

“What Does the Bible Say about Marrying Cousins?”

What does the Bible say about marrying cousins? Can first cousins marry? I am also interested in the relationship of third or fourth cousins. If two children of first cousins marry, is this relationship considered third or fourth cousins?

The Bible does not forbid marriage between cousins. However, marriage between first cousins is [illegal in about half the states](#) in the U.S.; the Biblical principle here is that God has instituted the government’s authority, so there may be a legal issue depending on where you live. But it’s not a sin biblically.

The children of one’s first cousin are actually “first cousins, once removed.” The children of first cousins are second cousins to each other. Here’s a helpful page to keep all that straight, an essay and chart called “What Is a First Cousin, Twice Removed?”: <https://wehavekids.com/family-relationships/What-Is-a-Second-Cousin-Twice-Removed-Chart-Explains-All>

Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“What Does It Mean for a Wife

to Submit?"

Do you have information on what it means for a woman to submit—is obedience in some sense a part of it? When might she come out from under his “lead”?

I’m doing a bible study and the issue came up last week. In my home I basically submit to my wife because her judgement has been proven to be better in most things and I have a very flexible temperament. Am I a wimp??? Sometimes I wonder if we are doing it right.

Dear _____,

Biblical submission is a military term meaning “to arrange oneself under,” the way a soldier places himself under the authority and leadership of his commander. God’s plan is for male leadership and authority in the marriage relationship, the home and the church. . . and for men to lead, it’s important for women to follow them. It does NOT mean being a doormat or denying one’s gifts, talents and passions; it means using those very things to help her husband be the best he can be and to help their family and home be and run most effectively.

Submission does involve obedience, as we all obey God, the governmental authorities and the elders in our churches as we submit to them; however, the submission of a wife to her husband has a different flavor because of our one-flesh intimacy. Obedience is a function of a power differential, seen best in the parent-child and government-citizen relationships. If the husband-wife relationship is characterized by the husband giving commands and the wife obeying, that kind of power inequity will destroy intimacy. Nonetheless, wifely submission does involve cooperating with and deferring to her husband.

The only time a woman should come out from under her husband’s

leadership is when that would mean sinning. For instance, I know of husbands who wanted their wives to have abortions, to dance at a strip club to make money, to engage in pornography, and other immoral, unacceptable behaviors. In those cases, to submit to their husbands would have meant taking a stand against God and His standards of right and wrong, so it is wrong to submit in those admittedly (but unfortunately real) extreme situations.

I'm glad to hear you're studying the Bible to see what God says about His intent for the marriage relationship. He has ordained that husbands be what some have called "servant leaders," serving their wives by leading them as men under submission to Christ, and He has ordained that women should serve our husbands by submitting to them as we submit to Christ. This is not an effect of the Fall, because as you read Genesis 2 you can see that Adam had authority over Eve when he named her, and Eve was created for Adam to be his helper and meet his needs. (The reason we rebel against this arrangement is our own self-centeredness, exacerbated by the effect of feminism's objection to the idea of women being submissive to their husbands.)

It's wonderful that your wife has good judgment, and I humbly suggest that you see this as an asset to your marriage. But having good judgment and being right don't have anything to do with who submits to who. If you have been gifted with a wise wife, then it is your responsibility to seek out her input and perspective before making a decision of what to do. There is a big difference between listening to your wife and saying, "That sounds really good. Let's do that," and saying "Yes dear, whatever you say dear, you just tell me what to do and I'll do it."

Are you a wimp? I don't know and sure wouldn't want to call you any names! <smile> Are you passively allowing your wife to dictate how things should be done in your home, instead of discussing things as equal partners? May I strongly suggest

you read Stu Weber's extraordinary book *Tender Warrior*, which Ray and I believe is the best book out there for men. In fact, the cover of the book is appropriately intriguing: "every man's purpose, every woman's dream, every child's hope."

I hope this helps, and I send this along with a prayer that you and your wife will find joy in God's intention for husband and wife roles and functions.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

"How Did the Bible Get Divided into Chapters and Verses?"

How Did the Bible Get Divided into Chapters and Verses?

I'm glad you asked! Many people don't realize that the original biblical documents were written without these artificial divisions, which turn out to be unfortunate in some places, with context apparently ignored. For example, the creation account of Genesis 1 ends with verse 31: "God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day." The chapter division ends before the end of the story of Creation Week; it would certainly make more sense to put 2:1-3 with the rest of Genesis 1:

2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts.

2:2 By the seventh day God completed His work which He had

done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.

2:3 Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.



You may be surprised to learn that the Bible was not divided this way until the Middle Ages. However, if you've ever seen a medieval illuminated manuscript (with the colorful and gilded artwork), you'll note there are no verse numbers on these magnificent pieces of art.

The Hebrew Old Testament was divided into verses by Rabbi Nathan in 1448.[{1}](#) Stephen Langton (c 1150-1228), an Archbishop of Canterbury, is believed to be the first person to divide the Bible into defined chapters.[{2}](#)

Robert Estienne (1503-1559), also known as Robert Stephens or Stephanus, was a 16th century printer in Paris. He divided the New Testament into verses, and was the first to print the Bible divided into standard numbered verses in 1555.[{3}](#) In 1560, the Geneva Bible, an English translation of the Bible made by the English exiles in Geneva, first divided the entire Bible into the verses that we still use today.[{4}](#)

Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

Notes

1.

www.worldinvisible.com/library/kenyon/storyofbible/2ck05.htm

2. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stephen_Langton

3. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Estienne

4. www.learnthebible.org/Divisions%20of%20the%20Bible.htm

© 2005 Probe Ministries

“Is It Spiritually Safe to Watch TV Shows Like Star Trek?”

I read your article on space aliens ([UFOs and Alien Beings](#)) and thought it was interesting. I have a question regarding watching TV shows such as the new Star Trek series. My husband is a big fan of it and a new Christian. I've expressed my opinion to him that I don't think there's life on other planets, and he feels there might be. Could this show be harmful by opening us up to a spiritual attack?

Thank you for your letter. I personally don't believe that there's anything wrong with watching the new Star Trek series. Further, I don't believe that simply watching this show poses any serious spiritual danger. Of course, with any movie or TV show, there's always the danger that the show will teach or promote ideas that are actually false. It's therefore important to think carefully and critically about the ideas being presented. But this isn't simply a danger arising from movies or television. We can also be exposed to false ideas through radio, books, magazines, the internet, and even friends and relatives.

Thus, I don't think there's anything wrong with watching this

TV series. But as the apostle Paul said to the Thessalonians, I think we need to “Test all things” and “hold fast what is good” (1 Thess. 5:19).

Hope this puts your mind at ease.

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

“You Have to Cut the Cord to Disconnect from Reiki Energy”

You can't disconnect from the [Reiki](#) energy unless you cut the cord linking you to the source of it.

Would you please elaborate on what you mean?

Sue Bohlin

Hi Sue, I would tell you my story but I know from experience that because of your faith you wouldn't believe in my words. I'll go as far to say is that I'm a Christian too and I became attuned to Reiki a decade ago and I never had peace with it and I prayed a lot to be released from it. I think that prayer can release someone from Reiki but if it doesn't please remember this to help someone disconnect from it, a person is corded to a spiritual being from the back of the neck at the base of the skull. You must either pray and ask this spirit being to release them or imagine yourself cutting the cord that runs out of that area and ask Jesus to seal it shut.

Thank you so much for elaborating! This is not the first time

I've heard this about the spiritual connection to demons from Reiki and other forms of accessing the energy of the spirit realm.

I would suggest that it doesn't do any good to ask a demon to release anyone; but in Jesus' name we can break the connection because His power is the strongest in the universe, and as believers we have the authority over the demonic realm (because He deputized us with His authority before leaving earth: Luke 9:1, 10:19).

Thank you so much for your insight! I am glad you walk in spiritual freedom today.

Sue

Hi Sue, I never said that Reiki was demonic; in fact I don't think they are demons, I think they are spirit beings from a different belief system, but I wouldn't go as far as to say they are demonic. The reason I wanted to be disconnected from the Reiki started because I could always feel the energy running through me and I didn't like it and I didn't want to be corded to a spirit being not of my faith.

I'm curious, _____ . . . Do you believe Jesus is the only way to God? Do you believe Christianity is true?

Hi Sue, yes I do believe that Jesus is Lord and he is my Saviour. As far as people who don't follow the Christian path and what happens to them when they die I'll leave the fate of the hundreds of thousands that died today and die daily all over this world in the hands of God for I believe He is pure love and if I didn't believe that I'd be an atheist. Take care.

Praise God! I am so glad to hear you have put your trust in the Lord Jesus! But if He said, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me," then His way is the only true and right way, and all other

“different belief systems,” as you put it, are wrong. (They might and do have nuggets of truth in them, but their basic core beliefs and values and teachings are wrong. They do not lead people to eternal life through Jesus Christ.)

I just wanted to respectfully set the record straight, sister _____, that there are no legitimate spirit beings from different belief systems which are legitimate alternatives to Christianity. The Christian worldview—seeing reality as God has revealed it through the Bible—is the only one that’s accurate. So that means that the spirit beings are either angels or demons (some of which [deceitfully present themselves as angels](#), by the way). According to the Bible, there are no other choices. Which is why, filtering Reiki and other experiences like that through the grid of scripture, we can (and should, I believe) call these spirit beings demons.

I know this is more than you bargained for when you wrote, but Probe Ministries is all about helping people think Biblically, and I wanted to offer this perspective in hopes that, as iron sharpens iron, I can help shape the way you think to help bring it into alignment with the Bible.

The Lord bless you and keep you today!

Sue

“Is Gwen Shamblin’s (Weigh Down Workshop) Remnant Fellowship a Cult?”

A young couple that I know have gotten involved in a “church”

called Remnant Fellowship that was founded by Gwen Shamblin. Could you tell me if this is a cult and give me more information about it?

I've just had a MOST enlightening trip through some internet web pages to help me answer your question. With some heartbreak I have to agree that Remnant Fellowship is, indeed, a cult. I am a former Weigh Down Workshop person, and it wasn't until after I stopped doing Weigh Down that I was able to figure out what bothered me about Gwen's teachings. Unorthodoxy—and a complete misunderstanding about the nature of God. Especially about the Lord Jesus!

A man who almost joined part of the Remnant Fellowship tells his story here:

<http://tinyurl.com/an37n>

I couldn't stop reading. Sadly, it was like watching a (theological) train wreck happen.

Another excellent article from former Remnant Fellowship members can be found here:

<http://www.spiritwatch.org/remnantwatch.htm>

A young lady who left the RF after experiencing its abuses has written her testimony here:

<http://www.hkpatterson.com/testimony.htm>

Christian Research Institute also has an article on Gwen, Weigh Down Workshop, and her theology: [Gwen Shamblin: Weighed and Found Wanting](#). Don & Joy Veinot, the authors of this article, have researched and written four other MCOI Journal articles on Gwen Shamblin at Midwest Christian Outreach. These articles are available on their website to be read online or printed off; the direct link to the most recent article written in 2008 is "The Pied Piper Is Shamblin" at www.midwestoutreach.org/Pdf%20Journals/2008/Spring_Summer_2008.pdf.

Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin

“You Got Christian Science Wrong”

I have read [your thoughts](#) about the religion Christian Science. Although you have researched the religion quite well it seems, to me, that your interpretation is wrong.

Christian Science is a religion based out of love for the lord God. Just like other Christian, Jewish, and Muslim religions.

What does the fine detail of those religions matter if they are based on the teachings of God. What does it matter how they choose to praise God and live the life they think they should. As long as it does not harm any person, and as I speak for my religion, Christian Science, it certainly does not.

I follow the teaching of Jesus Christ. I live my life for God each day. Who are you to judge the religion in which I choose to believe in? Jesus teaches us to follow the Lord and live our life in his Love. Christian Science has taught me to follow the Lord and live my life in his Love. Christian Science is about understanding that God has made you in his image and likeness (as it says in the bible).

I believe that everyone is entitled to an opinion, but I believe your writings to be criticizing the lives of others, in which only God can judge.

Our analysis of Christian Science isn't about criticizing the lives of others. It is about criticizing the LIES which are

manifested in this particular set of teachings. Christian Science is based on the non-biblical worldview of Gnosticism, not the teachings of God revealed in the Bible. Your experience with it may be different from what you read in our article, but we analyze the teachings of Mary Baker Eddy, not individuals' experiences.

The "fine detail" of different religions is what determines what is true and what is false. Our eternity depends on what we believe; if we put our trust in what is false, we will remain alienated from God forever. I respectfully suggest you listen closely to what is said at your church about sin and what to do with the sin problem that separates us from God. If what is taught differs from what God has clearly said in His word—that the only solution to sin is to trust in Jesus' death on the cross which paid for that sin—then it is not true and is giving people hope that is groundless. That is very dangerous.

Thank you for writing. I send this with a prayer that, because you truly seek to know God, He will show you what is true and what isn't. You say you follow the teaching of Jesus. But He didn't say to follow His teachings. He said to follow HIM. He said He was the way, the truth and the life, not the way-shower. The epistles explain that Jesus actually lives inside the Christ-follower who has put his trust in the crucified, risen Lord. Then Jesus Christ lives His life through us, the way light shines through a window. That is very different from any other religion—including Christian Science. I pray your eyes will be opened and you will see what's true. I am so glad you wrote.

Sue Bohlin

Posted 2008

“Do Our Pets Go to Heaven?”

I have a dog that I love very much. She is starting to get old and will only be with me a few more years. Can you tell me if our pets that we love and care about with all our hearts will be with us in heaven?

All we have to go on is what God has revealed to us in His word. According to what the Bible says, there is no indication that our pets will join us in heaven. (However, this does not rule out the possibility; it's just that the Bible is silent on this issue.) Animals are God's creation, but they are not made in His image as human beings are. Animals have bodies and we can say that some are [souls](#) (Gen. 1:21 and 24 use the word for “soul” [*nephesh*] to describe the land creatures), but soul in that context means “a breathing creature.” Because animals are not made in the image of God, they do not have a spirit where God indwells like humans do. (Neither do angels, by the way.) As far as I can tell from scripture, it is this God-imagining spirit-soul that lives forever.

Revelation 19 does include a vision of the Lord Jesus on a white horse, along with the armies of heaven on white horses, but at this point we can't know if the horses are symbolic or not. And that would be a very tenuous (and unsupportable) connection to conclude that pets go to heaven.

I should tell you that this is not a hill I'm willing to die on. If I'm wrong, that is perfectly okay with me. <smile> Perhaps there is a spiritual parallel to *The Velveteen Rabbit* where pets who are loved by people are made “real” in a forever sense. But if it turns out that pets will be in heaven after all, it will be by God's grace, because their presence can somehow add to God's glory and our worship. There is no

loss in heaven, so if they are not, then we will be so joy-soaked and absorbed in the presence of God that we won't notice or be troubled by their absence.

Sue Bohlin

“Was Man Created Twice, in Genesis 1 and Genesis 2?”

Why does it seem like man was created twice? Once in Genesis 1:27 and a second time in 2:7.

My own view is this. Genesis 1 is an overview of the entire creation event. Genesis 2 is a more detailed and specific description of God's creation of mankind. Thus, whereas Genesis 1 mentions the creation of man only briefly, Genesis 2 goes into significantly more detail. The two accounts are not contradictory, but complementary. Genesis 2 simply elaborates on the creation of man in particular.

An excellent website that deals with all sorts of biblical and theological issues is The Biblical Studies Foundation at www.netbible.com/index.htm. I use this site quite often and regularly recommend it to others as well.

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

“Was Isaiah Written by Two Authors?”

I was told in an Old Testament class that Isaiah was written by two authors. Is this true and if it is does that change the validity of the prophecies in the book?

Also, I have always believed that the gospels were found in different places but were in harmony. Is this true or what were the origins of the gospels?

I am a Christian but have been beating myself up trying to find answers to all of these questions I have.

Thanks for writing Probe Ministries. It is a very common view among moderate to liberal biblical scholars that Isaiah had two authors. Indeed, some even believe that there were three (or more) authors of this book. A disbelief in the validity of predictive prophecy may well be one of the reasons for adopting this view. However, I personally am persuaded that this view is incorrect. One conservative scholar makes the following points:

1. There is predictive prophecy in Isaiah 1-39 (often attributed to the “first” Isaiah who lived prior to the Babylonian Captivity). Thus, one does not escape predictive prophecy simply by asserting that chapters 40-66 were written later in history by another author. For instance, Isaiah 7:16, 8:4 and others are prophecies which were fulfilled shortly after they were given, whereas 9:1-2 is a prophecy about the coming of Messiah (fulfilled hundreds of years after it was given). Such examples could be multiplied.

2. Although there are some differences in the literary style

of chapters 1-39 and 40-66, this does not at all mean that the entire book could not have been written by one person. After all, if such standards were applied to the works of Shakespeare or Milton, we would have to deny that they wrote much of what is attributed to them. Clearly, the same author can make use of diverse literary forms.

3. There are also similarities between both sections of Isaiah. For instance, compare 11:6-9 (allegedly by first Isaiah) with 65:25 (allegedly by second Isaiah). Other passages could be mentioned. Such passages argue as persuasively for a single author as any differences might argue for two authors.

4. Most importantly (in my view) is the New Testament use of Isaiah. First, quotations from chapters 40-66 (allegedly from "second" Isaiah) are simply attributed to Isaiah (see Matthew 3:3 and Acts 8:28-33 for just two examples). Second, in John 12:37-41, there are quotations from Isaiah 53:1 and 6:10, and both are attributed to the same Isaiah who saw the glory of the Lord (John 12:41).

Thus, I think there are good reasons for believing that there was only one author of the book of Isaiah.

Concerning the Gospels, I will certainly admit that there are some difficulties in harmonizing them on all points. However, I do think it's possible to harmonize them in large part. Also, it's important to remember that sometimes problems are resolved with the discovery of new data from archaeology, history and the like. This has happened many times in the past and will likely happen more in the future.

I take the traditional view on the origins of the Gospels. Namely, that Matthew and John were written by the apostles of those names, that Mark was written with eyewitness testimony supplied by the Apostle Peter, and that Luke was written by the physician, who thoroughly researched the subject before

writing (see Luke 1:1-4). All of the Gospels were written in the first century, probably between the dates of the mid-50's to early 60's for Mark and the 90's for John.

Hope this information helps put your mind at ease a bit.

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries