



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

“The Biblical Design of Gender, Part 7”

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Informed. Insightful. Intelligent.



The Biblical Design of Gender, Part 7

Genesis 17:15-19

15 Then God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name.

16 And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be from her.”

17 Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, “Shall a child be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?”

18 And Abraham said to God, “Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!”

19 Then God said: “No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him.

We attend Church to obtain the mind of Christ, meaning, to have the Bible illuminated in our minds so that we can clearly understand the principles that Jesus taught and base our daily personal decisions on those principles.

We come to Church because we want to be obedient to the Bible, which is the doctrine of Jesus Christ, in an informed, insightful and intelligent manner.

Our takeaway point in this series on the Biblical Design of Gender is that God has designed man as the cooperative coalition of husband and wife so that man can successfully achieve the objective that God has given us to exercise dominion over the earth, developing wisdom and knowledge in preparation for further responsibility in our eternal life.

In our last lesson, we discussed the episode of Abram, Sarai and Hagar. Sarai, in her frustration over her lack of ability to bear a child for Abram, suggested to Abram that he father a child by her slave Hagar. Sarai intended to adopt the child, but Hagar began disdainfully treating Sarai as a rival wife because Sarai was not able to become pregnant by Abram and she, Hagar, was. Sarai would not have had the problem with Hagar had she not suggested that her husband break God’s rule of monogamy, that a person should only have one spouse and should be sexually faithful to that spouse. Abram should have known better than to listen to Sarai about this, but his desire for a child overruled his good sense, so he fathered a child by Hagar and caused this problem in his family.

Thirteen years after the birth of Hagar’s child Ishmael, God appeared to Abram. **Genesis 17:3-6, 10, 12** records:

3 Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying:

4 “As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of



many nations.

5 No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations.

6 I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you.

10 This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised;

12 He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant.

In some cases God heals by divine intervention, but God also heals us by giving us instructions which, if followed, can cause us to avoid diseases altogether. I think that if we compare our actions to Biblical instructions, we will conclude that we could have sidestepped most of the problems, physical or otherwise, that we have had in our lives had we heeded the admonitions in the Bible.

It's interesting how sermon writing goes. Just this Thursday, as I was preparing this lesson, experts at the Johns Hopkins University released an interesting study, which gave strong evidence for a cause-and-effect relationship between circumcision and HIV risk reduction based upon three randomized-control trials in sub-Saharan Africa, where the circumcision rate is relatively low and the HIV infection rate is relatively high. All the studies showed more than forty percent reduction in HIV acquisition among circumcised men. "Our randomized trials have shown that male circumcision prevents HIV infection in men and protects their female partners from vaginal infections, especially bacterial vaginosis. It is possible that the virtual elimination of anaerobic bacteria by circumcision contributes to these benefits of the procedure," said Ronald H. Gray, the scientific paper's senior author.

In **Deuteronomy 7:15**, the Bible tells the Israelites, and us:

15 And the LORD will take away from you all sickness, and will afflict you with none of the terrible diseases of Egypt which you have known, but will lay them on all those who hate you.

Deuteronomy intentionally doesn't give the Israelites any specific information about disease reduction, because, as **Hebrews 11:1** tells us:

1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Although God gives us instructions that lead us to the best life possible, He generally does not explain the science to us. Once God gives us His instructions, He says, "It's up to you. You can either have faith in Me or not. If you demonstrate faith and follow My instructions, you will live well. If you fail to demonstrate faith and disobey My instructions, you will live poorly, and then you



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will die.” We show our faith in God by following His instructions because we will trust that His instructions will work, even if we have no scientific explanation for them.

I have explained the medical benefit of circumcision, but a question about circumcision remains. Why the eighth day? Medical research tells us that vitamin K is responsible for the production of prothrombin, which is a protein which causes blood to clot. If vitamin K is deficient, prothrombin will be deficient also, and an injury to a person deficient in vitamin K may cause hemorrhaging. Research indicates that a newborn males do not have a sufficient quantity of vitamin K until between the fifth and the seventh days of life. Drs. Holt and McIntosh, in their medical textbook, *Holt Pediatrics*, observed that a newborn infant has “peculiar susceptibility to bleeding between the second and fifth days of life.” Interesting. But why did God specify the eighth day for circumcision?

