



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

“The Biblical Design of Gender, Part 13”

February 21th, 2010
Pastor Darryl R. Curtis

Family Life Baptist Church
909 West Saginaw Street
Lansing, Michigan 48915
Phone: (517) 393-9399
Email: info@familylifebc.com
Website: <http://www.familylifebc.com>

Informed. Insightful. Intelligent.



The Biblical Design of Gender, Part 13

Genesis 25:27-28

27 So the boys grew. And Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field; but Jacob was a mild man, dwelling in tents.

28 And Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

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 episode, Isaac was comforted after his mother's death by the wife that his father's servant procured for him. Rebekah was Isaac's beautiful cousin from Abraham's homeland, and a young woman that fit into the family circle. And Abraham needed comfort after his Sarah's death, even as did Isaac.

Genesis 25:1-2 says:

1 Abraham again took a wife, and her name was Keturah.

2 And she bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah.

It is not good for a man to be alone, even if he is one hundred and thirty-seven years old, as was Abraham. And, old Abraham could still function.

Abraham gave Isaac six younger half-brothers to add to his one older half-brother, Ishmael. Ishmael had already been sent away from Abraham's camp so that he would not interfere with Isaac's inheritance. And **Genesis 25:5-6** records:

5 And Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac.

6 But Abraham gave gifts to the sons of the concubines which Abraham had; and while he was still living he sent them eastward, away from Isaac his son, to the country of the east.

Sarah was Abraham's wife, Isaac was Abraham's son, and, interestingly, the Bible records that the other children that Abraham fathered were considered the sons of their mothers, whom the Bible calls Abraham's concubines rather than Abraham's wife. The dictionary definition of a concubine is a woman that cohabits with a man without the benefit of marriage, one who lives with a man but has a social status less than that of a wife. So shacking up did not start in the



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

1970's; men have been living with and enjoying the company of women without the benefit of marriage since Genesis. And wives are generally jealous about their prerogatives when dealing with the child of a concubine. Abraham kept his commitment to Sarah even after her death, and treated Isaac, the son of the promise, as the only son. **Genesis 25:7-11** records:

7 This is the sum of the years of Abraham's life which he lived: one hundred and seventy-five years.

8 Then Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people.

9 And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, 10 the field which Abraham purchased from the sons of Heth. There Abraham was buried, and Sarah his wife.

11 And it came to pass, after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac. And Isaac dwelt at Beer Lahai Roi.

So Isaac took the place of Abraham in the Biblical account. Rebekah took the place of Sarah, even to the point that Rebekah was barren, as was Sarah. But **Genesis 25:21-23** tells us:

21 Now Isaac pleaded with the LORD for his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD granted his plea, and Rebekah his wife conceived.

22 But the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If all is well, why am I like this?" So she went to inquire of the LORD.

23 And the LORD said to her: "Two nations are in your womb, Two peoples shall be separated from your body; One people shall be stronger than the other, And the older shall serve the younger."

Sarah had the two children, a hairy child named Esau, which means hairy, and his twin brother Jacob, which means trickster. And, as the story progresses, we will see family dysfunction between these twins even as that we saw dysfunction between Ishmael and Isaac. **Genesis 25:27-28** records:

27 So the boys grew. And Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field; but Jacob was a mild man, dwelling in tents.

28 And Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

Abraham's children Ishmael and Isaac were not really rivals because they were born fourteen years apart and had two different mothers. The rivalry, in their case, was more between their mothers, as Sarah had Hagar run out of the camp.

Esau and Jacob, however, were twins with the same parents, but they had two different personalities. Esau was an outdoors fellow, a less domesticated man, while Jacob was a more of a homebody. Two children, two different personalities. People with similar personality styles and interests fit more easily with one another. Parents generally find it much easier to relate to children that share their interests and personality styles than children that do not.



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

Isaac grew up with a father who was a nomad, a man that did not put down roots, but wandered from place to place. After all those years in Canaan, the only land Abraham actually owned was his burial plot. Isaac grew up with his father, living off of the land, eating the wild game that he and his father hunted as they wandered. Rebekah, however, was a city dweller, as she grew up in the established Mesopotamian city of Nahor. Two parents, two different experiences.

Esau enjoyed wandering with his father, and developed the lifestyle of Abraham and Isaac, and the same taste for wild game. But, even as Isaac took his oldest son with him, Rebekah kept her younger son under her wing, and Jacob became the mild mannered domesticated man. So Dad, Isaac, had his son and Mom, Rebekah had hers. And that's the way their relationships developed.

Now, this is not a good thing. In any marriage, the primary relationship is to be between husband and wife. **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.

Now, husbands and wives are not born identical twins. Genesis tells us that spouses can become "one flesh" by joining with one another. To achieve this, the primary and most constant interaction for spouses should be with one another. But, when the spouses become parents, and have a child whose personality is a closer match to one of them than the other, the parent whose personality matches that of the child may decide to sow the bad seed of making his or her primary relationship with their child rather than with their spouse, which diminishes the continuation of the development of the marital bond. This inappropriate relationship can be easily rationalized by the fact that the parent is "only" raising their child, which is their responsibility. Should this happen, the child may actually become a buffer between husband and wife. Our text, **Genesis 25:27-28**, tells us that Isaac and Rebekah did this; Isaac's primary familial relationship was with Esau, while Rebekah's primary familial relationship was with Jacob.

Now, the fruit of this problem develops when the children grow up. If either or both spouses have a primary relationship with their child or children rather than their spouse, the parents may find themselves beset by that which psychologists call "Empty Nest Syndrome" when the children leave home. While spouses should continue primary bonding with one another while raising children, they may change direction and make their primary bond with their children rather than with one another. But the plan of God for children is that they are visitors in your home; long term visitors, but visitors nonetheless.

And at some point, visitors go home; in the case of children, they go to establish their own homes.



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

When the children leave, those with whom the spouses are primarily bonded are no longer there, and the lack of a bond between the spouses leads to this “Empty Nest” situation.

Just after my wife and I married, we made quite a few weekend trips to her mother’s house in Pontiac, MI. This was back in the 1970’s before churches had day care centers. My wife’s mother is a devout Catholic, and, as a dutiful husband, I accompanied both my wife and her mother to church. I saw quite a different seating plan in the Catholic Church than I saw in the Protestant churches that I normally attended, and I learned the meaning of “stairsteps” as it applied to children.

Generally, in the Catholic Church, most families had several children, and all of the members of a family sat in one pew. Dad sat on the end of the pew by the aisle, Mom sat next to Dad, the tallest child sat next to Mom, and the other children sat next to one another, with the height of the heads descending going down the pew.

Now, my previous church experience was completely different. Whenever I remember seeing a husband and wife in church together, the children generally sat between the husband and wife. If Isaac and Rebekah had taken their children to church, Isaac would have sat on the aisle with Esau next to him, Jacob next and Rebekah on the opposite side of the family.

As I studied the issues of marriage, I learned an adage that pointed out the seating difference to me. The adage was: “No one should ever come between a husband and a wife.” And I made that the case in the classes that I taught. I was teaching a Bible study one day, and a husband and wife were sitting side by side. There was one chair between them, as the wife had spread out several reference books to try to keep up with my teaching and needed more room than one person would normally need. Another woman, a preacher’s wife as a matter of fact, came into the class and, since she was late, she started to sit in the first available chair that she saw, which was the chair between the husband and wife.

I immediately stopped my lecture, because I saw the opportunity for a more important lesson. “I’m sorry”, I said to the preacher’s wife, “but you can’t sit there. I never let anyone sit between a husband and a wife. Now, if you just want to sit next to this woman’s husband, you can sit on his other side, but you can’t sit between them. I just don’t allow that.” Of course, the preacher’s wife was not actually making a play for the woman’s husband, but I just said that as a bit of humor to make the point stick. But no one, parents, children, relatives or friends, should ever intentionally come between a man and his wife. In **Matthew 19:4-6**, Jesus tells us:

4 And He answered and said to them, “Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’
5 and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be



joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh' ?

