



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

“The Biblical Design of Gender, Part 12”

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Informed. Insightful. Intelligent.



The Biblical Design of Gender, Part 12

Genesis 24:2-4

2 So Abraham said to the oldest servant of his house, who ruled over all that he had, “Please, put your hand under my thigh,
3 and I will make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell;
4 but you shall go to my country and to my family, and take a wife for my son Isaac.”

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.

Throughout his life, Abraham has shown his ability to sacrifice his own plans to obey the plans of God. As a matter of fact, the only time that the record indicates that Abraham was displeased about changing his plan was when sent Hagar and Ishmael away to satisfy Sarah at the behest of God. It strikes me that every time Abraham is called, his response is, “Here I am”, which, to me, implies that Abraham is ready to do that which is required to fulfill the wishes of the person that called him. Abraham reminds me of Isaiah, who makes that point as he says, in **Isaiah 6:8**:

8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?” Then I said, “Here I am! Send me.”

But, in our text for today, Abraham is giving the orders. Abraham is concerned about Isaac’s future, and wants an appropriate wife for him. Abraham is concerned about Isaac’s acquisition of a good wife, because Abraham has lost his. In the chapter preceding our text for today, **Genesis 23:1-2** records:

1 Sarah lived one hundred and twenty-seven years; these were the years of the life of Sarah.

2 So Sarah died in Kirjath Arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan, and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.



Abraham needed to purchase a burial plot for Sarah and for himself. Because of Abraham's large number of armed battle-trained servants, the indigenous Hittites did not want any trouble with Abraham. So Ephron the Hittite offered to give Abraham the field of Machpelah as a proper burial place for himself and Sarah. Abraham did not take the gift, but paid Ephron the value of the field. This was the first piece of ground in Canaan that Abraham and his descendants owned. Eventually, Abraham's descendants would own the entirety of Canaan.

But before his descendants could own the entirety of Canaan, Abraham had to first have some descendants. Abraham did not want out-of-wedlock children, so to facilitate the continuation of his name, Isaac had to be married. Abraham sent his most trusted servant to find an appropriate wife for Isaac.

Why, you might ask, would Abraham send a servant to find a wife for Isaac? Well, because Abraham had two objective criteria to be used in the selection process. First of all, Isaac's wife needed to be a worshiper of God. Abraham had success because he had a partner who could agree with him to follow the instructions of God.

The Canaanite women that lived near Abraham's camp were not worshippers of God. The passage of Scripture that I am about to read occurs several hundred years later, but in it, God tells Abraham's descendants, the Israelites, to not worship as do the Canaanites. God says, in **Exodus 23:23-24**:
23 For My Angel will go before you and bring you in to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites and the Hivites and the Jebusites; and I will cut them off.

24 You shall not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do according to their works; but you shall utterly overthrow them and completely break down their sacred pillars.

And even during the time of Abraham, the Canaanites were not worshippers of God, so Abraham did not want his son mixed up with them. Paul echoes Exodus in **2Corinthians 6:14-18**:

14 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?

15 And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?

16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people."

17 Therefore "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you."

18 "I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty."



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Abraham wanted a believer in God from his own people as a wife for his son. **Genesis 24:2-4** says:

**2 So Abraham said to the oldest servant of his house, who ruled over all that he had, “Please, put your hand under my thigh,
3 and I will make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell;
4 but you shall go to my country and to my family, and take a wife for my son Isaac.”**

The second constraint was that Isaac had to live his married life in Canaan. To inherit Canaan, Isaac had to stay there, but Isaac could not marry a Canaanite. The woman that Isaac was to marry had to be a believer in God that would agree to leave her family and come to Canaan to live.

Abraham sent his servant to find a wife for Isaac. As a matter of fact, until relatively recently, marriages among the well-to-do were generally arranged by parents because parents have the ability and experience to determine the objective criterion for a marital selection, as did Abraham in this case, and the long term best interests of their son or daughter coupled with the emotional detachment required to make a good, objective selection. Now, parents still get involved with the process of selecting their child’s spouse in our day, but their involvement is generally more advisory, rather than actually selecting the mate as did Abraham’s servant. Marrying for emotional reasons rather than objective criterion is a relatively new concept in the course of human affairs, and is not a Biblical concept. Abraham wanted Isaac to have an objectively suitable wife, and sent his most trusted servant to procure a wife that met the objective criterion for Isaac.

