“Could My Children’s Autism be the Result of a Generational Curse?”

I understand that it says in the Bible that the children may be cursed for generations because of their fathers’ sins. I have two children with autism and a cousin that has a child with autism as well. Could this be a curse since both of our parents are sisters? There has been talk that in our family that relatives from two and three generations back married cousins. Isn’t that a sin?

I believe the concept of generational curses is best understood as the natural consequence of ingrained behavioral patterns that are passed down from one generation to the next. I yelled at my kids when they were small because my mom yelled at us. My brother is a (recovered) alcoholic because he saw our dad drink a lot every night he was home, and he internalized that behavior for himself. The guy down the street mistreats his wife because he saw his father continually do it to his mother. (And societally speaking, there can be generational “curses” when those in one generation make decisions which have effects for generations to come, such as the abortion decision. Our society continues to pay for that errant decision in more ways than the 30 million+ abortions since Roe v. Wade. The value of young innocent life continues to decline.)

We can’t change what we don’t acknowledge, so these behavior patterns (or curses) continue to play themselves out in the lives of those who don’t confront them and decide to stop them. But we CAN change what we DO acknowledge, particularly when we invite the Lord to release His power into an area we want to change.

But what you're asking about is something different. Marrying cousins isn't a sin biblically. The laws in place against marrying close relatives such as siblings are there to protect children from experiencing the fallout of recessive genes being expressed; however, the Journal of Genetic Counseling recently released a report that the risk of serious genetic disorders among children of first cousins is much smaller than originally thought (http://depts.washington.edu/mednews/vol6/no15/cousins.html).

Since there is talk in your family of cousins marrying several generations ago, and non-family genes were subsequently introduced through marriage to non-cousins which would strengthen the genetic mixture, I would think that while there is a chance that the autism in your family is connected to the cousin marriage, there's probably more of a chance that it isn't. More to the point, I don't think this is a generational curse since the marrying cousins didn't break any of God's laws.

I am so sorry that you are having to deal with autism. That is a difficult burden to bear. Please don't carry an unnecessary burden of thinking you are dealing with the consequences of someone else's sin, when you're probably not.

I hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

Posted 2003

“Why is the Appendix to the Book of Daniel Omitted from Most Bible Versions?”

One of my Sunday School classmates mentioned that his Bible had an appendix to Daniel, which included three additional chapters (13 to 15). Do you know the reason why these are excluded from most Bible versions?

The Hebrew and Aramaic texts of Daniel have been very well preserved. The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament written in the third century B.C., includes these other chapters but they are not in the Hebrew or Aramaic texts: the Prayer of Azariah, Song of the Three Young Men, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon. These books were never accepted as inspired by the Jews and were never in their Old Testament. As well, the Dead Sea Scrolls do not contain these chapters. These were probably later additions which probably came from Egypt.

Pat Zukeran

Probe Ministries

“Who Was Lillith?”

I hope you can give me direction on the issue of Lillith from a biblical perspective. A female student brought up this question: Who was Lillith? I was ashamed that I could not tell her my position on the issue because, quite frankly, I didn’t know who Lillith was. I am a married Christian man so I may not be as tuned in to what our youth are concerned with as I

once was. At 34 years, I don't feel quite ancient either. I don't want to turn an unsaved girl loose on a quest for knowledge on a decidedly pagan subject. Any help you can offer would be appreciated. BTW, our pastor simply told her she had been reading too much feminist propaganda, an answer that left her with doubts about him. Thanks for your help.

Well, it's easy not to know who Lillith was because she's not in the Bible. There is a "Lillith myth" which is no more than a story about Adam's first wife. Here's a link that will give you a full story:

http://www.webcom.com/~gnosis/lillith.html

The pastor's dismissive comment about reading too much feminist propaganda may have been easy for him, but certainly wasn't going to help HER any! Feminists have, indeed, adopted Lillith as a symbol of their philosophy, and when you read the stories you'll see why, but that doesn't tell a young unbelieving girl the truth: that Lillith belongs in the same category as Venus, Medusa and Aphrodite—make-believe for grownups!

Hope this helps. . .

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“Why Is God So Consumed with Blood?”

Why is it that God seems to be so consumed with blood? It seems that from the beginning of scripture to the New Covenant under Christ’s blood, that God was consumed with blood.

Thanks for your letter. You are certainly correct to notice the profound importance of blood in the Bible. The author of Hebrews wrote, “And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission” [of sins] (Hebrews 9:22). And Paul reminds us that Jesus made propitiation by His blood (Rom. 3:25) and that believers are justified (i.e. declared righteous) on the basis of the shed blood of Christ (Rom. 5:8-10). And elsewhere Paul tells us that Jesus reconciled the world to God, “having made peace through the blood of His cross” (Col. 1:20).

Because of the importance of this issue, and its prominence throughout the Bible, I would recommend reading the following article from bible.org. It’s called, “The Preciousness of Blood” (Leviticus 17) and you can find it at http://www.bible.org/page.asp?page_id=278.

The Lord bless you,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

“Why Were Things Like Polygamy OK in the Old Testament But Not Now?”

What about the issues in the Old Testament with families like masters sleeping with their servants and men having many wives or even the issue of “inter-family” relationships and the like? Was it a population issue? When did the law change? Why was it okay then and not now?

Great question! The problem is, the Bible rarely makes commentary on historical events. If it did, we would see notations like “[and this was not only sinful but STUPID because God’s plan for marriage is one man, one woman for life, and bad things happen when we disobey His commandment].”

The fact that sinful, unwise behaviors are recorded (without commentary) in the Bible doesn’t mean it was OK any more than newspapers reporting on crime means they condone it. They’re both just telling you what happened.

Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“Why Did God Reject Cain’s Offering?”

I was reading to my grandchild about Cain and Abel. The book we read said Cain was jealous of Abel because God rejected the sacrifice Cain made and accepted Abel’s. She asked me why, can you tell me?

The difference in the sacrifices was really about the difference in their hearts. If you read the actual story in Genesis 4, you will read that Abel, who was a rancher, made his offering of the first of his flock and of the “fat portions” of his flock. In other words, he gave God the first and the best of what he had. Cain, a farmer, only gave God “some” of his crops. He was greedy and self-centered and apparently wanted to keep the best for himself. God rejected Cain’s sacrifice because Cain rejected God’s right to his heart.

Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“What is the Value of the Old Testament for New Testament Christians?”

What exactly is the significance of the Old Testament for us Christians (other than to point towards Jesus Christ)? How does the Old Covenant apply to someone under the New Covenant

(if at all) in daily life?

Thank you for writing Probe Ministries. You ask some very good questions!

As to your first question, “What exactly is the significance of the Old Testament for us Christians,” I would probably want to say the following. First, the OT teaches us a number of crucial doctrines which are essential for Christianity. These include creation (Gen. 1-2), the fall of man (Gen. 3), the promise of a Deliverer (Gen. 3:15, etc.), the holiness of God (Leviticus), the need for a substitutionary blood sacrifice (Leviticus), the essential requirement of faith in God and His promises (Gen. 15:6), and God’s discipline of His wayward people (seen throughout the OT). We also learn a great deal about God’s interactions with people in the past (see 1 Cor. 10:6 in context), as well as His plans for the future. The wisdom literature and poetry (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon) are, for the most part, timeless. They include wise advice on getting along successfully in the world, in relating to both God and our fellow man, as well as offering us examples of how to approach God in prayer and worship. Of course, as you said, its primary importance is to point us to Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah and Savior of the world. Finally, it’s interesting to note that in passages like 2 Tim. 3:14-17 and 2 Peter 1:20-21, the “Scripture” which is in view is primarily the OT. This is so because the NT was still in the process of being written. And it wouldn’t exist in its present form (i.e., 27 books bound together and recognized by the church as authoritative in matters of faith and practice) for a few centuries.

In your second question you ask, “How does the Old Covenant apply to someone under the New Covenant (if at all) in daily life?” First, let me point out that there are many moral commandments which are the same under both covenants. In fact, nine of the Ten Commandments are repeated and enjoined upon believers in the NT (all but the Sabbath day observance).

Thus, there is clearly some continuity between the two covenants. However, there are also some important differences. For example, the dietary laws set forth in passages such as Leviticus 11:1-47 and Deuteronomy 14:1-21 were temporary laws given by God only to Israel. These laws are not applicable to Christians today under the terms of the New Covenant. This is not only made clear in Peter's vision, recorded in Acts 10:9-16, but it is stated explicitly by Christ Himself in Mark 7:14-23. Notice in particular what Jesus says in vv. 18-19. In part, this text reads, "Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him; because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?" Then notice the parenthetical statement which concludes this verse: "Thus He declared all foods clean." In other words, the dietary restrictions given by God to Israel have been nullified. Christians today are not bound by such laws. Today, the Old Covenant under which Israel operated is obsolete (Hebrews 8:13). Thus, while some of the moral commandments of the Old Covenant are reiterated for us in the New Covenant, strictly speaking, I do not believe that Christians are obligated to any of the duties or requirements of the Old Covenant. After all, the Old Covenant has been done away with by God Himself. Thus, any obligations that apply to us are repeated for us under the terms of the New Covenant. The New Covenant not only tells us how to live pleasing to God, etc., it also provides the means (through the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit) to live consistently with it (as we walk in faith relying on the power of God's Spirit).

In the New Testament, the book of Hebrews has a great deal to say about this New Covenant. In an article on "Covenant," Trent Butler describes some of the special features of the New Covenant as related in the book of Hebrews:

> "The emphasis is on Jesus, the perfect High Priest, providing a new, better, superior covenant (Heb. 7:22; 8:6). Jesus represented the fulfillment of Jeremiah's new covenant

> promise (Heb. 8:8, 10; 10:16). Jesus was the perfect covenant Mediator (Heb. 9:15), providing an eternal inheritance in a way the old covenant could not (compare 12:24). Jesus' death on the cross satisfied the requirement that all covenants be established by blood (Heb. 9:18, 20) just as was the first covenant (Ex. 24:8). Christ's blood established an everlasting covenant (Heb. 13:20)." (*Holman Bible Dictionary,* gen. ed. Trent C. Butler [Tennessee: Holman Bible Publishers, 1991], 312)

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

"Which Version of the Bible is Most Accurate?"

Do you know which version of the Bible is most accurate? The main ones I'm considering for thorough Bible study are the King James Version, New International Version, and the New American Standard Version. Are the NIV and NASB inferior to the KJV? Also, what study bible do you feel is most helpful? Life Application, Scofield, Ryrie?

I would never recommend the KJV for Bible study because language has changed so much since 1611, and better manuscripts are now available as the basis for translation than what they used for the KJV. (I suggest you read our article on the King James debate.)

The NIV is a dynamic translation, where the translators sought to communicate the general idea and thoughts behind the

original languages, rather than an actual word-for-word translation, which can tend to be more wooden. I no longer use the NIV exclusively (although I did for 20 years) because I am frustrated by the fact that they translate the word "flesh" as "sin nature," which leads to a misunderstanding of the Christian life, I believe. I have joined the ranks of a growing number who have returned to the NASB for serious Bible study. However, I am very much enjoying the NET Bible (New English Translation), which can be downloaded for free (www.netbible.org) although the beta version is now out in print. Each page has more translator notes and study notes than actual text, which gives the reader a VERY full understanding of what's going on in the original languages. I am using the NET Bible to augment my NASB reading; it's like listening to color commentary during a sports telecast.

In terms of the study Bibles, that is really a personal preference issue depending on one's theology. The Life Application, Scofield and Ryrie Bibles are dispensational, and the Reformation Study Bible is reform in its theology. The Student Bible is especially good, as is Kay Arthur's Inductive Study Bible. All the study Bibles you mentioned are good and have their fans. The best way to judge, I think, is to compare the notes on the same passage between the various versions.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

"Seven Spirits of Revelation?"

I recently encountered a group that believes the seven spirits of Revelation are seven aspects of the Holy Spirit … and the

Trinity is actually a "nine-ity" (for lack of a better word). I obviously do NOT believe this hogwash, but I was wondering if this belief has ever been promulgated in history. I personally believe it's a new heresy, but I wanted to check.

The interpretation of the "seven Spirits" in the book of Revelation as a reference to the Holy Spirit is actually not new. A number of interpreters throughout church history have adopted this position as their preferred view. However, it is by no means the ONLY view that has been advanced throughout church history.

John refers to the "seven Spirits" in Revelation 1:4; 3:1; 4:5 and 5:6. William Barclay points out that the Jews "talked of the seven angels of the presence," citing 1 Enoch 90:21. Of course John does refer to seven angels of the seven churches (1:20). What he means by "angels" is not entirely clear. He could be referring to the pastors of the churches, or he might be referring to guardian angels of the churches. Thus, some commentators believe the reference to the "seven Spirits" is a reference to seven holy angels before the throne of God.

Barclay mentions that another "explanation connects the idea of the seven Spirits with the fact of the seven churches." Since seven is often used as a number of completion, or perfection, in the Bible (and in the book of Revelation in particular) it is thought that the "seven" churches are representative of all churches, each of which has a share in God's Holy Spirit in order to carry out its ministry to the world.

A third view ties the reference to the "seven Spirits" to Isaiah 11:2. The Greek translation of this verse in the Septuagint reads: "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and piety; by this spirit He shall be filled with the fear of God." In this view, the "seven Spirits" of Revelation refer to this sevenfold ministry

of the Holy Spirit, particularly evidenced in the life of Jesus, the Messiah.

Which of these views is correct? I honestly don't know. Maybe the correct view is none of the above! It's important to point out, however, that those who see the "seven Spirits" as a reference to the Holy Spirit would not typically endorse any but a Trinitarian view of God. Barclay cites Beatus as having said, "The Spirit is one in name but sevenfold in virtues."

Thus, while I personally do not know what John intends by his reference to the "seven Spirits", those who interpret this as referring to the Holy Spirit are usually not heretics. They could be, of course; but one need not reach that conclusion from this particular interpretation. It is actually an old and well-accepted view.

Hope this helps. God bless you!

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

"Is There a Distinction Between the Law of Moses and the 10 Commandments?"

Is there a distinction between the Law of Moses and the 10 commandments? Does the Law of Moses include the 10 commandments in verses like Acts 13:39, Rom. 3:28 and Gal. 2:16? Does the book of the law contain the entire law found in the first five books of the bible including the 10 commandments? Which verses in the bible can I use to explain

that the entire Law of Moses includes the 10 commandments? There are some cultists out there who teach that there is a distinction between the law and the 10 commandments so that they can use the 10 commandments as a means of justification using verses like Matt. 19:17, 1 Cor. 7:19, 1 John 2:3-4, 1 John 5:2-3, Rev. 12:17, Rev. 14:12. They claim that the law was done away with (sacrifices and such) but insist that the 10 commandments are a binding means of justification. It sounds to me like a vain attempt to support a "works based" FALSE gospel!

The Law of Moses includes the Ten Commandments. All the laws of Moses are contained in Exodus through Deuteronomy and include over 600 laws. Of course, sometimes the first five books of the Bible are also referred to as the Law (e.g. Matt. 5:17).

Yes; the Law of Moses includes the 10 commandments in verses like Acts 13:39,Rom. 3:28 and Gal. 2:16.

> *Which verses in the bible can I use to explain that the entire Law of Moses includes the 10 commandments?*

Matthew 5:17-48 is quite clear about the Law (v. 17) including the ten commandments (vv. 21 and 27 – compare with Exodus 20:13, 14). Romans 13:8-10 also make this clear.

The cults which try to make a distinction between the Law of Moses and the ten commandments are in error. The entire Old Covenant (including the ten commandments) has been done away and replaced with the New Covenant (see Hebrews 8:7-13; etc.). Verses like Galatians 2:16 make quite clear that we are not justified by any works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, it is important to realize that nine of the ten commandments (all but Sabbath keeping) are repeated in the New Testament. These commandments are not a means of justifying us before God. However, they do give us God's principles regarding how those who HAVE BEEN JUSTIFIED through

faith in Christ ought to live their lives. Good works are the proper fruit of justification. We are not justified by our works, but justification should produce good works. We are saved by God’s grace through faith in Christ (Eph. 2:8-9). But we are created in Christ Jesus for good works (Eph. 2:10).

The Lord bless you,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries