



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

“The Biblical Design of Gender, Part 17”

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The Biblical Design of Gender, Part 17

Genesis 30:1-2

1 Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister, and said to Jacob, “Give me children, or else I die!”

2 And Jacob’s anger was aroused against Rachel, and he said, “Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?”

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.

Anger has been a key topic in our last three lessons. After Jacob cheated Esau, Esau was angry enough with Jacob to threaten to kill him. And since Esau killed things for a living, Jacob and his parents decided that the best thing would be for Jacob to get out of Dodge. So Jacob travelled to his uncle Laban’s house, who then cheated Jacob by giving Jacob the ugly Leah to wed rather than the beautiful Rachel for which Jacob had worked for seven years. Jacob was angry at being given the wrong sister, but since Laban wanted to keep Jacob around, he mollified Jacob giving Rachel to Jacob as a second wife. So Jacob was mollified, having the good looking girl that he wanted, but now Leah was miffed, because she was married to a husband that didn’t want her, but rather, was in love with her little sister. So God intervened on Leah’s behalf. **Genesis 29:31** tells us:

31 When the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, He opened her womb; but Rachel was barren.

To compensate Leah for the lack of love of her husband, God gave Leah four sons by Jacob. Rachel had most of Jacob’s time and affection, God denied Rachel the ability to have children. So each wife had some part of her husband; Leah had his children and Rachel had his affection. But, Jacob’s affection for the beautiful Rachel did not satisfy Rachel because although Jacob preferred Rachel, Leah, Rachel’s sister had Jacob’s children. Our text, **Genesis 30:1** tells us:



1 Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister, and said to Jacob, “Give me children, or else I die!”

Death? That’s really dramatic. Who do you know that has died from NOT having children? Nevertheless, there is another person added to the list of ticked off people in this family. Rachel’s anger is of a particularly different kind. No one has wronged Rachel; she hasn’t lost an inheritance or a blessing, or been given a cross-eyed wife or a neglectful husband. Of all of the people in the story, she has the least of which to complain. But she complains anyway. **Job 5:2**, in the KJV tells us:

2 For wrath kill[s] the foolish man, and envy slay[s] the silly one.

According to God, an envious person is silly. There’s an old story about a dog whose master had given him a bone. The dog was on his way to a comfortable spot in which to gnaw on his bone, and, as he was travelling, he passed a pond. With his bone in his mouth, he looked down into the pond, and he saw a dog that looked like him, with a bone like his, in the pond. “He’s my size”, the dog thought. “But I’m a better fighter. I can take him, and when I do, I’ll have two bones.”

So the dog opened his mouth to bark so he could scare the dog that he saw in the pond, but then he watched, incredulously, as both of them lost their bones at the same time. Actually, he should not have been envious. The dog of which he was so envious was his reflection in the water.

God gives us each a certain blessing to enjoy, but if we spend time being envious of someone else’s blessing, we may lose the blessing that we have and end up being able to enjoy neither blessing. That’s the key behind monogamy. All of the wives represented here today are beautiful women, but I’ve decided to concentrate my attention on my wife, because she’s my blessing.

Marie and I once took a dance class in Grand Rapids. The instructors were a married couple from Detroit. The female instructor was a dancer. No, not like me, who picked up dancing in the last couple years; I mean a real dancer, one who could have danced professionally. Not only did she possess great dance movements, but she was built like a dancer; beautiful, with voluptuous body parts, long shapely limbs along with all of the creative mannerisms and movements of a professional dancer.

We established, during the beginning of the class, that although there were not enough men to go around, I would only be dancing with my wife. We stuck to that routine all throughout the class. Finally, at the end of the class, she wanted to give me a “final exam”. She said, “Just dance with me for the test, so I can tell how well you can lead.”

“Well”, I replied, “if you’re a real dance instructor, you’ll be able to tell whether or not I can lead by watching me dance with my wife.”



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And she could. She still asks me to dance with her every time we happen to see each other at some event, but she's just messing with me. She knows I'm not going to do it.

There's an outside chance that she may be a better dancer than Marie, and her husband is so much better than me that it isn't funny. But, I'm not envious of either of them. I've figured out that if I concentrate on improving that which I have rather than being envious of that which I do not have, I'll reach my potential much more quickly than I would by complaining about that which others have. I'm an old guy that just picked dancing up. I have no illusions that I will ever dance as well as them. But, I do anticipate that I'll be able to enjoy dancing with my wife to the fullest extent possible given my limitations, because I'm going to concentrate on being thankful that I can enjoy the dancing that I can do.

Colossians 3:17 tells us:

17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

God admonishes us to not be envious, or covetous of that which other people have. **Deuteronomy 5:21** tells us:

21 'You shall not covet your neighbor's wife; and you shall not desire your neighbor's house, his field, his male servant, his female servant, his ox, his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's.

God has given each of us the provision that He wants us to have, and the question is whether we are going to be content with that which God has given us and maximize it, or are we going to be envious of that which someone else has and covet it. If we are covetous of that which others have, we are disobeying the direct commandment of God. Paul reinforces this doctrine, in **Philippians 4:11-13**:

11 Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content:

12 I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

The quotation from Scripture "I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me," actually means that I am prepared to deal with abundance and good fortune with equanimity, or suffer any trial or tribulation while maintaining my focus of being grateful for the circumstances which God has given me.

To avoid covetousness, we have to maintain our focus on the future. If this life is all that there is, of course it makes the most sense to maximize our comfort here. If this life is all that there is, then it makes a great deal of sense to get all that you can from it; make as much money and have as many women as you can. But, our takeaway point for the series tells us that God has designed man to exercise dominion over the earth, for the purpose of developing wisdom and



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knowledge in preparation for further responsibility in our eternal life. When Jesus told the thief, “Today, you will be with Me in Paradise”, Jesus let us know that there is another land for which we are preparing, and that we will have to arrive in that land one day.

So, our focus, rather than being on the things of this life, should be on our eternal life. Both abundance and lack are experiences, given to us by God, to teach us the wisdom in the commandments of the Kingdom of God and to give us practice exercising dominion. And if we forget that which we are learning and decide to indulge our envious desires, we may find ourselves gaining some temporary trinkets at the expense of wisdom and knowledge. Actually, we may still gain the wisdom and knowledge, but the source of our knowledge may be a painful experience. That’s the point of the story of Lazarus and the rich man, as told by Jesus in **Luke 16:19-25**:

19 “There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day.

20 But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate,

21 desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

22 So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died and was buried.

23 And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

24 “Then he cried and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.’

25 But Abraham said, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented.

The sin is not in having the things, but in being so covetous of them that you begrudge abundance to others, as did the dog that lost his bone, and as did Rachel, who had the comforting love of her husband, but begrudged the comfort of children to her sister. Although Rachel is a young woman for whom it would be natural to want children, Rachel doesn’t want a child because of maternal instinct. She wants a child because her sister has children. Rachel has already won the competition; her husband wanted her first, loves her more and shows it by giving her all his attention. But Rachel does not simply want to win the game; she wants the game to be a shutout. So she gives Jacob a dramatic ultimatum that he has no way to fulfill.

And Jacob lets her know. **Genesis 30:2**

2 And Jacob’s anger was aroused against Rachel, and he said, “Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?”



Psalm 127:3 tells us:

3 Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward.

Mechanical and chemical methods of contraception notwithstanding, Biblical wisdom indicates that people have children because of the will of God. If the Lord wants you to conceive a child, you will, and if the Lord does not want you to conceive, you will not. And God did not want Rachel to conceive, so she didn't. Rachel knew that Jacob was able to father children, as he had fathered four by her sister, and Rachel should have realized that the problem with her lack of conception was neither her husband's lack of ability to reproduce nor the frequency with which they performed the act of marriage. Jacob could not fulfill Rachel's desire, as he had no control over the situation. Jacob was disappointed that his wife did not have this level of awareness, and was angry because she tried to shift the burden of her unhappiness to him.

And that's a key point. A man cannot be responsible, in most cases, for his wife's happiness. He can provide her with the creature comforts that are available to him, but her happiness is directly proportional to whether or not she decides to be grateful that that which he does. It is impossible for a man to do whatever a woman wants, because her desires change with her circumstances. Rachel's desire to have children was a function of her envy of Leah; she was not interested in the experience of having children, but only in being competitive with her sister. How can I tell this? **Genesis 30:3** records:

3 So [Rachel] said, "Here is my maid Bilhah; go in to her, and she will bear a child on my knees, that I also may have children by her."

The child that Bilhah was to conceive would be the child of a slave to Rachel; Rachel would neither bear the child nor nurse him, but Rachel would be able to count the child as one point in her competition with her sister. **Genesis 30:4-6** records:

4 Then [Rachel] gave [Jacob] Bilhah her maid as wife, and Jacob went in to her.

5 And Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son.

6 Then Rachel said, "God has judged my case; and He has also heard my voice and given me a son." Therefore she called his name Dan.

Well, God has not really judged in favor of Rachel; Bilhah has had a child, but Rachel is still barren. But Rachel is happy, although she is no more of a mother than she was before the child was born, and will have no more of the experience of motherhood as she would have had had Bilhah never conceived. As far as Rachel is concerned, the childbearing score is now four to one. And it's not about her husband, nor is it about the child, but it's all about the score, as **Genesis 30:7-8** tells us:

7 And Rachel's maid Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son.



8 Then Rachel said, “With great wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister, and indeed I have prevailed.” So she called his name Naphtali.

Rachel is not interested in bringing children into the world, but is simply wrestling with her sister. You may remember the situation caused when Sarah decided to have a child through the good offices of Hagar. Sarah was only marginally attached to the child, and once she had a child herself, she was ready to throw the child of her husband and her slave under the bus. And that’s understandable; the bond between a woman and a child is caused by the intimate contact between the child and the woman. If the woman does not participate in the intimate contact with the child, the bond does not form. So Rachel will count Dan and Naphtali as hers as long as she can use them in her competition with her sister, but the normal emotional bond between mother and child is not there. And Dan and Naphtali don’t bond Jacob to Bilhah any more than the four children bonded Jacob to Leah.

The physical act of sex does not emotionally connect Jacob to Bilhah; Dan and Naphtali, like Leah’s children, are of no special moment to Joseph. Before a child is verbal, the emotional connection of their parents is their main form of security, so Dan and Naphtali will probably be insecure children. Procreation in a relationship other than that which God has ordained has long range ramifications for more people than just the people procreating. So the children are just pawns in the game between Leah and Rachel, as **Genesis 30:9-13** says:

9 When Leah saw that she had stopped bearing, she took Zilpah her maid and gave her to Jacob as wife.

10 And Leah’s maid Zilpah bore Jacob a son.

11 Then Leah said, “A troop comes!” So she called his name Gad.

12 And Leah’s maid Zilpah bore Jacob a second son.

13 Then Leah said, “I am happy, for the daughters will call me blessed.” So she called his name Asher.

Now, Jacob has eight children by three women, but Jacob is only bonded with Rachel, by whom he has no children. And Jacob’s affections have not changed. He is still in love with Rachel and visits his other wives only when Rachel is indisposed. And since Jacob has two other wives from which to choose when his beloved Rachel is indisposed, he doesn’t have to spend time with the eye-challenged Leah, so Leah is neglected.

But suddenly, Leah acquires something with which to bargain. Leah’s son Reuben has found mandrakes in the field. Now, the root of the mandrake plant is believed to be an aphrodisiac from which a fertility drug can be extracted. When Reuben brought the mandrake to his mother, Leah realized that she didn’t need the powers of the mandrake, but that she could use the mandrake to obtain that which she really needed. So she went to see her infertile sister, and struck up a friendly conversation with her. As they were talking, Leah just happened to



mention that Reuben had procured a stash of mandrake root. Rachel was interested, as **Genesis 30:14** tells us:

14 Now Reuben went in the days of wheat harvest and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them to his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, “Please give me some of your son’s mandrakes.”

Well, Leah has the mandrakes that Rachel wants, and Rachel has the husband that Leah wants, so Leah proposes that they make a trade, as **Genesis 30:15** records:

15 But [Leah] said to [Rachel], “Is it a small matter that you have taken away my husband? Would you take away my son’s mandrakes also?” And Rachel said, “Therefore he will lie with you tonight for your son’s mandrakes.”

As I said, Rachel has Jacob, and she decides with whom he sleeps at night. And Leah doesn’t need an aphrodisiac or a fertility drug; Leah needs a man. Leah wants Jacob, and she gets him from Rachel. And once Leah gets Jacob, she knows what to do with him. **Genesis 30:16** records:

16 When Jacob came out of the field in the evening, Leah went out to meet him and said, “You must come in to me, for I have surely hired you with my son’s mandrakes.” And he lay with her that night.

But just because Leah gave Rachel some mandrakes, it does not mean that Leah gave Rachel all the mandrakes. It also does not mean that Leah has lost her connection with God. **Genesis 30:17-21** says:

17 And God listened to Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son.

18 Leah said, “God has given me my wages, because I have given my maid to my husband.” So she called his name Issachar.

19 Then Leah conceived again and bore Jacob a sixth son.

20 And Leah said, “God has endowed me with a good endowment; now my husband will dwell with me, because I have borne him six sons.” So she called his name Zebulun.

21 Afterward she bore a daughter, and called her name Dinah.

So, Leah is the undisputed, undefeated champion of motherhood with six sons and a daughter. Two sons each for the slave wives Bilhah and Zilpah give Jacob ten sons and a daughter, none of them by his beloved wife Rachel. But Rachel has matured, and she has proven her ability to overcome her envy and share her beloved Jacob with Leah. So God rewards her, as **Genesis 30:22-24** records:

22 Then God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb.

23 And she conceived and bore a son, and said, “God has taken away my reproach.”



24 So she called his name Joseph, and said, “The LORD shall add to me another son.”

Jacob finally has the son that he wants, a boy by his beloved Rachel. Joseph is clearly Jacob’s favorite, as the Bible tells us, in **Genesis 37:3-4: 3 Now Israel [that is, Jacob] loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age. Also he made him a tunic of many colors.**

4 But when [Joseph’s] brothers saw that their father loved [Joseph] more than all his brothers, they hated [Joseph] and could not speak peaceably to him.

It is an extremely negative thing for a father to favor one son over his others, because brothers need their father to be objective. Sons go to their mothers for emotional love and affection, but sons need their father to be an instructor and a measuring rod to guide them into masculine maturity. A father needs to evaluate his sons objectively and critique their behavior both fairly and correctly. A father needs to be the one from which his sons can get mature direction to put them on the correct path.

Playing favorites keeps a man from being objective, and brothers can generally tell whether or not their father treats them fairly or favor one brother over the other. And the brother who is not the favorite is generally angry about it. God admonishes fathers to not aggravate their sons by playing favorites, in **Ephesians 6:4:**

4 And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

And young men count on older men to be leaders. A father that lived in southern California had a daughter who was his pride and joy. She developed into a beautiful young woman that attracted the attention of a young man that seemed to be an upstanding fellow. After the young man graduated from high school, he got a job and began going to community college while courting the young lady. After a couple of years of working and going to school, the young man moved out of his parent’s home and rented an apartment. He invited his girlfriend to move in with him, and she came home to tell her dad.

