



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

“The Biblical Design of Gender, Part 21”

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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 21

Genesis 38:11

11 Then Judah said to Tamar his daughter-in-law, “Remain a widow in your father’s house till my son Shelah is grown.” For he said, “Lest he also die like his brothers.” And Tamar went and dwelt in her father’s house.

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.

Our last lesson chronicled the episode of Dinah and Shechem, in which the sons of Jacob killed and plundered Shechem and the men of his city because Shechem seduced their sister Dinah into sexual immorality.

Jacob wasn’t particularly concerned with his sons or their sister, and as the boys lacked Jacob’s concerned leadership, they developed into a gang of angry, aggressive young men. The Bible record indicates that Joseph, Jacob’s favorite son, was the only son that was not part of the gang. This was true because of Joseph’s special relationship with his father. Joseph had to suffer with his brothers’ wrath, even as did Shechem. **Genesis 37:3-4** records:
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 his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him.

Joseph had Jacob’s concern and affection because Joseph was Rachel’s son, and Rachel was the one woman that Jacob wanted as a wife. Jacob’s father-in-law tricked him into marrying Leah. Jacob conceived children with Zilpah and Bilhah as the function of a competition between Rachel and Leah, but Jacob never wanted either one of them. So Jacob ended up fathering ten children by three women for whom he did not care, but he had one child whom he loved by the woman that he loved.

It is interesting that some 70% of sociopaths come from fatherless homes as do 80% of the men in prison. Father absence produces many consequences



similar to the symptoms of sociopathy – early, precocious sexuality; an antagonistic, deprecating attitude toward the opposite sex; a lack of interest in bonding with a durable, stable mate; an aggressive acting-out; excessive boasting; and risk-taking behavior. Furthermore, sociopaths tend to reproduce themselves, that is, they produce more than their own their share of illegitimate offspring themselves

And even if the father is physically present in the home, indifference by a father is emotionally equivalent to the absence of a father. Children need the involvement of a male parent, not just his presence. As a child, would you have preferred that your father was absent from your public exhibition of ability, or would you rather that your father attended your exhibition but was uninterested in it?

So, for his sons other than Joseph, Jacob was physically there, but uninterested. Jacob's other sons participated in the activities of the family, but Jacob's love for Joseph and disinterest for the others warped them.

Because of his love for Joseph, Jacob took the time to transmit his reverence for God and his ability to plan to Joseph. After spending personal time with Joseph in dedicated religious teaching and leadership development, Jacob appointed Joseph to supervise his brothers, although Joseph was the youngest of the brothers. Jacob recognized that Joseph's youth would cause his brothers to have a certain lack of respect for him, so Jacob made Joseph's job to report any of his brothers' infractions of the rules back to him. Of course, this chafed the brothers, so they conspired to take out their father's lack of respect and love for them on Joseph. Joseph was on his way to Dotham to supervise his brothers who were taking care of the flock, when his brothers saw him coming. **Genesis 37:19-20, 23-28** records:

19 Then they said to one another, "Look, this dreamer is coming!

20 Come therefore, let us now kill him and cast him into some pit; and we shall say, 'Some wild beast has devoured him.' We shall see what will become of his dreams!"

23 So it came to pass, when Joseph had come to his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the tunic of many colors that was on him.

24 Then they took him and cast him into a pit. And the pit was empty; there was no water in it.

25 And they sat down to eat a meal. Then they lifted their eyes and looked, and there was a company of Ishmaelites, coming from Gilead with their camels, bearing spices, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry them down to Egypt.

26 So Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is there if we kill our brother and conceal his blood?

27 Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh." And his brothers listened.



28 Then Midianite traders passed by; so the brothers pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.

The brothers took Joseph's tunic from him because it was a symbol of their father's lack of love for them and sold Joseph into slavery as revenge for his oversight of them. Then, they dipped the tunic in lamb's blood and sent it back to Jacob. **Genesis 37:32-35** records:

32 Then [the brothers] sent the tunic of many colors, and they brought it to their father and said, "We have found this. Do you know whether it is your son's tunic or not?"

33 And he recognized it and said, "It is my son's tunic. A wild beast has devoured him. Without doubt Joseph is torn to pieces."

34 Then Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his waist, and mourned for his son many days.

35 And all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, and he said, "For I shall go down into the grave to my son in mourning." Thus his father wept for him.

Leah's son Judah, the ringleader of the effort to get rid of Joseph, could not stand to have his father continue to focus attention of Joseph to the exclusion of himself even after Joseph was gone. So Judah left the camp and struck out on his own, as **Genesis 38:1-2** tells us:

1 It came to pass at that time that Judah departed from his brothers, and visited a certain Adullamite whose name was Hirah.