On the eighth day of life, the amount of prothrombin present is elevated above one-hundred percent of normal and the eighth day is the only day during life that Vitamin K and prothrombin levels are at their peak. Day eight is the perfect day to do surgery on an infant.

In his book, *None of These Diseases*, Dr. S.I. McMillen, MD observed:

We should commend the many hundreds of workers who labored at great expense over a number of years to discover that the safest day to perform circumcision is the eighth. Yet, as we congratulate medical science for this recent finding, we can almost hear the leaves of the Bible rustling. They would like to remind us that four thousand years ago, when God initiated circumcision with Abraham, Abraham did not pick the eighth day after many centuries of trial-and-error experiments. Neither he nor any of his company from the ancient city of Ur in the Chaldees ever had been circumcised. It was a day picked by God, the Creator of vitamin K (1984, p. 93).

Now, God arranged that the best day for a male to be circumcised was during his infancy because, before the advent of anesthesia, circumcision is a procedure that any adult male would be reluctant to undergo. But Abraham was called to have faith; he was not given the opportunity to be circumcised as an infant when he would be unaware of that which was going on. Abraham and the men in his camp had to submit to circumcision as adults. Abraham had to decide whether or not to believe God and allow the removal of a most sensitive area of his anatomy. And **Genesis 17:24-27** tells us:

24 Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.

25 And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.



**26 That very same day Abraham was circumcised, and his son Ishmael;
27 and all the men of his house, born in the house or bought with money
from a foreigner, were circumcised with him.**

Romans 4:3 tells us:

**3 For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was
accounted to him for righteousness.”**

Once God gives us His instructions, He says, “It’s up to you. You can either have faith in Me, or not. If you demonstrate faith and follow My instructions, you will live well. If you fail to demonstrate faith and disobey My instructions, you will live poorly, and then you will die.”

Abraham believed God enough to allow himself to be circumcised without an anesthetic. Abraham, however, had a much more difficult time believing
Genesis 17:15-16:

**15 Then God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call
her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name.**

**16 And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her,
and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be from her.”**

Hmm, said Abraham to himself, Sarai is nearly ninety years of age, and I’m nearly one hundred. God, are you sure? **Genesis 17:17 records:**

**17 Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, “Shall
a child be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah,
who is ninety years old, bear a child?”**

Abraham thought, God, Sarah and I and too old to have a child, and anyway, I have already made provision for my nation. I have a son. If you will just go along with my program, everything will be fine. **Genesis 17:18 records:**

18 And Abraham said to God, “Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!”

But, God is not interested in our modifications to His plan. He tells us, in **Hebrews 13:4:**

**4 Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators
and adulterers God will judge.**

Yes, I know that Abram was not your normal adulterer. Abram’s wife was the one that suggested to Abram that he make a child by Hagar. Yes, I know that in **Genesis 16:3**, the Bible refers to Hagar as Abram’s wife. Nevertheless, God rejected the child that Abram and Hagar produced, and did not approve of Abram’s relationship with Hagar. God changed both Abram and Sarai’s names in preparation of the birth of their child.

God changed Abram’s name, which meant ‘honored father’, to Abraham, which means ‘father of a great multitude’. The name change represented God’s promise to Abraham that his miracle child by Sarah would be Abraham’s descendent that would make him into a great nation. And once Sarah’s child is born, God will tell Abraham to send Hagar’s child away. **Romans 9:7-8** says, referring to the children of Ishmael:



7 nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, “In Isaac your seed shall be called.”

8 That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed.

The descendents of Abraham through Ishmael are not the descendents of Abraham to whom God was referring as the children of the promise. When I married my wife, I promised her that I would keep myself only unto her as long as we both shall live. My son Paul is the result of the promise that I made, and were I to father children by any other woman, although those children would be my children of my flesh, they would not be the children that I honored by giving their mother my promise.

Last week, in our question and answer period, I took a question about the reason for the saying that Black women raise their daughters and spoil their sons. The point that I tried to make in answer to that question was that, generally speaking, the parent that is the most influential in molding a child’s character when the child is in their adolescence is their same-sex parent. Thus, it is difficult for a single woman to raise a male child. As a matter of fact, I can remember that, one day when I was about eleven years old, I did something in school that was so bad that the principal called my mother to come pick me up, because they were putting me out of school for the rest of the day. Those were the days of corporal punishment, and I knew that I was going to get a whipping when we got home. But something in me rebelled. I was an exceptionally intelligent child, probably the most intelligent child that I had ever known, and I knew that defying my mother was probably not a good plan. So, I decided to take my whipping, but to frustrate my mother by just not reacting to the whipping.

So as my mother whipped me, I just laid there. When she saw my lack of reaction, she made me take off my clothes and whipped me some more. I refused to react. When she took a break from whipping me, my older brother tried to convince me to just cry and get it over with, but I refused. I just laid there and took the whipping without any reaction until finally, Mom had to quit because she was tired.

I’ve won, I thought to myself. Now I can do whatever I want to do, because I can take a whipping without reacting to it. Mom might as well never whip me again, and then what can she do? I have taken away her ability to punish me.

Or so I thought.

About ninety minutes later, I heard a key in the lock. Boy, I thought. That’s odd. Is Dad coming home early? I wonder why? He never comes home early. What’s going on?

As he came through the door, he called my name and told me to go into my room and take off my clothes. “But Dad”, I exclaimed, “Mom already whipped me.”



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Even with my exceptionally great intelligence, it never dawned on me that I could get two whippings for doing one thing. Maybe I wasn't as intelligent as I thought.

But I was right about one thing. Mom never whipped me again. She just let Dad whip me, because Dad's whippings made the point that hers couldn't.

Dad came home to whip me for three reasons. First of all, he whipped me so that I would be clear on the fact that I could not disobey in class. He was sending me to school to learn, not to cut up. Secondly, he whipped me because I was his child of his promise, and thirdly, he whipped me because Mom was the wife of his promise. Dad promised Mom that he would take care of her and of us, and nothing counts to an honorable man as much as his promise. **Numbers 30:2** tells us:

2 If a man makes a vow to the LORD, or swears an oath to bind himself by some agreement, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.

Although this is the Law of Moses, it is also a law of mankind. A man that casually breaks his word is less than a man. And there can be no more solemn promise than that which a man makes to the woman whom he weds.

Sarai was the wife to whom Abram's made his promise of marriage. But men that father children by women to whom they have not made the promise of marriage generally fail to wholeheartedly participate in the raising of the child, because there is no formal promise between the man and the child's mother. A man may tell a woman that a marriage license is just a piece of paper, and that he will commit to her without one, but generally speaking, the man is either mistaken or lying. God has designed women so that they are hormonally bonded to the man with whom they have sex. Unfortunately for women, God has not designed men with the same bonding hormone. God ordains marriage before sex because men are not bonded to a woman by a hormone, but by their commitment, and, to a man, having sex with a woman to whom he is not committed does not create a commitment. If I test drive a car, I am not committed to buy the car, but only to evaluate it and make a decision. Test driving the car, like having sex with a woman to whom I am uncommitted, is simply an activity, not a commitment.

If I make a commitment to buy a car, I commit to produce money in exchange for the car and the title to it. If the dealer does not produce the car I want, I feel no necessity to keep my word and provide the money. In the same way, men do not agree to marry women unilaterally; a man commits to provide a benefit to his woman because his woman commits to providing a benefit to him. **Numbers 30:2** tells a man that he should not break his word, but men consider that **Numbers 30:2** goes both ways in any commitment. After all, God's definition of man includes both male and female. In other words, I feel duty bound to keep my commitment do that which a good husband does as long as my wife feels



duty bound to do that which a good wife does. So any woman that expects a man to perform the duty of a husband to her should, first of all, obtain the husband's promise to do so, and the secondly, make sure that she performs the duty of a wife to her husband.

