



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

“The Biblical Design of Gender, Part 42”

September 12th, 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 42

Ruth 2:12

12 The LORD repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge.”

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 lesson, we discussed the situation of Naomi, who, during the period of Israelite history recorded in the book of Judges, lived in Bethlehem with her family, but, at the direction of her husband, traveled with her family to Moab to live during the Bethlehem famine. Twenty years later, her husband and her two sons, who reached maturity in Moab and married Moabite women, died in Moab, and Naomi was left with her two daughters-in-law for family support in that country.

After assessing her lack of prospects in Moab, Naomi decided that it would be best for her to return to her ancestral home in Bethlehem to seek support from her relatives there. Naomi instructed her two Moabite daughters-in-law to remain in Moab, as they were both young women and Naomi determined that their future prospects for marriage would be much better among their own people.

Orpah, one of Naomi's daughters-in-law, agreed with Naomi's assessment, but Ruth, the other daughter-in-law, had been influenced by her husband and by Naomi to become a worshipper of God. Since God was only peripherally worshipped in Moab but primarily worshipped in Israel, Ruth decided that she could only maintain both her connection to God and to Naomi by accompanying Naomi to Israel. Naomi, looking at the practicalities of the situation from a human perspective, tried to dissuade Ruth, but Ruth was not influenced.

In **Ruth 1:16-17**:

**16 But Ruth said: “Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; For wherever you go, I will go; And wherever you lodge, I will lodge; Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God.
17 Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. The LORD do so to**



me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me.”

And in our discussion of last week, we noted that although this passage of Scripture is often used in modern weddings as a vehicle for the bride to express her dedication to the groom, the original context of the Scripture was not between husband and wife, but mother-in-law and daughter-in-law.

Although Ruth declared her dedication to Naomi, Naomi was not immediately impressed. Naomi did not express gratitude to Ruth for her dedication, but rather withdrew from her daughter-in-law, as **Ruth 1:18 records: 18 When [Naomi] saw that [Ruth] was determined to go with her, she stopped speaking to her.**

Two women were traveling together, silently, one going back home and the other to an unfamiliar venue. Ruth's presence on the trip did not console Naomi, as Naomi was focused on the negative aspects of her situation. When Naomi and Ruth reached Bethlehem, Naomi's relatives in the city, some of whom had not seen Naomi for twenty years, were excited by her unexpected return, but Naomi was not in the state of mind to rejoice at their reunion. Naomi was too busy being negative about the loss of her family. **Ruth 1:19-21 records:**

19 Now the two of them [Naomi and Ruth] went until they came to Bethlehem. And it happened, when they had come to Bethlehem, that all the city was excited because of them; and the women said, “Is this Naomi?”

20 But she said to them, “Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.

21 I went out full, and the LORD has brought me home again empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has testified against me, and the Almighty has afflicted me?”

Mara, the name that Naomi chose for herself, means bitter. Naomi spent twenty years in Moab and has returned to Bethlehem with nothing to show for her years of work in Moab except a penniless Moabite daughter-in-law. Naomi did not have a husband or even a son to reclaim the inheritance of land that her family left during the famine. Naomi has returned home at the conclusion of the growing season, at harvest time, and even if she could reclaim the land, it was too late to do any farming or to raise any livestock. So Naomi is bitter about her circumstances and angry with God because, after twenty years in Moab, she is broke, she has no male relatives in her immediate family, she has no one to put her cold feet on, and it appears that nothing has worked out in the way that she hoped that it would.

Now, **Deuteronomy 28:1-8** tells us:

1 “Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth.



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

2 And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God:

3 “Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country.

4 “Blessed shall be the fruit of your body, the produce of your ground and the increase of your herds, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks.

5 “Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.

6 “Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out.

7 “The LORD will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before your face; they shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways.

8 “The LORD will command the blessing on you in your storehouses and in all to which you set your hand, and He will bless you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

God tells us that His blessing is contingent on our obedience to His commandments. But our text from two weeks ago, **Judges 17:6**, tells us that during the period that we are discussing:

6 In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

So Israel was not focused on God’s commandments, but rather, on whatever the Israelites decided that they wanted to do. And, the Word tells us that the Lord has programmed consequences for disobeying His commandments into His system, and we cannot avoid those consequences.

What do I mean? Look, for a moment, at **Genesis 3:6-8**:

6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

8 And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

Genesis 3:6-8 makes it clear that God neither opened the man and the woman’s eyes nor communicated to them that they should hide, because, from the perspective of time, God was not present when they ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but came into the garden afterward. So, let us consider: How did the man and the woman’s eyes suddenly become opened and why did they hide from the Lord? It appears that seeing life differently and being afraid of the presence of the Lord after eating of the forbidden fruit was an inherent result of their disobedience.



