Gender Medicine Policies

Kerby Anderson reveals some of the dirty secrets in true-gender-denying treatments of trans-identifying children and teens.

If you have been listening to my commentaries for any amount of time, you are aware of the significant concerns over the way transgenderism has been promoted by physicians, hospitals, and the government. So, it's not surprising that the federal government issued a report critical of some of the practices with this title: "Wolves in White Coats: How Doctors and Hospitals Pushed and Profited from the Fraud of Gender Medicine."

Most government reports usually have a title that is ambiguous and benign. When I interviewed one of the authors of the report on my radio program, I began with a discussion of the title. The title was a warning to the reader that they were going to learn about the many fraudulent practices implemented by physicians and hospitals.

One example is the deceptive use of diagnostic coding for reimbursement. They would use medical codes like "endocrine disorder" or "precocious puberty" to mask what they were doing to young people and get payment for gender transitions. Once patients underwent such transitions, they represented "lifelong revenue streams" for these groups.

Another part of the 64-page report is the section which provides "first-hand accounts from patients and parents" who were subjected to this "gender medicine." This provides a human face to procedures that were promoted by much of the medical establishment along with federal acceptance from the Biden Administration.

During the radio interview, we also mentioned the Cass Report out of the UK from Dr. Hillary Cass that two years ago raised

significant concerns about gender identity services for children and young people in the National Health Service. These two reports show that sanity and common sense are finally returning to this issue. I'm Kerby Anderson, and that's my point of view.

www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/hhs-wolves-in-white-coats.pdf

This blog post originally appeared at

https://pointofview.net/viewpoints/gender-medicine-policies/
on Aug. 31, 2026.

Two Genders, Two Spectrums

Sue Bohlin suggests a biblical view of masculinity and femininity that encompasses the variety within two genders as God creates us.

How do you see the variations of gender in people? Many people automatically think of a single spectrum with masculinity on one end and femininity on the other.

I don't think that's the way it works.



Consider the very first thing we encounter about gender in the creation account of Genesis 1:27—

> So God created mankind in his own image,
> in the image of God he created them;

male and female he created them.

Just two genders. No matter how many choices of made-up genders that Facebook used to offer.

We can look at the issue of gender spiritually by reading about how God created us male and female. We can also see the binary nature of gender by looking at biology. Male bodies produce small reproductive sex cells called gametes—sperm—and female bodies produce large gametes, eggs. There are no other options.

In this article we'll be walking through a way of looking at gender that I believe faithfully reflects what God has revealed in His word about His design for us as human beings. Instead of a single spectrum with male and masculinity on one end and female and femininity on the other, I suggest there are two separate spectrums{1}: a masculinity spectrum and a femininity spectrum. God makes delightful variations in girls and women, and equally delightful variations in boys and men, all of us made in His image and created for His glory.

I suggest that God chooses where on each gender spectrum a baby comes into the world. It's our starting point, but as we mature we can embrace and grow in the other characteristics of masculinity or femininity. We can take up more "bandwidth" and become a more fully-rounded man or woman.

One end of the masculinity spectrum, I suggest, are the rough-and-tumble boys who are constantly moving, playing sports, making noise, getting dirty, and can easily be emotionally clueless. On the other end of the spectrum are the sensitive, artistic, creative boys. And there's everything in between.

On the femininity spectrum, we see girly-girls on one end, who love frilly clothes, playing with their doll babies, and in American culture are drawn to pink and purple and sparkly. On the other end are the tomboy jockettes who are often gifted athletes and natural leaders, and hate girly clothes. And, as

with their brothers, there is everything in between.

Let’s explore these different gender spectrums and hopefully gain a fuller understanding of the goodness of God’s creation just the way He makes each one of us.

Masculinity Spectrum 1

I really like the idea that every child, created in his or her own individuality in the image of God, is a gift box that we as parents and care-givers get to open and discover what’s inside. Every child is fearfully and wonderful made, as we read in Psalm 139, and that includes the kind of boy and the kind of girl God chose for them to be. Whoever came up with the philosophy that children are blank slates that we write on, so they become whoever and however the surrounding culture instructs them to be, must have never been around actual children. Real babies come out of the womb and start revealing how God made them.

God shapes some baby boys as rough-and-tumble. They are often considered classically “all boy.” They’re constantly moving. Ask boys to walk from point A to point B and they may well zig-zag their way across the room. They often have an affinity for fighting and weapons. One mama who said no toy guns in her home because she hated violence, found her young son nibbling his toast into the shape of a pistol, which he pointed at his brother and made shooting sound effects. Her other son would treat the longest French fry from his Happy Meal like a miniature rifle to pretend-shoot his brother.

These rough-and-tumble boys are often emotionally clueless. They don’t *mean* to be insensitive, they just don’t pay much attention to non-verbal cues from other people. They tend to enjoy rough-housing with their daddies and with other boys. They will chest-bump and jostle each other in their male way of expressing friendship and affection. And these boys are drawn to contact sports, especially anything with balls.

God delights to make other boys, though far fewer of them, as sensitive, artistic, and creative. They are often gifted in the performing and visual arts, music, dance, drama, and design. They tend to experience life through a magnifying lens attached to their soul; everything is bigger, louder, and more vibrant. They can experience negative communications as more critical than they actually are. A parent's frown may feel as devastating as a spanking.

They constantly scan their environment, sensing when others around them are upset. My husband can spot these sensitive boys at age two in the church nursery. He has seen boys drop whatever toy they had and go over to another toddler asking, "You okay? It's okay."

Many of them don't care for sports, especially contact sports. Often they lack the eye-hand coordination needed for sports that utilize balls, rackets, clubs and other game equipment. They can do better at sports that scratch their competitive itch where they're racing against the clock, like cross-country running.

