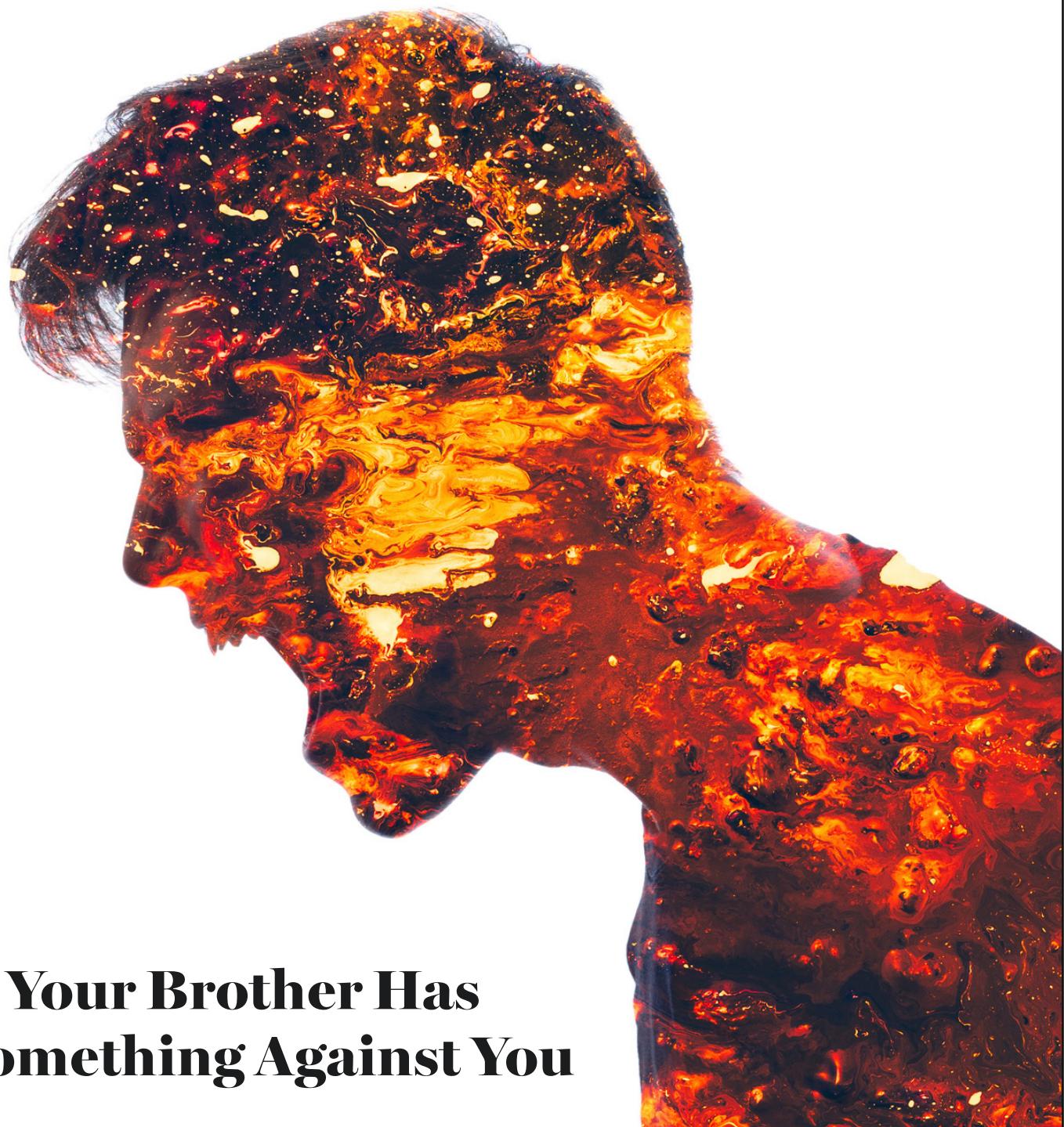


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Bonus Issue

A Magazine of Life Hope & Truth



**If Your Brother Has
Something Against You**

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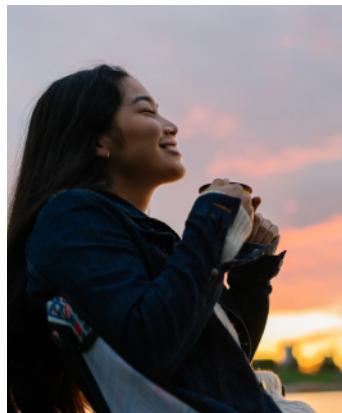
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If Your Brother Has Something Against You

All of us hurt other people, often without intending to cause them pain. What should you do if a fellow Christian has something against you?

By Bill Palmer

The crowd must have been stunned as Jesus began to describe righteousness of the heart, comparing it with obeying the letter of the law only (Matthew 5:21-48).

The first teaching in this section of the [Sermon on the Mount](#) was a comparison of murder with anger (verses 21-22).

Then Jesus told the multitude that their relationships with other people are so vital that any disputes should

be resolved immediately—even if it means delaying worship of God!