Abram had previously demonstrated his ability to let Hagar go, but Abram felt a commitment to Ishmael. In **Genesis 17:18**:

18 And Abraham said to God, "Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!"

But Ishmael was Abraham's child of the flesh, and God seriously does not approve of children of the flesh that are not children of the promise. God comprehensively addresses the issue in the ceremonial law that He gave to Moses. **Deuteronomy 23:2** records:

2 "One of illegitimate birth shall not enter the assembly of the LORD; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of the LORD.

Now, let me ask you. If a child is of illegitimate birth, is it the child's fault? No, of course not. The child is the result; the fault is that of the parents. So why is God so hard core about illegitimate children? Well, remember that whipping that Dad gave me? Dad came home from work early to whip me and the boss had to adjust his schedule to cover Dad's job. Somebody had to work overtime to get Dad's job done. Was it the bosses' fault or that employee's fault that I needed a whipping? Of course not. However, when we disobey God, we cause trouble in the world that God did not intend, and there is always collateral damage to those standing around that are affected by our sin.

Hagar, Abram's child Ishmael's mother, thought that Ishmael should have some status. Nonetheless, Hagar found out, to her sorrow, that Ishmael was illegitimate and would be rejected because Abram made the promise of marriage to Sarah, not her, and a godly man can only give one woman the promise of marriage. **Genesis 2:24** says:

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

Illegitimate children have to suffer the collateral damage caused by not being children of the promise. Illegitimate black boys are not at fault for their illegitimacy, but if they don't have a male parent or substitute to do the job that my Dad did, the chances are good that they will end up in trouble. Statistics indicate that eighty percent of men in prison have parents that were not married to one another. Quoting from the article, "Father Absence and Familial Antisocial Characteristics" in the 2001 Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology:

Families with fathers at home had fewer paternal, maternal, and child antisocial symptoms, and scored higher on multiple socio-economic status indicators, than did families with departed fathers. Antisocial characteristics were highest, and socio-economic status was lowest, when



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fathers could not be located or recruited (to participate in the study). Results suggest that requiring father participation (as in family-trio genetic designs) screens out the more antisocial families. Of clinical interest, antisocial behavior in any family member is more likely if the father is absent and nonparticipating. The heightened antisocial behavior in children associated with absent biological fathers was not mitigated by presence of stepfathers and was not accounted for by lower socio-economic status.

In other words, the child of the promise has a definite sociological, psychological and behavioral benefit over the child of the flesh. And God is the ultimate Father, who raised and empowered His Son of the Promise to perform the greatest mission in the history of the world, as **John 3:16-17** says:

16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

Just as God miraculously gave Abraham the son of the promise when he was one hundred years old and Sarah was ninety, God miraculously gives us Jesus the Christ, God's sinless Son of The Promise that we just read, who was born of a virgin, lived a life of miracles, healings and demonstrations of His Father's power, after which He was taken by the hands of sinful men, tried by the Jews, scourged by the Romans, and killed on Calvary's Cross. But three days later, God our Heavenly Father raised Jesus from the dead physically in His most public exhibition of power so that, twenty centuries later, we could believe and be saved, not just from sin, death, hell and the grave, but from the collateral damage caused by our failing to have faith in the teachings of the Bible and our disobedience to the Word of God.

John 3:16-17 is God's promise of everlasting life to us. Let us increase our faith in God's promise by submitting ourselves, just as Abraham submitted to circumcision and just as Jesus submitted to the Cross, as we submit to God's instruction to love one another as He loves us. Let us choose to keep our vows to love our spouses and raise our children, having faith that even if we do not feel motivated to love our spouse or see the results of our love being returned to us, that God is in control, and has promised us the ultimate benefit for keeping our word by following His Word. The promise of God and the reward for faithfulness is coming; let us persevere with patience until it arrives.

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