

“How Can I Share the Gospel with Jehovah’s Witnesses?”

How can I deal most effectively with Jehovah Witnesses? I specifically want insights on how to really reach the hearts of these dear people. I am not interested in just winning an argument, but would like to present the Gospel in a way that will make an impact.

I commend you for seeking to reach those lost in the JW organization. Yes indeed, our goal is not to win an argument but to win them to Christ.

The best thing we can do is study the scriptures diligently and ask them questions regarding the nature of Christ and the integrity of the organization. The key is to get them to start asking questions and start seeking the answers. When JW’s run into a Christian who knows his/her Bible, they often seek answers from the elders. When the elders cannot answer, they often try to find the answers on their own, reading the Bible for the first time without the Watchtower magazines. As they seek and look for answers, many come to find that the JW Jesus is not the God of the Bible. This takes a while but with patience and perseverance, it will one day bear fruit. So the key is to get them to start asking questions about the Bible and their organization. Keep on witnessing, brother. We’ll be praying for you here at Probe.

Patrick Zukeran
Probe Ministries

“What is the Biblical Perspective on Childlessness?”

What is the Biblical Perspective on Childlessness?

I would suggest that God’s design and intention for most married couples is the blessing of children. So first, it starts with the foundational premise that children are a blessing from God.

The Old Testament and New Testament both indicate that there was shame connected to not being able to bear children. This is not necessarily God-given shame, but the natural outflow of knowing that usually, children are produced at some point(s) in a marriage. Shame is about sensing something is wrong about ourselves. But now that we know more about conception, we can know that sometimes things just don’t go right for a variety of reasons on a purely biological level, such as a wife whose body is allergic to her husband’s sperm, or hormone levels not conducive to maintaining a pregnancy. In that case, it’s helpful to recall the biblical concepts of:

- Stewardship of the earth, which leads to medical science. There are procedures and medications that may assist in reproduction.
- The sovereignty of God. No one can conceive unless He calls that child into being.
- Trust in the goodness of God.

With the proliferation of sexually transmitted diseases that result in the infertility of one or both partners, the consequences of premarital or extramarital sexual sin may include childlessness. In this case, a biblical perspective sadly includes the principle of sowing and reaping, where infertility is the result of sinful choice.

When couples try to have children and cannot, then the biblical call to trust God means following His leading. It may mean pursuing medical treatment. Or building your family through adoption. Or choosing to live without children to free up energies for Kingdom work. (I am thinking of several couples I know who now recognize that their childlessness was the doorway to great spiritual fruitfulness of a different kind.)

A childless couple may not experience shame over their childlessness, but it would be important to give voice (and tears) to the grief, disappointment and deep sense of loss over it. David wrote in Psalm 51, "I know that You desire truth in my inmost parts," and we know that mental and spiritual health means being honest about what's going on in our hearts.

It is my privilege to share with you the deep wisdom of my friend [Dr. Sandra Glahn](#), author of *When Empty Arms Become a Heavy Burden* and *The Infertility Companion*:

What the Bible says directly about infertility:

If you read the Bible cover-to-cover, you will find lots of stories about infertile couples from Abraham and Sarah to Samson's parents to Hannah and Elkanah in the Old Testament and Elisabeth and Zechariah in the New. In each of these stories the couple goes on to conceive. That's because the Bible is not a textbook on infertility. The stories are select histories included as part of a bigger story, the story of God's redemption of humankind. And infertility is often the way God uses to demonstrate His ability to do the impossible.

In the Old Testament we also find promises that God will curse his people with infertility if, as a nation, they do not obey him. A problem arises when we read these sections and wrongly conclude that infertility is a curse from God.

The curses God outlined involved entire populations, including humans and livestock all infertile at once. He was not talking about individual infertility. Michal, David's wife who laughed at him for dancing before the Lord, is said to have never had children, but that does not necessarily mean she was "struck" with infertility. It may be that David just never "summoned" her again.

In one other instance in the Law we see that an adulterous woman was cursed with infertility. But overall, infertility is more an affliction of the righteous than the unrighteous. And the infertility as a curse is at a national not a personal level. In the New Testament when Elisabeth conceives, she rejoices that God has removed her shame in the eyes of the people.

How to think biblically about infertility:

Reproducing. The first commands given to humans were to be fruitful and multiply and to have dominion over the plant and animal kingdoms and the earth itself. The last command is to make disciples. So while reproducing physically is a wonderful part of being human, it is not the only way God has ordained and blessed for leaving a lasting legacy.

