

# OpenTheo

## Does Someone's Lack of a Near-Death Experience Prove There's No Afterlife?

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### #STRask - Stand to Reason

Questions about how to proceed with someone who isn't sure what she's unsure of about Christianity, whether not having a near-death experience proves there's no life after death, why Jesus is waiting so long to return, and whether it's shameful for a boy to have long hair.

- \* How should I proceed with someone who says she wants to continue reading the Bible but isn't ready to accept Christ and isn't sure what she's unsure of about Christianity?
- \* What should I say to an atheist who says the fact that he died for a few minutes and had no awareness at all proves there's no life after death?
- \* Why has it been such a long time since Jesus promised to return?
- \* According to 1 Corinthians 11, is it shameful for my son to have long hair?

### Transcript

Welcome, I'm Amy Hall. I'm here with Greg Cokel and you're listening to Stand to Reason's hashtag S-T-R-S-C-Pogast. Greg, you ready for your first question? Yes, boom.

Alright. Here's a question from Tom. Why? I'm not sure if I'm pronouncing your name right.

I'm sorry. H-W-E-I. Okay, so here's the question.

I finished Christianity Explained with a teen whose parents are professing Christians. After which she said she's not ready to accept Christ, but she wants to continue reading the Bible with someone. When asked, she said she's not sure what she's unsure of about Christianity.

How do I proceed? Well, I would just stay and play with her. If she's not sure, she

probably, she wants to move forward little by little, but she's not sure what's keeping her back. She's probably telling the truth, at least in terms of her conscious awareness.

It may turn out to be that there's some emotional or prejudicial element that's in the way, something that it's hard to tell. It's a moral thing, I don't know, but she's just moving slowly. It's not unusual.

People don't usually change their minds on big things like this overnight. We have some occasions on like that. I'm thinking of Guillaume Bignon, but he, there actually was a process for him too, but he kind of got hit with a thunderbolt at one point.

And that's when things change for him. And there's been others, Beckett Cook, you know, we have his story. He's worked with us at realities, etc.

But generally, it's a process. And I'm thinking September will be my 50th anniversary as a Christian. And all that summer, and even before that, I was mulling things over, you know, and Christianity was seeming more and more plausible to me.

But I was just holding back and I didn't know why I was holding back, but didn't matter because I was in process. And so I think that the best thing here is just continue to be supportive. Now, my younger brother, Mark, is the one who was the gardener in my life, principally, and he continued to garden in the process and bringing issues up.

And he wasn't wasn't shy of that at all. And so I would say two way that you just stay in play. Don't be intimidated by this.

It sounds like your friend is moving forward and hasn't put up resistance. Now, it's hard to tell sometimes. I'm thinking of, I get the, you know, Festus and Agrippa and those three guys in acts midway through the book of acts with Paul towards the end, actually, the book of acts.

And one of them said, maybe it was Agrippa, I don't know, or Festus, you know, he's listening and then he gets spooked. And he says, well, you go away for a while. You know, that's kind of spooks me.

I kind of like I'll think about it. And of course he never thought about it anymore after that. He left Paul in prison for two years.

So I would say that from what we've heard, Amy, this person, who is friend is in a good place. And just to be available and continue to talk and let them work through this. Only spirits got his ways of doing that.

I agree as long as she wants to read the Bible with someone, then read the Bible with her. Somebody who is not at all interested isn't going to do that. So I would definitely continue with that.

And just remember, ultimately, you know, you're trying to figure out all these different reasons. Well, maybe it's this or maybe it's that. But ultimately it is a spiritual issue.

And her problem is spiritual. And so even if you were to find out exactly, like you said, she might not even know what's holding her back. So pray for her and just be patient and see what happens.

All right, here's a question from Jane. What would your response be to an atheist friend who tells you that he is living proof that there is no life after death? My friend claims that the doctor told him that he had died for a few minutes from a heart attack. During this time, my friend says he had no awareness at all.

Okay. Well, I think the answer to that is in the definition of death. And so he is dealing with one definition of death, a cessation of heartbeat in which he lost consciousness.

Okay. The biblical understanding of death is a different type of death. And so they're actually medically three different characterizations of death.