2 And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua, and he married her and went in to her.

Interestingly, the Hebrew words that the Bible uses to describe the liason between Dinah and Shechem are almost identical to those used by the Bible to describe the liason between Judah and Shua's daughter. The difference between the two experiences is that Jacob's sons objected to Shechem marrying Dinah, but Shua did not object to Judah marrying his daughter. And just as Esau violated Isaac's command to marry in the family because Jacob was Isaac's favorite, Judah married outside of the family because Joseph was still Jacob's favorite, although Jacob thought that Joseph was dead. Favoritism of parents generally causes a reaction in the children.

Of the union of Judah and Shua's daughter, three sons were born, Er, Onan, and Shelah. The episode fast-forwards to the time when Judah's oldest son is old enough to marry, and Judah obtains Tamar as a bride for Er. But Er was such a bad fellow that the Lord killed him, so Judah, following the custom of Levirate marriage, commanded Onan to marry Tamar, impregnate her and name the child for Er. **Deuteronomy 25:5-6** codifies this practice:

5 "If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the widow of the dead man shall not be married to a stranger outside the



family; her husband's brother shall go in to her, take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her.

6 And it shall be that the firstborn son which she bears will succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel.

It is not good for a man to be alone, and God made women for men. So God uses this statute in his law to make provision for women who are widows to still have husbands and families. But **Genesis 38:8-10** records:

8 And Judah said to Onan, "Go in to your brother's wife and marry her, and raise up an heir to your brother."

9 But Onan knew that the heir would not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in to his brother's wife, that he emitted on the ground, lest he should give an heir to his brother.

10 And the thing which he did displeased the LORD; therefore He killed him also.

Onan refused to perform the duty of a husband to Tamar, and the Lord killed him for it. This episode occurred during an era in which marriage, following by child bearing and taking care of a family was the normative case for women. A woman's status was derived from the size of and her attentiveness to her family, as we can see in the childbearing competition between Rachel and Leah, in which Leah was unloved, but derived her status from the fact that the Lord gave her seven children.

In this agrarian society without the administrative and clerical jobs produced by industrialization, a woman relied upon her husband and sons to provide the material support for her. The woman, for her part, provided the emotional and domestic support for the family. And, in order to function optimally, the family unit required, and actually still requires, emotional and domestic support as well as financial.

Before 9/11, when you could actually go to the airport, stand in the terminal, look out of the windows and see planes without purchasing a ticket, a man took his son to the airport to look around. On their way to look at the planes, the father and his son passed a pilot in the terminal walking by in his suit and tie with his briefcase. "Ooh", said the little boy, "who is that?"

"That's the pilot", said the father. "He's the one that flies the plane." The little boy continued to watch the pilot until he was out of sight. Then they continued to the window to look at the planes. The little boy saw a man with a wrench, with grease on his hands and face, working on the plane.

"Who is that guy with the grease on his face?" asked the little boy.

The father decided to teach a lesson. "He's the mechanic. He's just as important as the pilot", said the father.

"What does he do?" said the little boy.

"He makes sure that the plane is working right so that it doesn't crash", said the father. "Without the mechanic, it wouldn't be safe for the pilot or the



passengers to fly in the plane. For the plane to work properly, you need the mechanic to make sure that the plane is working correctly just as much as you need the pilot to fly the plane.”

The same thing is true of families. **Ephesians 5:22-23** says:

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.

So the husband is the pilot. He’s the one that flies the plane. But if something goes wrong at 30,000 feet, the pilot can’t get out and fix the plane. If the mechanic fails to do his job, the plane will crash and the pilot and all the passengers will get killed. And although the wife may not be the pilot of the family, she is no less important to the proper functioning of the family than the mechanic is to the proper functioning of the plane, which is why **Ephesians 5:25** tells us:

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

And since Onan failed to live up to his obligation to his wife Tamar, the Lord crashed his plane.

Er and Onan are dead because of their sinfulness. But, as people often do, Judah failed to properly evaluate the cause of his sons’ deaths, and chose to blame the situation on Tamar, as she had been married to both of them and could be accused of being the common denominator. But the fact that two things happen in succession does not mean that the first thing that happened caused the second. Tamar married Er and he died, and then Tamar married Onan and he died, but Tamar didn’t kill either one of them or cause them to be killed.

Nevertheless, Judah did not want to risk his third son, Shelah. Maybe the deaths of Er and Onan weren’t Tamar’s fault, but why take a chance? Our text, **Genesis 38:11** tells us:

11 Then Judah said to Tamar his daughter-in-law, “Remain a widow in your father’s house till my son Shelah is grown.” For he said, “Lest he also die like his brothers.” And Tamar went and dwelt in her father’s house.

Fortunately, thought Judah, Shelah was too young to marry Tamar. And maybe, by the time Shelah was old enough to marry, something might happen to Tamar. So Tamar, after having been the wife of two men, was sent back home to her father’s house, ostensibly to wait for Shelah to grow up. But when Shelah grew up, Tamar would see Shelah out at the club; he was young and single and loved to mingle, but neither Shelah nor Judah ever called her for the wedding.

Now time was passing, Tamar’s childbearing years were going by, and she didn’t have a husband. Tamar wanted a pilot and some passengers for her plane. She was keeping the plane in good mechanical condition, but she needed a pilot to do some flying. None was forthcoming, so she waited. Then a sad event occurred, as **Genesis 38:12-13** records:



12 Now in the process of time the daughter of Shua, Judah's wife, died; and Judah was comforted, and went up to his sheepshearers at Timnah, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite.

13 And it was told Tamar, saying, "Look, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep."

Generally speaking, wives didn't go on sheep shearing expeditions with their husbands. The men went to work, and the wives stayed home and took care of the house and children. Now, generally speaking, the schedule for commercial air travel calls for turnaround trips, meaning, that when pilots fly planes to airports other than the plane's home base, the mechanic at the home base is supposed to certify that the plane can both make the trip and return home. However, in certain cases, the pilot might decide to call a mechanic from the other airport to check out the plane and fix it. And there are mechanics available at every airport.

Judah is going to the airport at Timnah, and Tamar knows that he just lost his mechanic and Judah's plane may be in need of some repair. So Tamar gets her tools together and decides to go meet Judah. **Genesis 38:14** records:

14 So [Tamar] took off her widow's garments, covered herself with a veil and wrapped herself, and sat in an open place which was on the way to Timnah; for she saw that Shelah was grown, and she was not given to him as a wife.

Tamar needs to have a conversation with Judah, because Judah owes her a husband and some children, so she decided to meet him on the road to discuss matters. However, both Judah and Tamar actually had a different kind of discussion in mind. **Genesis 38:15-16** records:

15 When Judah saw her, he thought she was a harlot, because she had covered her face.

16 Then he turned to her by the way, and said, "Please let me come in to you"; for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law.

Well, Tamar went there for a conversation, but maybe this situation will work out better. She needed a man, she wanted children, she was pledged to be married but her husband was not forthcoming, and her husband's father was coming on to her. Maybe I can kill two birds with one stone, Tamar thought. So she decided to go along with the program. But she was smart enough to cover her bases, as **Genesis 38:16-19** records:

16 So [Tamar] said, "What will you give me, that you may come in to me?"

17 And [Judah] said, "I will send a young goat from the flock." So [Tamar] said, "Will you give me a pledge till you send it?"

18 Then [Judah] said, "What pledge shall I give you?" So [Tamar] said, "Your signet and cord, and your staff that is in your hand." Then [Judah] gave them to [Tamar], and went in to her, and [Tamar] conceived by [Judah].

19 So [Tamar] arose and went away, and laid aside her veil and put on the



garments of her widowhood.

This is really an interesting setup as far as Tamar is concerned. Judah is supposed to provide a husband for Tamar so that she can have children and a family. But Judah isn't giving Shelah to Tamar, so Tamar lets Judah take Shelah's place and give her the children that she wants to have himself. And she seduces Judah into identifying himself as the father of her child. A signet is a small official seal for legal documents. A person's signet is personal to them, and now she has Judah's signet.

Now, this is not exactly the way that God planned the situation to occur, but, just like in the garden, when we sin, we have prepare for some unexpected consequences. Judah didn't really want anything to do with Tamar, since he had lost two sons that had been married to her, but a fellow without the comfort of a wife is subject to forget that which the Lord tells him to do. **Genesis 2:18** tells us: **18 And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him."**

And **Genesis 2:18** says that for a reason. **Genesis 2:18** says that it is not good for a man to be alone because it is not good for a man to be alone. Sooner or later, every plane needs a mechanic.

And so, now that Judah has had his engine tuned up, he flies to Timnah, shears his sheep, and brings the wool back home. When he gets home, oh, by the way, he has a little matter to which he must attend. He has to pay his mechanic and get his signet back. **Genesis 38:20-23** records:

20 And Judah sent the young goat by the hand of his friend the Adullamite, to receive his pledge from the woman's hand, but he did not find her.

21 Then [the Adullamite] asked the men of that place, saying, "Where is the harlot who was openly by the roadside?" And they said, "There was no harlot in this place."

22 So [the Adullamite] returned to Judah and said, "I cannot find her. Also, the men of the place said there was no harlot in this place."

23 Then Judah said, "Let her take [the signet, cord, and staff] for herself, lest we be shamed; for I sent this young goat and you have not found her."

Strange. There was a harlot in the place the day I was there, said Judah to himself. Well, I have done my part. If she ever shows up with my signet, I'll give her a goat, but hey, I did what I was supposed to do and I have witnesses to it.

Well, Judah, you sort of did what you were supposed to do. You weren't really supposed to deny your daughter-in-law a husband, but you did that. You weren't really supposed to go in to harlots, but you did that. You were supposed to pay your bills and you tried to do that, but don't let the fact that you paid your prostitute for sex make you think that you are some type of righteous person. You are paying for doing something that you ought not do. **1 Corinthians 10:6-12** tells us:



6 Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.

7 And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.”

8 Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell;

9 nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents;

10 nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer.

11 Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

Verses seven and eight of this passage speak directly to that which Judah did. Prostitution was originally designed as part of idol worship, and in places like Corinth, each idol’s temple was accompanied by that which we would call a house of ill repute, in which rather than making donations, men paid their tithes to the ritual prostitutes in return for sexual intercourse, which was their act of “worship”. If you didn’t know that, maybe now you realize why the Israelites were so easily seduced into idolatry and why God hates idolatry so much.

And that’s what Judah thought he was doing with the harlot by the side of the road. Going in to ritual harlots is part of the practice of idolatry and the goat was to be sacrificed to an idol god. So Judah can’t claim righteousness for making a donation to an idol god. **Isaiah 64:6** tells us:

6 But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away.

And Judah will eventually have to face his iniquity. But in the meantime, **Genesis 38:24** tells us:

24 And it came to pass, about three months after, that Judah was told, saying, “Tamar your daughter-in-law has played the harlot; furthermore she is with child by harlotry.” So Judah said, “Bring her out and let her be burned!”

Finally, said Judah to himself, I can get rid of this woman that has been hanging over my head to kill my last son. I know that I was supposed to give Shelah to her, but I didn’t want him to die. Now I finally have a solution to my problem, and the Lord gave it to me. I can cover up my sin and use the Bible to judge hers. But Jesus tells us, in **Luke 6:37** tells us:

37 “Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

It is always bad when we use the Bible to condemn others. **John 3:17** tells us:



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

God does not give us His Divinely inspired Word to condemn others, but to show them the error of their ways so that they might be saved. But we forget and allow our arrogance to lead us away from Christ and from personal purity into the judgment of others because it is far easier and more satisfying to point out the sins of others than to look at our own.

But Judah, as the father-in-law, has it within his rights to judge Tamar. And Tamar doesn't protest Judah's judgment. Not at all. She just sends Judah a message. **Genesis 38:25** records:

25 When she was brought out, she sent to her father-in-law, saying, "By the man to whom these belong, I am with child." And she said, "Please determine whose these are—the signet and cord, and staff."

In **John 8**, the Pharisees asked Jesus if they should stone an adulteress, just as Judah wanted to burn Tamar for adultery. And, in **John 8:7**:

7 So when they continued asking [Jesus], He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first."

Tamar simply says, "I have sinned. Am I the only one?" And Judah found himself having to admit that he has no justification for judging Tamar, as he sinned against her first. **Genesis 38:26** records:

26 So Judah acknowledged them and said, "She has been more righteous than I, because I did not give her to Shelah my son." And he never knew her again.

And Jesus has come to tell us that we are all as an unclean thing, and all of our righteousnesses are as filthy rags in the sight of God, but God has chosen to forgive all of our sins. All of our sins were paid for by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross of Calvary, in which he suffered, bled, and died so that our sins, though they be many, might be forgiven. And Jesus commands us to put our self-righteous feelings aside, forgive one another and love one another, even as the Lord has forgiven us. No, this is not a suggestion, this is a command. Jesus tells us, in **Matthew 18:23-35**:

23 Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants.

24 And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents.

25 But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made.

26 The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.'

27 Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.



28 “But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, ‘Pay me what you owe!’

29 So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’

30 And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt.

31 So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done.

32 Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me.

33 Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?’

34 And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.

35 “So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.”

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.

So let us forgive, and let us love one another, as Christ has loved us.

Pastor Darryl R. Curtis
Family Life Baptist Church