Longing. In Proverbs 30 we read that when we look around and observe the natural world as God made it, we see that it's normal for an infertile person to have deep, unfulfilled longing. Infertility can cause a lot of grief, and it is not "unspiritual" to feel a profound sense of loss.

Gifted living. The apostle Paul called celibacy a gift (1 Cor 7). And in one translation of the Psalms (NASB), children are called "a gift." (Though in the context, Psalm 127, the actual phrase is "sons are an inheritance/heritage"; at that time children were the means to economic success and many sons assured military protection). A wife is called a gift. So one way to think

biblically about infertility is to recognize that while the gift of children has been withheld, children are only one of many gifts through which God gives his blessing. If Aquilla and Priscilla ever had children, they are not mentioned.

Limits on dominion. If you read Genesis 1-2, you will notice that while God gave humans dominion, he put limits on what they were to manage/subdue. They were given stewardship of the earth and its animal and flying creatures. But notice that they were not given dominion over each other. Humans were made in the image of God, so all humanity, even at the one-cell stage, is precious to Him. One of the ways of thinking biblically about infertility is to recognize this and to tread carefully when considering advanced reproductive technologies (ARTs). There are ways to use ARTs that honor human life at the one-cell stage and there are ways that do not. We are also called to be good stewards of our bodies and our resources. That being said, infertility is only a symptom of a problem such as a malfunctioning thyroid or hormone imbalance. Many couples pursue treatment both to have a child and also to find out the source of what is wrong.

I hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

© 2006 Probe Ministries

“Is God Punishing Me Because

I Committed the Unforgiveable Sin?"

I enjoy your website a great deal, and have especially found comfort in the Probe Answer to E-mail ["I Fear I Have Committed the Unforgiveable Sin."](#)

I, much like person who wrote in, have been assailed by doubts and fears that I've blasphemed the Holy Spirit. I've read so many things indicating that I haven't, but I've had a hard time accepting them. I recall a specific time in my life that I (for no reason) wanted to push God's limit. Knowing there was a blasphemy against the Spirit, I tested and cursed (in my head) God. After a while of this (and I didn't want to do any of these things—they came out of nowhere—or just my sinful nature, perhaps), I started reading the scriptures dealing with this sin and wondering, "What if Satan's really behind Jesus and His miracles? What if Satan has fooled us all into believing in God, but it's all a joke?" Immediately after thinking these things, I just knew I had blasphemed the Spirit by calling God Satan.

While I'm also aware that other scriptures don't carry the disclaimer, "unless you commit the unpardonable sin," I fear that it still applies, since Jesus Himself made this sin the one exception. Just because it isn't always there in a disclaimer doesn't seem to make it null and void, in my opinion. In addition, I feel that my concern doesn't really prove my innocence. A lot of times, people say that the fact that I'm concerned means God is working with me, but could it be that God has left me, and my own conscience is torturing me? Or maybe it's Satan, telling me, "You can never be saved now! You're through!" Perhaps it IS God working with me, but He isn't offering forgiveness. Maybe, as part of my punishment, He's calling me—dangling that carrot of salvation out in front of me, while also saying, "You've gone too

far—you can't be saved!" Why is there no evidence that He did it with the Pharisees, if this is the case? Maybe He did! Or, given their personalities, maybe it would be worse punishment for them to build more and more power, just to see it crumble when they reach Hell. With my sensitive conscience, perhaps the greater punishment would be to torment me here AND in Hell.

Is there any way you might be able to clear this up for me? My girlfriend, who is a Christian, says there's no way God would send someone to Hell for having weird thoughts, and I desperately want to agree with her. But we all, as sinners, deserve Hell to begin with...so I'm very torn. Every time I feel safe from worry, I start over-analyzing and talking my way out of assurance...

"Everything can be forgiven, but you've rejected the last appeal.." vs. "Everything can be forgiven, but you've gone too far!!"

Dear _____,

Bless your heart. Satan really has been playing mind games with you, hasn't he? What a dirty rotten liar and skunk.

Please remember that God loves you, MUCH more than you have the capacity to receive or even imagine. Please remember that He understands just how fallen your intellect and your conscience is (as is the case for ALL of us). Please remember that He fully knows that we can only "see through a glass darkly" (1 Cor. 13:12 KJV) on this side of eternity. Therefore, He completely understands that we're going to jump to faulty conclusions because we have faulty thinking, and He has more grace to extend to you than you can possibly experience.

I think growing older will help you with this. Once you are married and you are a father, you will understand the heart of God toward you much more than you can now. You will know that

God passionately loves you and will do just about anything to help you know Him and understand Him and ENJOY Him. As a father, you won't want to play mind games with your children or dangle carrots in front of them—your love will blow those kinds of thoughts away.

Instead of trying to explain away all the mental gymnastics you've been going through to wrack yourself with doubt over the fear of committing the unforgiveable sin, I'm going to make a very serious suggestion: that you pray every day, for three months at least, "Lord, teach me that You love me." Look for the ways He will answer that prayer. (And He will!)

And then write me back and let's see where you are in your spiritual life.

I really mean this, _____.

Sue Bohlin

© 2006 Probe Ministries

“Should Women Be Pastors?”

Hi Sue,

I hope it is ok to email you and ask your opinion (biblical) of this whole issue with—

1. Should woman be pastors?
2. In a church is there any ministry a woman can lead, whilst men are in that group?
3. In 2 Tim the verse regarding women not to teach and have authority etc. I have come across an interpretation which says

that it is talking about wives, because the word translated women can either mean wife or woman... but the word translated man... is actually translated husband. Which should therefore give the whole sentence its context...(What is your opinion)?

4. The Bible shows that Deborah was a married woman who led the people of Israel and from the character portrayed, she seemed to be a woman of God as opposed to someone like Jezebel. Hence I would assume that she was submitted to her husband at home as the word of God says to all married woman, but her role as wife did not hinder her ministry as a leader over the country....So isn't it possible for a married woman to maintain her submissive role in the home, but does not necessarily need to be carried over into the church sphere ...Also, isn't submission when mentioned in the bible only mentioned in the context of marriage...and hence all women are not submitted to all men...so why is it that she cannot teach or lead men?

Thanks in advance,

A (hopefully) teachable young woman of God...who just wants to get a right understanding on this whole issue

I hope it is ok to email you and ask your opinion (biblical)

Sure!

1. Should woman be pastors?

I make a distinction between exercising the GIFT of pastor (shepherd) and holding the OFFICE of pastor. Many, many women are given the spiritual gift of being a pastor-teacher (Eph. 4:11), including me, and we are given the responsibility and privilege of being a shepherd to other women. The OFFICE of pastor, however, is biblically limited to men. 1 Tim. 2:12 makes that very clear.

2. In a church is there any ministry a woman can lead, whilst men are in that group?

That's the tough question. I think so, if it's a support ministry. For example, I think a woman can function very well as the director of children's ministries, where there are male Sunday School teachers who serve under her leadership—AS LONG AS she is under the leadership of the church pastor and elders and not in any position of final authority.

There is a book called *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* that is excellent, and one chapter gives some suggested guidelines to what women can do in the church without crossing the line. Christian bookstores can get it, and you can also check the website for Council of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: <http://cbmw.org>.

3. In 2 Tim the verse regarding women not to teach and have authority etc. I have come across an interpretation which says that it is talking about wives, because the word translated women can either mean wife or woman... but the word translated man... is actually translated husband. Which should therefore give the whole sentence its context... (What is your opinion)?

In the Greek, the word translated *man* means "male adult." It is not limited to "husband," and generally is not translated husband. So this translation you came across was done by someone with an agenda, seeking to read a loophole into this verse that's not there. Particularly when you read the REASON for limiting women to positions of authority over men, which comes immediately after that verse.

4. The Bible shows that Deborah was a married woman who led the people of Israel and from the character portrayed, she seemed to be a woman of God as opposed to someone like

Jezebel. Hence I would assume that she was submitted to her husband at home as the word of God says to all married woman, but her role as wife did not hinder her ministry as a leader over the country.