The words of Christ present a vivid image of someone stopping in the very act of worship:

"Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (verses 23-24).

No break in thought

A casual reading of verses 21 through 26 might leave you wondering how they fit together.

Even though the word *anger* is not mentioned in the last four verses of this segment, those verses also provide illustrations of anger. The first deals with anger in a brother. The second deals with the anger of an adversary.

"Remarkably," *Expositor's Bible Commentary* points out, "neither illustration deals with 'your' anger but with 'your' offense that has prompted the brother's or the adversary's rancor" (Vol. 8, p. 150).

Magnifying the law

Jesus had first magnified the law by expanding the topic from the literal act of murder to its emotional root, anger. This highlighted the emotional and spiritual aspect of the law. He did not stop there, however.

He then moved from the danger inherent in our own anger to the responsibility we have to remove anger-rousing obstacles we've put before others. This also magnifies the law.

Other parts of Scripture, of course, are consistent with what Jesus taught. In the *Law of Moses* God commands us to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18).

The context in that Old Testament passage is helping others avoid sin (verse 17). That includes restoring relationships torn apart by anger, so we need to look at the nature of anger.

Is anger itself sin?

We all experience anger. It is a normal part of life, and anger itself is not sin. Jesus, who lived without ever sinning, experienced anger.

For example, He was angry at the leaders of a synagogue who opposed His merciful act of healing on the Sabbath (Mark 3:1-5). His anger was based on "the hardness of their hearts."

However, our anger may not be righteous indignation, as His was, but may simply be a result of frustration. Whatever the cause, we must heed the apostle Paul's admonition, "Be angry, and do not sin" (Ephesians 4:26).

The problem with anger

Paul then urged Christians not to "let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil" (verses 26-27).

Unresolved anger can fester, growing in a person's heart until it consumes that individual's every thought. It truly opens the door to Satan.

Hebrews addresses this problem, referring to it as a "root of bitterness" (Hebrews 12:15). This type of anger is dangerous, not only for the person who harbors those feelings, but for anyone around him or her. It can result in many others becoming "defiled" (verse 15).

Two ways you can help your brother or sister by reconciling

If your brother (or sister) has something against you, the source of his or her anger is *you*. How can you help make it easier for the person to deal with that anger?

Among the [10 tips the Mayo Clinic](#) has identified that help someone control or manage personal anger, a couple relate to the source (or perceived source) of that anger.

One tip for dealing with anger is to identify possible solutions. That will be easier for your brother if you are there and willing to do your part in resolving the issue.

The other tip is for a person to forgive rather than to hold a grudge.

Make it as easy as possible for the other person to forgive you. Forgiveness is not easy, but it is far easier when the offending party asks for forgiveness, and when both parties work together for reconciliation.

Be concerned for your brother's health

The spiritual damage caused by unresolved anger is not the only problem. It may also have adverse effects on a person's health.

The U.S. National Institutes of Health asserted that "ongoing anger might lead to permanent damage and increased risk for cardiovascular disease."

David may have had in mind both the spiritual and physical destruction caused by anger when he urged, “Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; do not fret—it only causes harm” (Psalm 37:8).

James wrote that Christians should “confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed” (James 5:16).

James was not suggesting that we all confess to every other Christian indiscriminately. *Expositor's* explains: “If a person has sinned against a brother, he should confess the sin to him. This will no doubt result in mutual confession—‘to each other’” (Vol. 12, p. 204).

When to approach your brother

Jesus stressed the urgency for His followers to reconcile. Worshipping God is a vital aspect of our lives and should not be taken lightly.

Even so, Christ emphatically told those listening to Him, “Leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift” (Matthew 5:24). Restoring a broken relationship is *that* important!

Reconciliation is a priority. After all, that’s what the Christian life is all about. God “gave His only begotten Son” to reconcile us to Him (John 3:16). In fact, Paul even called his role in preaching the gospel message “the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18).

If God is reconciling the whole world to Himself through the sacrifice of His only begotten Son, shouldn’t we seek to make reconciliation a priority?

Now is the time to seek reconciliation. The longer you wait, the more difficult the task becomes. We’re told, “A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city, and contentions are like the bars of a castle” (Proverbs 18:19).

How to approach your brother

We can look to Christ for the key to reconciliation. (He, of course, was not a sinner. We are. Still, His mindset can help us restore relationships we’ve had some part in breaking.)

A key Jesus displayed is humility. He “humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:8).

In a sense, we as Christians must put to death whatever parts of our lives interfere with our ability to love our neighbors. Paul spelled out what this means

just a few verses prior to his description of Christ humbling Himself:

“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others” (verses 3-4).

Don't forget to pray

Humility does not begin with how we view others, but with our relationship with God. We humble ourselves when we pray, and God hears the humble (Isaiah 66:2).

Acknowledging whatever it is that we’ve done to hurt others is a good starting place. Ask God for forgiveness before you ask for forgiveness from your brother or sister who has something against you.

And ask God for the wisdom that will help you reach out to the other person effectively. God will not leave you hanging, but will give “liberally and without reproach” (James 1:5).