And of course, there are boys (and men) everywhere in between as well. One of my sons was so sensitive and artistic he graduated with an art degree; the other puts himself square in the middle of the masculinity spectrum.

Masculinity Spectrum 2

We see the two kinds of boys and men in the account of Jacob and Esau in Genesis 25. Esau, the rough-and-tumble man, was a hunter, an outdoorsman. His twin brother Jacob was a mama's boy, more interested in hanging back in the tents with his mother, in all probability the sensitive, artistic, creative type.

Since sensitive boys are in the minority, they often get bullied by the rough-and-tumbles or boys in the middle of the

spectrum, and they can easily feel like they don't fit, they don't belong. They feel different from an early age.

These are the ones who are vulnerable to spiritual attacks of being labeled gay and other ugly words. In recent years, as sensitive, artistic and creative boys feel the pain of not fitting in, they are now being encouraged to label themselves as transgender. It used to be they would think, "I don't fit in the world of boys. There's something wrong with me." Now they are being encouraged to think, "I don't fit in the world of boys because I'm really a girl. Or life would be better and easier if I became a girl." (Which, of course, is impossible.) Then if they accept these false labels and they practice seeing themselves that way, they can literally think themselves into a gay or trans identity. But it doesn't have to be that way. Scripture tells us to "take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5). All of us need to derive our identity from who God says we are.

Thinking of the masculinity spectrum, I like to ask, where would you put Jesus?

I think He embodies the entire spectrum. He was the best of rough-and-tumble men, strong and physically active; He started out as a carpenter or handyman, and men were drawn to Him. Was He artistic? Have you ever seen a sunrise or a sunset? Jesus paints the sky with glorious colors! Was He creative? Scripture tells us He was the Creator of the universe!

I have observed over years that as boys and men grow spiritually, they start taking up more bandwidth on the masculinity spectrum as they become more well-rounded. Rough-and-tumbles learn to listen and show compassion, and sensitives stretch out their comfort zone to take more initiative and reject passivity.

Rough-and-tumbles can become great leaders and servants as they use their strength to love and serve others. Sensitives

can become great husbands, dads, pastors, counselors, and teachers as *they* use their gifts to love and serve others.

Femininity Spectrum 1

On the one end of the femininity spectrum are the girly-girls who come into the world wanting a pink receiving blanket and one of those headbands with a big puffy flower on their little bald head. They can't wait till their fingernails and toenails are big enough for Mommy to paint. In American culture they often gravitate toward pink and purple and silver glitter. They cuddle baby dolls and stuffed animals.

One progressive-minded mother didn't want to support gender stereotypes for her daughter, so instead of buying her stuffed animals and dolls, she gave her cars and trucks. One afternoon she saw her little girl lining up the cars and trucks, covering them with a blanket, and tenderly kissing them "night-night" as she put them down for a nap. Just as she would have with dolls and stuffed toys, if she'd been allowed to have them.

It's easy to define feminine as girly-girls, but God loves and creates another kind of femininity.

He delights to make some girls tomboy jockettes. They have no interest in frilly clothes or makeup. They don't care for skirts or dresses and in fact will often push back when required to wear "girl clothes." For them, comfort is everything. You can find them outside climbing trees, shooting hoops, and perfecting their spirals. Some mechanically-inclined girls want to help their dads work on cars and lawnmowers. They tend to have no patience for girly-girl activities; girl drama drives them crazy. Barbie is stupid, and who wants to play house—nobody wins!

Many times they are gifted athletes, and often natural leaders.

Like sensitive boys, tomboys are outnumbered by girly-girls and those in the middle of the femininity spectrum. Being the minority, they are often bullied. They are judged and ostracized for not being like the other girls.

Sensitive boys and tomboy girls can get the message loud and clear that they don't have what it takes to be a good boy or girl. They can conclude, wrongly, that they don't belong in the world of boys, of girls. They burn with the shame of being "other than." Different.

But God makes every person male or female on purpose, for His glory. They DO belong in the world of boys or girls, of men and women!

Femininity Spectrum 2

As girls grow spiritually, becoming more like Jesus, they can take up more bandwidth on the spectrum and become a more well-rounded expression of femininity.

Girly girls can put down their mirrors and selfies, and become prayer warriors and first responders. They can walk into emotional crises and hard conversations to point people to Jesus. They can become shepherds, more concerned about other people than themselves.

Tomboys can embrace the softer, more nurturing side of femininity. These girls often want to fight and defend those needing protection. They need to be introduced to spiritual warfare! Whether as a princess warrior or a warrior princess, the kingdom needs all girls and women to be fully engaged in fighting evil!

Many of the gender issues today are about stereotypes. People want to stick everybody in either a blue box or a pink box. They make sweeping generalizations like

- "Boys wear blue and brown and play with trucks and guns."

- “Girls wear pink and purple and play with Barbies and jewelry making kits.”

But what if a boy thinks blue and brown are boring, and he loves pink and purple? Does it mean he’s gay? No! Jesus loves pink and purple! Have you ever seen a sunrise?

What if he doesn’t want to play tackle football? What if he’d rather sit and try to draw out another kid’s thoughts and feelings? Does it mean he’s gay? No! It may be a junior counselor in the making, who’s also going to be a fantastic daddy!

What if a girl thinks it’s just WRONG that she has to stay inside and learn to make gravy because Grandma says that’s what girls do, when there’s a broken carburetor outside she’s itching to get her hands on? What if she’s an amazing softball player? Does it mean she’s a lesbian? No! It means she’s a gifted mechanic or athlete!

Let’s forget the blue and pink boxes and just open the gift box that is each child and find out how God packed the gifts and interests inside. Let’s celebrate God’s good design of each child IN HIS IMAGE and affirm them as the child they are, even if they don’t conform to stereotypes.

Can you imagine how freeing it would be to celebrate the full spectrum of masculinity and femininity, and teach kids to appreciate and celebrate it in each other?

Notes

1. I do realize that the plural of spectrum is *spectra*, but most people don’t take five years of Latin like I did. For those who wince at my coining a word, my apologies.

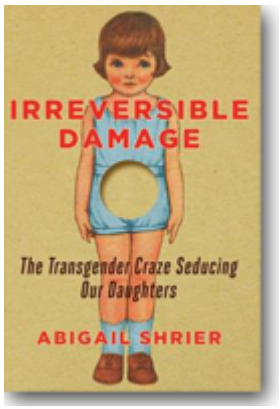
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Transgenderism

Kerby Anderson provides an overview of the transgender craze that has taken over the western world in the past ten years, drawing on startling insights from Abigail Shrier and Ryan Anderson.

Transgenderism is the belief that people have a "gender identity" that is distinct from their sex. If they feel there is a conflict between their gender and their sex, gender identity should take precedence. Although a very small fraction of the population may experience gender dysphoria, the current percentage of Americans identifying as transgender or nonbinary has exploded.

Gender Dysphoria Research



Abigail Shrier wrote about the transgender craze in her book *Irreversible Damage: The Transgender Craze Seducing Our Daughters*. When she joined me on my Point of View radio program, she explained that "gender dysphoria" was characterized by severe and persistent discomfort in one's biological sex. It typically begins in early childhood. In previous generations, it afflicted a sliver of the population (roughly .01 percent) and occurred mostly in boys.

Prior to 2012, there was no scientific literature on girls (11-21) ever having developed gender dysphoria at all. Then the Western world experienced a sudden surge of adolescents claiming to have gender dysphoria and self-identifying as "transgender."

In 2016, Lisa Littman (an ob-gyn, public health researcher)

was scrolling through social media when she noticed a statistical peculiarity. Several adolescents (most of them girls) from a small town in Rhode Island had come out as transgender. In fact, they were all from the same friend group.

She admitted that she knew very little about gender dysphoria, but this statistical anomaly was interesting to her. And she then noticed there had been a sudden spike in the western world of girls experiencing gender dysphoria. She immersed herself in the scientific literature on gender dysphoria to try to understand what was happening. Perhaps it was due to increased social acceptance of LGBTQ people, but she suggested in a peer-reviewed paper that the girls might be rushing toward "transition" because of peer contagion. As you might imagine, her suggestion was roundly criticized. She was also accused of anti-trans bigotry.

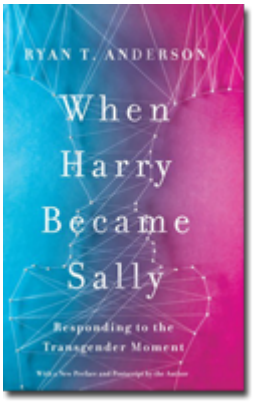
In a subsequent research project, she collected data anonymously from 256 parents whose kids had not met the criteria of gender dysphoria in childhood, but suddenly identified as transgender in adolescence. She identified 16 traits in common. Here are a few.

- The vast majority have zero indicators of childhood gender dysphoria.
- Almost a third of them did not seem at all gender dysphoric.
- A majority had one or more psychiatric diagnosis and almost half were engaged in self-harm prior to the onset of dysphoria.
- Nearly 70 percent of the teenagers belonged to a peer group in which at least one friend had also come out as transgender.
- Among parents who knew their children's social status,

over 60 percent said the announcement brought a popularity boost.

• Over 88 percent of the parents surveyed reported being supportive of transgender rights.

How to Respond to the Transgender Moment



Ryan Anderson is the author of the book, *When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Moment*. He explains how transgender ideology promotes the opportunity for children to change their gender with surgery and drugs. And parents "are told that puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones may be the only way to prevent their children from committing suicide."

Ryan Anderson countered that the best studies of gender dysphoria have found "that between 80 and 95 percent of children who express a discordant gender identity will come to identify with their bodily sex if natural development is allowed to proceed." He also documented that even children going through "transitioning" treatment still have an extraordinarily high rate of suicide attempts compared to the general population.

He reminded us that we should be tolerant and loving toward children (and adults) who struggle with their gender identity. But we should also be aware of the potential harm when transgender identity is normalized.

Unfortunately, we are living in a world where transgender activists want more than tolerance and kindness. They demand affirmation. We aren't allowed to question whether using medical treatments to aid in transgender transformation is positive for children. In his book, Ryan Anderson shows that the best biology, psychology, and philosophy support an understanding of sex as a bodily reality. As he puts it: "Biology isn't bigotry."

Abigail Shrier also offers several suggestions. **First, don't get your kid a smartphone**. She explains that nearly every problem teenagers face traces itself back to the introduction of the smartphone years ago.

Second, don't relinquish your authority as a parent. You don't have to go along with every idea your teenager has, nor do you have to go along with every educational or psychological fad being promoted in society.

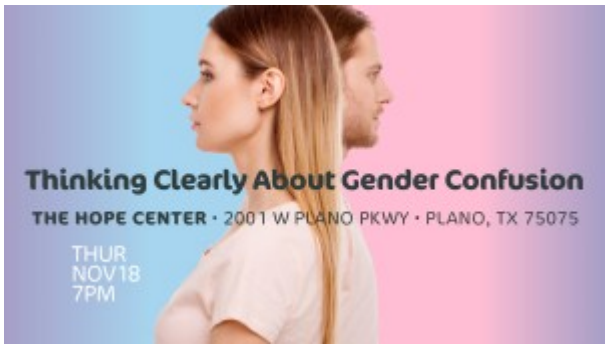
Third, don't support gender ideology in your child's education. She provides an example of what happens when schools do a seminar on anorexia or suicide. Often the prevalence increases. A small number of students may have gender confusion or gender dysphoria. But talking about it will spread confusion.

Finally, don't be afraid to admit that it's wonderful to be a girl.

While she talks about the benefits and opportunities of being a girl, Christians can go even further. We believe God is responsible for who we are and what we are. Each one of us is created in God's image (Genesis 1:26). We can celebrate girls and boys and encourage them to use their gender and their gifts to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 1:31).

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Probe Live – Thinking Clearly About Gender Confusion



Probe Live – November 18, 2021



God's good gift of gender—male and female—has never been more broken or confused. Sue Bohlin brings the clarity of biblical worldview thinking to this issue with grace and truth.

There was a problem with part of the audio recording on the video, but here is the back-up **audio recording**:
www.ministeriosprobe.org/mp3s/GenderConfusion_11-18-21.mp3

Powerpoint Slides:

PDF form: app.box.com/s/iv7z9j1ao9thnn2syfwrajh94pjrxxxm

PPT form: app.box.com/s/iv7z9j1ao9thnn2syfwrajh94pjrxxxm

How Bad is This Conversion Therapy Thing?

As pro-LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) voices and values grow louder and more insistent in the culture, what about those people of faith who experience same-sex attraction and don't want it? What are they supposed to do with feelings and desires at odds with their faith? How are they supposed to learn to reconcile their faith and their sexuality?



The cultural narrative has become, "LGBT represents normal, healthy variations in human sexuality, so everyone should support and celebrate all forms of sexual diversity. And if you don't, we're going to punish you, shame you, and squelch your voice."

Part of the punishing and shaming includes outrage over "Conversion Therapy." A growing number of states outlaw it. What makes it so bad and why are people so angry about it?

What is Conversion Therapy?

Conversion Therapy is usually defined as therapy designed to change a person's sexual orientation. But is that what it really is? Therapy is a shortened form of the word "psychotherapy," which means the treatment given by a licensed mental health professional such as a psychologist or psychiatrist, a social worker, or a licensed counselor. So Conversion Therapy isn't therapy without a professional counselor of some kind, with the goal of changing someone's sexual orientation.{1} But do a Google search for

organizations being labelled as doing (or even promoting) Conversion Therapy—which will include a number of churches—and you'll find neither element happening.

Conversion Therapy is the current buzzword that instantly communicates something that smears hate, shame, judgment and probable suicidality in those who undergo it, forced or not. It is not acceptable to say there's anything wrong or unhealthy about any form of "sexual diversity." Those that do—for example, anyone who holds to a biblical, traditional view of marriage and sexuality—are labeled as haters, bigots, prudes, outdated . . . and wrong.

Anne Paulk, director of Restored Hope Network, describes it as "an ideological term used by the GLBTQ activist community and their supporters who seek to link compassionate spiritual care and talk therapy with horrible, clearly disreputable practices."{2}

These "disreputable practices" include stories of some extremists who used torture, pain and punishment to try and exorcise homosexuality from people. Most notably and recently, the movie *Boy Erased* purports to show the true story of a teenage boy whose parents sent him to a strict camp that left heartbreaking wounds on his soul. (It should also be noted that the producers took a number of creative liberties to produce the most dramatic moments of the film, none of which actually happened per the book.) The cultural narrative lumps extremists with all those engaged in helping those with unwanted homosexuality, painting them all with a broad brush of condemnation.

Helping Those Who *Want* the Help

A number of ministries and churches actively seek to help those who don't want their same-sex feelings or their discomfort with their gender. Or, even if they don't fight against their feelings, they want to live lives honoring to

God despite their desires, which means not giving into them. These ministries and organizations neither offer nor promise conversion of homosexual attractions into heterosexual ones. That would be like offering to make someone stop loving chocolate and start loving kale. Not gonna happen, right?

But they can teach what God's word says about sexuality, discipleship, and living a life pleasing to God. They can help people (note: choose to, not be forced to) submit every area of their lives to the lordship of Jesus Christ, including sexuality. There are many who define and identify themselves by their sexuality; God's word calls us to define and identify ourselves by our relationship to Him.

Human sexuality is a complex, many-layered issue comprised of a lifetime of experiences, perceptions, habits, and ways of thinking. There's nothing simple about it. It has also, for every one of us, been impacted by the Fall and the pervading presence of sin.

But Is Change Even Possible?

Ever hear the pejoratively-used phrase "Pray away the gay"? That's as effective as praying away fat. A prayer like, "Please Jesus make me stop wanting people/things/food I shouldn't" has never worked because He doesn't have a magic wand. He says to all those who want to be His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24). That means saying no to ourselves and to our flesh, the part of us that operates independently of God. The apostle Paul instructs us in Romans 12:2 to "be transformed by the renewing of your mind. . ." Cooperating with God to renew our mind means submitting our thoughts and habits to Him, "taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5). The call to surrender every part of us, including our sexuality, as the way to obey and honor God, is a difficult one, and it takes community. It takes the support of other Christ-followers to

walk alongside us, pray for us, speak God's truth to us, encourage us, challenge us, restore us when we stumble and fall, and help us keep going.

Change is not only possible, it is the mark of things that are alive. And it is the fruit of the gospel. Lasting change comes not from human effort but from supernatural transformation as we surrender to the work of God in our lives. We experience change as we are transformed into the image of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). Christlikeness produces change in how we think, what we believe, how we see ourselves and others, our behavior, and finally—like the caboose on a train—our feelings. But there's no point in trying to change the feelings apart from the rest of the process.

Discipleship is often what's happening in ministries and churches that are smeared with the label of "Conversion Therapy," being lied about and attacked by people who can't abide any position other than their own.

Next time you see the term "Conversion Therapy," know that it's not about shutting down bad therapists. It's about shutting up people who agree with God about sexuality.

1. I am indebted to the amazing Joe Dallas for his crazy-great analysis and tender compassion concerning this issue, particularly this article: joedallas.com/2018/11/13/dances-with-snakes/
2. www.wnd.com/2019/02/ex-gay-leader-jesus-still-transforms-lives/

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/how_bad_is_this_conversion_therapy_thing on February 19, 2019.

Raising Gender Healthy Kids

Emotionally healthy children who grow up to be emotionally healthy adults are comfortable in their own skin, in the gender God chose for them. These days, when a child shows non-stereotypical gender behavior, people start to freak out, afraid that their child is actually the opposite sex on the inside.

Good news! There are things parents can do to raise gender healthy kids, girls who are content to be girls and boys who are glad to be boys. Without resorting to artificial stereotypes, either.

First, loosen up your expectations of what boys and girls should be like. A friend of mine now in college was recently exasperated when the instructor taught that "Little girls play with dolls and wear dresses." Carol shot back, "I was NEVER like that!" My friend preferred to climb trees and ride her skateboard, and absolutely hated it when her grandmother tried to teach her to make gravy because "that's what girls do." And it really irritated her that her brothers never had to do any kitchen work because "boys don't do that sort of thing." Narrow gender stereotypes don't honor the creativity of the God who makes varieties of girls and boys on a femininity spectrum and a masculinity spectrum (my blog post on the Gender Spectrum has been helpful to a lot of people; please read it!).

When parents can relax about the kind of boy or the kind of girl they have, it is easier to support and encourage children according to the way God designed them. Some boys are not the rough-and-tumble, athletic type; they are born emotionally sensitive, more relational than most boys, often creative and

artistic. I know one little boy who pretty much danced out of the womb, and has been dancing ever since. That's his gift, his divine design. His family loves it, loves him, and supports him fully. Some girls just aren't the girly-girl type; they are natural athletes and gravitate toward more classically masculine interests, but God intended them to be more of the tomboy feminine. Like my friend Carol.

Second, cultivate warm, affectionate, respectful relationships in your family—between husband and wife, between mom and children, and between dad and children. Emotionally healthy, gender healthy kids are grounded in the security of parents who love each other and their children. A hurtful relationship with the same-sex parent is the biggest contributing factor to a later development of homosexuality, but there are other forms of brokenness that can also arise from hurtful family relationships.

Third, appreciate the different contributions from mothers and fathers. God created the complementarity of male and female (Gen. 1:27) for our good and for His glory. Moms and dads are not interchangeable, which is why He intended for families to be led by a mother and a father.

Here are some suggestions from Ricky Chelette, my esteemed colleague at Living Hope Ministries, who has been helping parents deal with gender issues for decades, my friend Anne Paulk, author of *Restoring Sexual Identity* . . . and from me:

Fathers and Sons

• Strongly connect with your son at an early age.
• Affirm the son's identity as a boy.
• Take interest in him and his interest(s). Be his #1 fan.
• Demonstrate love by word and deed. He needs to hear you say "I love you, son."
• Love his mother and assure her security and safety.
• Powerful affirmation: "You're good enough, you're strong

enough, and you have what it takes."
• Always give affirmation, attention, and affection (The "Three As")

• Don't feel rejected by the mother/child relationship.
• Draw out your son ("Hey, let's be guys together!").
• Show him what maleness is.
• Do things together. Even a trip to the grocery store or Home Depot counts.
• Cultivate a habit of "thumbs-up" attitude of affirmation. Look for things to affirm.
• When he doesn't get it right, don't dismiss him and send him to Mom.
• Encourage and affirm "be-like-Dad" behavior.
• Be physical. Boys need safe male touch.
• When giving hugs, let kids (both boys and girls) pull away first.

Mothers and Sons

• Push your son towards his father and encourage their relationship.
• Affirm your son's masculinity.
• Point out the differences between you and him, between him and his sisters, etc.
• Allow for emotional distance and independence. Don't try to keep him bound to you like a baby.

• Demonstrate positive, safe touch with him (not just spankings).
• Love and respect his father.
• Bring other boys into the home and encourage connections with other boys.
• Reinforce the father's role.
• Tell him that being a boy is wonderful, and you're glad God made him a boy!
• Build up the similarities to his daddy.
• Refuse to diminish the glory of the father/son relationship;

don’t get in the middle of it.
• Affirm what is valuable in your son’s father so your son can model it.
• Nurture and comfort with empathy, but allow your husband to nurture differently (aggression nurturing), such as “Hop up, you’re OK.” Boys need to learn to develop a thicker skin from their dads.
• Don’t insist that he look you in the eyes when you’re having a difficult conversation (except when it’s time to apologize). It’s especially threatening and painful for most boys. Take a walk or drive with him where you are shoulder to shoulder, or talk to him in dim lighting (such as bedtime), to encourage him to open up to you.

Fathers and Daughters

• Love and build up your wife, and make sure she feels secure and safe.
• Affirm your daughter’s femininity with words and deeds.
• Be your daughter’s “protector.”
• Tell her she is loved and beautiful 3X more than you think is necessary.

• Love and serve her. Set the bar high for the man she will marry.
• Girls are tactile. Touch is the key to your daughter’s heart. Appropriate touch is SO powerful and necessary.
• Girls are verbal, so words are also very powerful. They need to hear words of affirmation more often than boys.

Mothers and Daughters

• Respect and honor your husband.
• Affirm your daughter’s femininity.
• Show her what strength and nurture together look like.
• Love your daughter, don’t compete with her.
• Do girly things together early and often. She needs to learn to be a girl from you.
• Communicate feelings, not weakness.

• Continually develop and demonstrate a healthy relationship /romance with your husband.

• Be confident so she can admire you.
• Stand up for what is right in godly femininity, in the family and in the world.
• Demonstrate biblical femininity: relational, nurturing, vulnerable, responsive, and beauty (for an excellent article on this, read A Real Woman: Defining Biblical Femininity on the Living Hope website.
• Pursue contentment; enjoy life where you are right now.
• Model Christlike submission to God, husband, authorities.

And finally: pray, pray, pray for your children!

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/raising-gender-healthy-kids/ on July 28, 2015.

On Gender and Refusing to Disclose It

There was a storm of controversy recently (June 7, 2011) over a Toronto couple's announcement that they were not disclosing the sex of their now 4-month-old baby. They "believe they are giving their children the freedom to choose who they want to be, unconstrained by social norms about males and females." Not only are they raising their child Storm to be genderless, but they decided not to tell the world—and the world did not like that one bit.

The mother, Kathy Witterick, writes, "When the baby comes out, even the people who love you the most and know you so intimately, the first question they ask is, 'Is it a girl or a

boy?’ If you really want to get to know someone, you don’t ask what’s between their legs.” But genitals are only one indication of sex; gender-bound brain structures and chromosomes also delineate the fact that we live in a boy/girl world. And the way God set things up—to maintain the boy/girl distinction—you don’t have to ask what’s between someone’s legs because there are plenty of other signs far less intimate.

Ms. Witterick and her husband, David Stocker, hold a loose ideology about gender, which they are encouraging in Storm’s brothers, Jazz (five years old) and Kio (two). Jazz loves traditionally girly things like pink and purple, and chooses to wear his hair long in braids, which regularly invites people to assume he’s a girl. His parents give him total freedom in how he presents himself.

“It is true that my oldest son Jazz does not have a traditional notion of what boys should wear, look like or do. It is also true that we believe our children should have the right to choose their clothes and hairstyle. Jazz has a strong sense of being a boy, and he understands that his choices to wear pink and have long hair are not always acceptable to his community. He chooses freely to do them anyway, because he also has been taught to respect difference, love himself and navigate the world in a way that is true to his own voice.”

This is a five-year-old boy. How free is he, really, to make choices that he “understands” are “not always acceptable to his community”? How much understanding of the nature of the world does a five-year-old have?

Jazz’s mom suppresses her natural instincts in order to parent ideologically:

“In my heart of hearts, I squirm when my son picks a dress from the rack (won’t people tease him?), even though I know from experience and research that the argument that children

need a binary gender orthodoxy taught to them in order to feel safe is simply incorrect."

I would suggest that teaching "a binary gender orthodoxy" is not incorrect; it is woven into the very nature of how things are because God made it that way: "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." (Genesis 1:27) When we depart from a biblical explanation and understanding of reality, and we start making it up as we go along, we invite chaos and confusion.

I think she's right to squirm when her son picks a dress from the rack, and not just because people will tease him. The binary nature of gender is part of God's plan for helping us maintain boundaries between things that need to be kept separate. The Old Testament includes a prohibition against cross-dressing (Deuteronomy 22:5) to support the natural distinction between the sexes. Creating confusion by dressing in the other gender's clothes is not consistent with God's intent to maintain separations between things that should not be confused or blurred. Genesis 1 tells us that He separated the light from the darkness, the waters above from the waters below, the land from the sea. And when he created humans, He created them in two distinctly different types: male and female. Then, in Isaiah 5:20 He said, "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!"

I do understand the frustrations of Storm's parents concerning society's too-narrow definitions of boy and girl. (Please see my blog post "The Gender Spectrum.") Jazz is one of those emotionally sensitive boys who delight in color, texture, fabrics and vibrancy, and his parents apparently fully support the kind of gifted, creative boy he is, which is great. But when parents fully indulge a boy's gravitation to pink, and dresses, and long hair, yet he wants other people to know he's a boy (as Jazz does), there's some needless confusion going on

because of a lack of common-sense boundaries.

There's another aspect of this philosophy of parenting that is disturbing: the desire for children to discover "their true gender self," as psychologist Diane Ehrensaft puts it, and to choose what they want to be. Storm's mama wrote,

> "[I]n not telling the gender of my precious baby, I am saying to the world, 'Please can you just let Storm discover for him/herself what s(he) wants to be?!. . . . We've decided not to share Storm's sex for now—a tribute to freedom and choice in place of limitation, a stand up to what the world could become in Storm's lifetime (a more progressive place? …)"

There are lots of legitimate choices that children can make for themselves, and exercising those "choosing muscles" develops self-confidence. But some choices are not legitimate: deciding whether or not to brush their teeth, refusing to eat anything but junk foods, discovering their own religious "truths". . . and choosing their gender, regardless of what their body tells them. From a biblical perspective, God as creator is the one who gets to choose a child's gender, and His choice is revealed in the first moment of birth: "It's a boy!" or "It's a girl!" It is our place as His creations to accept and embrace God's choice for us, not insist on the personal freedom to define ourselves according to our own limited ways of understanding. That is anarchy. That kind of independence from God is the essence of sin.

I am reminded of the deep wisdom of Proverbs 14:12, "There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." Just because something sounds good to us at the time doesn't mean it will end up well. And this seems especially true of encouraging children to make their own paths without parental limitations.

This blog post originally appeared at

blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/on_gender_and_refusing_to_disclose_it
on June 7, 2011.

The Gender Spectrum



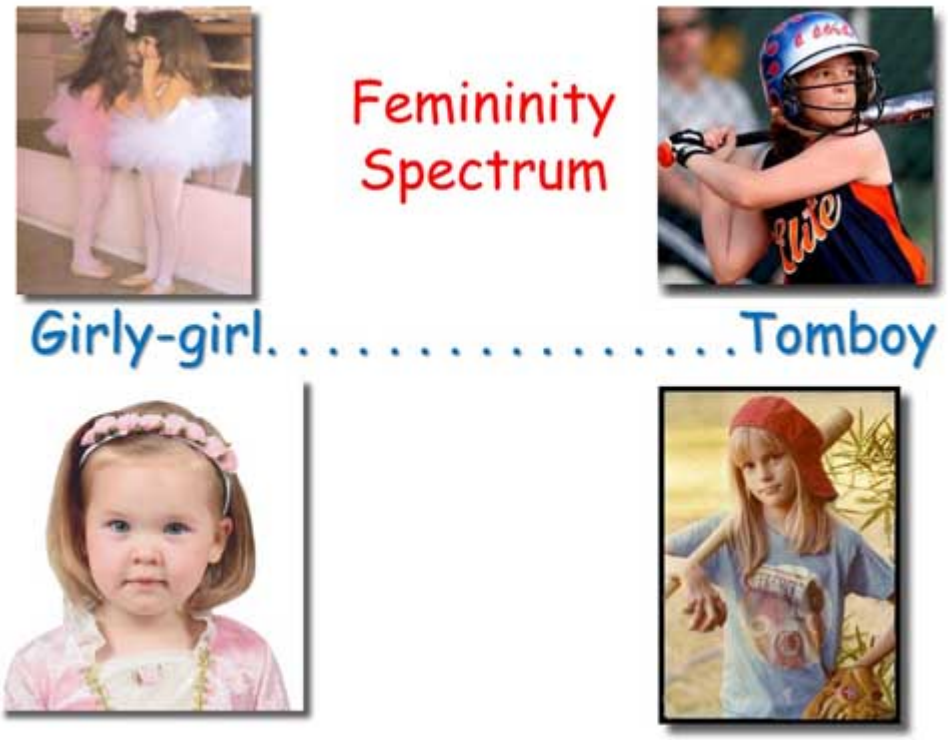
When I use the term "gender spectrum," you might think in terms of masculinity on one end and femininity on the other. We hear men being prompted to "get in touch with your feminine side." (For some reason, women never seem to be exhorted to "get in touch with your masculine side." Huh.)

But I don't think that's the way it works.

In Genesis 1, we are told that "God created them male and female" (Genesis 1:27). I think, rather, that there is one spectrum of masculinity and another spectrum of femininity. I also think that God is the one who chooses where on the spectrum babies are born, according to His design and for His pleasure and glory.

The Femininity Spectrum

I suggest that little girls come into the world at some point on a femininity spectrum. On one end is the girly-girl who comes out of the womb asking for the little flower headband to wear in the hospital nursery, and she keeps on running toward all things frilly and girly. She loves pink, loves to wear dresses and twirl around to "be pretty," wants to wear nail polish and makeup just like Mommy (or like the other ladies she sees on TV).



On the other end of the spectrum is the tomboy jockette, who can't stand wearing dresses, wants to climb trees and play tackle football with the boys. These girls are often gifted athletically and many are natural leaders. When these little girls' type of femininity is supported and encouraged, they are comfortable in their skin just the way God made them. Wise parents also make sure they wear dresses and "act like a lady" when it's time to do that—with the promise that when they get home, they can put their jeans or sweats back on and be comfortable.

Sometimes, though, girly-girl types can morph into "mean girls" and inform the jockettes that they're not good enough as girls, and they can receive the message that it's not okay to be the kind of girl they are, the kind of girl God chose for them to be because He has a good plan for them. They can grow up not feeling secure in their femininity.

The Masculinity Spectrum

On one end is the rough-and-tumble boy—athletic, noisy, enjoys getting dirty. He bonds to other boys shoulder-to-shoulder, engaging in common activities or tasks, and tends to find

face-to-face interaction intimidating.



On the other end of the spectrum from the *athletic* boy is the *aesthetic* boy: emotionally sensitive, gifted in art, music, theater, dance, or some other kind of art. He usually avoids athletics, getting dirty, and anything having to do with balls coming at him. He bonds eyeball-to-eyeball, connecting to others' hearts through their eyes the way most girls do, but they are not girls. And then, of course, there is everything in between.

In our culture, we tend to define masculinity in terms of the rough-and-tumble type ONLY, but I don't think God agrees, since He delights to create so many sensitive boys and those who are a balance between the two. In fact, even as toddlers, they can reveal themselves by responding to another child's upset by dropping what they're doing and going over to pat them, soothe them, and attempt to comfort them: "You okay? It's okay." This sensitivity is a beautiful thing to behold, but it can get a little boy in trouble. Since we define masculinity so narrowly, it is easy to marginalize and shame the masculinity of the sensitive boy. Especially if his daddy

is a rough-and-tumble sort of man who is flummoxed by a little boy who would rather Daddy read to him than throw a football.

If the sensitive boy is affirmed in his type of masculinity, he can grow up to be a phenomenal husband, father, pastor, counselor, artist, musician, dancer—the list goes on. When tomboy girls are loved and accepted by their parents just the way they are, they can grow up to be great moms and teachers and scout leaders, especially of boys. If, however, they are ostracized for the way they are designed, they can burn with the indignity of being "other than."

It's these sensitive, gifted boys that are most at risk for embracing a gay identity, especially when others wound them by slapping false labels on them, even from a young age: gay, queer, homo, fag. Tomboy girls, especially the ones gifted athletically, are quickly tagged with ugly false labels as well: lez, queer, gay. They can easily think, "What do others know that I don't know? If they say it, it must be true."

But it's *not* true. They're not gay, they're gifted. If only they could be helped to see themselves that way!

Our goal as adults should be to help all children grow into gender-secure, emotionally healthy kids who are glad God made them a boy or a girl, and are comfortable in their own skins just the way God made them. I think it starts with affirming the different kinds of masculinity and femininity. It's ALL good!

This blog post originally appeared at
blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/the_gender_spectrum
on January 4, 2011.

India’s Missing Girls and the Right to Choose

Rusty Wright and Meg Korpi reveal that female infanticide and feticide in India’s patriarchal culture stir passions for equality and fairness but raise troubling questions. Does favoring a woman’s right to choose logically imply that one supports her right to terminate a fetus simply because it is female?

Last summer, a farmer in southern India discovered a tiny human hand poking from the ground. A two-day-old baby girl had been buried alive. The reason? Much of Indian culture favors males over females, sometimes brutally so. The girl’s grandfather confessed to attempting murder because his family already had too many females; keeping this one would be too costly.

This wasn’t an isolated incident on the subcontinent according to award-winning filmmaker Ashok Prasad. Prasad spoke recently at Stanford University at the U.S. premiere of his BBC documentary “India’s Missing Girls.” Anti-female bias affects Indians rich and poor. Males can perpetuate the family name, bring wealth, and care for elderly parents. A female’s family typically must pay a huge dowry when she weds, often depleting family resources. A popular Hindi aphorism: “Having a girl is to plant a seed in someone else’s garden.”{1}

Female Infanticide and Feticide

Against odds, this baby survived, but social and financial pressures bring alarming rates of female infanticide and feticide (termination of a fetus). UN figures estimate 750,000 Indian girls are aborted every year.{2} Demographic studies reveal dramatically growing gender disparity since the 1980’s{3}; in some regions only 80 baby girls survive for

every 100 boys.{4} Many men cannot find wives.

Financial repercussions are typically cited as the reason for discarding daughters, but the decision is often an economic choice rather than necessity. Greater gender disparity occurs in wealthier states.{5} There families can better afford the sex determination tests and sex-selective abortions that, according to a report published by the UN Population Fund, are the main contributors to the decreasing proportion of female children.{6}

Adding to the offensiveness of sex-selective abortion: the fetus must be well-formed (15-18 weeks) before the sex can be detected using ultrasound-the common sex-determination technology. “India’s Missing Girls” includes brief, grisly footage of terminated female fetuses being lifted from a well belonging to a clinic that performed sex-selective abortions. After the discovery, outraged women’s groups protested in the streets; several such clinics were closed down.

The heartening side of the documentary is Sandhya Reddy, who runs a children’s home, cares for abandoned kids, and tries to persuade mothers to keep their daughters or girl fetuses. This angel of mercy brings love, care and opportunity to society’s young rejects.

“India’s Missing Girl’s” poignantly depicts where devaluing women can lead. The Stanford screening’s sponsors included feminist and women’s organizations, but feminists and nonfeminists, liberals and conservatives alike will be moved. An abbreviated 29-minute version on YouTube is worth watching, even if only the first 10-minute segment.{7}

Troubling Questions

To Western sensibilities, killing babies and terminating fetuses solely because of gender is abhorrent. Yet no Hitler masterminds this mass extermination of females. It results

from hundreds of thousands of personal decisions.

As the U.S. recognizes 35 years of *Roe v. Wade*, feticide's increasing contribution to India's missing girls raises a disturbing dilemma: Doesn't favoring a woman's right to free reproductive choice logically require supporting her right to terminate a fetus simply because it is female?

Important worldview questions emerge. Opposing female feticide seems to ascribe some sort of value to the female fetus. Is this value inherent because the fetus is female? If so, wouldn't equality require that we ascribe similar value to the male fetus because it is male?

Or is the fetus's value utilitarian, e.g., to ensure female influence in society or sufficient brides? Or is it merely economic-negative for Indian females, positive for males?

An enduring view of the fetus's value appears in Psalm 139. King David's worldview recognizes awe-inspiring biological intricacy fashioned by the Divine: You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex![{8}]

Inherently valuable? Socially useful? Economically consequential? Wonderfully complex? The troubling quandary still haunts: Can opposing female feticide be reconciled with supporting reproductive choice? The question demands a logically consistent answer from every thinking person.

Notes

1. Raekha Prasad and Randeep Ramesh, "India's missing girls," Guardian Unlimited, February 28, 2007, guardian.co.uk/india/story/0,,2022983,00.html; accessed January 18, 2008
2. Ashok Prasad, "Harsh reality of India's unwanted girls," BBC News, 22 October 2007, news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/this_world/7050657.stm;

accessed January 18, 2008.
3. Christophe Z. Guilmoto, “Characteristics of sex-ratio imbalance in India, and future scenarios,” Report presented at the 4th Asia Pacific Conference on Reproductive Health and Rights, Hyderabad, India, October 29-31, 2007. Published by the United Nations Population Fund www.unfpa.org/gender/docs/studies/india.pdf; downloaded January 25, 2008.
4. Prasad and Ramesh, loc. cit.
5. Using India’s 2001 census data for each state (www.censusindia.gov.in), we found strong negative correlations (-0.5 to -0.7) between various indicators of wealth and female-to-male sex ratios for children under 6.
6. Guilmoto, loc. cit.
7. www.youtube.com/watch?v=gf32d735VgE; accessed January 18, 2008.
8. Psalm 139:13-14 NLT.

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“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

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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