“How Do We Know God’s Will About Infertility?”

I have a few questions. First, does God cause everything to happen or does He just allow most things to happen? I know that He can make good results out of things that seem bad to us, but did He make the thing happen because it was what was best for us, or did it just happen as a result of free/human will? I know that God certainly CAN make things happen, but I just wonder how often He does. It seems that we thank God for the good things that happen in our life. And we should! But is it then right to “blame” Him for the bad in our life? Or maybe not so much blame, but just thank Him for the bad too because we know it’s ultimately for the best? Or maybe we shouldn’t thank Him or blame Him for every little thing, because maybe some things just happen. But typing that out – it just doesn’t sound right.

Many things make me wonder this, but on a personal level, it’s in regards to my and my husband’s infertility. Did God cause this to happen because we must learn something from it, or did it just happen because we live in a fallen world where things like disease, infertility, and bad things as a result of sin and our free will are just going to happen?

Also, in regards to our infertility problem, how do we know what God’s will is for us? We have been trying for 2 years now. We’ve had advanced and expensive treatments that have failed. Sometimes people tell us to “just trust God.” But what do they mean, that we should stop pursuing treatments and just let it happen naturally? I mean, we have medical diagnosis that need treating… one would do the same for a cold, or flu, or cancer right? They would seek help. I feel the same way about infertility. Do you have an opinion on that? Now, maybe by saying “Just trust God,” they mean not to worry so much. And that I can understand. I know that God has a plan and that

it will be perfect for us. So I do need to not worry so much. It's just a very emotional issue!

But as far as knowing God's will…. I mean, I just wish I knew if His will for us was to never be parents, or to adopt, or to keep trying for a biological child. We pray for guidance, but it's hard to tell if we're "hearing" God or just doing what we want to do. If I ask God to "speak" to me, will He always? How will I know it is God rather than just myself telling myself, "it's a sign?" Does that makes sense?

Oh, and I don't know what your thoughts are on fertility treatments. We have done in vitro fertilization but we do not believe in destroying any embryos. We also only put in as many as we'd be willing to carry and froze the rest to use in another cycle. We would never do selective reduction or kill an embryo. So I hope if you have time to reply, that you don't automatically say that we should stop fertility treatments because they are immoral… unless you think they are for another reason that I have not mentioned and that you might enlighten me with.

Thanks for your trust in us to help you think through these important issues.

> *I have a few questions. First, does God cause everything to happen or does He just allow most things to happen?*

Ultimately, I think it's really a matter of semantics because of the biblical teaching that God is sovereign. Bottom line is, nothing happens to us without His permission, so whether He proactively caused it to happen or He allowed it to happen, it still has His fingerprints all over it and He has a purpose in it before it ever reaches us to begin with.

> *I know that He can make good results out of things that seem bad to us, but did He make the thing happen because it was what was best for us, or did it just happen as a result of*

> *free/human will? I know that God certainly CAN make things happen, but I just wonder how often He does.*

"Just happening" sounds a lot like "accident" or "coincidence." And in a universe where God is sovereign, there are no accidents. Nothing "just happens" apart from His permission. God is big enough to use both things He directly sends to us, as well as indirectly such as through people's choices, to accomplish His purposes. The "how often" part is a shrouded mystery that He doesn't let us in on. There's no way to know that, only to speculate.

> *It seems that we thank God for the good things that happen in our life. And we should! But is it then right to "blame" Him for the bad in our life? Or maybe not so much blame, but just thank Him for the bad too because we know it's ultimately for the best? Or maybe we shouldn't thank Him or blame Him for every little thing, because maybe some things just happen. But typing that out – it just doesn't sound right.*

Absolutely! And that's why God calls us to always give thanks for everything (Eph. 3:20). From our very limited perspective, we don't always know the difference between the good things that happen in our lives, and the bad things. The biggest example of that is the horror and pain the disciples experienced when Jesus died, which devastated them because they thought it was a bad thing, but it was the very best thing that ever happened-until right around the corner, an even better "best thing" happened, when Jesus was raised from the dead. When we give thanks for what feels like a bad thing, we are relinquishing it into God's hand and affirming our trust in His goodness and His sovereignty. (By the way, this is one of the major lessons God has taught in my Christian walk. I invite you to read my story, which I call "How to Handle the Things You Hate But Can't Change" here: www.probe.org/how-to-handle-the-things-you-hate-but-cant-chang

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> *Many things make me wonder this, but on a personal level, it's in regards to my and my husband's infertility. Did God cause this to happen because we must learn something from it, or did it just happen because we live in a fallen world where things like disease, infertility, and bad things as a result of sin and our free will are just going to happen?*

Unfortunately, God often doesn't let us know the "why" of our trials. But when you consider that He calls us to honor him in the midst of our suffering (1 Peter 2), then the reason behind them doesn't matter as much as our response to them.

