valid argument’ against his theory” (<http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/am/v4/n1/god-of-gaps>).

It appears that Dawkins’ Darwinian delusion is the illusion that evolution can be supported and proven! The wording of the apostle Paul rightly describes such theorizing: “philosophy” and “profane and vain babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge” (Colossians 2:8; 1 Timothy 6:20).

One more question.

10. Why were you born? Can evolution discover or give a purpose for human life?

Theories of evolution are based on the precept that there is no purpose in the universe for anything, but that it all just happened and evolved by random chance, “luck,” mutations and natural selection. If that is true, then we might as well say, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!” (1 Corinthians 15:32).

What science cannot discover, God has revealed in His written Word, the Bible—the Creator’s revelation to man (2 Timothy 3:15-17). It reveals that though man was created from the dust as flesh and blood and may share many genes with other beasts (Genesis 2:7; Ecclesiastes 3:18-21), man is special, created “in the image of God” and given abilities way above the animals (Genesis 1:26-28; 1 Corinthians 2:7-14). We have the potential to become the children of God and to rule over animals and in the future over angels and all things assisting God in His rulership (1 Corinthians 6:2-3; Hebrews 2:1-10).

Is there a future destiny for you beyond death? God, who is eternal, offers eternal life to all mankind. God is “not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). Though “the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

God has a master plan for the salvation of all (1 John 3:1-3). See [What Is Your Destiny?](#) for more on this inspiring subject.

Dr. Stout was trained as a scientist and has worked as a veterinarian, college professor, researcher and consultant.

Overcoming Apathy

By Jeremy Lallier

There are times in our lives when we lose our way, become stationary and cannot seem to move forward. What can we do?



MANY OF US HAVE, at some point in our lives, come into contact with that foul beast called apathy. It is a frightening monster, because when we find ourselves trapped in its clutches, we simply *don't care enough* to fight our way out. We are content to remain trapped, bereft of motivation or drive—even the desire to regain these things seems beyond us.

So what should we do to overcome apathy? What *can* we do, for that matter? As with all problems, apathy is surmountable. We can overcome. The following are four steps (I will not call them easy; if you have faced this problem yourself, you know why) that will help you in your struggle to do so.

1. Ask God for strength and willpower

Of all the steps, this is the simplest and most overlooked one. All too often, we forget that “with God all things are possible” (Mark 10:27) and “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13). But before we can call on this strength to do the seemingly impossible, we must first *ask* our Creator for it. This way, we remain conscious of where our help and deliverance is coming from—not from ourselves, but from God.

God has an amazing plan for us—in this life and the next.

2. Understand where apathy comes from

God has an amazing plan for us—in this life and the next. Every day we face new opportunities to grow into His character, and every Holy Day (the Sabbath included!) we are reminded of the eternal plan He is ever working toward. This plan provides us with both the drive and motivation necessary to get up and face each day.

Apathy comes when we lose sight of this plan and its importance in our lives. Think about this. The source, the very origin of apathy, is a loss of focus on God’s plan. And when we have lost sight of what God is doing, we have distanced ourselves from God. A friend of mine, in relating her story of overcoming anorexia, confided in me that she had realized not only that God did not like what she was doing, but additionally that she didn’t care. And that was enough of a shock to jolt her out of apathy and into action.



So ask yourself: Is a state of mind where God doesn’t matter to you really where you want to be?

3. Get doing

Once we realize that we need to be doing something, the next step is to go out and do it. Is that an easy task when you don’t have any real desire to? No. But you can’t wait until you feel like it. If you wait until you care enough to do something, then you’ll never do anything.

That’s not how apathy works. *You* need to be the one who breaks the cycle, whether you have the motivation to do it or not. Pray to God for strength, and then plow ahead.

You need to be the one who breaks the cycle, whether you have the motivation to do it or not.

Sometimes it helps to have someone “light a fire under you,” so to speak. Others have done that for me and allow me to return the favor. To go back to the previous point, if you are apathetic, it means God’s plan and God Himself have dropped from their appropriate position as number one in your life.

This is not okay. God demands that number-one spot; and by placing Him anywhere else, we jeopardize our salvation.

God is not asking you to overcome this alone. Talk to Him; He is with those who turn to Him—but the decision to overcome apathy has to be yours.

4. What to do

As far as *what* we can be doing, the possibilities are limitless. In serving others—following the example set by Christ (Matthew 20:26-28)—we can often recapture that sense of purpose we have come to lack. (Don’t forget the principle set forth in Ecclesiastes 4:9-12—with the help of others, such tasks become easier.) Ask your local pastor for suggestions on how you can help out.



Prayer and studying the Bible to better understand a topic of interest or a previously unexplored section of Scripture can help rekindle the fire as well.

The promise

The most important thing to remember is that with God, all things are possible. With His help, we can fight our way out of the grasp of apathy and finally slay the beast. With the promise of the future He has set before us and the opportunities we encounter every day to grow into the son or daughter He wants for us to be, there is no room for apathy in our lives—so let's get doing!

Read our free booklet [You Can Have Living Faith](#).

Letters to the Editor

A Better Way

Thanks to all your contributors for their articles. I especially enjoyed this one about the Titmouse. I always enjoy reading your articles and the insight they provide.

— Debra Doss

God's Pruning Process

The article "[God's Pruning Process](#)" is so powerful. I'm not sure when it was published, but I came upon it at the perfect time. I have shared this article with my friends on Facebook and at work. Thank you for sharing this word. It has served as knowledge and encouragement to me and many others! I pray for our Father's blessings to flood you and *Virtual Christian Magazine*.

— Kimberly N. Johnson

Father, Please Heal My Broken Heart

I would like to thank you for the article "[Father, Please Heal My Broken Heart](#)" by Janet Treadway. It was really touching and helped me a lot to relieve me from my pain.

Today in the morning when I sat in front of my PC, I was really broken-hearted and hopeless. So I just typed, "God please heal my heart" not knowing what else to do. I read the story, step by step. In the beginning I was bored, but after that I felt that God was talking to me. I believe that He will heal me slowly.

Thank you again for your social work. Let me know if I can help others like you do. God bless you all. Kind regards,

— V. Amarasena, from Dubai

Some feedback messages are edited for space and/or clarity