Now, please allow me to digress for a moment. After our last lesson, we discussed the question of whether Abraham told Sarah about God’s command to sacrifice Isaac. Although the Bible does not specifically say one way or the other, let me give you some arguments about the issue that might point out the necessity of a married couple having the type of relationship that would allow them to share their innermost thoughts and plans with one another.

First of all, Sarah had experience with God. Twice she agreed to allow her husband to give her to other men, and twice God extracted her from the circumstance. After the miraculous birth of Isaac, Sarah had the firsthand experience with God required to know that, regardless of that which we do, God will bring His Will to pass. In **Genesis 17:19**:

19 Then God said: “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.

Sarah had God’s Word that Isaac would be part of the everlasting covenant, which would not be possible if he was dead. So, just as God made the



provision for Isaac to be born when she was at the age of ninety, Sarah knew that God had some provision in mind for the continuation of Isaac's life when He commanded Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. But Sarah did not only have confidence in God. She also had confidence in her husband, **1Peter 3:5-6** tells us:

5 For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, 6 as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.

Sarah was a submissive wife. She gave Abraham some pushback about Hagar and Ishmael, because Abraham put Hagar under Sarah's control. Nonetheless, Hagar and Ishmael would not have had to leave the camp had God not intervened on Sarah's behalf to tell Abraham to grant Sarah's request.

1Corinthians 11:3 tells us:

3 But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

Sarah was submissive, Sarah had experience with and faith in God, and Sarah knew that God would intervene with her husband to grant her desires, and she had God's promise that Isaac would have descendants. So Sarah was a mature wife, and Abraham could confidently share his command from God with his wife. The "c" portion of **Malachi 2:14**:

14 Yet she is your companion And your wife by covenant.

It is a most important point that if Abraham ever needed the comfort of his companion, it was at this time just before he was going to sacrifice his son. Not only comfort, but Abraham may have needed encouragement. When men have difficult things to do, they always do better if they are encouraged by their wives. As a matter of fact, that is the reason for wives in the first place. **Genesis 2:18** records:

18 And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him."

There is a serious problem in the marriage if either spouse can't provide emotional support to his or her partner when he or she most needs it. Anyone can be a fair weather friend, but a good spouse sticks by you through thick and thin, and especially when you have to make the hard decisions. So, if Abraham couldn't discuss his difficult decisions with Sarah, even the decision to follow the command of God and sacrifice their son, Sarah was defective as a wife, and I don't think that she was. And we need to think about this example before we find ourselves in a difficult situation, because if we find ourselves in a difficult situation that we cannot share with our spouses, our reluctance to share brings dissention to the marriage, because there is probably a person of the opposite sex somewhere with whom we will share the situation, and unless that person is our minister or psychologist, to share our lives with them rather than our spouse puts



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our marriage in a precarious position. Intimacy, be it emotional, psychological or physical, should be the exclusive venue of husband and wife.

Our belief structure is based, to a large degree, upon our experience, but experience is not necessarily destiny. That's where objective criterion comes in to the spouse selection process. If you have not selected a spouse, make sure that you select someone that has experience with God, as Abraham tells us in our text and Paul tells us in **2Corinthians 6**, so that when challenges come, you have a partner, like Sarah, that believes in God and can function from a position of faith.

But, back to Abraham's plans for Isaac's wife.

Godliness is the first criterion for being a spouse. The second one is willingness to do the job. No, let me change that. The second one is the desire to do the job. Desire is more important than willingness, because when the chips are down, willingness changes into won'tingness, but desire changes into determination.

If I truly desire to love my wife, I will do my best to take care of her.

Ephesians 5:25-29 tells me:

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,

26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,

27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

28 So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.

29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.

The Lord, our example, did a lot of nourishing and cherishing, as well as loving, as He gave His very life for the Church. If I love my wife as Christ loved the Church, I will be able to sacrifice myself for her, even to the point of giving myself completely.

If my wife desires to love me, she will listen to my instructions and follow them, even past the point of her understanding, **Ephesians 5:22-24** tells her:

22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.