At first, Dad was uncertain as to what to do. He liked the young fellow, and he didn’t want to alienate his daughter, but he knew that that which the young man proposed was wrong. His problem was that that which the young people wanted to do was also common, and Dad was not sure as to how his daughter and the young man would receive his disapproval.

He consulted his pastor, who agreed that the young people were only proposing that which was common for the times, but admonished the father that if he wanted them to think differently, he would have to communicate his disapproval to them in the strongest possible terms.



So the father called the young man and invited him over for dinner. Dad instructed his daughter to send the young man out back to his shed when he arrived. When the young man came over, Dad was sitting in his shed overlooking the canyon behind his southern California home, cleaning his shotgun. As the young man approached, the father waved him over and invited him to sit down. "Young man", the father began, "I used to have respect for you. You seemed like a nice, upstanding young man. But now, I understand that you want to make my daughter into an unpaid whore."

The young man's eyes got wide, and he was speechless for a moment. He began to stammer, but the father cut him off. "No, son", the father said, "I'll talk. You listen. If you had come to me with an honorable proposal of marriage for my daughter, I would probably have been favorably disposed to listen, but this shacking up business has lost you my respect. I just want you to know that I own this canyon back here, and, as you can see, I also own a gun. Now, I'm not generally a violent fellow, but there is no telling the amount of anger that I will feel if you treat my daughter disgracefully, and I'm not sure what I might do if I lose my temper. It will take them a long time to find someone back here."

As the father glared at the young man, the young man regained his equilibrium enough to speak. "Sir", he replied, "I meant no disrespect to you or your daughter. I like her a lot, and a lot of guys live with their girlfriends. I just thought..."

And the father cut him off. "I'm going to give you the benefit of the doubt", he said, "because maybe you didn't know. But I'm telling you, there will be no shacking up with my daughter without consequences. Are we clear?"

"Yes, sir" said the young man.

"Now, we are going back in the house and have a nice dinner", said Dad, "but I don't want to hear any more of this shacking up talk ever again. When you reach the point that you are ready to propose marriage, come and see me, but just remember; whatever you do to my daughter, I'm going to do the same thing to you. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir", said the young man.

Needless to say, the two of them never shacked up, and are now engaged to be married.

Young men need older men to teach them the ways of the world and to keep them in check, which is why fathers ought not provoke their sons to wrath by treating them badly, but ought also to let them know when they have crossed the line in no uncertain terms. Sons reach a point in which they have to pull away from their mothers to become men, and they need an alpha male, meaning a male that is clearly and primarily in charge, to take over their training. Boys without fathers also need an alpha male, which is why it is good that so many of them are on athletic teams, or become Eagle scouts. Of course, in the worst case scenario, the young men find their alpha male in a gang and end up in



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prison, which is also staffed by alpha males who instruct young man as to what to do. And a lot of big boys turn into men after a stretch in the joint.

But all males need someone who is alpha to guide them. Even Jesus Christ needed an alpha male when He considered the Cross. In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus appealed to the His Father for a pardon from the sacrifice, but God gave Jesus His marching orders. Jesus responded in **Matthew 26:42: 42 Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, “O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done.”**

And Jesus did what His Father instructed Him to do and went to the Cross. He suffered, bled and died, on the instruction of His Father, that our sins might be forgiven and that we might have a right to the tree of eternal life that Adam rejected in the Garden of Eden. **John 3:16-17** 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.

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 the fellow in California laid out the path for the young man, and God laid out the path for Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ lays out the path for us. We can be saved by believing in the teaching of Jesus Christ and following His instructions, and there is a consequence for those that reject the word of the Son and the Father's wisdom. So let us reject the wisdom of the world, listen to the wisdom of God, and follow the path laid out for us by the Lord Jesus Christ.

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