You might even consider asking others to pray for you as well. This does not mean you need to divulge every detail. Simply asking for prayers so you can restore a relationship may be sufficient.

Meeting with your brother

When you are spiritually, mentally and emotionally prepared, contact your brother to set up a private meeting in a quiet place where you will not be disturbed. Be sure to show up on time, and do nothing that would be viewed as confrontational.

Then speak with your brother candidly, expressing a heartfelt desire to restore the relationship. Confess any wrongs you have done, whether intentionally or not. Recognize that perceived offenses can be just as damaging to relationships.

If the problem arose through some sort of miscommunication, assure your brother that you will make every effort to avoid any future miscommunications.

Some few individuals may not respond to your efforts in a positive way. However, most of those who are truly striving to live the Christian life will. And you will have won your brother back!

For further biblical advice, see our study guide *The 5 Rs of Healing Relationships*. 

If Your Brother Sins Against You

The Bible says all people sin. That includes fellow Christians who may say or do something wrong to you. What should you do if your brother sins against you?

By Bill Palmer



Christians know that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23) and that “if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves” (1 John 1:8).

What this means is that even Christians sin, and you may have a fellow Christian commit a serious sin that affects you. So, what should you do if your brother sins against you?

Thankfully, Jesus taught His disciples what to do.

The context of His teaching

Before looking at the specific instructions Jesus provided, it is important to look at the context of the lesson. It all began after the disciples asked Him, “Who then is greatest in



the kingdom of heaven?" (Matthew 18:1).

In response, Jesus called a little child over (verse 2). This was undoubtedly surprising to His disciples, who were focused on status and rank.

This initial interaction between Jesus and His disciples set the stage for His teaching throughout the remainder of the chapter.

Humility comes first

Jesus told His disciples they could enter the Kingdom only after they became "as little children" (verse 3). *Expositor's Bible Commentary* points out that "the child is held up as an ideal, not of innocence, purity, or faith, but of humility and unconcern for social status" (Vol. 8, p. 397).

The disciples had been concerned about their own status in the Kingdom. Jesus, on the

other hand, made it clear in this passage that God places great value on those people who might be considered of little importance.

To drive home His point, He warned His disciples not to act in such a way as to cause "one of these little ones" to sin (verse 6).

He also offered a parable about a lost sheep to illustrate that every person is important to God. The Father is not willing that "one of these little ones should perish" (verse 14).

We must all adopt the same attitude toward our brothers and sisters in Christ and toward all of mankind.

If your brother sins against you

It is in the context of how we view other people that Jesus taught His disciples what to do "if your brother sins against you" (verse 15).

First we need to recognize that this passage is talking about sins—the kind of wrongdoing that could cause a person to be put out of the church (verse 17). It is not about misunderstandings, hurt feelings or slights that offend us. Seeking reconciliation in those situations is also important, but different approaches may be needed. For example, in a situation where a person has offended us with unkind words, in many cases simply saying to that person, “I wish you hadn’t said that” or “Your comment hurt . . .” and dropping it would be sufficient. (See our study guide *The 5 Rs of Healing Relationships*.)

In the context of Matthew 18 and a serious sin against you, realize that how you approach a Christian brother or sister who has wronged you can lead him or her to repentance, if done with spiritual maturity. The primary concern should always be for the spiritual welfare of the sinning member.

The first step is a simple conversation with the brother or sister (verse 15). That conversation is to be held in private, not in front of other people. This demonstrates an attitude of concern for your fellow Christian, who might be embarrassed if the sin against you becomes public knowledge.

The Greek word behind the concept of telling someone his or her fault is *elenchō*. This word can mean to expose or to rebuke. But the objective in telling a fellow Christian his or her fault is more about the other person than it is about the victim. *Expositor*’s notes that the point “is not to score points over him but to win him over . . . because all discipline . . . must begin with redemptive purposes” (Vol. 8, p. 402).

It is important to understand that wisdom precludes this approach for serious sins, such as abuse, or situations that could put a person in danger. For instance, a professing Christian who abuses his wife may react violently if she asks him to face his abusive behavior.

Otherwise, however, telling a brother “his fault between you and him alone” (verse 15) is the right starting point. That individual might be unaware of how his or her sinful words or actions affected you. In such cases, communication is all that is needed.

If he will not hear

Unfortunately, some might not respond as we hope. They might reject any notion that they have sinned against a brother. Jesus provided a second step for such situations.

He instructed His disciples to set up another meeting, but with one or two other Christians accompanying the victim (verse 16). The meeting would still be private, protecting the dignity and reputation of the sinning brother.

This other individual or individuals would be there as witnesses of the sin, not witnesses of the conversation. Witnesses of the sin, of course, are aware of it before the offended person comes to them. This is not about trying to find friends who will be on your side.

The presence of another person or two would impress upon the sinning brother the gravity of the situation. (The need for other witnesses could also take care of the possibility that you, as the aggrieved party, may be wrong in what you have perceived as sin.)

If the brother who sinned against you acknowledges his sin and commits to making the appropriate changes, the process can conclude at this point. However, if the sinning brother continues to be unrepentant, the presence of another witness (or two) sets the stage for the next step.

This preparation is in accordance with the law God gave Israel requiring multiple witnesses to establish any legal claim: “by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established” (Deuteronomy 19:15).

Tell it to the church

Jesus told His disciples that if an individual refuses to acknowledge and repent of sin, even when confronted by multiple witnesses, the matter should be taken to the church. This does not mean to publicize a member’s sins to all other members. It refers to representatives of the church in positions of leadership.

The context of Matthew 18:17 helps us understand. In the next verse (verse 18), Jesus said: “Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you

bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." *Matthew Poole's Commentary* explains, "By the church then must be meant those who had power to bind and loose."

Once the church hears the case, the brother who sinned may yet repent.

Regrettably, some individuals will so harden their hearts that they won't acknowledge their sins or repent, even when the church knows about those sins. That happened in ancient Corinth, prompting the apostle Paul to have the sinner put out of the church (1 Corinthians 5:5). But even in this situation, the goal was to induce the sinning brother to repent so "that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (verse 5).

An ancient decree

Jesus established that this procedure be followed when a Christian sins against a fellow Christian. However, taking responsibility for the spiritual well-being of neighbors was already present in the law of God.

Ancient Israel was given this command: "You shall surely rebuke your neighbor" (Leviticus 19:17). In modern Western culture, this may seem intrusive, but the context of the quote makes it clear that this action is a matter of taking responsibility for the neighbor's spiritual well-being.

The beginning of the verse sheds light on what it means to fail to carry through with this responsibility: "You shall not hate your brother in your heart." In the same way, the end of the verse points out that failing to fulfill this duty would be a sin.

What this means is that we should love our fellow Christians enough (verse 18) to be willing to gently point out their sins. Although our motivation can include rectifying wrongs we've experienced, it must also include helping our brothers and sisters repent of sins that could easily destroy them. Of course, the Bible is also clear that we must bear with one another (Colossians 3:13) and that love covers a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8).

A warning about judgment

This responsibility is one that must be approached with deep humility, discernment and wisdom. We must be certain of our motivation, but also of our capacity to assess a situation properly and understand how to proceed.

That's why Jesus warned His disciples about making unjust judgments (Matthew 7:1-2). It's easy to see the sins of others and to judge their words and behavior.

What's not so easy is removing the veil from our eyes so that we can first see our own sins. Jesus included a touch of irony when He spoke of ignoring the "plank" in our own eyes at the very time that we attempt to remove the tiny "speck" from the eye of a brother (verse 3).

Approaching the brother who sins against you requires another trait—spiritual maturity. In Paul's letter to the churches of Galatia, he wrote that those "who are spiritual" should be the ones who restore anyone "overtaken in any trespass" (Galatians 6:1).

Turning sinners back to God

Sins should not be ignored. (Remember, this process in Matthew 18 is for serious sins that would result in a member being put out of the church if that individual did not repent. It is not for less serious offenses.)

Such sins should be addressed, but in the proper spirit and with spiritual maturity. Both come from a close relationship with God.

If your brother sins against you, seek reconciliation with humility. If the idea of speaking to your brother about the issue is daunting, pray about it. If you ask God in faith and humility, He will give you the wisdom you need (James 1:5-6).

As James wrote, helping a fellow Christian turn back to God is a wonderfully rewarding act: "Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins" (James 5:19-20). 

How to Find Real, Lasting Satisfaction

Why are we never satisfied for very long with our lives? What does the Bible say about how to find real satisfaction and fulfillment in life?

By Mike Bennett

People today often feel dissatisfied. But probably most people believe that if they could just have more money, more pleasure, more things, more experiences, they could achieve happiness and satisfaction.

But is that true? Is there anything that will give us lasting satisfaction?

Wise and fabulously wealthy King Solomon wrote a lot about satisfaction, and the lack of it.

In Ecclesiastes 2:1-11 Solomon describes all the things he tried in his search to find meaning, happiness and lasting satisfaction in life.

He tried it all. He tried comedy . . . music . . . pleasure . . . great building projects . . . gathering treasures . . . even wisdom. And yet after a while he felt it all was just vanity—empty, valueless, like chasing after wind.

Wonderful food and drink can't satisfy our deepest hunger and thirst. Material things themselves don't fulfill our inner longings.

Physical things can't fill a spiritual hole

God says through Isaiah:

“Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price” (Isaiah 55:1).



What a wonderful offer from God! He offers to satisfy our thirst and hunger, and He's talking about more than just our physical thirst and hunger. But verse 2 says:

"Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy?"

We pay dearly for things that don't quench our thirst or fill us, but God gives true satisfaction freely. Mankind is metaphorically spending its time and money on things that don't satisfy—things that *can't* satisfy us emotionally or spiritually.

This materialistic world tries to use physical things—fancy houses, fast cars, designer fashion—to fill a spiritual hole.

Our sensual world tries to look at, touch, taste, hear whatever we want—especially forbidden things, things God knows aren't good for us. We think the taboo pleasures will satisfy us. Instead, they leave us feeling empty or dirty, or both.

But God continues:

"Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance.

"Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you—the sure mercies of David" (verses 2-3).

God offers a way that is fulfilling and sustaining, not just physically, but emotionally, mentally and spiritually.

So what does God offer?

As we look for the biblical answers, we have to recognize that sometimes they may not be what we expect. What are the biblical keys to being satisfied?

1. To find true, lasting satisfaction, we first need to fight covetousness.

In the past, when I was dissatisfied, I subconsciously considered it a sign that I wasn't getting what I deserved, what I needed. It was someone else's fault.

But could I sometimes have a part in causing my own dissatisfaction? I didn't like that thought. But the more I studied the [10th Commandment about coveting](#) (Exodus 20:17), the more I realized that to really have satisfaction, I needed to overcome coveting.

What is covetousness? According to *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, to covet means "to feel inordinate [immoderate, excessive] desire for what belongs to another."

Coveting is a desire, especially a wrong desire, for something we can't or shouldn't have.

Our world tempts us with things to covet and desire

at every turn. Advertisers have learned all the tricks to encourage our desire and longing for things we don't have and dissatisfaction with what we do have.

Now ads are everywhere. MediaSmarts says we're exposed to 4,000 ads every day!

But dissatisfaction is not created just by advertising and materialism. It seems to be a human weakness that Satan can find a way to tap, anywhere, anytime.

How do we fight covetousness?

We fight it by seeking to prioritize God above our own desires and by learning to trust Him to fulfill our needs. Matthew 6:33 says, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all of these things shall be added to you."

God, His Kingdom and His righteousness should be our priorities. So we need to regularly reinforce the right priorities, and we need to constantly [grow in faith](#)—the belief that God will take care of our needs.

To fight covetousness, we also need to avoid dwelling on what we can't have or pitying ourselves. When we let a desire or craving stay in our mind, it will work its way in even more deeply.

Instead of allowing a desire to remain in our minds and grow and conceive sin, we should be *thankful* for what we do have. We should remember that God does want us to have our desires, when they are good for us and align with His will.

As Paul wrote in Philippians 4:6:

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God."

Being thankful helps us avoid asking in a covetous, selfish, gimme-type way.

God wants to give us the desires of our hearts (Psalm 37:4). He wants the very best for us. But in this evil world, blessings can be delayed. In fact, we know by experience and biblical example that the Christian life can be very hard and full of trials.

We don't get the desires of our hearts immediately. It takes living, growing faith to see what God has in store for us. And in the meantime, we need another key that helps us prepare for eternal satisfaction.

2. To find lasting satisfaction, we must learn contentment.

Consider the apostle Paul's example. In Philippians 4:11-12 Paul wrote:

"Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content:

"I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need."

Paul didn't waste his trials. He used his difficult circumstances to develop character, to fight the desire to complain, and instead to grow in faith and reliance on God. Complaining might be natural in times of great need, but contentment requires God's help. As Paul says in verse 13:

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

[Learning contentment](#) is part of our training as God's children. Learning to be content with a little can help us learn and prepare to be content and satisfied with much more.

God doesn't want another Lucifer—another malcontent, another dissatisfied being of great power (Isaiah 14:12-14). Power corrupts, as the saying goes. God wants us to learn through experience how to be content and how to avoid becoming corrupt when He gives us more power and wealth.

3. To find real, eternal satisfaction, we must please God.

After listing all the unsatisfying things he had tried, Solomon gave this advice:

"There is nothing better for mortals than to eat and drink and find enjoyment in their toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God, for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment?

"For to the one who *pleases him* God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy" (Ecclesiastes 2:24-26, New Revised Standard Version, emphasis added throughout).

God's way of thinking and acting is good and loving and generous. He finds joy, fulfillment and satisfaction in accomplishing good things and giving good gifts. And He is pleased when we choose to follow His example and become more like Him. Becoming like our Heavenly Father is our purpose in life, and it brings with it real, lasting joy and ultimate satisfaction.

You can study this further using the article "[How to Please God.](#)"

We will find that the things that delight God, that please Him and make Him happy, are the things that will eternally delight and please us as well. We are His children, and He is trying to teach us what things are just shiny bubbles, cheap and breakable toys, and what things are beautiful, valuable and eternally enjoyable.

4. To find lasting satisfaction, we must love others.

This is the same as the second [great commandment](#): to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Many times the Bible shows the benefits of God's way of give, of loving our neighbor as ourselves, of serving others, looking out for their needs, caring about them.

God wants us to have a caring, giving, *loving* approach to others. God will bless and satisfy the giver. And giving itself is meaningful work—it's a blessing that gives us purpose and joy.

Consider what the apostle Paul said in Acts 20:33-35. This is at the end of his powerful and emotional address to these Ephesian elders that he was sure he wouldn't see again. He pleaded with them to follow his example of serving and giving.

He warned in verses 29 and 30 about savage wolves and men from among them who would attack the Church and draw away people after themselves, perhaps greedily thinking of the Church as a source of personal wealth.

Here's how Paul ended this speech:

"I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel.

"Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me.

"I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

Paul lived that way of give, following the example of Jesus Christ.

Giving to others gives us blessings—and, beyond that, it gives our lives meaning and a sense of belonging. It produces loving relationships.

Being part of God's family will be what truly satisfies. And it will be the kind of satisfaction that never diminishes or grows old.

Consider one more scripture about the satisfaction that God promises. David wrote:

"How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God!

Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings. They are abundantly *satisfied* with the fullness of Your house, and You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures" (Psalm 36:7-8).

Fighting covetousness, learning contentment, pleasing God and loving others: these are the keys to real, lasting satisfaction!

Take the time to study this further in our article "[Life More Abundantly.](#)" 

5 Ways to Help Your Child Deal With Evolution

How can parents who believe in the Creator God help their children navigate the minefield of the evolution vs. creation debate? Consider these tips.

By Paul Luecke



“D

ad! Did you know that horses used to be no bigger than our *dog*? Imagine riding a horse the size of Buddy!”

How do you answer your child when he or she hears evolutionary concepts presented as facts?

There is no escaping the fact that our children will be exposed to evolutionary teachings—whether in public school, nature shows, science books or museums. The theory of evolution has been embraced and promoted as fact in almost every aspect of society—while the Creator God has been rejected and minimized to religious myth.

Does the evolution debate matter?

Some parents who believe in the Bible may assume that evolution vs. creation is just an academic debate for adults to argue about. Nothing could be further from the truth! It is *critically* important that our children learn that all things were literally created by a very real, living *God*. Jesus Christ is described as the Creator who made Adam and Eve with His own hands, not through evolution (1 Timothy 2:13; Colossians 1:16).

It is essential that parents begin teaching their children about the existence of God from a young age. We must not wait to begin

teaching this vital truth to our children until they are older! The god of *this* age (2 Corinthians 4:4, referring to Satan the devil) can begin indoctrinating our children at a tender young age. We must be proactive in equipping our children to overcome this powerful deception.

Believing in the Creator is a fundamental prerequisite to any person coming to Him. “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God *must believe that He is*” (Hebrews 11:6, emphasis added throughout).

The angels in heaven are constantly mindful that God created everything—and are moved to praise Him as a result. “You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created” (Revelation 4:11). This is an excellent example for us earthly mortals—of all ages—to follow.

Specifically, how do you equip your child to believe firmly in the Creator God and *refute* the false teachings of evolution? Here are some suggestions:

Talk about God regularly

“And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. *You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them* when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up” (Deuteronomy 6:6-7).

False teachings will come quickly to our children through many avenues. Therefore we must make conversation about the true God even more natural and routine.

For example, talk about God’s creative genius in designing the creatures you see—the amazing agility God built into the squirrel or the aeronautical abilities of the bird that surpass any man-made aircraft.

The more you actively point to God, the more the truth and reality of God as the *Creator* of *everything* will become embedded in your child’s mind.

Equip yourself with the basic teachings of evolution

You are your child’s most important teacher! Therefore you need to have a working knowledge of what evolution actually teaches. We highly recommend that you read some of the materials listed in the sidebar “Creation vs. Evolution Resources.” Some of these you

can read for free at your local library or on the Internet or find as used books for purchase at low prices.

Having some knowledge of evolutionary theory will prevent you from describing it inaccurately—such as simplifying it to the idea that “human beings came from monkeys.”

Learn about intelligent design with your child

In the last two decades, microbiologists have made astonishing new discoveries about the living cell. Each discovery adds to the growing mountain of evidence that this mind-blowing complexity can only have come from a superintelligent mind capable of the most complex engineering.

The intelligent design movement is leaving evolutionists with fewer arguments to stand on. The sidebar lists several recommended resources. As you begin reading some of these, you’ll quickly realize that most “intelligent design” authors choose to approach this subject purely from an analytical position, that is, showing clearly that evolution fails to explain the origin and complexity of life, and that a superintelligence was necessarily involved. Most are not claiming to bring the God of the Bible into the picture.

Those who believe the Bible know who this superintelligence is, and learning facts from these books about His creative genius can be inspiring and helpful.

For example, after reading *Darwin’s Black Box*, you could illustrate the principle of “[irreducible complexity](#)” to your child by taking apart a mousetrap or putting together a bicycle, explaining how each part must be made in a specific shape and positioned precisely for the whole system to have any useful function.

Video animations of living cells can also be excellent teaching tools. These show the amazing complexity of the billions of parts that work harmoniously together in every living cell. You can find many of these videos on YouTube by searching for “living cell animation.” When you see the astonishing complexity required to give us life, you (and your child) cannot help but have a deeper awe and reverence for the *great* Creator God!

Address evolutionary teachings promptly

Since *you* have the primary responsibility for the education of your child, you need to know what others

are teaching him or her. Start the habit of discussing what was taught in school each day as a matter of routine, perhaps at dinner.

Whenever your child encounters evolutionary concepts—whether in school or in a TV show or book—discuss it at your earliest opportunity. If you have equipped yourself with some facts disproving evolution, you can help your child process what he or she has just heard on a level you know your child can best understand.