6 So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”

But children can sometimes come between a husband and a wife. One of the reasons that I recommend ballroom dancing as an activity for married couples is to avoid or repair the lack of a bond between spouses raising children. Dancing is physical, sensual, and it gives the partners a shared activity that leads to mutual pleasure and augments the creation of a bond. Dancing also demonstrates the molding of a marital bond in a public situation. I notice that, when my wife and I go dancing, unmarried women give full body hugs as a greeting to the unmarried men that they meet at the club. In fact, unmarried women give full body hugs as a greeting to the married men that they meet at the club. But, the unmarried women with whom I come into contact are very respectful of the relationship between my wife and me; they generally extend a hand rather than trying to hug me. And should a married couple decide to take up ballroom dancing, the spouses should dance with one another the majority of the time, if not exclusively. I do know of one married couple in which the wife decided to learn dancing and the husband did not. Their lack of a bond grew to an unbearable point, after which they divorced.

Of course, ballroom dancing is only one of many things that spouses can do together. But I think that dancing is unique as a shared activity because it requires the equal participation of both spouses. When, for instance, I watch mixed doubles in professional tennis, the winning strategy is to attack the woman, since she has the weaker strokes. Many other physical activities that spouses can share highlight the physical inequity between the spouses. But in dancing, neither partner has a stronger or weaker role; both partners are equally involved in the activity. As a matter of fact, I once read a quote that Ginger Rogers made after someone praised Fred Astaire for his complicated dance steps. Ginger said, “Well, I did all the steps that Fred did, and I did them backwards, and in high heels!”

So, my point is that no one should come between a husband and wife, be it emotionally, psychologically or physically. The marital relationship is designed to be every person’s primary relationship.

Unfortunately, Isaac did not get the memo. Not only did he allow his sons to split his house, He also allowed the potential for another man to come between him and his wife. **Genesis 26:1-3** records:

1 There was a famine in the land, besides the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went to Abimelech king of the Philistines, in Gerar.

2 Then the LORD appeared to him and said: “Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land of which I shall tell you.

3 Dwell in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; for to you and



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

your descendants I give all these lands, and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father.

So God instructed Isaac to stay in the land of the Philistines. Isaac had the Lord on his side, and he also had the military resources that his father left him, but **Genesis 26:6-7** tells us

6 So Isaac dwelt in Gerar.

7 And the men of the place asked about his wife. And he said, “She is my sister”; for he was afraid to say, “She is my wife,” because he thought, “lest the men of the place kill me for Rebekah, because she is beautiful to behold.”

Well, Isaac had no excuse for telling this lie, because he had the Lord on his side, he had his army on his side, and Rebekah was his cousin, not his sister, so he couldn't truthfully use his father's excuse. If Isaac was actually afraid, he was irrationally so. And Isaac wasn't that afraid, because he didn't actually give his wife to anyone or keep it a secret that he made love to her. **Genesis 26:8-11** records:

8 Now it came to pass, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked through a window, and saw, and there was Isaac, showing endearment to Rebekah his wife.

9 Then Abimelech called Isaac and said, “Quite obviously she is your wife; so how could you say, ‘She is my sister’?” Isaac said to him, “Because I said, ‘Lest I die on account of her.’ ”

10 And Abimelech said, “What is this you have done to us? One of the people might soon have lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt on us.”

11 So Abimelech charged all his people, saying, “He who touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.”

Although the Philistines didn't worship God, they did understand and respect the relationship between a man and his wife. Abimelech would have fit in nicely in my Bible study class, and I might have even been able to convince him to become saved. But, after a while, Abimelech didn't want Isaac around any more, as **Genesis 26:12-14, 16** tells us:

12 Then Isaac sowed in that land, and reaped in the same year a hundredfold; and the LORD blessed him.

13 [Isaac] began to prosper, and continued prospering until he became very prosperous;

14 for he had possessions of flocks and possessions of herds and a great number of servants. So the Philistines envied him.

16 And Abimelech said to Isaac, “Go away from us, for you are much mightier than we.”

I mention this to spotlight the irrational nature of Isaac hiding his relationship with his wife and the fact that even pagan men recognize that they



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

should leave your wife alone if they know that she is your wife. I reiterate: no one should come between a man and his wife, be they parents, children, relatives, friends or even strangers.

I hope that, one day, my son makes an intelligent choice of a young woman to marry, and I will give him whatever counsel that I can when he reveals his selection. But, my son is a grown man, and if he decides to make a choice with which I have an objective reason to disagree, after I present him with the objective Biblical information that makes me question his decision, I will then respect his decision. Ultimately, a husband and wife have to struggle with their differences, whatever they may be, to become one flesh.

And even if you marry the person who is the most objectively well matched to you, the possibility still exists that a situation will come along in which you or our spouse may choose to do something that would put your marriage at risk, as Isaac did when he lied to the men of Gerar. So, the key is to understand that the purpose of marriage is to promote an exclusively close and intense interpersonal bond between spouses and to further understand that any activity or relationship undertaken by either spouse that would undermine or deteriorate the close, intense, interpersonal bond between them is an activity or relationship that should be modified so that the marital bond is not negatively affected.

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. We cannot achieve the objective that God has given us if we do not cherish and nurture the cooperative coalition with our spouse.

I read a couple of counseling case histories in preparation for this sermon. In both of them, one spouse mistreated the other over a period of years. In one, the man was periodically unfaithful, having had several affairs over the course of the marriage. In the other, the woman was cold to her husband, and had cut him off from intimacy after their children were born. Neither marriage was immediately headed for divorce; in both cases, the partner that was originally not behaving well realized their sin and did their best to reverse their behavior and repair their marriage. However, in both cases, the partner against whom the other spouse sinned rejected their spouses' attempt to repent and improve their marital situation, but was determined to maintain their marriage while simultaneously holding a grudge.

In both cases, the prescription was the same. It was time for the aggrieved spouse to make a decision to either give up their grudge or to divorce, because there is no point in trying to create a cooperative coalition if one of the parties refuses to cooperate. And, as I said last week after reviewing the situation in the Garden, neither men nor women have a corner on sin. When we make wedding vows, we vow to love and to cherish until death do us part. Both men and women



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

can break that vow, and I would guess that if it was possible to develop the statistical data to compare bad behavior by marital partners by gender, you would probably find that the distribution between the genders would probably be fifty-fifty. There are probably as many cold, unresponsive wives as there are philandering husbands.

But, John tells us, in **1John 3:23**:

23 And this is [God's] commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as [Jesus] gave us commandment.

Jesus prayed, in **John 17:20-23**:

20 "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word;

21 that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.

22 And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one:

23 I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

These quotes are not specifically written to married couples, and Jesus is not specifically praying for married couples only, but these passages of Scripture certainly apply to married couples as a subset of those whom God is commanding and for whom Jesus is praying, because, as Paul tells us, believers are to be married to other believers. God tells Moses, in **Leviticus 19:18**:

18 You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.

Once again, this is not written to married couples in particular, but the population to whom it is written certainly includes married couples. Spouses should have more, not less, love for one another than they do for the general population. The two are to become one flesh, and as Paul says, in **Ephesians 5:29**:

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

So we are to nourish and cherish one another; we are to give up vengeance and grudges, we are to make every possible attempt to become one with one another. **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.

And that is the standard. God gave the most precious one that He had, His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, and sent Him to earth to suffer the persecution of the sinful men that He came to save. God did not send Jesus to the ignorant, to the pagans or the infidels, but God sent Jesus to the people to



whom He had previously given the prophecy that Jesus was coming. God sent Jesus to the people who were offering burnt offerings on the altar as a sweet smelling aroma representing the relationship between themselves and Him. God sent Jesus to the people that maintained His Temple, who believed in His Word, and who venerated His prophets. God sent Jesus to His chosen people in fulfillment of prophecy that He made to them of a coming Messiah.

But God's knowledgeable, chosen people killed Jesus. They persecuted Jesus, the Son of the God of Glory, and then put Him to death on the Old Rugged Cross. How much vengeance could God have extracted; how large of a grudge could God have held against those who killed His Son? But interestingly, **Acts 5:30-31** tells us:

30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree.

31 Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

Israel, the nation closest to God at the time, murdered Jesus, and because of their sin, God retaliated by granting them repentance and forgiveness of sins.

So that's the example of God. And if God provides us with the example of loving the people that voted to kill His son, we should at least be able to love one another, especially the person with whom we have taken wedding vows. And I think that that is the verifiable standard of godliness. **1 Timothy 5:8** tells us:

8 But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

And "providing for" is not restricted to making money. Spouses need one another to provide one another the loving human relationship that will make our earthly lives complete. So don't allow anyone to come between you and your spouse, emotionally, psychologically or spiritually, and love your spouse, even as Christ loves the church.

Pastor Darryl R. Curtis
Family Life Baptist Church