> *Also, in regards to our infertility problem, how do we know what God's will is for us? We have been trying for 2 years now. We've had advanced and expensive treatments that have failed. Sometimes people tell us to "just trust God." But what do they mean, that we should stop pursuing treatments and just let it happen naturally? I mean, we have medical diagnosis that need treating… one would do the same for a cold, or flu, or cancer right? They would seek help. I feel the same way about infertility. Do you have an opinion on that? Now, maybe by saying "Just trust God," they mean not to worry so much. And that I can understand. I know that God has a plan and that it will be perfect for us. So I do need to not worry so much. It's just a very emotional issue!*

Yes, I think that God's command to Adam and Eve to exercise dominion over the earth was the overarching principle that resulted in modern science. So, if there's something that can correct infertility, it makes sense to do what we can (and what we can afford, while still remaining good stewards of the money God has put in our hands). Of course this is an emotional issue for you. . . it's much more than just a command to "be fruitful and multiply," it's also the desire of your heart which God put there as an element of your

femininity and your husband's masculinity!

> *But as far as knowing God's will…. I mean, I just wish I knew if His will for us was to never be parents, or to adopt, or to keep trying for a biological child. We pray for guidance, but it's hard to tell if we're "hearing" God or just doing what we want to do. If I ask God to "speak" to me, will He always? How will I know it is God rather than just myself telling myself, "it's a sign?" Does that makes sense?*

Boy, it's hard when we're trying to discern God's leading, isn't it?

Here's one way to look at it: God will not open a door that violates His will for you. Which is how fertility clinics can put all the right chemicals in a Petri dish, add eggs and sperm. . . . and the stuff just sits there and no baby is made. Only God can create life. (And yes, we can theoretically force a clone, but we can't control whether or not a healthy baby makes it to full-term delivery.) Which is why you have to go with the biblical principles, which are to be fruitful and multiply. If you try in vitro and God doesn't bless it, He is speaking His will to you. You can try to adopt and if God doesn't allow an adoption to go through, He is speaking His will to you.

I think the best route is to commit your desire for children to the Lord, ask Him to guide you, and then move forward, trusting Him to take care of the details. If you have submitted yourselves to the Lord about this issue, then you can rest in Him and in His love for you that He will be faithful to lead you. (My guess is, that describes how you've been living already. . .??)

I do think that often, God leads us through His peace (consider Col. 3:15, "Let the peace of Christ rule [act as umpire] in your heart. . .") or the lack of it. I often counsel people, "Go to where the peace is." After praying much

about it, you probably don't have any peace about the idea of never being parents, for example, which would constitute direction to continue to seek His ways of getting His children into your family, whether by adoption or biology.

> *Oh, and I don't know what your thoughts are on fertility treatments. We have done in vitro fertilization but we do not believe in destroying any embryos. We also only put in as many as we'd be willing to carry and froze the rest to use in another cycle. We would never do selective reduction or kill an embryo. So I hope if you have time to reply, that you don't automatically say that we should stop fertility treatments because they are immoral… unless you think they are for another reason that I have not mentioned and that you might enlighten me with.*

Nope, we don't think they're immoral; we think that using the criteria you specified, that is the God-honoring and life-honoring way to do it.

I hope this helps. I don't have a crystal ball to tell you what you should do, but I CAN encourage you to daily give thanks for your fertility problems, give thanks for your desire for a baby, give thanks that God is in control, give thanks for His faithfulness in guiding you in the process, and give thanks by faith for the baby He has for you, however He chooses to do it.

(And by the way, we experienced secondary infertility after our first baby died, so I have prayed these prayers myself. We have two sons.)

Blessings to you!

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

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“When Is It Wrong to Have Lust For Your Spouse?”

I read this in your article about God’s plan for sex in marriage and I need some clarification.

Here’s their list of what God prohibits in His Word:
Fornication (immoral sex, which is any sex outside of marriage)
Adultery
Homosexuality
Impurity
Orgies
Prostitution
Lustful passions
Sodomy
Bestiality
Incest
Obscenity and coarse jokes

Can you please give a more specific definition of impurity, and lustful passions? What is the difference between being attracted to your spouse, and lusting after your spouse? When does it become evil? I am really concerned about this because I don’t know if the passion my husband has for me is too much, to the point of being evil lust…

Within marriage, there isn’t a problem with lust toward our spouses, since lust is a strong desire for something God hasn’t given us, and He HAS given us our spouse! In fact, I heard Linda Dillow (co-author of *Intimate Issues*) once suggest to wives that we pray for a “holy lust” for our husbands, which is a way of praying for greater sexual desire (a win-win for everybody).

Impurity is having thoughts and engaging in actions that are directed toward the wrong person (i.e., someone other than one's spouse), such as thinking about being sexual with another person, or dressing in a way to be alluring to anyone other than one's husband.

The passion your husband has for you is God-designed and God-given. Men are visual creatures, and when you combine that with the testosterone that God created to flow through his body, it means he has a strong desire for sex—WITH YOU. When he directs that desire toward you and you alone, this is the safety net that marriage provides. God means for our sexuality to flow within the banks of marriage alone, and not overflow those banks into other relationships or a habit of physical masturbation (a temptation for men and a growing number of women) or emotional fantasy (a temptation for mainly women).

Speaking as one woman to another, we will probably never understand how strong a man's sex drive is, or the power of his attraction for us and our bodies, but that's the way God designed it, so you don't need to worry about it being lustful in a sinful way. Being desired is one of the great joys of life (think about the opposite: not being wanted!!), and may I suggest that you enjoy it as the gift that God intends for it to be.

I hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“Am I Committing Adultery?”

I got married right out of high school (34 years ago), and my husband committed adultery and divorced me a year later. Neither of us were Christians. I married someone else four years later, and two years into our marriage, my husband and I became Christians.

Is it considered “committing adultery” if:

–My previous husband had committed adultery while we were married?
–We weren’t Christians when we did all this?

Are we STILL committing adultery by remaining married?? A few years ago, we wanted to join a church, and they said we couldn’t because I had been married before. And they said we needed to seperate because God did not recognize our marriage and we are still committing adultery by staying married. We have been happily married for 26 years now, with two wonderful children. What should we do??????

Dear friend,

I’m sitting here shaking my head at the insensitivity, not to mention the biblical misunderstanding, of the church that gave you such lousy counsel. It sounds to me like that was God’s way of saying, “This is not the place for you, beloved!”

Bottom line: neither you nor your husband are committing adultery.

God specifically says in His word that when one person commits adultery, the other is free to remarry without committing adultery. Your first husband broke your marriage covenant, giving you freedom to marry your present husband to the glory of God. (And it would appear that God is glorifying Himself through your present marriage!)

In Matt 5:32 and 19:9, Jesus says that if someone divorces a spouse for any reason other than adultery, they commit adultery when they remarry. This is because the divorce is illegitimate, and the second marriage is bigamy since the first marriage is still in force regardless of what the civil authorities say. But if the other spouse has committed adultery, then that act has broken the sacred covenant, and it is not bigamous (and thus not adulterous) for the sinned-against spouse to remarry.

That church may have been standing on the second part of Matt. 5:32, which says “whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.” It’s important to understand the culture of that day. There was a popular movement in Jewish culture that said a man could divorce his wife for any reason at all, including burning the toast. (I am not kidding.) Such a wife, thus divorced, was single in the eyes of the culture, but still married in the eyes of God, so any man who married her committed adultery since she was still a married woman.

You did not fall in that category. When your first husband committed adultery, that dissolved the marriage in God’s eyes (in a manner of speaking), and you were free to remarry. I am so sorry that church refused to check into the circumstances of your divorce. If Jesus made an exception for adultery, and then Paul, writing with the very words God gave him, made an additional exception for abandonment by an unbelieving spouse (1 Cor. 7:15), then the church needs to follow ALL of scripture and not just one verse.

You did not commit adultery when you married your present husband, and you are not committing adultery by remaining married to him, and the Lord bless you for staying together for 26 years! Way to go!!! <smile>

I wish you were in Dallas. I’d invite you to our church where you would be honored and affirmed.

I hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

P.S. I do want to make a distinction here: adultery does not *mandate* divorce, but God does allow divorce as a consequence of adultery. It's even better for the unfaithful spouse to repent, for the violated spouse to forgive, and for them to forge a new, stronger relationship. This isn't always possible due to the hardness of some people's hearts, and God understands and allows for it.

"Can I Be Forgiven for My Abortion?"

What if someone really believes that they were saved at a young age (14). . .but is then faced with an unwanted pregnancy at age 15 . . .and she terminates the pregnancy even though she KNOWS in her heart that it was wrong – do you believe that she can be forgiven? God tells us that He will never put more on us than we can handle . . .so what if we make the WRONG choice . . .what if we take the easy way out??? Do you think he can forgive us for this? I mean . . .what about the sacredness of life . . .I mean a baby is the most innocent of His creation . . .I hope with all my heart that it can be forgiven. . .but I just don't see how!!! I interfered with His plan!!! Plus what about the scripture in Proverbs . . .about a man being tortured by the guilt of murder shall be a prisoner forever . . .let no one support him . . doesn't this mean that I'm supposed to be tormented by it FOREVER!!! and no one should help me????

Okay . . .Here's my story . . . [Story edited out]

Thanks so much for listening . . .this has been hidden for so long that it has been so difficult re-living it!!! Maybe it is my judgment to live with this internal struggle . . .maybe I'm not supposed to find peace . . .

