“Single Men Struggle, Too”

Dear Probe,

Even though I am a man, I found the article on the role of women (5 Lies the Church Tells Women) quite interesting. I especially enjoyed the section on the struggle/opposition faced by single women engaged career/ministry activity. Though perhaps not as intense, I have also found a similiar attitude toward single men with the verses saying a pastor should be the husband of one wife being taken out of context and meaning unmarried men aren’t fit for leadership either. It might be fruitful for Probe to conduct a similar study for singles.

Thank you for taking the time to share your response to my article! What an insight. It does seem, doesn’t it, that sometimes people in the church are better at excluding than making people feel like they belong. . . .sigh . . . . . I’m so sorry. The people with the anti-single-man attitude would probably have a problem with the Lord Jesus and the Apostle Paul as well!

Cheerily,

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“How Do We Discern God’s Will?”

Ray and Sue,

I was hoping I could take a few minutes to ask a question and

draw upon your experience and wisdom. It concerns knowing the will of God and faith and confidence. We have a decision to make in our family, and there are good reasons to believe we should go through with it, for the benefit of many of us. There are many factors involved: financial, relational, comfort, influence of the children, etc. And, though I may be convinced it is the right thing, there is still an uneasiness. Now, I know many of the principles of finding God's will:

- *What is righteous*
- *Peace after prayer / Clear feeling of direction*
- *Open and closed doors*
- *Blessing to others*
- *Wisdom of scripture*
- *Wise counsel (uh, that would be you guys!)*

My question is whether my uneasiness is a lack of faith. In studying science (and especially probability and statistics), we define confidence as a measure of certainty, and it is always somewhere on the continuum between 0 and 1, exclusive of the endpoints. So, I feel that I cannot say anything with 100% confidence, though I may approach that on the most serious issues in life. And when I want to determine the will of God in the gray areas, my confidence is much less than on things of which I'm doctrinally certain.

If it is a lack of faith, does this have spiritual implications I'm unaware of? I mean you can say I'm sure God exists, and I'm certain Jesus was raised from the dead. To some extent, though, my confidence is based upon my perception of these realities. Any my perception can always have a (remote) possibility of being false, right? The easiest person in the world to fool is myself (Richard Feinman). Even if I know God wants me to walk that tightrope, I may still have an uneasiness as I do it, right? Is this a lack of faith? What am I missing here? What are your experiences regarding this?

Thanks for your time. I'll be very appreciative of any insight you can throw my way.

Dear _____,

Good to hear from you. Glad to know God is leading you into places of uncertainty!

Let me explain. It sounds like you have availed yourself of godly wisdom and sound counsel. Your hesitancy is not so much a lack of faith as it is a normal human reaction to change. It's called fear! Stepping out of our comfort zone! When a soldier is asked after performing a heroic deed in battle if he was scared, he invariably says YES! Courage is not the lack of fear but the ability to do what is right in the midst of fear. Jesus Himself experienced the agony of Gethsemane. It wasn't a lack of faith He wrestled with, but the very real fear of separation from the Father. Once He was convinced that the path ahead was the will of the Father, He went ahead despite the fear.

Each time I was elected chairman of the elders at our church (two consecutive years), I experienced times of wrestling with God whether He really wanted me to do that. I was scared of not being able to measure up. I felt unqualified. But once I was convinced that this was His path, I was still scared and insecure but determined to follow His path for me regardless of the consequences.

I have found that this is precisely where God wants us so we can depend on Him and not ourselves. If we are fully confident in our own abilities and decision-making, then our confidence is in our own flesh and not in Christ. Sometimes we need to be put in a rather squeamish or uncertain position, so we can recognize that it got done by His grace, and God gets the glory and not us.

If God is leading you in an uncertain or slightly scary position or decision, that means He is giving you an

opportunity to grow. Will you trust Him or yourself? He won't shout or make it so plain as to be a no-brainer. He wants to see if you are listening to that still small voice despite the contrary noise of your flesh. I have never regretted stepping out when it didn't always make complete sense. The fear or uneasiness often doesn't dissipate until well after the decision is made and the results begin to show.

You are right to say that we are never entirely certain of anything. But that is not a lack of faith, just being human.

As a whole, I am firmly convinced that the church suffers today because too many are unwilling to face their fear or indecision and truly rely upon God and not themselves. I think you already know what is the course He wants you to follow. My advice is to make the decision knowing that at every step you are relying on Him and not yourself.