It is good to remember that if evolution had occurred, many missing links would have been found. Instead we see vast gaps in the fossil records where Darwinian evolution predicted there would be transitional creatures. See our LifeHopeandTruth.com article “[The Fossil Record and Creation](#).”

When it comes to evolutionary teachings at school, there are a few more points to consider:

- If your child worries about having to put down answers he or she doesn’t believe when taking tests, here is one idea. When the “correct” answers would be evolutionary concepts, your child can simply add a note at the top of the test page such as, “According to the book” or “According to the theory of evolution.”
- Advise your child not to start arguments in the classroom. Arguing with teachers who do not believe in the biblical account of creation will only cause unnecessary conflict or resentment toward your child in the long run. No teacher likes to be put on the spot or shown to be wrong in front of a class of students.
- Prepare your child to “*be ready* to give a defense to everyone who *asks you*” (1 Peter 3:15). This is a principle we all need to practice. This requires being adequately armed with the knowledge of the truth. Remind your child that he or she is not alone; there are many others who believe in the Creator God rather than evolution. We can—and should—have confidence in knowing the facts are solid, true and irrefutable.

Coach your child in making a list of his or her own personal proofs of God’s existence

Your child’s list can be added to or modified as he or she grows in understanding. It would, of course, be a good idea to first have your own personal list!

We believe the articles in the “[Is There a God?](#)” section of the Life, Hope & Truth website can help you in your responsibility to equip your child to deal with evolutionary teaching and to develop a growing

relationship with our Creator. We invite you to bookmark the site and visit it often.

Parents, God has given *you* the responsibility to equip your children with the knowledge that will help them build a strong relationship with their Creator! ☩

Creation vs. Evolution Resources

- *The Case for a Creator*
Lee Strobel, 2004.
A journalist investigates scientific evidence that points toward God.
- *Darwin on Trial*
Phillip Johnson, 2010.
A professor of law examines scientific detail that argues convincingly against the theory of evolution.
- *Darwin’s Black Box*
Michael Behe, 2006.
A professor of biochemistry shows that the building blocks of life are far too complex for their codependent parts and processes to have evolved. Also by the same author: *The Edge of Evolution* (2007) and *Darwin Devolves* (2019).
- *Darwin’s Doubt*
Stephen C. Meyer, 2013.
A geophysicist and Cambridge-trained philosopher of science makes the case that intelligent design is the best explanation for the sudden explosion of life shown in the Cambrian fossil record. Also by the same author: *Signature in the Cell* (2009).
- *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*
Michael Denton, 1985.
A biochemist examines features of the natural world that mutation and natural selection cannot explain. Also by the same author: *Evolution: Still a Theory in Crisis* (2016).
- *Icons of Evolution: Science or Myth?*
Jonathan Wells, 2000.
A molecular biologist tackles 10 of the most prominent illustrations used in teaching evolution and shows how each is misused.

Should Christians Vape?

Vaping has been promoted as a safer alternative to smoking. Is it really safe, and would God approve?

By Gabriella Ware



Vaping has rapidly gained popularity since e-cigarettes, vapes, electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS), and similar devices first came on the market in the early 2000s.

Vaping was initially promoted as a safer alternative to smoking, and it has become increasingly popular even among those who have never smoked. However, mounting data is showing that these devices are not as safe as some have thought.

What should Christians consider when it comes to vaping?

What is vaping?

Vaping is the act of inhaling aerosol produced by a vape, a device that contains a battery, a heating

element and a place to hold liquid. The liquid, or “juice,” is heated to become a vapor, which the user then inhales.

Vapes often resemble other devices, such as highlighters or USB flash drives, making them easy to conceal. Having exploded onto the market in 2019, disposable e-cigarettes are currently the most purchased product of this type, as of 2024 (CDC).

Why do people vape?

There are various reasons that vaping has become so common:

- As an alternative to smoking. Some people who want to quit smoking believe vaping is less harmful.
- Convenience. The devices are small, easily

concealed, don't trigger smoke detectors and face fewer restrictions in public.

- Stress and [anxiety](#) relief.
- Social pressure.
- Self-expression. The variety of devices and juices make it trendy and individualized.
- Marketing. Strong ad campaigns make it seem attractive and cool, especially to young people.

While there are many reasons people have taken up vaping, those seeking to obey God must answer the question: "Would God be pleased with this activity?"

Those seeking to honor God are called to separate themselves from things of the world (2 Corinthians 6:17) and not "be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2).

Just because something is widely accepted in society does not mean it is beneficial or acceptable for a Christian.

Addiction

Many vaping liquids include the chemical nicotine, which is a highly addictive substance. But even those without nicotine can be addictive. Some new "smart vapes" are equipped with a screen and a game system, which may increase their addictive tendencies by using the brain's reward pathways.

Addiction is a form of slavery. When we become addicted to something, we become slaves of that thing or substance.

Those seeking to please God must strive to avoid and overcome all forms of addiction. "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey?" (Romans 6:16).

Through Jesus Christ, we can be freed from the sinful habits that keep us in bondage (verses 17-18). We should never surrender control of our body to any addiction.

For more information, see our series "[Freedom From Addiction](#)."

Poison

Besides being addictive, nicotine affects multiple body systems.

It can strain the cardiovascular system by raising the user's heart rate and blood pressure, irritate and inflame the respiratory tract and disrupt normal gastrointestinal function.

Nicotine also weakens the immune response and can reduce fertility in both men and women.

In people under 25, whose brains are still developing, nicotine can interfere with learning, attention and impulse control—and can increase the likelihood of future addiction to other substances.

Another significant risk of vaping is [nicotine poisoning](#), which can occur in both children and adults through contact with vaping liquid. Before the popularity of vaping, nicotine poisoning was relatively rare and typically occurred because of contact with insecticides containing nicotine or accidental consumption of tobacco.

From 2017 to 2022, the average nicotine strength in U.S. e-cigarette products increased substantially (from around 2.5 percent to 4.4 percent), raising concerns about higher exposure. Early signs of nicotine poisoning include vomiting, rapid heart rate, increased salivation and seizures. In more severe cases—particularly among children or users of high-nicotine products—symptoms can escalate to breathing difficulties, low blood pressure, paralysis, coma or even death.

Unfortunately, children are at the greatest risk of nicotine poisoning. Many vape products come in appealing packaging, with flavors and scents that attract children who either swallow or spill the liquid on their skin (Cleveland Clinic, 2021).

Is vaping without nicotine safe?

A common draw of vaping is the array of options, including different flavorings and varieties that don't include nicotine.

Even though they may not have nicotine, they still contain many of the same chemicals found in traditional cigarettes. Contrary to a common belief that vaping just produces harmless water vapor with no risks, the vapor is actually an aerosol that contains suspended particles.

In addition to flavorings, the [vapor](#) often contains heavy metals such as lead and other chemicals, as well as additives commonly found in antifreeze, paint solvent, herbicides and even car exhaust. The inflammation and irritation caused by these chemicals can contribute to chronic diseases like bronchitis, emphysema, heart disease and cancer.

Is vaping less harmful than smoking?

Some have proposed that vaping is less harmful than smoking a cigarette and thus recommend it as a replacement. However, *less* harmful isn't the same as *not* harmful. Rather than helping people quit smoking, the introduction of vape products has led to dual use by many.

Because both smoking and vaping are harmful but include different substances, this increases the risk compared to using either alone. In fact, dual use of these products may be up to [20 to 40 percent more harmful](#) than using either alone.

Vaping is not included as a smoking cessation tool by the FDA, and the CDC advocates against its usage. Still, the message that vaping can be less detrimental to one's health than smoking has led some to believe that vaping is not harmful at all.

Due to this belief, some individuals who would never consider smoking due to the risks have taken up vaping. This is especially the case for teens and young adults.

In fact, a majority of advertising for vape products seems directed toward teens, seeking to draw in a new generation of consumers to these harmful products. Most young people are exposed to vaping advertising, which often includes fun colors, flavors and famous characters all over their social media.

While it isn't widely discussed, some emerging research suggests that disposable vapes—especially popular among younger users—may carry unique risks and, in some cases, could be [more harmful](#) than traditional cigarettes or reusable vaping devices.

Love your neighbor

Another draw to vaping is how few restrictions there seem to be.

While smoking is banned in many indoor public spaces and restricted in outdoor public spaces, vaping often has fewer restrictions. Because of this, those who vape may assume that there is no risk to others around them.

However, like secondhand smoke, vapor can also be breathed in by those nearby after it is exhaled. Like secondhand smoke, secondhand vapor contains the same chemicals as the vapor inhaled by the one vaping.

When people vape, the aerosolized chemicals are released into the air around them, exposing everyone in the vicinity to the same harmful effects.

Christ called upon His followers to “love one another; as I have loved you” (John 13:34), and Romans 13:10 tells us, “Love does no harm to a neighbor.” If we truly love our neighbor, we will not release chemicals into the air he or she breathes.

Body as a temple

God carefully designed our bodies and expects us to take care of them.

Paul wrote, “Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit . . . and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

Our bodies belong to God, and we should take care of them as such.

Keeping this in mind, we should ask ourselves, “Does it glorify God to intentionally inhale something that harms my body?” Would Jesus Christ, if He were walking the earth today, recreationally inhale chemicals into His lungs?

Is vaping a sin?

Although the Bible doesn't speak directly about vaping, there are many biblical principles we should consider.

Christians shouldn't try to conform to this world and participate in trendy things just because others are doing them (Romans 12:2). Vaping is popular, but that doesn't mean Christians should do it.

Human beings were made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26), and Christians are called to “be holy” (1 Peter 1:16). To be “holy” means to be set apart by God for a purpose.

Instead of being enslaved to addiction and exposing our God-created bodies to the chemical substances found in vapes, we should seek to serve God and do things that promote holiness and purity in our lives.

Research shows that vaping is not harmless, but that it poses real health risks. We should take care of and glorify God with our bodies, not poison them.

For more insight on related topics, read “[Is Smoking a Sin?](#)” and “[Temple of the Holy Spirit: The Body.](#)” 

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