I think it's important to look beyond the FACT that Deborah was a leader at the values associated with Deborah being a leader:

1. Deborah considered the fact that she was Israel's leader (judge) as a shameful indictment of the men who refused to take leadership. In Judges 4:6, in her role as prophetess she gives Barak instruction from the Lord to take the responsibility of military leader to go and attack the wicked Sisera. The apparently wimpy Barak balks, telling her (vs. 8), "I'll only go if you go with me. If you aren't going, neither am I." Deborah responds with a reproach: "Well, okay, I'll go with you, but because of the way you are going about this, you lose the honor in this expedition. Yahweh is going to deliver Sisera into the hand of a woman." God was going to discipline Barak for his lack of leadership by giving the honor of killing Sisera to a woman. Yes, that says something positive about women's ability, but we shouldn't lose track of the fact that awarding the honor to a woman was a slap in the face to the man who was SUPPOSED to earn it.

2. Consider Deborah's and Barak's song in Judges 5, which starts out: "When the princes in Israel take the lead. . .praise the Lord!"(NIV) Something is wrong when men fail to take their God-given place of leadership.

3. I found this recently and it was a real eye-opener for me: In a passage where the context is the judgment of God's people, Isaiah 3:12 says, "Youths oppress my people, women rule over them." When women rule, it is in the context of judgment. Again, something is wrong.

So isn't it possible for a married woman to maintain her

submissive role in the home, but does not necessarily need to be carried over into the church sphere?

Two thoughts here:

1. We need to draw a distinction between women in church leadership, and women in leadership OUTSIDE the church. The Bible never forbids a woman to assume political or civic leadership. It is only church hierarchy that is addressed in the scriptures.

2. If a married woman is submissive to her husband in the home, how would she take off that submissive hat in the church and be the spiritual leader of her husband? A wife is NEVER to be the spiritual leader of her husband; it's the other way around. Ephesians 5:23 says that the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church. The wife's role is to lovingly, respectfully submit; the husband's role is to lovingly, sacrificially lead.

So does that mean an unmarried woman could be a spiritual leader in the church? No. 1 Tim 2:12 is a categorical statement against women exercising authority over men. Marital status doesn't matter.

Also isn't submission when mentioned in the Bible only mentioned in the context of marriage...and hence all women are not submitted to all men?

No, submission is a much bigger concept than merely wives toward husbands:

- *Luke 10:17 – Demons submitted to the 72 disciples in Jesus' name*
- *Rom. 13:1 – Everyone is to submit him/herself to the governing authorities*
- *1 Cor. 14:34, 1 Tim 2:11 – Women are to have an attitude of submission in church*

- *1 Cor. 16:16 – Paul exhorted the Corinthian believers to submit to a certain group of mature believers in the church*
- *Eph. 5:21 – Submit to one another [a general rule, but not always reciprocal: I mean, do you want parents submitting to their children, or employers (masters) submitting to their employees (slaves)?]*
- *Eph. 5:22 – Wives, submit to your husbands*
- *Eph. 5:24 – The church submits to Christ in everything*
- *Heb. 5:7 – The Lord Jesus submitted to the Father*
- *Heb. 12:9 – We are to submit to the Father*
- *Heb. 13:17 – The church is to submit to our church leaders*
- *1 Pet. 2:13 – Submit yourself to every authority instituted among men*
- *1 Pet. 2:18 – Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect*
- *1 Pet. 3:22 – Angels, authorities and powers (various kinds of angels, I believe) are in submission to Christ*
- *1 Pet. 5:5 – Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older.*

You're right, all women are not to submit to all men. As a woman, I am called to submit to my heavenly Father, to my Savior, to the Holy Spirit, to my husband, to church leaders, and to governing authorities. But not to my next-door neighbor, or my friend's husband, or *any* man just because he has a Y chromosome! <grin> On the other hand, we are all called to submit to each other (Eph. 5:21), meaning to serve and help each other in humility. This attitude of submission should carry over into all areas of life because it is the only attitude appropriate for a believer, who is to live his or her life in submission to God.

So why is it that she cannot teach or lead men?

It goes back to the creation order. In Genesis 2, when God created man and woman, he created man first as the initiator,

and created woman second to be his helpmate and to be the responder. Adam and Eve got into trouble in the Garden of Eden when Eve was deceived by the serpent, and talked Adam into disobeying God by eating the forbidden fruit. Adam knew Eve was being deceived; she didn't. He was with her when the serpent tempted her to distrust God's goodness and provision for them, and instead of speaking up to defend God's word to them and defend Eve against the deceptions of the enemy, he was silent and became her follower instead of her leader. This went against the created order. Men are to lead and women are to respond, generally speaking, although on an individual basis there are times for men to respond and women to lead (each other, and our families).