24 Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

So if I have a track record of doing my best to take care of my wife, and if she has a track record of submissive cooperation with me, I believe that situations will generally not occur in which we cannot explain our reasonable



motivation for doing things to one another. That is, in my opinion, by the design of God, because He calls for the two of us to be equally yoked to one another and for the two of us to become one flesh. Occasionally, something analogous to Abraham's situation of being called by God to do something does occur, and in those cases, my wife can see that I have as much to give up as she does by obeying God. The characteristic of God's calls for sacrifice is that the pain of the wife is shared by the husband and vice versa, because we are one. God generally does not call us so that one of us has the advantage over the other. The sacrifice of Isaac, for instance, caused Abraham to lose as much as Sarah.

So, the criteria for spouse selection are allegiance to God and the desire to perform the role expected of a spouse. Interestingly, there are no other universal objective criteria.

In Abraham's specific case, an additional criterion was that the young woman had to be willing to leave her home, as did Sarah, to come to Canaan to be Isaac's wife. But the only universal objective criteria are an allegiance to Christ and the desire to perform the job. So, **Genesis 24:10-14** tells us:

10 Then the servant took ten of his master's camels and departed, for all his master's goods were in his hand. And he arose and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor.

11 And he made his camels kneel down outside the city by a well of water at evening time, the time when women go out to draw water.

12 Then he said, "O LORD God of my master Abraham, please give me success this day, and show kindness to my master Abraham.

13 Behold, here I stand by the well of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water.

14 Now let it be that the young woman to whom I say, 'Please let down your pitcher that I may drink,' and she says, 'Drink, and I will also give your camels a drink'—let her be the one You have appointed for Your servant Isaac. And by this I will know that You have shown kindness to my master."

In those days, drawing water was considered woman's work. The servant decided to go to a city in which the people worshiped God and to the place in which he could find women performing the tasks that women traditionally perform. I mentioned that one of the objective criteria was that the woman desired to do the work of a wife, and the easiest way to determine her desire was to give the woman a chance to do the work of a wife when it was not required of her. Abraham's servant had no expectation that the local women would water his ten camels; as a matter of fact, that was an extraordinary expectation to have of a woman that he didn't know and that had no allegiance to him. But the servant was checking the woman's motivation and he was asking God to lead him to Isaac's future wife.

And he found her. **Genesis 24:15-18** records:



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15 And it happened, before he had finished speaking, that behold, Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, came out with her pitcher on her shoulder.

16 Now the young woman was very beautiful to behold, a virgin; no man had known her. And she went down to the well, filled her pitcher, and came up.

17 And the servant ran to meet her and said, "Please let me drink a little water from your pitcher."

18 So she said, "Drink, my lord." Then she quickly let her pitcher down to her hand, and gave him a drink.

Not only did Rebekah give the man a drink, but she also addressed him in the way that would be befitting for a wife for Isaac. **1Peter 3:5-6** tells us:

5 For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, 6 as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.

So the servant saw the potential in Rebekah. As the Scripture continues, in **Genesis 24:19-20**:

19 And when she had finished giving him a drink, she said, "I will draw water for your camels also, until they have finished drinking."

20 Then she quickly emptied her pitcher into the trough, ran back to the well to draw water, and drew for all his camels.

So Rebekah met the criteria set down by the servant. The servant found the woman for which he was looking, and only needed to know whether she was part of Abraham's family. The servant gave Rebekah gold jewelry as a gift for drawing the water, and asked to be introduced to her family. Rebekah was in fact Abraham's relative; she was the daughter of Abraham's nephew Bethuel, which made her Isaac's cousin. Once the servant explained to Rebekah's family that he had come to acquire a wife for their rich uncle Abraham's son, they willingly agreed to let Rebekah go to be married if she desired to do so, and she agreed to go.

Now by our criterion, this was a quick decision, but arranged marriages can be a quick decision, because the people making the decision do so based upon objective criteria. Parents can investigate very quickly to tell whether or not someone meets the objective criteria to be a good spouse for their child, and when the objective criteria are met, the subjective, emotional criteria can be easily met by cooperation between the two getting married.