What a mess I've made of my life!!!!!!!

Dear _____, precious child of God, beloved daughter of the King—

I am so very very VERY glad you wrote! I hurt with you. . . in fact, there are tears in my eyes as I write this to you—-my heart hurts for you and for the burden you have been carrying all these years.

Let's get to the bottom line first: In Jesus' name, YOU HAVE ALREADY BEEN FORGIVEN!!! Because you have trusted Christ, the first time you confessed your sin of abortion and asked for God's forgiveness, He gave it to you. In fact, He POURED His forgiveness out on you like an anointing of oil. Listen to 1 John 1:9:

> If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

You confessed your sin, and because He is faithful and He is just (meaning, Jesus already paid for your sin at the cross), God the Father not only forgave you of your sin, He cleansed you from the stain of your guilt. Your feelings of being unforgiven and dirty and shame-filled have been lying to you, because the truth is, you are forgiven and clean and accepted in the Beloved (Eph. 1:6 KJV)

I want to challenge you to do something that will help you really GET this truth. Three times a day (at least), say out loud, "Thank You, Lord for forgiving me because Jesus died for me. I receive Your forgiveness and I receive Your cleansing.

Thank You for making me clean and pure again." It really helps to say it out loud so that your spirit hears those words of truth come out of your mouth. This is the way of faith, the way we receive God's blessings by faith even before we feel them.

You have some work to do to get to the point where you can feel unashamed and pure again—but that's not a matter of EARNING those things, but of changing your thinking so that you can embrace the reality that is yours to live out. Is there an Abortion Restoration or Recovery ministry near you? Ask the Lord to show you if there is; I don't know of any network of programs to check with, but I can point you to an excellent workbook you can do on your own. This is the book that is used at our church for the Abortion Restoration class that healed, post-abortal women offer a couple of times a year.

Her Choice to Heal by Sydna Masse and Joan Phillips

Also, there are a couple of websites where you can do some reading that will be very encouraging to you as you work your way through the necessary grieving of the loss of your baby (who is in heaven, and you will see him or her again someday!), and the necessary forgiving of those involved: yourself, the boy who got you pregnant, your parents, the Planned Parenthood people, and anyone else who played a part in the trauma to your soul.

After Abortion
After Abortion Message Boards (Online Christian Support at the above site)

www.hopeafterabortion.com

I also suggest you listen to a lot of praise and worship music so that you focus on the Lord and let Him minister His love to you. As you do that, there's one prayer I would strongly suggest you pray, regularly: "Lord, show me how much You love

me.” He LOVES to answer that prayer!

You have not gone further than God’s grace can reach, and you have done nothing that He cannot turn into good, for His glory and for your benefit. God wants to soak His grace down into the very bottom of your soul. Jesus’ blood has covered and cleansed your sin, and you are clean and forgiven because He loves you so much He paid the ultimate price to prove it to you.

I’m glad you told me your story, because with every telling, you release more of the shame and the guilt, and you take another step toward healing. Who knows. . . some day you may find yourself telling your story to young girls BEFORE they make the same mistake you did, and you will watch God redeem your pain to change lives to His glory!

I SO hope this helps.

Warmly,

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

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Addendum: I received this note from someone who works in abortion recovery ministry:

Hi Sue,

I was just reading your response to the email question: Can I be forgiven for my abortion? My heart is heavy for her and I am lifting her up in prayer.

She might also locate a recovery support group in her immediate area by doing a zip code search at www.optionline.org.

About the same time, I received this wonderful letter from the

original writer:

Dear Sue,

I did find a place that ministers to women like me. . . and I am planning to participate in the "Forgiven and Set Free" Bible study. I've been through the study guide 3 times and I can't even tell you how much it helped me!! I know that I am not alone and I will continue to work on my healing…

I wanted to share a poem that I wrote with you—it comes from my heart. . .

A Baby's Perspective. . .

I can hear her talking with someone ~ I know it is all about me . . .
She says she's just not "ready" and the TRUTH she cannot see . . .
The truth that You made me and meant for me to be with her . . .
That You would never put more on her than she is able to endure.

For You created my inmost being & placed me in her womb. . .
But she does not realize this and will make a choice real soon.
Please be with her and help her to make the choice that is right . . .
And to know that NOTHING can be hidden from Your sight!

For I am a precious baby and deserve the right to live. . .
If she could only know ~ I've got lots of love to give!
They have NO RIGHT to decide to remove me from this place. . .
But I know that real soon I will be looking upon Your face.

For You are already aware of the choice she will make. . .
Oh God ~ she just doesn't realize all that is at stake!
For as hard as she tries ~ she will be UNABLE TO FORGET. . .

I just pray someday she will feel the NEED to REPENT!

And when that time comes ~ help her to cope with what she's done. . .
And to find strength, love and compassion in the arms of Your Son!
For the blood of Jesus can purify her from all of her sin. . .
No matter how SEVERE & HORRIBLE it might have been!

I know she feels scared inside as I can hear her every cry. . .
She even prays and wishes that You would let HER die.
She is being faced with a TREMENDOUS internal struggle. . .
So many feelings and emotions she will try to juggle . . .

The biggest decision she's faced thus far has been 'what to wear'. . .
But now she feels as if she is living a TERRIBLE nightmare!
Please help her to realize the truth before it is too late . . .
That a baby is a precious gift and NEVER a mistake!

These people talking to her right now don't even have a clue!
They are telling her what they believe she really needs to do.
They tell her she would be better off without me in her life. . .
Even though he says he loves her -she's too young to be his wife!

They tell her: "You must make a choice and do it really fast . . .
Then you can get on with your life and put this in the past. . .
Just go and take care of this 'problem' and never think of it again"
Oh – God – Don't they even realize the SEVERITY of this sin-!?!??!

Why is this the ONLY advice that they have to give !!?!?!?

That it’s not in her best interest to even let me LIVE!?!?!
They tell her that she has so much to look forward to ~
And forgetting about this “situation” is all she needs to do!

How can they make this option sound so easy and so right??
Oh – please God ~ before it’s too late – help them to see the light!
Please forgive them – they do not know what they are saying!
When instead they should be on their knees and praying!

She is now talking to her mom about her big “mistake”
Surely my grandma will help her before it is too late!
But instead I hear my grandma say she doesn’t want me to be born. . .
She says that I will only bring the family a lot of shame & scorn.

God – please be with them as they face this tragic event. . .
And when it’s all over – please show them their NEED to REPENT!!
What are they thinking!?!? – THIS SHOULD NOT EVEN BE AN OPTION!!!
I never once heard anyone mention the possibility of adoption!

Why do they continue to talk as if I’m not “real”. . .
That I’m just a “blob of tissue” and really “no big deal”
They do not know that You made me and have a Plan for me. . .
If only we could open their eyes so that THIS they would see!

Sooner or later she will be faced with the reality of her action. . .
And grief, despair, guilt & shame will be part of her reaction.
When this time comes – God please help her to know that it is true . . .
That there is NOTHING in this world that You cannot do!

And when my mommy is forced to deal with this someday . . .
Please let her know when she seeks You ~ everything will be

okay!
That Your amazing Grace and abounding love will see her through . . .
That all she needs to do is to place all of her trust in You!

When she puts her faith in Jesus and what He did on HER behalf. . .
Then surely You will save her from all of Your wrath!
For You sent Jesus into the world to save us from EVERY sin. . .
From even the most horrendous ones that are hard to comprehend!

Please help her to realize that in Your Word she needs to trust. . .
That if she confesses this sin to You, You will be faithful & JUST. . .
You will forgive her and make her "pure" again. . .
And You will no longer remember this terrible sin!

So please let my mommy confess & feel Your presence in her heart. . .
So that she will realize that she can have a brand new start!
Please protect her from all the people who will be quick to condemn. . .
For You said let him throw the first stone who is completely without sin!

For ALL sin separates us from You and no one is "good" enough. . .
For being "perfect" and always doing "right" is just way too tough!
For we have a "sinful nature" – the bible says it through & through. . .
But if we believe & trust in Jesus we can be made completely "new"!

For You can turn ANY situation into GOOD for Your glory. . .

She may even help others someday by telling her story!
For Your love is GREATER than we can ever comprehend. . .
And Your Grace covers even the very worst of sin!

Even though I wish we would never have to be apart. . .
Please let her know I still love her with all of my heart!
Tell her I forgive her and forgive herself she must . . .
For I am in heaven with You and in that she can trust.

I pray that someday she will come to You with this big "mess". . .
And I know that You will help her in her time of great distress. . .
When she finally finds you -in Your loving arms she will stay. . .
And I will be so very happy that I will see her in heaven one day!

"Teen Rebellion is Just Individuality"

I read your article on teen rebellion When Your Teen Rejects Your Values. What you call "rebellion" is actually called individuality, not wishing to conform to society's opinions. Don't get me wrong, some people just like to go with the flow, nothing wrong with that. It's just that I don't think parents should inadvertently squish their son/daughter's individuality by believing that there is something wrong with them and therefore punishing them for simply being who thay want to be and believing what they want to believe. My name is _____ and I'm a High School Student.

Dear _____,

You're right that some parents define any individuality as rebellion, and that is incredibly sad. The teenage years are a time for you to find out who you are and who you want to be, and it requires people to pull away from their parents in order to do that healthily.

However, the point of our article isn't to have parents squash individuality, but to deal with truly harmful rebellion. Taking drugs is something more than simply finding out who one is. It causes harm to body, mind and soul. If a girl whose parents have taught her to respect her body and wait for marriage sleeps around with boys, or even "services" them with oral sex in junior high (something which has become an epidemic), that's not expressing her individuality, that's being rebellious. (However, it may also be an expression of her need for her daddy's affection and approval that she didn't get when she was younger.) And if a teen raised in a Christian home declares herself a Wiccan, that's way more than individuality, that is rebellion.

Expressing individuality is saying "I want to wear my hair long and green," which is something our son did when he was in high school. It may be uncomfortable for parents, but there's no harmful after-effects. Rebellion can be (and usually is) harmful, either to body or soul or both. Rebellion also tends to be disrespectful toward parents and other authority figures, and that is very painful and destructive to the relationship(s).

I just want you to know I DO hear your request that parents honor their teens' desire to be different from them, but please don't dismiss the heartbreak of true rebellion as something innocent and necessary for emotional growth.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“Should a Woman Work or Stay Home with Children?”

Dear Sue,

I was wondering if you could help me to understand more about your studies from the Bible on the lies of the church. From my understanding from Titus women are called to be at home and bring up the children. Of course some single mothers have to work. But, when the husband is the bread winner, the women is called to bring up the children, and maintain the home. Of, course our society tells us for a women to be productive she must work to be fullfilled. Can you explain a little bit more about what the implications are from the Bible. Thank you. Because I don’t know what to think? My mother has taught me to work, and the church teaches to stay home.

I’m so glad you wrote me!! I can understand why you might be confused since there are MAJORLY conflicting views on the role of women in our society and even in many churches.

You’re right, Titus does instruct women with children to be industrious and to take care of our children. It’s important for women to keep our “Focus on the Family,” so to speak, because God has ordained for the family to be the place where children are loved and taught and raised to become the people He intends for them to be. I think that whenever possible, in whatever way possible, mothers should be the caretakers of their children because no one can do as good a job as a parent.

But feminism has changed the view of the wife and mother. That worldview says that the only work that matters is work for which you get paid money. It says that the only way to be

fulfilled is to produce something that has economic value, either products or services. That's because the feminist viewpoint values material things above people. And the feminist viewpoint really disrespects children and the women who care for their own children. For a philosophy that is supposed to empower women, it's actually very disrespectful toward women unless they agree with feminism's very narrow perspective on what is acceptable.

A big reason for that is that feminism is, at its heart, humanistic. That means that they value mankind as the highest thing there is. No room for the God of the Bible or for God's values and commandments, nor for His heart toward women and the family. So feminism doesn't care that God longs for children to feel safe and loved and cared for, and the best place for that to happen is with a mom who's intensely THERE, with and for her children, instead of a daycare center. Feminism also doesn't understand that a Christian woman who invests her time and energies and gifts into her family will receive eternal rewards. The only thing that matters to a feminist mindset is money and the approval of the world.

Should a woman work? I don't know any who don't. Some get paid for their labor in dollars, and others get paid in other ways. Like the joy of creating a well-run, balanced home for a family that's not stressed out all the time because there's never enough time to get everything done.

In Proverbs 31, the "excellent wife" has several home-based businesses. She keeps a well-run home, is a great wife and mother, and she works at a business. The biblical pattern is that godly women are industrious workers (as opposed to busybodies who gossip and chatter all day). There are business women mentioned in the New Testament whom Paul praises as godly women. And then, young women are instructed to be homemakers, taking care of their children and homes. (There weren't many choices for employment for women in that culture.) There is no one-size-fits-all pattern for all women.

God’s plan is that we all work. It’s a sin to be a lazy do-nothing. The question isn’t about working or not working, it’s WHERE you work and how you get paid. The other question is, will your children suffer because you work? Or does the fact that you work mean your children will have food to eat and clothes to wear? It’s not a cut-and-dried answer. What you need to do is what God leads YOU to do after praying and seeking His face.

I heard a pastor say on the radio recently that a young mother came to him and said, “I would love to stay home and care for my toddler, but I have to work. We don’t have enough money for me to stay home.” He had occasion to visit her and was stunned; they lived in a large, new home, with two late-model luxury vehicles in the driveway. Their problem wasn’t that they didn’t have enough money for her to be her child’s caretaker; their problem was that they had chosen a standard of living that put things above people. If they moved to a smaller house and older, less expensive cars, they could have done it.

But then, there are people who literally cannot make it on the husband’s salary because it really isn’t enough. God understands that, too. And in that case, a wife’s outside job is His gift and His provision for a family. That’s why it’s not a cut-and-dried issue.

If you have children, you might ask why working outside the home is so important. Because you can? Because you’re smart? Because you’re trained? Because Mom thinks you should? It’s pretty cool when gifted, smart, capable women pour all those strengths into their children instead of the workplace. The whole family benefits. Especially in the long run. Because, now that my children are young adults, I see the benefits of pouring myself into them, and I am so very glad I did.

I hope this helps. Feel free to write back if I didn’t really answer your specific needs or questions.

Sue

“Is It a Good Idea to Marry Someone I’m Not Attracted To?”

I’ve been dating a long time friend of mine for three years, and the subject of marriage came up. She is my best friend and we are both saved. Both of us have never married and are 45 years old. We enjoy each other’s company, and go to church together. But sometimes I don’t think she is pretty. I find myself looking at other girls at times. Would this be hindrance to marriage? I realize that beauty and brawn change over time. But I can’t date her forever and don’t want to lose her friendship. Do you have any advice?

It sure sounds like the Lord has blessed you with a wonderful friend. It’s quite possible you would be better off friends than spouses. If you don’t think she’s pretty, does that mean you’re not really attracted to her? If you’re not attracted to her after three years of dating, it’s probably not going to happen. And marriage to someone who only makes a good friend can range from empty and colorless to downright miserable when your heart longs for passion.

The fact that you find yourself looking at other girls is not a problem. It would be a problem if you LUST after other girls. And it would be a problem if your girlfriend catches you looking at other girls in her presence because I assure you, women’s egos are really just as fragile as men’s.

Read the Song of Solomon. Do you experience that kind of

intense love and longing for your girlfriend? That's God's intention for marriage. If what you have is nothing more than a comfortable friendship that has been a convenient base for dating, and if it hasn't developed into real romance after three years, then do yourself and your girlfriend a favor and find someone that you CAN feel that kind of passion for. I'll tell you a secret about women: we long to be wanted. We long to be thought of as beautiful. We long to be lusted after with a holy lust. If you can't give that to your girlfriend, you are cheating both yourself and her. And that's no way to treat a friend.

Hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

"What Does the Bible Say about Interracial Marriages?"

What does the Bible say about interracial marriages, and what are your thoughts on this subject?

The Bible does not prohibit interracial marriages, but that has not stopped people in the past from trying to "make" the Bible teach that it is wrong.

Here are some biblical principles that apply to race and interracial marriage:

1. We are one in Christ Jesus. The Bible teaches that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek. Galatians 3:28 – "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in

Christ Jesus."

2. We are one in creation. Acts 17:26 – "He made from one, every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times, and the boundaries of their habitation."

We know that racial differences amount to very small changes in skin color (amount of melanin in skin), eye shape, hair color and texture. The differences that exist are often created by those with prejudices against particular groups of people.

The Bible does teach that Christians are not to be unequally yoked (2 Cor. 6:14). But that applies to the spiritual condition of your intended marriage partner.

Mixed marriages (due to cultural or social differences) may face problems. So it would be wise to seek premarital counseling to consider how these differences might affect your communication in marriage and other important issues.

I hope that answers your question.

Kerby Anderson

Probe Ministries

See Also *Probe Answers Our Email*:
"My Racist Parents Disapprove of My Boyfriend"

“What Do You Think About Surrogate Mothering?”

My wife is considering acting as a surrogate mother for a friend who is having difficult with in vitro fertilization. Her embryos won’t implant. Both of us couples are Christians. My wife and I have 3 kids and although she doesn’t want another child for us she is willing to carry one for her friend. What are your thoughts about entering into this relationship?

First, I consider surrogate parenting a very risky venture. Just because your wife is able to intellectually say she will give up the baby to your friends when the time comes, does not mean she will be able to do so emotionally. Carrying a baby for nine months creates a powerful bond that is not easily broken. This is easily seen in teenage mothers who often change their minds about giving their baby up for adoption after birth. The surrogate mom can rationally say and believe “this baby is not mine,” but her emotions find it difficult to believe this after carrying the child for nine months.

Since there is also a relationship among friends here the risk is even greater, because even just a hint of wavering as the time of birth approaches could be interpreted as betrayal. The mother acting as the surrogate would also be faced with seeing this child regularly and having the pain of separation renewed frequently.

Second, there is the sacrifice of the family of the surrogate mother. Her husband and children will need to endure the difficulties of a pregnant mom and wife for a child that is not theirs. How is this explained to her children particularly? Pregnancy always involves risk and this is asking a lot of the family. All parties would need to seek God’s peace before proceeding. If anyone is hesitant, I would

not proceed.

Third, I am troubled by the implications of surrogacy to the concept of a couple becoming one flesh through marriage and child-bearing. I would want to be sure of the Lord's leading in this regard because I just have a suspicion that surrogacy may violate this principle by having someone outside the marriage carry a baby from another union.

While I do not see a clear and unambiguous reason to say no, that is my advice due to the number of potential problems and pitfalls. We sometimes have to face difficult decisions with couples dealing with infertility because we seem to say we are unsympathetic to their dilemma. But we must also be realistic to realize that God does not promise that all potential solutions to all our problems are Biblical. Having a child of our own is not promised or demanded. Often a family's unwillingness to adopt is not just rooted in the natural desire to have children but in a selfishness that only wants "our" child.

If it were me, I would not do it.

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin
Probe Ministries

"Aren't You Embarrassed That the Most Important Part of

Your Life is Your Domestication?”

Sue–

Does it not bother you that your various and vast achievements in both the academic and spiritual realms are completely overshadowed by your domestication and motherhood?

Your website reports:

> ***“Sue Bohlin is an associate speaker with Probe Ministries. She attended the University of Illinois, and has been a Bible teacher and conference speaker for over 25 years. She serves as a Mentoring Mom for MOPS (Mothers of Pre-Schoolers), and on the board of Living Hope Ministries, a Christ-centered outreach to those wanting to leave homosexuality. She is also a professional calligrapher and the webservant for Probe Ministries; but most importantly, she is the wife of Dr. Ray Bohlin and the mother of their two grown sons.”***

Does it not hurt to define your life through your involvement with others? Does this proliferation of the values dictated by our patriarchal society not cause you distress?

Hi ____,

Wow, what great questions! I’m so glad you asked!

First of all, what does “domestication” mean? I’m thinking that to you, it may mean something negative and contemptuous. The root word comes from the Latin “domus,” home, which is exactly what is most important to me because home is about family (and not the structure in which we live). But it has taken on a negative connotation as if a woman’s true fulfillment is found outside the home, so anything that connects her to home and family is sadly restrictive. (Thank

you Betty Friedan *et al*.. . .)

I have been blessed to be able to live a rich and varied life, but all of my "achievements" pale markedly compared to the sweetness of my most important relationships with my husband and sons. For example, my work as a speaker and writer and webservant for Probe Ministries, as wonderful as that is, can't begin to hold a candle to the joy of loving and influencing the men God has given me to love and influence. I believe that God means for women to be most deeply fulfilled by our relationships, because He made us so relational. My "mark" on the world, I assure you, is far greater in my various relationships compared to the lectures I've given or the website I built. You might not ever be able to see the difference I make as Ray's wife or Curt and Kevin's mom, but believe me, as they all make their marks on the world, I can see it.

Doesn't it hurt, you ask, to define my life through my involvement with others? In other words, to define my life through my relationships? I wish you could see the huge smile on my heart as I think about your question. . . because ultimately, I think we were created to define our lives exactly that way. What makes my life worth living is my strong and healthy relationship first of all with my Creator, from whom I find out what I was made for, what I was made to do, and thus find my fulfillment in walking out the sense of "I was made for this!!" My "achievements in the academic and spiritual realms" are only a small part of what God made me for, as His beloved daughter and friend. Since that is how I define myself—as a cherished child of God—then no matter what happens in any other dimension of my life, I do not fear being rocked by the loss of what defines me. Should I lose my family, God forbid, that will not change my identity. Should I lose my vision or my voice or my mobility or my mind, that will not change my identity, since my identity and my definition is not found in those things.

You also ask, “Does this proliferation of the values dictated by our patriarchal society not cause you distress?” Not at all, because I don’t see patriarchy as evil; I see it as a God-ordained chain of authority. Of course, it is complicated by the fact that every single human being on the planet is broken and sinful and infected by a rebellious spirit, but that doesn’t make patriarchy inherently wrong. I’m smiling again because I know that patriarchy is another one of those contempt-filled words in the academy (especially at the University of Texas! How many women’s studies profs have you studied under?). Yet from my understanding of scripture and of feminism, an authority structure that points to God as loving Father makes me feel secure, not subjugated, and beloved, not bitter.

I’m also aware that I may well come off to you as naïve and uneducated in The Ways Of The World, needing to be shown how truly sad and imprisoned by my misbeliefs I am. But that’s one of the joys of being over 50 and seeing how incredibly loving and kind and generous God has been to me, personally, in 30+ years of walking with Him and deriving my identity and direction from Him: I know too much about how good life is lived according to His values to be bothered by what feminist thought thinks of my life.

Here’s the thing, _____: when I am an old woman, at the end of my life, it really won’t matter what I have accomplished in the world’s eyes. What will matter is how much I loved and was loved, how much and how deeply I influenced and impacted people’s lives. That’s ultimately about relationships. My sister is a hospice nurse and she sees people dying every day. They never want to be surrounded by their diplomas or their trophies or their certificates of achievements, but by their family and friends. I think that says something profound about what ultimately matters.

Thank you so much for asking so I could share my heart with you.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

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