



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

“The Biblical Design of Gender, Part 31

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Informed. Insightful. Intelligent.



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Numbers 25:16-18:

16 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:

17 “Harass the Midianites, and attack them;

18 for they harassed you with their schemes by which they seduced you in the matter of Peor and in the matter of Cozbi, the daughter of a leader of Midian, their sister, who was killed in the day of the plague because of Peor.”

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.

After our father’s day diversion, let us return to our chronology of Biblical male/female relationships. The next episode is one of seduction. **Numbers 25:1-3** tells us:

1 Now Israel remained in Acacia Grove, and the people began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab.

2 They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods.

3 So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel.

In God’s original commandments to the Nation of Israel, He tells them, in **Exodus 20:3-6:**

3 “You shall have no other gods before Me.

4 “You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth;

5 you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me,

6 but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.



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The second clause of the fifth verse of the twentieth chapter of Exodus is extremely interesting. God tells us, in Exodus 20:5, that He is jealous. Jealousy is understood as a human emotion, but to think that God is jealous is interesting. Understand God's position vis a vis the nation of Israel.

As we know from our earlier Biblical travelogue, God gave the patriarch Joseph the plan to save Egypt from starvation during the great seven year famine. The plan turned Egypt into an empire that ruled that part of the world for three centuries. Then, a Pharaoh that did not know the history of his own land came to power. This Pharaoh did not realize that the blessing of God upon Joseph's people was the cause of his own prosperity. This Pharaoh that did not know Joseph decided to enslave the Israelites, and use them to build vast temples to his idol god, which was he himself.

Now, none of us is actually omnipotent, meaning, all powerful. None of us is actually omniscient, meaning all knowing. None of us can actually control the future; the best we can do is to pray that the Lord will be in the plans with which we come up. So, none of us actually is God, and the arrogant Egyptian Pharaoh was no exception. He found out, much to his chagrin, that in a competition with the true God of Heaven, he was helpless before blood, frogs, lice, flies, disease on his livestock, boils, hail, locusts, darkness and the death of all of the firstborn males in Egypt.

And God kept this Pharaoh from realizing that his arms were too short to box with Him until the Egyptian kingdom was destroyed and the Egyptian army was drowned in the Red Sea while his former Israelite slaves watched. Moses and the Israelites did not destroy the Egyptians; they just watched. **Exodus 14:13** tells us:

13 And Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever.

Israel was saved from Egypt because of the power of the Lord, not the military might of the Israelites. The Lord rescued Israel because He wanted them to be His people. **Exodus 19:3-6** records:

3 And Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel:

4 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself.

5 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine.

6 And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel."

And the children of Israel, who saw the salvation from Egypt that the Lord



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had given them by drowning the Egyptians in the Red Sea, responded, in **Exodus 19:8:**

8 Then all the people answered together and said, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do.” So Moses brought back the words of the people to the LORD.

And God held up His end of the covenant. God showed his love for Israel by delivering them from Egypt. God gave Moses to Israel to bring them into the Wilderness of Sin for the journey to the Promised Land. God gave Israel the greatest system of laws in the history of the world as guidelines for their nation and a sacrificial system that allowed them to offer animal sacrifices to atone for their sins. God fed the entire nation of Israel daily with manna, a wafer-like substance that fell from heaven each morning. The Israelites collected the manna and munched on it as they wandered, since they could not farm the wilderness as they passed through it. God allowed Moses to strike a particular rock, and the rock yielded sufficient water for the two million of so of them to drink, bathe and perform any other task for which water was needed.

So God miraculously met the needs of the Israelites in the wilderness. What did God ask in return? Love. And love, to God, meant that the Israelites recognize and be grateful for the great things we have just enumerated that God did for them. God told them, and us, in **Deuteronomy 7:9-11:**

9 “Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments;

10 and He repays those who hate Him to their face, to destroy them. He will not be slack with him who hates Him; He will repay him to his face.

11 Therefore you shall keep the commandment, the statutes, and the judgments which I command you today, to observe them.

This call from the Lord and response from the people is analogous to a marriage vow between the Lord and the people of Israel. God wanted an exclusive relationship between Israel and Himself. God’s design for marriage is that the marital union be an exclusive relationship 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.

Men and women are constructed as are fingers and thumb on the hand. The hand is one body part, but the fingers close into the palm of the hand from the opposite direction of the thumb to allow the hand to grasp objects. The thumb and the fingers are designed differently to make the hand functional when its parts are working together. This difference is known as a division of labor.

And it goes without saying that the division of labor depends on the fingers and the thumb being available to work with one another. A man missing fingers



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or thumb is crippled, because he lacks one of the parts required to make his hand function as originally designed.

God tells us, in **Genesis 2:18**:

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

In other words, to just have fingers is not a good situation. You need a thumb in order for the hand to work as designed. In the case of the hand, God physically attached the parts to one another. In the case of mankind, for purposes of reproductive diversity, God chose to separate the male and female parts and allow them to come together voluntarily. And then, once the male and female parts agree to come together, they have to voluntarily work together to achieve their objective.

So the purpose of the man and woman is to work with one another. A woman is as different from the man as a thumb is from a finger, but she is to work with the man as a thumb works with the fingers to make the hand functional. Each man is to select a certain woman with which to work, and once the man and woman agree on that decision, God says that the two of them are one flesh.

We often look at relationships through the wrong end of the telescope. A fellow with whom I am marginally acquainted told me of a negative interaction that he had with his wife. "You know", he told me, "that woman was born on CP time. She can never be on time to anything. I had an important social engagement with my boss, and she held me up trying on clothes. She looked good in the first outfit she put on, but she couldn't stop trying on clothes until finally she made me late."

"How's her cooking", I asked him.

He stopped, and then he frowned and looked at me as though I was too dumb to follow the conversation. "Well", I repeated, "how is her cooking?"

"Her cooking is fine", replied the fellow, "but she wasn't cooking at the social engagement. We were going as guests."

"I understood that", I said, "but if you have a wife that can cook, you have a blessing. If, rather than focusing on her faults and complaining, you chose to focus on that which she does well and compliment her, it would make you feel better. You are tense and getting angry sitting here talking to me about her, but if you were to focus on some great dinner she made you recently, you would have a completely different perspective.

"What is the point of making yourself feel bad?" I continued. "Everyone has faults. If you focus on the negative to the point which you can't stand it any more and decide to get rid of her, there will be something wrong with the next woman that you get, because something is wrong with all of us.

"But if you focus on that which is lovable about her, you will fall more in love with her", I said, "and that's my point. I'm always looking for some reason to



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love my wife, because she is the only wife that I have and it is better for me to feel good about her than to feel annoyed and displeased.”

Think about your hands. You can't easily replace your fingers or your thumb. But you can get a manicure, work on your hand strength with weights, take piano lessons to improve your manual dexterity, or do any number of other things to improve your hands. We can't improve our spouses as easily as we can our hands, but the best thing we can do to improve them is to increase the amount of love that we show them, because, generally speaking, the more you show love for someone, the more they will try to reciprocate. But it just might be that you have to show love first, like priming a pump, in order to get the other person's love water flowing.

God holds the position that once the decision for the man and woman to become one flesh is made, that decision ought not be altered, modified or changed. Cooperation in marriage is analogous to fingers and thumb on the hand, and people generally do not swap out their fingers. Jesus teaches, in **Matthew 5:31-32**:

31 “Furthermore it has been said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’

32 But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.

The permanence that God intends for marriage is defined in verse 32 of Matthew chapter 5. The only acceptable reason for a man to divorce his wife is because of her sexual immorality. And in discussing this with the religious leaders, Jesus makes it clear, using the law of primary reference, that this is the case. In **Matthew 19:8-9**:

8 [Jesus] said to them, “Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.

9 And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.”

A couple of weeks ago, we discussed the Old Testament ritual for a man who suspected his wife of adultery without any proof. The man was to take his suspicions to the priest, who prepared bitter water for the woman to drink. If she was guilty of adultery, the water would cause her belly to swell and her thigh to rot. **Numbers 5:11-15** tells us:

11 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

12 “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘If any man's wife goes astray and behaves unfaithfully toward him,

13 and a man lies with her carnally, and it is hidden from the eyes of her husband, and it is concealed that she has defiled herself, and there was no witness against her, nor was she caught—



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**14 if the spirit of jealousy comes upon him and he becomes jealous of his wife, who has defiled herself; or if the spirit of jealousy comes upon him and he becomes jealous of his wife, although she has not defiled herself—
15 then the man shall bring his wife to the priest. He shall bring the offering required for her, one-tenth of an ephah of barley meal; he shall pour no oil on it and put no frankincense on it, because it is a grain offering of jealousy, an offering for remembering, for bringing iniquity to remembrance.**

The spirit of jealousy spoke of in verse 14 is the husband's suspicion of his wife's infidelity. The husband does not have proof that his wife has been unfaithful; she may not in fact have been. But the husband thinks that she has been unfaithful, and God designed the aforementioned test so that the man could ascertain whether or not his wife had actually been unfaithful.

So human jealousy in the Bible has to do with unfaithfulness in marital relationships. Just imagine how you would feel if someone cut off your fingers or your thumb. Your hand would be non-functional, and you would be in a great deal of pain. That's analogous to the jealousy that you would feel if your spouse was unfaithful to you.

But God is jealous as well. The jealousy God feels when His people choose to worship other gods is analogous to the jealousy of marital unfaithfulness. You don't want your fingers or thumb cut off; you don't want your spouse to be unfaithful, and God does not want His People to worship idols or other gods.

Once we make the marital commitment to a spouse, God considers that commitment sacred. By the same token, when we make a commitment to God, He considers our relationship with Him to be sacred. But the problem in our generation is that since we no longer look at either marital relationships as sacred, we don't think of our relationship with God as sacred.

I can remember, when I was a child, watching a television program called "Divorce Court". The show was a chronicle of actual divorces. At that time, a divorce could only be obtained if one spouse could prove that the other spouse was sufficiently at fault in the marriage. This required something more than just "falling out of love" with one another; a divorce required one spouse to prove, with evidence in court, that the other had committed adultery, abandonment, a felony, or other similar acts. And the accused spouse could use a variety of defenses, including the accusation of "so did you". A judge often either found that the respondent had not committed the alleged act or accepted the defense of the spouse being sued, found both spouses at fault for the dysfunctional nature of their marriage and, in either case, did not grant the divorce. In those days, a divorce was not a slam dunk; you had to prove your spouses' unfitness to be a spouse.



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But people refused to see their marital commitments as sacred despite the requirement to find legal fault with their spouse to obtain a divorce. And divorce lawyers, bless their hearts, began to advise their clients as to how to bypass the evidentiary requirements. One such method was referred to as “collusive adultery”, in which both sides agreed that the wife would come home at a certain time and discover her husband committing adultery with a “mistress” obtained for the occasion. The wife would then swear to a carefully tailored version of these facts in court. The husband would admit a similar version of those facts. The judge would convict the husband of adultery, and would generally grant the couple the divorce that they were seeking. Both the husband and the wife actually perjured themselves, but the judge and the courts winked at their wrongdoing in order to allow them to obtain that which they wanted.

Then, California codified this wrongdoing into their law.

In 1970 California instituted “no-fault” divorce, in which either spouse could simply obtain a divorce without having any reason. The idea spread to all of the states in the Union, and, after 40 years of no-fault divorce, marriage is no longer considered a sacred commitment by most people in our society. I counseled one couple that I thought was particularly ill-suited to marry, and the prospective husband agreed with my assessment. “But if it doesn’t work out”, he responded, “we can always get a divorce.”

The commitment implied by a marriage license no longer exists, and a marriage license is no longer worth the paper upon which it is printed, since, because of no-fault divorce, a marriage can be mutually or unilaterally dissolved on a whim.

And there is societal fallout. Since marital commitment is worthless, any other commitment that we may make is worthless as well. As a nation, we are currently going through an economic downturn that was caused by people making commitments to repay mortgage loans without a reasonable expectation that they would be able to repay, and then casually forsaking their obligation. If we can invalidate the most intimate commitment that we make on a personal whim, we completely forsake Jesus’ admonition for us to only agree to that which we intend to do, given in **Matthew 5:37**. The New Century version reads:

37 Say only yes if you mean yes, and no if you mean no. If you say more than yes or no, it is from the Evil One.

The evil one is the author of our words if our “yes” is actually a “no”. And we can see his influence in the case referred to in our text. **Numbers 25:1-3** tells us:

1 Now Israel remained in Acacia Grove, and the people began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab.

2 They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods.



3 So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel.

Israel was betrothed to God, but the devil, the “evil one”, used the sexual favors of the Moabite and Midianite women to tempt the people of Israel to adulterously worship the idol god Baal. In order to enjoy the blatant sexuality of the Moabites and Midianites, many of the men of Israel decided to forsake God and worship Baal, notwithstanding the fact that God consistently kept His end of the marriage ratified by Israel in **Exodus 19**.

But God does not believe in “no-fault” divorce; God defines unfaithfulness as that which it is, and is jealous because of His unfaithful bride. And God’s jealousy did not allow Israel’s unfaithfulness to slide. **Numbers 25:4-5** tells us:

4 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Take all the leaders of the people and hang the offenders before the LORD, out in the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may turn away from Israel.”

5 So Moses said to the judges of Israel, “Every one of you kill his men who were joined to Baal of Peor.”

The wages of sin is death, and the jealousy of God called for the death of the sinners. But some of the Israelites were not aware of God’s wrath. **Numbers 25:6** records:

6 And indeed, one of the children of Israel came and presented to his brethren a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.

“Why are you crying?” said the man of Israel. “While you are busy at the tabernacle killing animals and throwing their blood on the altar to worship God, look at this woman that I have received by worshipping Baal. Isn’t Baal better than that god that brought us out of Egypt?”

Like the Israelite man, in our society, people campaigned for the implementation of no-fault divorce. They argued that no-fault divorce was a good thing; since this is a free country, anyone that wanted a divorce should be free to obtain one without having to perjure themselves. Of course, they did not foresee the commitment problems that no-fault divorce would cause in the greater society, because all they could focus on was that which they and their clients wanted in the short term. To live by the fact that God hates divorce and that Jesus said that we should keep our commitments, especially our marital commitments, required anticipating a long term benefit that was beyond their capability to appreciate when faced with the opportunity to being able to divorce their wives at will.

The devil’s plan for us is remarkably consistent. He always tempts us to forsake joy in the long term in order to obtain pleasure in the short term. He offers us the benefit of a big lead at halftime although he knows that God’s team will catch up in the fourth quarter and win the game. And we often fall for it.



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Pleasure so blinds us that we are unable to see that the devil's plan for a halftime lead is not sufficient to win the game. And Jesus tells us, in **Matthew 7:13-14**:

13 "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.

14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

The narrow gate is analogous to the difficult way, while the broad gate is analogous to the easy way. Disciplining ourselves, which is the difficult way, leads us to life. By rejecting divorce we have to opportunity to persevere through trials and create a relationship that will stand the test of time. Doing that which we want, which is the broad way, leads us to destruction. Obtaining a divorce makes divorce our primary solution when something in our situation is not to our liking. The divorce culture makes people more and more self-centered, and unable to sustain a marital relationship at all. Thus, 70% of Black women are unmarried. But we can have that which we want in the short term, just as the Israelite man wanted a temporary relationship with his Midianite mistress.

Unfortunately for the Israelite man with the Midianite woman, his relationship with her did not prove to be as pleasurable as the man had hoped.

Numbers 25:7-9 records:

7 Now when Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose from among the congregation and took a javelin in his hand; 8 and he went after the man of Israel into the tent and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her body. So the plague was stopped among the children of Israel.

9 And those who died in the plague were twenty-four thousand.

The Israelite man and twenty-four thousand Israelites that forsook God were destroyed by the plague and the men of Israel that refused to forsake God. When God decides to vent His jealousy on a nation, **Job 20:5** tells us:

5 That the triumphing of the wicked is short, And the joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment?

The broad road leads to destruction and the narrow road leads to life. In our text, **Numbers 25:16-18**:

16 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:

17 "Harass the Midianites, and attack them;

18 for they harassed you with their schemes by which they seduced you in the matter of Peor and in the matter of Cozbi, the daughter of a leader of Midian, their sister, who was killed in the day of the plague because of Peor."

God told Israel to attack the Midianites because they seduced twenty-four thousand Israelites into unfaithfulness. And as the Midianites and the Israelites found out, it's never really a good idea to ignore the word of God in order to receive the short term benefits promised by the devil.



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God keeps covenant for a thousand generations. We can count on God for that which He promises us, because, as we learned from the episode of Jesus, whom God sent to marry us once again. The church is one with Christ; the Church is the Body of Christ, not because of our goodness, but, even as God brought Israel out of Egypt with great power, Jesus Christ saved us with great power through His resurrection from the dead after His sacrifice on the Cross, as **Colossians 1:15-28** tells us:

15 [The Lord Jesus Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.

17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

19 For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, 20 and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

21 And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled

22 in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight—

23 if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.

Jesus' death on the Cross is that which reconciles us to God. **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.

But, like Israel, we need to maintain our relationship with the Lord and forsake those worldly pursuits that would lead us into that which we think would be a no-fault divorce from the Lord, because, in reality, there is no such thing. As **John 14:6** tells us:

6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

And Peter tells us of Jesus, in **Acts 4:12**:

12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."



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So let us learn from the example of the Israelites at Peor, let us not be seduced by the devil, and let us maintain our relationship with the Lord, because we know that our salvific relationship with God cannot be positively modified by committing adultery with the devil, but only by improving our love relationship with Jesus Christ.

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