Paul explains this in further detail in his first letter to Timothy (2:11-14):

11 A woman should learn in quietness and full submission.

12 I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.

13 For Adam was formed first, then Eve.

14 And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.

Paul invokes the creation order (Adam was formed first, then Eve.) Then he reminds us that Eve was the one deceived, and became a sinner. The reason God doesn't want women in leadership over men isn't that we're second-class or less gifted than men; to the contrary, God says "woman is the glory of man" (1 Cor. 11:7)! What a great statement of the value of woman! It's because we do need the protection that God gives us through men, and we need to maintain the creation order. We can be deceived more readily than men, because of the way God was pleased to make us; more emotional, more relational, where men tend to be more analytical. That doesn't make one better than the other, and it doesn't mean that women are deceived all the time, but it does set the mold for the roles He wants us to take.

I do think it's interesting that God never forbids a man to LEARN FROM a woman; indeed, Apollos was disciplined by both Priscilla and Aquila, a married couple who were very instrumental in his spiritual growth and training. (See Acts 18.) I think the prohibition against women teaching men needs to be seen in the context of the Ephesian church to whom Paul was writing, where apparently women teachers were bringing in false doctrine from the pagan culture into the church.

But when a pastor who knows and respects a woman's knowledge and insight asks her to share it with a group of people under his care, I think a case can be made that that pastor is stewarding the gifts of the Body of Christ without handing over authority and leadership to a woman. It's not that a woman's teaching is inherently suspect (after all, a man and a woman can teach the exact same thing using the exact same words), but that leadership and authority in the church is designed by God to be held by men. (I know, this is very politically incorrect, but that's our position.)

Let me get personal with you here and share how God has opened doors for me as a woman gifted to teach. Probe Ministries has a 3-minute daily radio program that airs on about 400 stations. I am one of the writers and speakers for that program. Every time a man listens to our program when I'm on, he might learn something he never knew before or gain an insight he didn't have before. There's nothing wrong with men learning from a woman. There's nothing wrong with men reading books written by women.

As a teacher of women, I have the privilege of standing before groups of women to teach the Bible and other subjects from a Christian world view, both in our church and in other churches and conferences. I have full freedom to teach here.

Probe also holds conferences for young people and adults to help them learn to think biblically. I am often the only woman speaker at these conferences. But I am not speaking as a

church authority, only as a resource person.

I would not be comfortable filling the pulpit of a worship service as a preacher or teacher, although I am very comfortable in front of the church participating in a drama with a lesson in it that people, both men and women, can learn from. [Full disclosure since I originally wrote this article: a dear pastor friend asked me to give a short “Messages to Moms” on Mother’s Day. I directed my remarks to the women, inviting the men to listen, but my intended audience was women.] Again, there’s a difference between standing up as a teacher in authority over men, and being in a position where men can learn something without me being in a position of spiritual authority over them.

One final thought in this category. One day when I was praying about this issue, I asked the Lord to show me His heart about the whole subject of women teaching, and He led me to see that what He most cares about is that a woman gifted to speak and teach, cultivate an attitude of submission and humility.

A (hopefully) teachable young woman of God.. who just wants to get a right understanding on this whole issue

I am so delighted to hear you say you are teachable. I think maintaining a teachable attitude is so very vital to our spiritual growth and maturity, and it’s something I consciously seek in my life as well.

As a young woman, you have a challenge before you to think biblically on this issue of men and women in the church, because the world has squeezed many people in the church into ITS mold instead of people going to the scriptures for understanding that allows us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:1).

Please feel free to ask for clarification on anything I’ve said. Let me add one point. The American actor James Dean was

purported to have defended his bisexual preferences by saying, "I refuse to go through life with one arm tied behind my back." It was his way of saying he refused to be limited to only 50% of the population for his sexual expression.

I think God gives women teachers a broad range of ministry opportunities and ways to use our gifts with a full 50% (at least) of the church. Why isn't that enough (as it apparently wasn't for James Dean), when God knows better than we do? There are SO MANY women in the church who are desperate for godly, mature Christian women to teach them; why should some women resent the fact that men should teach men when there's this huge need that already exists?

Paul, when instructing Titus how to pastor his flock on Crete, told him to teach the older women so that THEY could mentor the younger women. Paul knew that the most effective way for young women to be taught many things was by older women, not by male pastors. It's God's plan, and it works, and there's always going to be more work to be done than there are people willing to do the work.

I think the place to put our energies is NOT in trying to force open doors for women to be pastors over entire churches, but to educate both men and women in the value and worth that God gives women so they don't see "women's ministry" as something lesser-than, something second-class—but as something exciting, vital, and important.

Most warmly in the Lord,

Sue Bohlin

© 2006 Probe Ministries

See Also Probe Answers Our E-Mail:

- [I Have Some Questions About Women in the Church](#)
- [So Are All Women Pastors Deceived and Going to Hell?](#)
- [Your Position Against Women Pastors Is Outdated](#)

“What Do You Think of ‘The Purpose Driven Life’ by Rick Warren?”

None of us here at Probe have any cautions or reservations about it.

Personally, I think it has become so popular because Rick Warren has taken “Basic Christian Living” principles and put them all in one place, in a highly accessible format. One of the best things about the book is its first sentence: “It’s not about you.” So his starting point is that the Christian life, the purpose-driven life, is about giving glory to God. It’s not about personal fulfillment or self-actualization—it’s all about God. That puts everything else into proper perspective.

The fact that this book appeals to both believers and unbelievers is exciting to me, because we are all hungry for truth and this book has it. It is steeped through and through with Scripture, and it’s well written.

Sue Bohlin

“Was John the Baptist Elijah?”

Was John the Baptist Elijah? John 1:21 and Matthew 11:14 appear to give different answers to this question.

To begin, the Lord had promised Israel that He would send them Elijah the prophet before “the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord” (Mal. 4:5). When the Jews saw John, and heard his preaching, they clearly wondered if he might be the promised figure of Elijah. But why?

First, as Edwin Blum points out in his commentary on John, “John had an Elijah-type ministry. He appeared on the scene suddenly and even dressed like Elijah. He sought to turn people back to God as Elijah did in his day” (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, eds. John Walvoord and Roy Zuck [Victor Books, 1983], 274). Thus, when the Jews saw someone who dressed like Elijah and had a similar ministry as Elijah’s, they rightly wondered whether he might in fact BE Elijah.

But John said he was not Elijah. And, as you pointed out, this seems odd because in Matt. 11:14 Jesus says of John, “And if you care to accept it, he himself is Elijah, who was to come.” So what’s going on here? Charles Ryrie comments on this verse, “Jesus is saying that if the Jews had received Him, they would also have understood that John fulfilled the O.T. prediction of the coming of Elijah before the day of the Lord” (*Ryrie Study Bible*, 1463). But of course the Jews did not receive Jesus at His first coming. Indeed, in the next chapter (Matt. 12) there is clear evidence of the rejection of Jesus by the Jewish religious establishment (vv. 22-45). Afterward, Jesus began to veil His message in parables (see Matt. 13:10-15). And later still, after the Transfiguration when the disciples

ask Jesus why the scribes say that Elijah must come first, Jesus responds by saying, "Elijah is coming and will restore all things; but I say to you, that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished." Then the text goes on to say, "Then the disciples understood that He had spoken to them about John the Baptist" (Matt. 17:10-13).

Here's what I think is going on. John the Baptist would have served as the fulfillment of God's promise to send Elijah before the day of the Lord (Mal. 4:5) IF the Jews had received Jesus as their Messiah. They did not, however, and so, as Jesus makes clear in Matt. 17:11, Elijah is still to come. Indeed, some commentators believe that one of the two witnesses mentioned in Rev. 11:3 may be "Elijah". Of course, as in the case of John the Baptist, this does not necessarily mean the literal, historical Elijah, but simply someone who comes in the spirit and power of Elijah and performs a similar ministry. At any rate, this is how I think we should understand the Baptist's response in John 1:21. He is led to deny that he is Elijah because God already knows that the Jews would reject His Son. Hence, as Jesus later affirms in Matt. 17:11, Elijah is still to come.

Hope this helps. God bless you!

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

"Do the Bible's Statements on

Head Coverings Apply Today?"

I would like to hear your explanation of 1 Cor. 11:2-16 where it talks about woman wearing a head covering and if this applies to us today. And why.

Thanks for your letter. You've asked a rather difficult question about an extremely controversial and emotionally-charged issue. For what it's worth, I will offer my opinion (we don't have an official Probe position on this issue). But I certainly don't think I have any special insight into this issue.

Commentators point out that Paul offers a number of reasons why women should wear head coverings in the church. First, it appropriately reflects the Divine order mentioned in vv. 3-6. Second, it is based on creation (vv. 7-9). Here Paul seems to allude to Genesis 2:18-24. Third, Paul mentions that the woman should wear a covering because of the angels. Apparently, angels observe church meetings and may be offended to witness the insubordination of wives to their husbands (in particular), or the rejection of the Divine order by women in general. Fourth, Paul offers an argument from nature (vv. 13-15). His point may be that just as a woman's long hair is her natural glory, and is given to her as a covering, so also it is her glory to wear a covering in the church as a symbol of subordination to her husband and/or to God. Finally, Paul seems to argue for women wearing head coverings on the basis of this being the universal practice of the church in the first century (v. 16).

Of course, this is not the universal practice of the church today. But should it be? Although I don't know for sure, I tend to think that the key issue in this passage (i.e. the timeless truth which applies to all believers at all times and in all places) concerns subordination or submission. In particular, the man must understand that Christ is his head.

Just as Christ willingly subordinated himself to the Father (Phil. 2:5-11, etc.), so also should man subordinate himself to Christ and follow his example. Similarly, a woman should be submissive to her husband (Eph. 5:22-33). It's important to understand that this does not imply inferiority. Just as Christ is not inferior to the Father, so also the wife is not inferior to her husband, nor is woman inherently inferior to man. However, there is a Divine order, also reflected in creation, and men and women have different roles and different responsibilities in that order.

Thus, I tend to think that the timeless truth of this passage is that both men and women need to recognize and accept their God-ordained position and purpose in both creation and the church. Just as it would be completely inappropriate for a man to refuse to subordinate himself to Christ, so also it is inappropriate for a wife to refuse to submit to her husband (or for a single woman to reject the Divine order, etc.). The head-covering was a visible symbol of such submission in the first century church. But I don't think that head-coverings are the real issue. The real issue is one of subordination to the will of God and an acceptance of the Divine order. In a sense, it's the distinction between the letter of the law—and its spirit.

At any rate, for what it's worth, that's my opinion.

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn

© 2006 Probe Ministries

See Also:

- ["What Do You Think About Headcoverings for Christian Women?"](#)
- [Sue Bohlin's Blog Post: "Why I'm the Lady in the Hat"](#)

“Apostle John: Senile Upon Writing Gospel?”

“Could John Have Been Senile When He Wrote His Gospel?”

- 1) Approximately how old would the Apostle John have been when he wrote his Gospel?**
- 2) I assume he would have been very old; would his age have affected the reliability of his Gospel and thus render it not very reliable, i.e by becoming senile because of old age [sic]?**
- 3) What exactly are the effects of being senile?**
- 4) Does everyone elderly become senile, or is it possible to be old and not senile?**
- 5) Approximately what age do people usually become senile?**

John was probably very young when Jesus called him to be His follower. If John was around 20 years old at the time of Jesus' death, and if Jesus died around 33 A.D., and if John wrote his Gospel around 90 A.D., then John would have been approximately 77 years old when he wrote his Gospel. This is a reasonable estimate.

There is no reason whatever to suppose that John was senile when he wrote his Gospel. The author of John's Gospel is clearly someone in full possession of his mental faculties. There is absolutely no indication that the author of this Gospel was senile. Please note: Deut. 34:7 says that even at age 120, Moses was still a vigorous man.

As for your questions about senility, I will leave you to explore that on your own. WebMD has a search engine which will allow you to research senility and old age. You can find it at: <http://www.webmd.com/>.

Hope this helps.

The Lord bless you,

Michael Gleghorn

Probe Ministries

“What Do You Think of The Message Bible?”

I've seen some articles online claiming that *The Message Bible* is not true to the original Greek and that it is secretly part of the New Age Movement. I enjoy reading it and I have not felt that it is heretical. Do you have a comment?

Thanks for your letter. I've also heard some rather negative things about *The Message Bible*. However, there is at least one Probe staff member who also enjoys reading *The Message* – so you're not alone there! I'm afraid that I personally don't know much about it. I really doubt that it is part of the New Age Movement or Neo-paganism. Probably *The Message* is intended to be something more like a paraphrase of the Bible (like *The Living Bible*), rather than a translation (like the NASB or [NET Bible](#)). This CAN (and usually DOES) result in much more interpretative freedom for the one doing the paraphrasing (in this case, Eugene Peterson). Thus, the choice of words *may not always accurately reflect the Hebrew and Greek texts*. It's important to bear this in mind. But this does NOT mean that

it's secretly purveying New Age philosophy.

I think that *The Message* could be a great resource for reading, but I don't think it would be best for studying the Bible. If your goal is devotional reading, it's probably great. If your goal is to get (as best you can) at the original meaning of the text, you're better off reading the NASB or NET Bible. Of course, it's best of all if you can read Hebrew and Greek! But not many people can. At any rate, there's certainly nothing wrong with reading *The Message*. And if you like reading it, more power to you!

Hope this helps a bit.

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

Probe Ministries

© 2006 Probe Ministries

“Will God Punish Me Forever for My Mistakes?”

I am so depressed right now because I feel all the mistakes in my past mistakes are so many that I won't have a good future.

I'm 29 years old and I had 2 abortions before I was 20. Two years ago I slept with my boyfriend even though I was already a Christian; we went our separate ways because of this. (He's also a Christian.) I have been single ever since and I have been told that I am being punished for all my sins. Does this mean because of what happened in my past I will never find peace, joy or fulfillment? Does this mean God will never

trust me with a relationship again? Will I have to pay for the rest of my life?

Will He refuse to forgive me since I made the mistakes when I was already a Christian? I have been so tormented by all this and I am in constant pain—my heart aches. I really don't know what to do, I have prayed and asked for forgiveness, don't know what else to do. All I feel is guilt, guilt, guilt.

Oh, you precious girl! I have such wonderful news for you!! Your flesh and Satan have been doing a number on you, pouring guilt and self-condemnation onto you all this time . . .when God has been standing there, extending grace and mercy and complete forgiveness to you, wanting you to receive it, but you haven't been able to see it.

How do I know this?

Because of "the Christian's bar of soap," 1 John 1:9—"If we confess our sins [and you have, over and over and over, right?], He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness." Note that God does two things when we confess: 1) He forgives us, which means He sends them away forever, and 2) He cleanses us of ALL unrighteousness, making our souls clean and pure as snow. What's missing for you is the decision to consciously RECEIVE His forgiveness and cleansing.

Are you being punished for your sins? Well, consider this: there is a difference between punishment, which includes wrath being poured out on us, and the consequences of our choices, which is loving discipline. Romans 8:1 says that there is NO condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because the Lord Jesus took all of the Father's condemnation on Himself on the cross. So God is not punishing you. Are you experiencing consequences for your sinful choices? Maybe in the beginning. But from what you describe to me, with peace, joy, and fulfillment eluding you, it sounds like you have your cup

upside down, which is preventing you from receiving any new blessings from God because of the mistaken belief that you are still under condemnation.

No, beloved sister, you will not have to pay for the rest of your life. What God wants is repentance, and you have already done that. Scripture says that godly sorrow leads to repentance (2 Cor. 7:10), but there is a worldly sorrow, fed by our own flesh or by demonic forces in temptation, that leads to death. And that's where you've been living, hasn't it? Camped out in a living death?

I would love to lead you in a prayer to receive God's forgiveness and cleansing. May I also suggest that you do something physical to make it more real: lift up your arms, palms up, like a small child ready to be picked up by her daddy: *Dear Father, I want to turn my cup right-side up and receive all the forgiveness and cleansing You have for me. I make a choice today to open my heart to You and let You love me, let You forgive me, let You cleanse me from all unrighteousness. Thank You for exchanging my sin for Jesus' righteousness. Thank You that Your word is true, that because I have confessed my sins, You are faithful and just to forgive me of my sins and cleanse me of all unrighteousness. I receive it in Jesus' name.*

From here on out, every time the old feelings of condemnation and guilt pop up (and they will, because they have become a habit), go back to the Father and thank Him again for forgiving you and cleansing you, and tell Him, "I do not accept those false feelings of condemnation and guilt, but I do receive Your grace, and thank You for loving me, Abba!" It may take awhile for your feelings to catch up with the truth of your decision to receive God's grace, but that's OK. They will. Feelings follow beliefs and actions like a caboose follows the engine of a train.

The Lord bless you this day, _____, and I pray that you will

hear the love in your Father's voice and see the love in His eyes as you receive His truth through this email!

Warmly,

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

© 2006 Probe Ministries