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin

Dear _____,

So good to hear from you, and thank you for honoring us with this question!! I loved what Ray wrote and mega-dittoes to him on everything he said. I just have one thing to add. . .

I think that when we have a decision to make, it's either between two good things OR between the right thing and the wrong thing (or possibly wise and unwise). If it's a choice between good things, we can choose either one and the Lord will be glorified and He will accomplish His purposes either way. In that case, it's been my experience that we don't necessarily get a super clear "YES, DO THIS AND DON'T DO THAT" kind of response from the Holy Spirit. Which can be a little unsettling because we want clear direction and instead what we get is the Lord saying, like a waiter opening the menu before you, "Choose whatever you want and you'll enjoy whatever you

choose.”

Then there’s the other kind of choice, which is between right and wrong or wise and unwise. I like to think of those as “red light/green light” kinds of choices. Either the Lord gives us a red light (“Stop! Don’t do it!” or a check in our spirit) or a green light, which is either a sense of being given permission or a lack of any constraint otherwise (and sometimes it’s a clear “Go for it!”).

So my question is, is your uneasiness due to a “red light,” in which case making that choice would be disobedience, or simply the reality that you’re not completely sure?

Sounds to me like it’s the second, which takes you back to what Ray said about the humanness of experiencing fear as we step outside of our comfort zone.

Hope this helps!

Warmly,
Sue

“The Real Problem in This World is People Like YOU!”

I just wanted to let you know I found it offensive how you describe satanism, buddhism, witchcraft or other religions as a “problem.” The real problem in this world are the people who believe their religion possesess the right to rule the entire planet and they are right and everyone else is wrong…do we try to change the world to reject christianity? In most cases (except the nutballs) no. But the tyranny of christianity finds it to be necessary to try to change everyone to its

ways. So much for tolerance…is it any wonder I converted?

Thank you for writing.

I find it interesting that you call our information "offensive" when you had to search it out and come to our server to find it and read it. There's a big difference between something being *different* from what you believe, and being *offensive*. If someone deliberately hurls obscenities or causes nauseating odors within a few feet of you, that's being offensive. But stating what we believe, especially when there is very good evidence that it is true, isn't offensive—even though you have the right to *take offense* at it. But that is your choice, one you have the right to make.

That said, let me address the content of your letter. I get the sense from the hostility of your e-mail that, quite apart from what you read on our website, you have been on the receiving end of some very unloving, disrespectful, manipulative messages on behalf of Christianity. If that is the case, let me say I'm sorry, and let me try to assure you that people who truly understand the person and message of Jesus Christ understand that no one can be coerced into being a Christian; it has to be a freely made choice. We understand that any attempts to "rule the entire planet" are foolish and completely misguided, because God doesn't work that way—He honors the dignity and choice of the people He made and loves very much.

I will admit, though, that yes, we do believe Christianity is right and all other religions are wrong, but it's not because we're so smart or so prideful or so arrogant. We believe it because there's strong evidence that it is true, it's our personal experience that it is true, and it is the world view that is most consistent with reality. We also believe it because of revelation: the belief that God has spoken to mankind and has shown us what is ultimately and eternally true, and we're just agreeing with what God said. If

Christianity were a man-made religion, as all other religions and faith systems are, then it WOULD be arrogant and self-serving to believe we are right and all others are wrong. But true Christianity is about relationship, not religion, about a love affair between the one true God, who loves us and courts us.

Because we do believe in absolute truth, and we believe that God has pierced the space-time continuum to show these truths to man, then it makes sense that other religions which deny these truths would be a true, cosmic-grade "problem," because those who trust in them are misguided, deceived, and headed for an eternity separated from the only One who can give them—give you!!—life.

Were you around when Jim Jones caused a holocaust at his cult compound in Jonestown, Guyana in 1978? He had hundreds of disciples drink Kool-Aid laced with cyanide. If one person had gone around warning the people not to drink the Kool-Aid because it was poisoned, that person would have been labeled a "problem," when actually the problem was the Kool-Aid (as well as the mind of the cult leader). I think there is a legitimate parallel between the Jonestown tragedy and what we are saying about other religions. I pray you will be intellectually honest and investigate whether the "spiritual Kool-Aid" you've been drinking is pure, or poisoned. And I pray you will be able to get past the hurtful, unfortunate experiences you've had with people who claim Christianity and check out the true Person of Jesus Christ. See if He's the real thing. You may find that what you converted FROM isn't true Christianity at all, but a sad, sad parody of it, that deeply grieves the heart of God.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“How Dare You Judge Edgar Cayce?!”

How dare you judge! I just read your article on Edgar Cayce and he was a Christian. How can you say just because he had a gift that you can’t explain that he must have been in an occult! God gives us gifts and that is something you can’t control so why would you say he was dealing with the devil? Everyone perceives the Bible differently and who is to say that your way is right and his way was wrong? I am Catholic and I believe that God gives us gifts and what you choose to do with them is up to you!

Thank you for writing.

Have you ever been pulled over for speeding? When the police officer said, “You were going 70 in a 55 zone,” did you say, “How dare you judge!”? Probably not, because the officer doesn’t judge the people he pulls over—he compares our behavior with the standard of the law.

The article on Edgar Cayce compares his behavior with the standard of the law that God set down in the Bible. Having been brought up Catholic, I do understand that your perception of the Bible is probably not as accurate as it could be. The Bible is far more reliable than many people think, but they haven’t taken the time to research it. God has spoken very plainly about what constitutes the occult, and Edgar Cayce clearly fell in that camp. He certainly did have a gift, but it wasn’t from God, because God’s gifts behave differently than Cayce’s.

I hope that if this really bothers you, you will study the Bible for yourself and see that it is a supernatural book, and

God has given us the Holy Spirit to help us understand it even further. It's not open to every person's individual interpretation, any more than the newspaper is. Different sections of the newspaper are to be read and interpreted differently, such as the comics, the front page, and the editorial page. The Bible is like that too, and the more familiar we become with it, the easier it is to tell the difference between the sections and the type of literature within it.

One more point: perhaps Edgar Cayce believed in God, but that didn't make him a Christian. The Bible says that the demons believe in God, too. What makes a person a Christian is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, when we realize that He died on the cross for OUR sins and we say "thank you" for His gift of eternal life.

Thanks for writing.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

"Did Nostradamus Predict the Destruction of the World Trade Center?"

A friend sent me these writings from Nostrodamus' Quattrains:

The book of Nostrodamus, called The Quattrains (The Centuries), he has repeatedly predicted the future over and over and over again, from centuries ago. Nostrodamus' prediction on World War III:

“In the first year of the new century and nine months,
From the sky will come a great King of Terror…
The sky will burn at forty-five degrees.
Fire approaches the great new city…”

“In the city of york there will be a great collapse,
Two twin brothers torn apart by chaos
While the fortress falls the great leader will succumb
The third big war will begin when the big city is burning.”

What is the story on Nostrodamus? Was he a prophet or someone with extraordinary psychic powers? Was he a Christian? Is it true that his predictions have been fulfilled with great accuracy over the years? I’m sure I’m not the only reader that would like to know the answers to such questions.

I am so glad you wrote. I know this “prophecy” is buzzing around the internet in the wake of the WTC/Pentagon terrorist attacks.

First of all, these quattrains weren’t written by Nostradamus. They were written by a Brock University student within the last decade as a fabricated example to show how anybody could write an obscure-enough, impressive-sounding prophecy. (See the Snopes report: http://www.snopes2.com/inboxer/hoaxes/predict.htm)

Secondly, Nostradamus’ prophecies were written in a very old French, and much depends on both the translation and the interpretation. Prophecies can only be understood in retrospect, and his “believers” work very hard to try to make his prophecies fit events. His writings are full of symbolism and obscure references that could be twisted to mean anything.

If his writings coincide with later historical events, it’s a matter of coincidence, not of writing history in advance like

inspired, scriptural prophecy. It is not true that his prophecies have been fulfilled with great accuracy. They have, however, been treated with great relish by those anxious to find a spiritual aspect to life without submitting to the True Author of actual prophecy!

Finally, I don't know if he was a Christian or not.

Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

"What Does It Mean for a Wife to Submit?"

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

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

Dear _____,

Biblical submission is a military term meaning "to arrange oneself under," the way a soldier places himself under the authority and leadership of his commander. God's plan is for male leadership and authority in the marriage relationship, the home and the church. . . and for men to lead, it's important for women to follow them. It does NOT mean being a

doormat or denying one's gifts, talents and passions; it means using those very things to help her husband be the best he can be and to help their family and home be and run most effectively.

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

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

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

feminism’s objection to the idea of women being submissive to their husbands.)

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

Are you a wimp? I don’t know and sure wouldn’t want to call you any names! <smile> Are you passively allowing your wife to dictate how things should be done in your home, instead of discussing things as equal partners? May I strongly suggest you read Stu Weber’s extraordinary book *Tender Warrior*, which Ray and I believe is the best book out there for men. In fact, the cover of the book is appropriately intriguing: “every man’s purpose, every woman’s dream, every child’s hope.”

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

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“Do Our Pets Go to Heaven?”

I have a dog that I love very much. She is starting to get old and will only be with me a few more years. Can you tell me if

our pets that we love and care about with all our hearts will be with us in heaven?

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

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

I should tell you that this is not a hill I'm willing to die on. If I'm wrong, that is perfectly okay with me. <smile> Perhaps there is a spiritual parallel to *The Velveteen Rabbit* where pets who are loved by people are made "real" in a forever sense. But if it turns out that pets will be in heaven after all, it will be by God's grace, because their presence can somehow add to God's glory and our worship. There is no loss in heaven, so if they are not, then we will be so joy-soaked and absorbed in the presence of God that we won't notice or be troubled by their absence.

Sue Bohlin

“What About the Witch of Endor Calling Up Samuel’s Spirit?”

I just read the Animism article. It states that Christianity specifically teaches against the existence of ghosts (spirits of dead people) in the world, and that dead people cannot communicate with the living and vice versa. What about the passage in I Samuel 28 with Saul and the witch of Endor? She calls up Samuel’s spirit to communicate with Saul.

The incidence in 1 Samuel 28 is one of two exceptions to the “no crossing over” boundaries in scripture, both highly supernatural miracles. The witch of Endor had no power to truly conjure up the spirits of dead people; that’s why she screamed in terror when Samuel actually appeared. It was God at work, not the witch or even the departed prophet responding to the summons. Samuel gave the word of the Lord to Saul, and his prophecy was fulfilled shortly thereafter.

The other miracle was when Moses and Elijah appeared along with a transfigured Christ to Peter, James and John (Matt. 17). The disciples did not summon the spirits of these dead saints; they were sent by the Father (probably to encourage the Lord Jesus).

The fact that there are two biblical exceptions, both of which required divine intervention to send departed spirits into this world, does not affect the truth that there is a “great gulf fixed” between the living and the dead (Luke 16:26). That’s the point of miracles: they are God-powered exceptions.

Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin
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 Shouldn't Talk About Evidence When the Subject Is Faith"

In your article "Evidence for the Existence of God," the link between the remarkable things about earth and God is called "faith." I believe in God. The author misuses the word "evidence."

The author takes away from issues of religion and faith by throwing in a reference to "Saving the Whales" because there are all sorts of flawed and fraudulent environmental agendas floating around by various groups and the true conservationists are not represented by these groups. "Saving the Whales" is fraught with political ramifications and does not belong in a commentary supposedly "proving" the existence of God. The title of this article is inaccurate and is a disservice to your organization.

Thanks for your comments about my article.

If I indicated that I was trying to "prove" the existence of God, then please help me see where, so I can change it. I don't think anyone can prove the existence of God, but we can

point to evidence for Him. I am very aware that our sinfulness makes it easy for people to dismiss perfectly good evidence of our Creator NOT because the evidence isn't good enough, but because they are disturbed by the implications of the existence of a God to whom we are all accountable.

My reference to "Saving the Whales" was simply to make the point that people resort to the moral argument regardless of their relationship to God, because our morality is ingrained in us as people made in the image of God. The politics of that movement really don't have anything to do with the point I was making; I was only concerned with the motivation behind it.

I do think that evidence and faith are not diametrically opposed. We have faith not just because we choose to believe, but because there is good reason to believe; and that constitutes evidence. I think Christianity is an evidential faith; that's why Jesus appeared to over 500 people after His resurrection, so there would be eyewitness testimony (evidence) of the foundation of our faith. For some, the faith comes first, and for others, the evidence comes first and THEN they put their trust in God. Either way, the important thing is the object of our faith and not how we got to Him.

Thanks for writing.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries