“Will Computers Take Over Humanity to Produce Spiritual Machines?”

I would appreciate hearing your views on *The Age of Spiritual Machines* by Ray Kurzweil. If you’ve not yet seen it, this is a rather disturbing book which was brought to my attention at a recent dinner I attended on campus last month. During the dinner conversation I heard discussion between Dr. Rita Colwell (Director of the National Science Foundation) and Larry Smarr (Director of the National Center for Supercomputing Applications) that really took me by surprise. To hear some of today’s most influential scientists discussing the reality of software taking over humanity within the next century was a more than a little disturbing. Their consensus seemed to be that “the software takeover is inevitable.” The discussion was prompted by a recent article by Bill Joy in *Wired* Magazine titled “Why the Future Doesn’t Need Us.” You can read the article online at http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/8.04/joy.html (Bill Joy is the cofounder and Chief Scientist of Sun Microsystems).

I’d really appreciate some clear thinking from a Christian-minded perspective on this subject.

Thank you for your e-mail about “The Age of Spiritual Machines.” I have not read this article by Ray Kurzweil, but plan to do so in the future. That is an ominous statement about software taking over humanity.

In the meantime, I thought I might forward a portion of my recent book on a related subject. In *Moral Dilemmas*, I have a chapter on technology and address the issue of computers and the computer revolution. Here is section I wrote on the interface of computers and human intelligence:

Fourth, computers should not replace human intelligence. In *The Society of Mind* Marvin Minsky, professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, says that "the mind, the soul, the self, are not a singly ghostly entity but a society of agents, deeply integrated, yet each one rather mindless on its own." (Richard Lipkin, "Making Machines in Mind's Image," *Insight*, 15 February 1988, 8-12). He dreams of being able ultimately to reduce mind (and therefore human nature) to natural mechanism. Obviously this is not an empirical statement, but a metaphysical one that attempts to reduce everything (including mind) to matter.

The implications, however, are profound. Besides lowering humans to the material process, it begins to elevate machines to the human level. One article asked the question, Would an Intelligent Computer Have a "Right to Life?" (Robert Mueller and Erik Mueller, "Would an Intelligent Computer Have a 'Right to Life?'" *Creative Computing*, August 1983, 149-161). Granting computer rights might be something society might consider since many are already willing to grant certain rights to animals.

In a sense the question is whether an intelligent computer would have a soul and therefore access to fundamental human rights. As bizarre as the question may sound, it was no doubt inevitable. When seventeenth-century philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz first described a thinking machine, he was careful to point out that this machine would not have a soul—fearful perhaps of reaction from the church. (Danny Hillis, "Can They Feel Your Pain?" *Newsweek,* 5 May 1997, 57). Already scientists predict that computer intelligence will create "an intelligence beyond man's" and provide wonderful new capabilities. (Robert Jastrow, "Toward an Intelligence beyond Man's," *Time*, 20 February 1978, 59). One of the great challenges in the future will be how to manage new computing power that will outstrip human intelligence.

The Bible teaches that humans are more than bits and bytes, more than blood and bones. Created in the image of God, human beings have a spiritual dimensions. They are more than complex computers. Computers should be used for what they do best: analyze discrete data with objective criteria. Computers are a wonderful tool, but they should not replace human intelligence and intuition.

_____

Thanks for writing. I will continue this discussion in the future.

Kerby Anderson
Probe Ministries

"Why Won't My Sister Accept My Live-In Boyfriend?"

Please help me answer this question?

I am a single parent (40 yrs old) of three children 16, 14, and 9. I have decided to live with my current boyfriend. I have taken all the pros and cons into consideration. So far it is going well. The only draw back so far has been my sister, her husband and 2 children. My sister and I are very close and spend a lot of time together. But since I have started dating again, 2 years with this one person (the only person I have dated by the way), I am not allowed to bring my boyfriend to her house. We are not allowed to do things with her children at all. I can understand that they would not want their children to spend the night or us to spend the night over there. I do not however understand why we can not spend time

together as a family as we have in the past. Going to Six Flags, etc…. We do not hug or kiss, we may on occasion hold hands. I understand this is a moral issue, living together.

Can you please explain why I can't spend time with my niece and nephew?

P.S. My family is Catholic. When I married the first time I married into a different church. My family is Catholic. I was married for 19 years. Been divorced for about 2 1/2 years and have been dating my current boyfriend for much of that time.

Dear _____,

I'm sort of wondering why you're asking US instead of your sister. . .??!

My guess is that your sister is extremely uncomfortable with your choice of an immoral lifestyle and she is concerned that doing things together as if you were married might communicate to her children that immorality is okay. Many people are not confident that their kids can handle (or that they can teach) both the belief that "we love our family member" and "that family member is doing wrong things that we deeply disagree with."

I noticed you used the term "moral issue," but my guess is that your sister is thinking of it as an IMmoral issue. Which, to be blunt, it is. Living together outside of marriage is sin. You said you took all the pros and cons into consideration, but apparently you didn't, since you could not possibly foresee how other people would react to your choice.

I hear the hurt in your "voice," and I am sure that it weighs very heavily on you. Unfortunately, that's one of the consequences of making choices that do not align with God's intentions and commands for us. Sin causes pain and always ends up affecting more people than just ourselves. Your sister may be concerned about the effect of your lifestyle choice on

your children as well, since you are teaching them that living with someone you're not married to and not committed to is a good thing. As a mother, your sister may be concerned about the impact your children's attitude and perspective may have on HER children as a result of what you're modeling to your own kids.

By the way, I don't think this issue has anything to do with denominations. It's a people issue and it's a moral issue. You could substitute any mix of religious traditions and have the same heartbreak over this situation.

If you were looking for comfort, I'm sure this isn't what you were hoping for, but it DOES align with what the Word of God says. He grieves over your choice just as He grieves over the pain you are experiencing because of it.

I hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

"You Haven't Got A Clue About 'A Course in Miracles'"

With all due respect, you really haven't got a clue about what "A Course in Miracles" says. Jesus was way too nice of a fellow to have people like you confuse His Love with hate, fear, and death. That is why He channeled the Course.

By the way FYI, the Jesus of the Course is not the Jesus of the New Testament. This might be a good place for you to start your research on ACIM….:-)

Thanks for your reply to my article on The Course. I appreciate your spiritual astuteness. Perhaps you could help me understand who Jesus is? I must be confused. Could it be that the channel of The Course is an alter ego? That could possibly answer the dilemma.

As I am most assured, you are undoubtedly familiar with The Course's use of biblical language. The Course refers to the Son frequently (pages 290, 301, 357, 557, 620). In most circles when the term "son" is written Son of God, there is a strong inference of deity and singleness. In other words, there is only one, not many.

Marianne Williamson—I'm sure you are familiar with her—in her book *A Return To Love* uses biblical references to make her points about Jesus and His teaching (page 16 for one). She, along with the author of The Course consistently refer to the Holy Spirit, a clear biblical reference and not found in other religious texts. Therefore, one would rightly make the assumption that the Jesus being referred to in the text is the Jesus of the Bible. Marianne makes at least one reference to the Bible (see page 66) where she references the creation of Eve. She makes numerous references to biblical material, the crucifixion, the resurrection, the beatitudes, to name only a few.

Now, either the Jesus of the Bible is the primary individual referenced in The Course or Marianne Williamson, as the foremost spokesperson of The Course, along with the author (channeller) of the text is intentionally attempting to deceive the masses. Help me out, I remain confused. You can't have it both ways.

If you can shed further light on the above ideas I would welcome your input. Otherwise, I wish you well on your spiritual journey and peace.

Russ Wise

Christian Information Ministries
(formerly with Probe Ministries)

“My Kids Are Into Goth, Punk and Emo Sub-Cultures”

My two teenage daughters are interested in the goth, punk and emo sub-cultures. I’m not sure how to deal with this. Could you give me some good Christian parenting advice?

I asked a couple of Christian counselors for advice about your question.

The first came back with this response:

> *The best overall reference I’ve seen for teens is the book Age of Opportunity by Paul David Tripp because it makes it clear the target for change is their HEART, not just behavior – otherwise we just create cooperative rebels (work the system to make life easier for “me”) or religious Pharisees. There is an audio series by the same name, available from Resources for Changing Lives, 1-800-318-2186 – web site www.ccef.org.*

The second, who is a child psychologist, made these suggestions:

1. First of all, DON’T come down heavy with the hammer, telling them they are not allowed to pursue these interests. It will only backfire.

2. These lifestyles and values are meeting a need in your daughters. There is no shame in having needs; God gives us

needs for others to meet, and for Himself to meet. Your job is to find out what need goth/punk/emo is meeting, and then subtly provide other, healthier ways for them to get those needs met.

3. Don't communicate that you're going to change your children and they're going to have to stop this behavior. It won't work; we don't have the power to change other people. We do, however, have the power to gain understanding about WHY they behave as they do, and then adjust our response to it.

4. Seek to understand your daughters' thinking and feeling about this. Many kids feel alienated from their parents, believing that their parents don't really care about how they think and feel (which is, unfortunately, all too true in many families). So make a plan to meet for 5-10 minutes each night, for a week, to LISTEN. Ask, "Please help me understand why goth/punk/emo is important to you. Tell me one thing that you like about it." Draw them out with unjudgmental questions; the goal is to understand, not to change them. Each night, try to get another part of the big picture.

5. After a couple of weeks, when you have learned something about what these cultures are doing for your daughters, see if you can find other ways to get those needs met at times that interfere with activities that mean more involvement with their questionable friends. Many times, it's an esteem issue. Looking like the other people in that sub-culture makes them feel accepted and gives them a sense of belonging. . . legitimate, God-given needs that are better met in the family and with friends whose values are consistent with the family's and with God's.

6. Pray, pray, pray. Pray for wisdom to be loving without being controlling. Pray that you will see what YOU need to do to make sure your daughters' emotional needs are being met. The hard thing is that adolescence is a time when, developmentally, it is normal and right for their attention to

turn to friends and want to fit in with their friends more than their families. This is important for growth into independent adults. But the choice of one's friends can make or break a young person. Which is why it's essential for parents to know what's going on, with whom, and hit our knees on our children's behalf.

This is a big issue and not an easy one. I pray God's blessing on you as you seek to be wise in the face of unhealthy cultural pressures.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

"What's a Good Evangelism Training Curriculum?"

Can you recommend any curriculum I could use to train young people in evangelism?

I think one of the best evangelism training out there is "Becoming a Contagious Christian" by Willow Creek. "Evangelism Explosion" (www.eeinternational.org/) is also another very good tool.

Patrick Zukeran
Probe Ministries

“Satanism Has Nothing to do with Satan!”

A lot of Russ Wise’s article on Satanism made sense. The only idiot thing he did and every other person on that site did was make a common error due to lack of research. If any of you had researched Satanism properly instead of judging (which made you look very unintelligent) you would have realized that the practice of “Satanism” has absolutely nothing to do with Satan. I have a friend who is Satanic and have studied the religion on my own. In my studies I observed that Satanists don’t worship Satan. They believe in the worship of themselves and giving in to desire. I think everyone should do that every now and then, within reason.

Another thing he did wrong was the way he judged teenagers. Almost every teenager is depressed, or has a low self esteem. Teenagers emphasize social acceptance and few get it, and it makes them feel bad. A lot of children don’t get the proper attention from parents. Seems they’re all Christian to me. A lot of children like vampire movies, which doesn’t mean they’re satanic. I think that Russ and everyone other Christian should open up their eyes just a little and recognize that not everyone will be Christian. Not everyone will believe God. I’m wiccan, but I was Baptist for 14 years.

I’m responding to your email regarding my piece on Satanism. Let me first say that the piece I wrote was originally limited to space available for a radio transcript. I wish I would have had more space to have elaborated on the topic. I hope to update the article and broaden the information presented so a more comprehensive understanding will be known.

I agree with you that Satanism is primarily a self-centered belief system that indulges the base desires of an individual. However, you must admit that Satanism, as Christianity, is

subject to more than one interpretation. I'm sure you have heard of Richard Ramerez, the night-stalker, and self proclaimed Satanist. He without doubt worshipped Satan.

You may not have heard of Sean Sellers, the 17 year-old self-styled Satanist, who killed his mother and father because Satan told him to. I'm not going to hold Satan accountable for Sean's or Richard's actions. However, it is obvious that the influence of a malevolent spirit being is at play here. Likewise, we cannot hold God accountable for every unloving act that His created beings make. As a result of God's love we have free will and will ultimately be held accountable for our actions.

God does not orchestrate our lives as a puppeteer even though He could if He desired. On the other hand Satan, as a created being, cannot as well. But Satan can influence or oppress the individual in a negative manner, thereby causing one to commit evil acts.

If I can be intuitive for a moment, I suspect that you probably do not believe in Satan as a physical being. If so, could your pre-conceived bias color your view of who Satan is and ultimately his influence on humanity? As a Christian, I believe in Satan and his demons and their desire to confuse and confound mankind spiritually. In other words, to rob men and women of the joy and peace that can only be found in a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Now as for my judgmental attitude of teenagers. I wholeheartedly agree with you that teens are often depressed and suffer from low self-esteem. My observations are simply those made by individuals in the field of psychology and law-enforcement. I do not accept your conclusion that I am judgmental in this case. Maybe others!

It is grievous that many teens do not get the attention they need from parents or other adults. I recognize that when teens

do not get what they need emotionally, etc. they are susceptible to negative influences. Sean Sellers is a classic example. I'm sure we could name others.

At the risk of running on, let me thank you for your critique. I consider it part of making my comments more reliable and ultimately more helpful for those who seek truth in the spiritual realm.

Best regards to you in your spiritual quest—remember God loves you!

Russ Wise
Christian Information Ministries
(formerly with Probe Ministries)

"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 arguement 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 perseverence, 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 if 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 discipled 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