You see, God has a design for marriage, and the design has nothing to do with emotion. Emotional fulfillment is not the design for marriage; emotional fulfillment is the reward for following the design of marriage. It does not matter whom you marry as long as they meet the objective criteria; a man can fall in love with any woman that will do those things that he asks, and a woman can fall



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in love with any man that is willing to give himself for her as Christ gave Himself for the Church. But the emotional criteria don't necessarily match people as the objective criteria do. **Genesis 34:1-4** records:

1 Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land.

2 And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her and lay with her, and violated her.

3 His soul was strongly attracted to Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the young woman and spoke kindly to the young woman.

4 So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, "Get me this young woman as a wife."

Strong attraction caused Shechem to put the cart before the horse and consummate their relationship before dealing with the objective criteria. Shechem was prince of his land, and thought that his father the king could make the situation right and get him the girl. But it was not to be. Hamor and Shechem went to Jacob and his sons to request Dinah's hand and that the family of Jacob become part of their town and intermarry with them, the brothers pretended to go along, but they demanded that the men of the town be circumcised before they could allow any of them to marry their women. Hamor and Shechem agreed, as **Genesis 34:20-26** records:

20 And Hamor and Shechem his son came to the gate of their city, and spoke with the men of their city, saying:

21 "These men are at peace with us. Therefore let them dwell in the land and trade in it. For indeed the land is large enough for them. Let us take their daughters to us as wives, and let us give them our daughters.

22 Only on this condition will the men consent to dwell with us, to be one people: if every male among us is circumcised as they are circumcised.

23 Will not their livestock, their property, and every animal of theirs be ours? Only let us consent to them, and they will dwell with us."

24 And all who went out of the gate of his city heeded Hamor and Shechem his son; every male was circumcised, all who went out of the gate of his city.

25 Now it came to pass on the third day, when they were in pain, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, each took his sword and came boldly upon the city and killed all the males.

26 And they killed Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah from Shechem's house, and went out.

So it is not a good idea to ignore the objective criteria, as Hamor and Shechem found out.

2 Samuel 13:1-2 tells us:

1 After this Absalom the son of David had a lovely sister, whose name was Tamar; and Amnon the son of David loved her.



2 Amnon was so distressed over his sister Tamar that he became sick; for she was a virgin. And it was improper for Amnon to do anything to her.

Here is the case of Amnon, who fell “in love” with his half sister Tamar, and schemed to consummate a relationship with her. Amnon told David, his father, that he was sick, and needed Tamar to attend to him. David instructed Tamar to make Amnon a meal and take it to him, and when Tamar brought the food, Amnon overpowered her and raped her. But, **2Samuel 13:15-18** tells us: **15 Then Amnon hated her exceedingly, so that the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her. And Amnon said to her, “Arise, be gone!”**

16 So she said to him, “No, indeed! This evil of sending me away is worse than the other that you did to me.” But he would not listen to her.

17 Then he called his servant who attended him, and said, “Here! Put this woman out, away from me, and bolt the door behind her.”

When the emotion precedes the objective criteria, the result may not be so good. This incident caused a rift in David’s house, because Absalom, who was Tamar’s full brother, schemed against Amnon and killed him. Emotional attachments that form before the objective criteria are fulfilled lead people to do things that cause them trouble, but Paul tells us, in **1Corinthians 14:40**: **40 Let all things be done decently and in order.**

So Abraham sent his servant to take care of all of the objective criteria, and the servant brought Rebekah back to Isaac. **Genesis 24:66-67** records:

66 And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done.

67 Then Isaac brought Rebekah into his mother Sarah’s tent; and he took Rebekah and she became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death.

And that’s the decent order. Both Isaac and Rebekah met the objective criteria, their union was sanctioned by their families, so that there was no violence or dissention when they came together. Isaac was comforted and Rebekah had a new tent to decorate. And the moral of the episode is that, in the affairs of the heart, if you take care of the objective criteria, the subjective criteria will take care of themselves.

John 3:16 tells us:

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.

The objective criteria for salvation is faith in Jesus Christ. Just as we can be successfully married to anyone that meets the objective criteria, which are allegiance to God and the desire to perform the role expected of a spouse, God will save anyone that meets His objective criteria, whether they be male or female, black or white, rich or poor, oriental or occidental, hawk or dove, Democrat or Republican or Democrat. There is no subjective criteria than can



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stand between us and the objective love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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