One characterization is what he experienced that the heart stops beating. The heart's not beating. The person is dead.

Now, I don't really actually think that's the common way of characterizing death nowadays. The second characterization of death is loss of brainwaves when you have a flat EEG, not in a flat EKG. I'm getting the term electrocardiogram.

Yeah, that's, but in EEG, EG flat, you're flatlined. Nothing's happening. Heart-wise brain-wise.

Okay. And so now that has a consequence. If that stays that way for enough time, then the body begins to be in the brain.

It's to decay. Okay. When the body begins to decay, you crossed over into another stage in which you are gone.

You are dead. Dead is a doornail dead. Okay.

There's no coming back from that. That's full biological death. I actually don't know the term they use.

Okay. But this is the kind of way that scripture is talking about death. When you die, you have, you know, you're not going to die.

It is, is it a point appointed for man once to die and then comes the judgment. It's not dealing with medical terminology here. It's dealing with once the, once you're dead and dead as a doornail dead kind of thing, then that's it.

There's no further chance for you. Okay. And that was the case with Lazarus.

And that was the case with Jesus. You know, in the case of Lazarus, they said, don't open the tomb. He stinks.

In other words, his body is rotting. Okay. Jesus was in the tomb for Friday, Sunday, and he was involved.

Okay. So there was no coming back in any naturalistic way in these lesser forms of quote, unquote death. It's possible to come back.

And people have, even in those lesser forms, they have what are called NDEs. It's interesting, the terminology near death experiences. They aren't dead dead.

They are near to death by some medical standards. And so then they have these out of body experiences, in many cases, that are called NDEs. Now, I'm not here to defend NDEs necessarily.

I'm just simply saying that there are kinds of death from which one returns. All right. And if you, if you experience that and don't have any recollection of it, it's not, this tells us nothing about the ultimate state of an individual once biological death has set in full biological death has set in.

So my, my response to the atheist was that this doesn't tell you anything unless he's willing to change his mind because other people have experienced things. And D.E.'s and their body is in the same condition or even worse than his was, and they still had conscious experiences. So it's, it's, it's like saying miracles do not happen.

How do you know? I never saw one. Okay. Well, then there are no French cooking schools.

Why? Because I never saw one. It's, it's, it's kind of a, you know, obviously a silly one. Obviously a silly way of arguing.

It didn't happen to me in the circumstances I had. So that means it never happens to anyone ever. And I would say not only does it not tell you anything about the ultimate state, I don't think it even tells you about the, anything about the intermediate state.

You can't conclude anything. I mean, think about if you were to have an operation, you, you wake up, you don't remember anything that happened during that. Does that mean that you were dead? During that time? It just doesn't mean anything because you don't remember.

I mean, maybe, maybe he did experience something. It doesn't remember it. You just, there's no way to know that.

So I, I would just say it's just, you can't conclude anything from that. There are other things that we can use to think about whether or not there is life after death. Right.

The atheist is leaning on a bent read here and he's getting it. Now again, I'm not arguing that there is life after death. What I am saying here is his reason that there is a, holds no water whatsoever and it doesn't take an, an into account the difference between medical terminology describing death for which he qualified at one level and the kind of death that leads, that is followed by something in the afterlife that the, the biblical record talks about.

So his, his experience never addresses that situation at all. Yet he thinks he's getting comfort. Maybe he's gaining comfort from his claim that he's going to be safe and there's no safety at all in this.

That's what I mean by his leaning on a bent read. Let's go to a question from Glinda. Greg and Amy, I know we cannot know the time of the Lord's return, but I would love to hear your thoughts on when it might be and why it has been 19, 190 years.

That's such a long time. Thank you and God bless. Well, we actually don't talk about this too much.

And though I, my, I was weaned on a very aggressive second coming kind of theology. And that was spiritually speaking under Hel Lindsey back in the early days of the light and powerhouse where the community, I was in, he was one of the principles in that community and I spent a lot of time with Hel and at his home and with his family, et cetera, et cetera. So I was deeply influenced by all of that.

Here we are 50 years later and Jesus hasn't returned. Well, doesn't mean he's never going to return. I just think that there's a lot of ambiguity about a lot of the details there.

I, I don't know. And lots of eras in lots of eras, people of circumstances, cultural and political, et cetera, spiritual and thought, well, the return of Christ must be right around the corner. But of course that didn't happen.

So I think it's really, it's good to think to be cognizant of the imminence of Christ's return that, you know, you don't want to be caught sleeping when the, when the household, the, when the, what's the wording I'm looking for, you know, in the payrolls. The slave doesn't want to be pom sleeping when the, when the owner of the master returns. Okay.

So, and that's the exhortation of the New Testament. I, I, with regards to the passage of time, I just go back to Peter's response to that in 2 Peter. God is not slow, according to his promise, as some count slowness.

Okay. But rather is long suffering, not wishing that any should perish, but all should come to repentance. And there I think what he has in view is that the church bringing the

full number of the church in, certainly he doesn't mean waiting for everyone to become a Christian because that's not going to happen clearly.

And it has to happen. People have died as non-Christians. But it's interesting the way Peter puts it.

He says that a year is, is a thousand years and a thousand years is a year to God. Now he's not given us any numbers to make calculations with. And this is so silly sometimes when people do that.

Well, a year is, a day is a thousand years and a thousand years is a day. I guess the way he puts it. Oh, a day.

That means a thousand years. No, it's not a calculation. It's an expression that the phenomenology of time is, is different for God than it is for us.

You see, it's from God's experience, if you will, from his perspective, a thousand years doesn't seem like a long time and a day doesn't seem like a short time. That's something that we experience. Wow, it's been 1900 years.

What's keeping him. But so I can't answer the question why God has waited so long because he has purposes in the church, the full number of the church, the elect they chose and are not in yet. They're not gathered in and this is why.

But when it is, then then the end will come because the job has been completed and then God, Jesus will return and bring retribution appropriately on the rest of the world. But it's been a long time from our perspective. But as Peter points out, not from God's perspective, God doesn't have the same sense that, well, that took a long time.

I think that's the, you've hit on the simple answer right there, Greg, and it is God is gathering his people and when the full amount has come in, that will be the end. That's what he's waiting for. That's what we're being patient for.

We're waiting for all of his people to be brought into the kingdom. I was thinking about another verse in Revelation 6. So here's what it says, starting in verse 9. And when the lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar, the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and because of the testimony which they had maintained. And they cried out with a loud voice saying, how long, oh Lord, how long? I'm Psalm 13.

Holy and true, will you refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth? And there was given to each of them a white robe, and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed, even as they had been, would be completed also. And that's of course talking about martyrs specifically, but I think the principle is there.

We are waiting for the number to be completed.

And when it is, that's when things will end. And incidentally, I made this reference to 2 Peter and people read that passage differently, you know, for God is not willing for any to perish, but all to come to repentance. Now, the question here is, any what and all what? Now we read naturally, or any person to perish and all people to come to repentance.

But if that's the way you read it, notice there's no object in there. If that's the way you read it, then Jesus is never going to come back. Because if God is waiting for every single person to be saved and every single person to come to repentance, well, then that's not going to happen.

So Jesus isn't going to be returning. It's got to be all or any of a smaller group. And of course, the group that he's talking to in the entire letter from the very beginning, and I read every verse to confirm this, that all of the all of the pronouns are being used of believers, all of you, all of the believers, not wishing for any of the elect, if you will, or the church, if you will, of you to perish.

But all of you, all of the full number of the redeemed to come in, and there are people probably yet to be born, that Jesus will redeem. And so it is an act of patience, but it's an act of patience on the world waiting to bring in the bride. And I think that's the only way that makes any sense to read that passage.

But it does speak to this particular question. Okay, let's squeeze one more question in there, Greg. This one is from Timothy, and it's kind of unusual.

I don't think anyone has asked me about this before. Timothy asked me. Okay.

He says, my pastor said that it's a shame for men to have long hair, 1 Corinthians 11, and cultural practices of the New Testament in regard to this still apply. My son is the only one in the church who has long hair, and I'm trying to figure out how to address this. I guess I wonder how to address this with his son, or how to address this with the pastor.

You take your pick, Greg. Yeah, well, I don't know what he has in mind. I actually don't think that that's an appropriate application of the passage.

So I think the difficulty would be with the pastor's approach, shaming the son. By the way, how long is long? That's another question. And I think there, I do need to bone up on this eventually, but there are some cultural factors that are relevant in that passage, and that have to do with peculiar things in the culture.

And so women without hair or men with long hair, this communicated a signal, I think, regarding that person. And so this was what Paul is saying to avoid for women with short hair, for example, maybe with temple prostitutes, the women there had short hair. So

they're easily recognizable in the community as such.

I can't give all of the background details. There are some passages that are just unusual. And what's ironic, by the way, is that almost everybody characterizing Jesus in every film and painting has Jesus with long hair.

I mean, that's not theologically significant, but I do think it's curious that nobody at any time really thought that that passage or that requirement applied to Christians, you know, characteristically. And in any event, I'm curious what you have to say about it. Maybe you've done more research on it.

Well, it seems to me that isn't this passage also have the part about the woman having to pray with her head covered and wear head covering. Are the women wearing head coverings in his church? That's a good question. Because if not, that doesn't seem consistent to me.

Maybe they are. When I grew up, women wore hats or they adored oily or something to church. And I went to a Roman Catholic church and women had their heads covered.

So they did certainly apply that principle as a sign of submission. I'm chuckling because it was, in some case it was an empty gesture. A sign of submission, it wasn't evidence in genuine biblical submission, but that's another issue.

Yeah. So I don't know if I have anything else to add to that. I think the length of your hair might communicate something depending on the culture you're in and what's happening in the culture.

If it's long hair in the sense that I'm seeing a lot of kids with long hair, I don't think it's communicating what he thinks it's communicating. But I would have to think some more about it. If I were to talk to the pastor, I would just ask him why he makes a distinction between head coverings and the long hair.

In the same passage, if he does. If he does. Yeah.

Sorry, I don't have anything. But when I was in junior high, I was in junior high, seventh and eighth grade, I got out in 64. So 62 to 64.

Guess who was on the scene right around that time? That was when the Beatles came on board. And the Beatles were really extreme because they had long hair. That is there were portions of the hair that covered portions of their ears.

Early on, they were pretty trim by today's, they almost looked like just like Mormons who needed a haircut. That's all. And so that's it.

So that was long by their standards, by the culture standards. And people made a big deal about it. And then the hair covered their ears and then it went down to their



shoulders.

Of course, in the mid to late 60s, it was a total de-rigour. It was the fad accepted thing for young people, male young people to have long hair. And so that's the way that we did believe it or not down to my shoulders.

And don't you think, Greg, that there are situations where the long hair is meant to communicate some sort of rebellion against society in some way? I mean, depending on what's happening in the society. Right. But that's true with different types of hairstyles even now.

We are not going to be like you. We're going to be like everybody else in our group. It's like the nonconformists are conforming to a different group as it turns out.

But there's lots of ways that that can be manifested in one's style haircut or whatever. And I wonder. There is an issue about making sure the sexes stay distinct in the way they look.

And that is a biblical thing that's important. It's in the Old Testament as well. That's actually exactly what I was just going to mention because it's... I stole it from you.

It could be a comparison between a man trying to look at like a woman with long hair. Because he's saying does not nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him. But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her.

So maybe there's some of that happening there too. So if in a culture that's not communicating that he's trying to look like a woman or that he's trying to communicate something about his values or morals or whatever it is, I'm not sure that would be an issue. But again, this isn't something I've studied a ton.

I do know that Mike Winger has done several hours of videos on the head coverings. And I would say whatever... I would go listen to those because whatever principles he's talking about there should apply in some way since it's in the same passage and it's making the same kinds of points here. Yeah, so W-I-N-G-E-R, Mike Winger.

What's his handle for his podcast or video? It's Bible thinker. I don't know if that's the name of his podcast, but you should be able to find him if you look up Mike Winger on YouTube. A good friend of ours lives close by and he's worked with us before.

Yeah. Alright, well thank you for sending us your questions. If you have a question, send it to us on Twitter with the hashtag STRS.

This is Amy Hall and Greg Kockel for Stand to Reason.