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

I mean that it appears as though, God poisoned the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, infecting it with a psychotropic toxin, a mood altering drug which, when consumed, would transmit the concept of evil to the person that consumed it. So God didn't have to do anything to make the man and the woman afraid; part of the poison of the fruit was the transmission of knowledge of evil, which included the concept of fear. God designed the consequences of disobedience into His system, thus, the man and the woman could not avoid those consequences.

God's punishment is different than human punishment. When our children disobey, we endeavor to shield our children from the consequences of their disobedience that are designed into God's system, but after having done so, we provide our children with artificial consequences, like whippings, to dissuade them from disobeying. If a toddler under our supervision were to disobey us and run into the street, we would not allow the natural consequences of their actions to befall them; we would not allow a car to hit them, but would do all we could to rescue them from the natural punishment of disobedience. Of course, once they were safe, we would artificially punish them to deter them from repeating their disobedience.

Thus, children may not associate disobedience with designed consequences. Children associate disobedience with artificial consequences, which may give them the false idea that there are no designed consequences; and children often feel free to disobey if they think that they can evade the artificial consequences. However, God's plan is still in effect, and even if children can evade the artificial consequences, the designed consequences of disobedience will still befall them.

Thus, the most important information that we can acquire and teach our children is an understanding of the information that God has revealed to us about the design of the world, because God tells us that if conform our lives to God's design, we can avoid the natural consequences of disobedience.

But Naomi's bitterness against God implies that she doesn't believe that she is reaping the designed consequences of her disobedient actions, but that God is unfairly punishing her. And believe it or not, it may be that Naomi has not been disobedient and is actually not being punished by God. Please allow me to make my point by taking our conversation in a different direction.

Author Leonard Sax, Ph.D, in his book, *Why Gender Matters* observes:

"In teenage girls, emotion is processed in the same area of the brain that processes language. So, it's not too difficult for most teenage girls to talk about their emotions. In boys, the brain regions involved in talking are separate from the regions involved in feeling."



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

Dr. Sax postulates that females process their emotions through language. Males, on the other hand, do not do so. Interestingly, men process their emotions through action, rather than words. That is why women talk while men fight, or compete, which is another name for fighting.

Fighting is a primal male response. Predatory animals can only survive by winning fights. Little boys start fighting as soon as they develop the motor skills to do so, and the concept of fighting remains with the male of the species even after the man is no longer physically able to fight. Men fight vicariously when their physical ability fades. If one asks a man how he feels, he may have difficulty answering the question, but take him to his favorite form of fighting, which is generally his favorite athletic competition, and his ability to express his emotions immediately becomes apparent.

I turned on my television one evening, and an MMA, mixed martial arts, program happened to be on the channel upon which the television had last been tuned. I was transfixed by the program. After watching the program to its conclusion, I found out that I could watch the main MMA events at a local sports bar for \$5, and I have not missed an MMA event since.

All organized sports are a form of fighting, and most men are devotees of their favorite sport. This week, Tom Brady signed a contract to play football for the New England Patriots at the princely sum of \$19 million dollars per year, making him the highest paid player in the NFL. He makes almost as much as Kobe Bryant, who makes \$22 million per year playing basketball for the Los Angeles Lakers. Men will pay dearly to watch or participate, if they are able, in a good fight.

So, just as women are verbal and need to talk, men are physical and need to fight, or compete. Interestingly, organized fighting of any description has two components, each of which is absolutely essential to the success of the fight. The first essential component of competition is rules. You cannot have a fight of any description without a rule book. The more sophisticated the fight, the more sophisticated the rules. And since men see life through conflict, or fighting, men need rules to govern everything that they do. As a matter of fact, the first proclamation that God gave man was a rule. The first five books of the Bible are known as the Law of Moses, and laws are nothing more than rules for the competition of life.

The second essential component of competition is a referee, whose job it is to adjudicate the rules. Currently, in many sports, the adjudication of the rules is changing from a human referee to a digital one; the venue of the US Open Tennis Tournament has a computerized system to call the lines on the court and each player is given the opportunity to challenge the call of the human referees in case their observation is incorrect. But, human or digital, each sporting event requires a referee to determine that each team is playing according to the rules.



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

Would you like to read an interesting passage of Scripture? **Genesis 2:24** tells us:

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

This passage of Scripture is familiar to us, so why is it so interesting? Well, you notice that the Scripture says that a man should leave his parents. Why does it not say that a woman should leave her parents? Is it not equally necessary for a woman to leave her parents to be joined with her husband as it is for a man to leave his parents to be joined with his wife? Of course it is. When Elimelech decided to go to Moab, didn't Naomi have to go with him? Yes, she did. Then why does the Scripture only address the man? Well, the Scripture only addresses the man because, since men relate to life in terms of action and conflict, men are the ones that need the rules.

The rules in the Bible are for men. Look, for example, at **Deuteronomy 5:21**, which says:

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.'

According to this passage of Scripture, we ought not covet anything that belongs to anyone else. But look at the list. Although the Bible mentions that we ought not covet our neighbors' wife, female servant, ox, donkey, or even his male servant, it does not say that we ought not covet our neighbor's husband. Isn't that an interesting omission?

The rules are made for men. Men see life through conflict, and in order to have Godly conflict, we need rules. If we look at the penalties for the first rule that was broken, **Genesis 3:16** tells us:

16 To the woman [God] said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you."

Suppose a woman bears twenty children, each of which take two days to bring into the world. How many days does she suffer the consequences of the sin of the woman in the garden? Forty? Forty days of pain out of your whole life is not that much of a penalty. But look at **Genesis 3:17-19**:

17 Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life.

18 Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field.

19 In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return."



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

The man's punishment is "all the days of your life" and "till you return to the ground". That's a little different than forty days. I postulate that Biblical rules are made for men. The penalties for disobedience are made for men. As a matter of fact, there is only one major rule that is made specifically for women, found in **Ephesians 5:22-24**:

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

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

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

Because of the design of men and the design of women, God gives men the rules, and then He gives men the responsibility to transmit those rules to women, thus, the rules predominantly apply to men. Now, I will freely admit that my research on the laws in the Bible is not comprehensive, and you might be able to find another few laws that apply predominantly to women. As a matter of fact, I can think of one. **Deuteronomy 25:11-12** says:

11 "If two men fight together, and the wife of one draws near to rescue her husband from the hand of the one attacking him, and puts out her hand and seizes him by the genitals,

12 then you shall cut off her hand; your eye shall not pity her.

This law notwithstanding, I think that I make a good point, which takes us a long way toward our understanding of Naomi's bitterness. Naomi has followed the law of God. She obeyed her husband, and she and her two male children went to Moab under Elimelech's supervision. She was a good wife and obeyed her husband, but the consequences were that not only her husband, but her two sons died in Moab. She came back to Israel penniless, childless, and with no obvious way to sustain herself except to rely on the kindness of strangers to a widow. When the people came to welcome her back to Bethlehem, she was more than willing to let them know that she was angry with God for taking away both her husband, her sons, and her livelihood.

But Ruth thought differently than Naomi, and was able to see the providence of God in their situation. The "b" portion of **Ruth 1:22** tells us:

22 Now [Naomi and Ruth] came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.

Although Ruth has lost her husband even as has Naomi, Ruth is not focused on bitterness, but is rather is focused on that which God has given her to enable her to survive. And **Leviticus 23:22** and **Deuteronomy 24:21** tell us:

22 'When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field when you reap, nor shall you gather any gleaning from your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger: I am the LORD your God.' "



21 When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not glean it afterward; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow.

God builds charity into the agricultural system of the Israelites, who were not to maximize the crop yield of their fields. During the harvest, the reapers generally cut down the stalks of grain with a sickle, and other workers, generally women, followed them, stacking and tying the stalks of grain in bundles so that they could be threshed, which was the process of separating the ears of grain from the stalks. But the reapers were not supposed to cut down the plants in the corners of the field, and if some grain fell off of the cut down stalks by itself, the women were not to pick up that grain from the ground. That grain was to be left to be gathered, free of charge, by those that did not have land to harvest.

Fortunately, Ruth was aware of this regulation, and, since she and Naomi arrived in Bethlehem at harvest time, Ruth decided to go to work. But being both a stranger in town and a good daughter-in-law, she decided to consult her mother-in-law before taking on the job. **Ruth 2:2-3** records:

2 So Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, “Please let me go to the field, and glean heads of grain after him in whose sight I may find favor.” And [Naomi] said to her, “Go, my daughter.”

3 Then [Ruth] left, and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers. And she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.

When Naomi left Moab, she came home to familiar territory, the inheritance of the members of her family in Bethlehem. So, when Ruth went out to glean, the field in which she saw people working belonged to one of Naomi’s husband’s relatives, who also lived in Bethlehem. As lunchtime approached, that relative, Boaz, came through to find out how the work was going. As Boaz rode by his field, he saw a sight that he did not expect to see. Now, Boaz knew that there might be some gleaners in his field, as the law proscribed, but when he saw Ruth going through the sheaves left on the ground to pick up grain, her physical activity, bending over, straightening up and walking, caught his attention. Ruth was certainly not the only woman in the field but, for some reason, she stood out in Boaz’s mind. Gleaners were not an unusual sight to Boaz, but Boaz found this particular gleaner to be worthy of inquiry. **Ruth 2:5** records:

5 Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, “Whose young woman is this?”

Inquiring minds want to know. **Ruth 2:6-7** records:

6 So the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered and said, “It is the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab.

7 And she said, ‘Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.’ So she came and has continued from morning until now, though



she rested a little in the house.”

Boaz, being up on current events, knew the story. Ruth was a vulnerable, needy, young, attractive, hard working unattached widowed relative in need of sustenance, and she's been gleaning all morning. Well, Boaz thought to himself, it's never a bad thing to have the pleasant scenery of an attractive woman in the field, but she's young enough to be my daughter. So Boaz says to himself, “down, boy”, and decides to treat Ruth like the daughter she could be, as **Ruth 2:8-9** records:

8 Then Boaz said to Ruth, “You will listen, my daughter, will you not? Do not go to glean in another field, nor go from here, but stay close by my young women.

9 Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Have I not commanded the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn.”

And when Ruth, quite naturally, inquires as to why she should receive the benefit of such benevolent treatment from Boaz, **Ruth 2:11-12** records:

11 And Boaz answered and said to [Ruth], “It has been fully reported to me, all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, and how you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people whom you did not know before.

12 The LORD repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge.”

The attractive Ruth could have found a husband in Moab, but she chose to follow her mother-in-law to Israel to worship God. Ruth chose God, and God used the natural attributes that He gave Ruth to provide for Ruth and Naomi, through the protective generosity of Boaz. Although neither Ruth nor Naomi had a husband, God was still looking after them through Boaz, their kinsman-redeemer. **Ruth 2:15-17** records:

15 And when [Ruth] rose up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, “Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her.

16 Also let grain from the bundles fall purposely for her; leave it that she may glean, and do not rebuke her.”

17 So she gleaned in the field until evening, and beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley.

A gleaner would have considered themselves blessed to gather two or three pounds of barley, and here Ruth was coming home with an ephah, or about thirty pounds of barley. As Naomi saw Ruth straining to bring this load of barley into the house, Naomi was astonished. **Ruth 2:19-22** records:

19 And her mother-in-law said to her, “Where have you gleaned today? And where did you work? Blessed be the one who took notice of you.” So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked, and said, “The man's name with whom I worked today is Boaz.”



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

20 Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, “Blessed be he of the LORD, who has not forsaken His kindness to the living and the dead!” And Naomi said to her, “This man is a relation of ours, one of our close relatives.”

21 Ruth the Moabitess said, “He also said to me, ‘You shall stay close by my young men until they have finished all my harvest.’ ”

22 And Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, “It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, and that people do not meet you in any other field.”

Naomi’s view of the Lord has suddenly changed. Now, Naomi is considering that the Lord may not have forsaken her and Ruth. Maybe bringing Ruth back with her from Moab was not such a bad idea, because I doubt that dear old Naomi could glean thirty pounds of barley in two weeks, less known one day. There’s just something about Ruth that makes her a better gleaner than Naomi, and God has blessed Naomi with Ruth’s devotion, as Ruth is willing to share the proceeds of her ability with Naomi. The Lord was still providing for Naomi after all.

I’m reminded of Saul, the instigator of the first great persecution of the Church, of whom **Acts 8:1-3** tells us:

1 Now Saul was consenting to [Stephen’s] death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

2 And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.

3 As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.

But Saul, who was zealous for the Lord, albeit without knowledge, reaped the benefit of his zeal, when the Lord Jesus Christ intervened on Saul’s behalf, even as Ruth worked on Naomi’s behalf, as **Acts 9:1-6, 8, 17-18, 20** tells us:

1 Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest

2 and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

3 As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven.

4 Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”

5 And he said, “Who are You, Lord?” Then the Lord said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.”

6 So he, trembling and astonished, said, “Lord, what do You want me to do?” Then the Lord said to him, “Arise and go into the city, and you will be



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

told what you must do.”

8 Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus.

17 And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”

18 Immediately there fell from [Saul’s] eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.

20 Immediately [Saul] preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.

Just as Ruth was an unlikely vessel to come to Israel and care for Naomi, Saul was an unlikely vessel to become the chief missionary of the early church of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles. But God is still the only one that can take a crooked stick and hit a straight lick, who can stand flatfooted and tiptoe at the same time.

Just as we are not always aware of the natural consequences of disobedience, we are also not aware of how the intentional benevolence of God to those of us that believe in His Word will work in our favor. God describes the height of His benevolence to us, in **John 3:16-17**:

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.

And, as that great apostle, Paul, called from opposing Jesus Christ to become the most eloquent preacher of the gospel, tells us, in **Romans 8:28**:
28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

So, as we contemplate the good fortune of Naomi and Ruth, let us also conform to God’s Word that we may be called according to His purpose, and may experience God’s intentional benefits for obedience as God brings good things into our lives.

Pastor Darryl R. Curtis
Family Life Baptist Church