



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

“The Biblical Design of Gender, Part 43”

September 19th, 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 43

Ruth 3:1

1 Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, “My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you?”

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 looked at the effort of Ruth to support herself and her mother-in-law, Naomi. Naomi, who returned to Bethlehem from Moab with neither husband nor sons, was consumed with bitterness against God, whom she blamed for the death of her husband, her sons and the state of indigence that she was in. **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?”

Naomi was depressed by her circumstances. Ruth, however, was not.

Ruth was taught, by her husband before he died and also by her Israelite family, that God was in charge of providing blessings for Israel.

Were we to go over the lessons in this series that pertain to the nation of Israel, we would come to the inescapable conclusion that God is the only reason that the Israelites even exist. Israel would never have been able to escape Egyptian slavery had it not been for the plagues that God sent upon Egypt. Israel would never have survived in the Wilderness after escaping Egypt had it not been for God’s daily provision of manna that allowed the Israelites to have sustenance. Joshua would not have been able to win the battle of Jericho, which allowed the Israelites to establish a presence in the Promised Land, had it not



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

been for the intervention of the Angel of the Lord, who caused the defensive walls surrounding the city of Jericho to fall into the city so that the Israelites could successfully invade and destroy the city.

The military weakness of the Nation of Israel is shown in the book of Judges, as the book repeatedly records that when the Israelites forsook God to worship the idols of the land, their enemies roundly defeated them and kept them in subjugation until the Israelites repented and cried out to God. When God decided to show His favor to Israel, God raised a judge who could not only restore the nation of Israel to the worship of God, but could also defeat the military rulers under whose thumb Israel had fallen while worshipping idols. The Book of Judges is a clear contrast between the spiritual and military downfall caused by the disobedience of Israel and the victories won by Israel when God decided to act favorably to Israel and show them His grace.

And Ruth, armed with the historical information about the power and grace of God, left her home land of Moab and travelled to Israel to continue the relationship with God that she started when she and her husband were married. Ruth did so counting on the benevolence of God to those that obey Him, as **Deuteronomy 28:1** 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.

And when Ruth reached Bethlehem, she decided to do that which the Scripture proscribed that widows do to obtain sustenance. **Leviticus 23:22 and Deuteronomy 24:21** tells Israelite farmers:

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.

Ruth decided to become a gleaner, one that picked up the grain missed by those harvesting the grain from the field, as the Scripture instructs widows to do to obtain sustenance. The field to which God providentially guided Ruth belonged to Boaz, who was a relative of Ruth’s late husband’s father and who was acquainted with Ruth and Naomi’s situation, as Boaz indicated in **Ruth 2:11-12**:
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.”



Boaz, as a moneyed Israelite landowner, had a general Scriptural responsibility to contribute to the support of strangers, the fatherless and widows by not completely harvesting his field. Upon seeing Ruth, however, Boaz decided to contribute to her support more directly. Being young, attractive, deferential and hard-working, Ruth presented herself in such a way that motivated Boaz to instruct to his harvesters to leave grain specifically for Ruth. When Ruth finished her work in Boaz's field that first day, she had ten times more grain than the average gleaner usually was able to gather, and Boaz invited Ruth to return to his field to glean daily until the harvest was completed, that he might make sure that she gleaned as much as possible. When Ruth brought her first day's gleaning home, Naomi was astonished, as **Ruth 2:19-23** 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."

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 Moabite 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."

23 So [Ruth] stayed close by the young women of Boaz, to glean until the end of barley harvest and wheat harvest; and she dwelt with her mother-in-law.

As the harvest came to an end, the benevolence of Boaz had enabled Ruth to gather sufficient grain enough to more than adequately provide for herself and Naomi. Boaz's generosity to Ruth caused Naomi to think past her personal negative circumstances and rethink her bitterness against God.

That which makes people the most dissatisfied is a self-centered obsession with personal negative circumstances. But Jesus Himself tells us, in **John 16:33**:

33 These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

The word "tribulation" that Jesus uses in this verse of Scripture is another word for trouble. We are promised trouble in this world by Jesus Himself, thus there is no reason to be surprised when trouble befalls us.

Trouble began in the third chapter of Genesis, when the man and woman decided to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and the Scripture teaches that trouble will persist in the lives of men until the end of time.



But Jesus tells us the antidote to negativity and trouble is a focus on obedience to the Word of God. The way to avoid dissatisfaction is to recognize that we are only part of God's greater plan and not God's focal point. Thus, we need to focus on the Lord's program; on doing that which the Lord tells us to do, not on worrying about our personal dissatisfaction. Self-centeredness is the opposite of Godliness.

So, rather than focusing on lack, need and dissatisfaction, Naomi began focusing on the solutions in God's word as recorded in **Deuteronomy 25:5-6**, which tells us:

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 [husband's] 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.

Naomi has had both a husband and sons. Having had sons makes her ineligible to apply for marriage as proscribed in **Deuteronomy 25**, however, her daughter-in-law Ruth has had no sons. So, in our text, **Ruth 3:1**:

1 Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to [Ruth], "My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you?"

Naomi has come to realize that that upon which a person focuses becomes magnified in their minds. The more a person focuses on being dissatisfied, the more dissatisfied they become, and the less able to see the positive aspects of their lives and be appreciative to God for that which He has given them they become. On the other hand, a grateful person always can find something about which to be grateful.

Naomi has also learned from Ruth's self-sacrificial solution to their problem of penury that a focus on self is as self-defeating as a focus on dissatisfaction. Although Ruth has had to glean and thresh a large amount of grain, which was hard physical labor, Ruth has not shown herself self-focused by complaining about the difficulty of her lot in life, but has been grateful to have work to do, and has shared the fruits of her labor with her mother-in-law. Even though Ruth has been working while Naomi has been watching, Ruth has remained deferential to and supportive of her mother-in-law.

So Naomi came out of herself and gave up her self-focus and her dissatisfaction. This enabled Naomi to recognize that the solution to her problem of a lack of companionship was marriage, but marriage for someone other than herself. Naomi realized that a self-focused search for security would not benefit her nearly as much as seeking security for someone other than herself.

Babies and young children are almost exclusively self-focused, which is the defining characteristic of immaturity. One of the early objectives that parents need to have is to teach their children the value of the lives of others, because



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

one of the most prevalent characteristics among young children is sibling rivalry, which begins in older children when younger children are born. The immaturity of older children instinctively causes them to resent the place of a younger child in their family, and older children often act out, with rage, when they perceive that a younger child is invading their turf. I postulate that one of the reasons that children are born and remain physically helpless for a prolonged period of their infancy and childhood is so that they do not have the capacity to act out the rage that they feel for the young siblings that they feel are infringing on their territory.

If parents are successful, they can socialize their children to the point that the children can coexist in peer groups, but the march to maturity, in which a person learns to actually sacrifice their own desires in order to meet someone else's desire, is a long one. When children successfully march through the stages of development that lead them to the goal of being able to place someone else's need above their own, they achieve the level of maturity required to make them a good spouse. In His interaction with the first man and woman, God said, as quoted and amplified by Jesus Christ in **Matthew 19:5-6:**

5 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh' ?

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

God, in His initial design of mankind, intended that man function as a cooperative coalition. God did not create the man as an infant, but as one that had the maturity to consider the needs of another over his own. The sequence of operations that prepares us for marriage is to first reach chronological maturity, and then intellectual maturity, and then emotional maturity, at which point, a person is able to co-exist with another person while having the best interests of the other person at heart.

The marriage vows say: I take you to be my lawfully wedded spouse, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, until death us do part, according to God's holy ordinance.

This vow requires that the person taking the vow have the emotional maturity to put their own desires and even their best interests aside to sacrifice themselves for the other person, especially in the cases of worse, poorer or sickness.

So marriage implies that men and woman provide a commitment to and security for one another, as each one is putting their personal best interests aside to provide for the best interests of the other. And if two people maintain their vows to do so, God will bless their union. As we have read, in

Deuteronomy 28:1:

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.

And, just as God gave Israel both the capability and the responsibility to conquer the temptation to worship idols in the Promised Land, God gives men and women both the responsibility to conquer the temptation to be self-focused in their marital relationship.

Ruth and Boaz have shown one another their maturity and their preparation for the adult responsibility of the vows of marriage. Boaz has shown Ruth his maturity in that he has abundantly met her material needs within the boundaries of the law without requiring her to compromise her morals or her principles. Boaz has given Ruth an extraordinary living as a gleaner without demanding anything of her; Ruth has had only to do the work of gleaning in Boaz's field. Ruth, on the other hand, as proven to be a hard working gleaner; not complaining or creating drama among the maidens in the field with whom she was working, but simply doing the work that the Lord has appointed to widows in the Scripture.

Naomi has observed the two of them; she sees Boaz as an honorable man that is well able to take care of a family, and she has seen Ruth being a faithful, industrious, helpful companion from the time that Ruth left Moab until the present time. Although Naomi has observed that Boaz and Ruth would be a secure match for one another, Naomi also recognizes that Ruth needs to make her desires for marriage known to Boaz.

In normal Israelite marital relationships, the man is responsible for asking the woman's father for her hand in marriage. But in the case of Levirate marriage, the widow of the deceased man is the one applying for the protection of her near kinsman. And **Deuteronomy 25:7-9** tells us:

7 But if the man does not want to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate to the elders, and say, 'My husband's brother refuses to raise up a name to his brother in Israel; he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother.'

8 Then the elders of his city shall call him and speak to him. But if he stands firm and says, 'I do not want to take her,'

9 then his brother's wife shall come to him in the presence of the elders, remove his sandal from his foot, spit in his face, and answer and say, 'So shall it be done to the man who will not build up his brother's house.'

So Naomi instructs Ruth to apply to Boaz for the protection afforded her by the Scriptural admonition of Levirate marriage. Boaz is not actually in the position to make overtures to Ruth, because Boaz is not the nearest kinsman, although the extraordinary provision that he makes for Ruth during his harvest indicates his affection for her. But Naomi thinks that an overture by Ruth toward Boaz would be received favorably, and she instructs Ruth to follow through, in **Ruth 3:2-4**:



2 Now Boaz, whose young women you were with, is he not our relative? In fact, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor.

3 Therefore wash yourself and anoint yourself, put on your best garment and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking.

4 Then it shall be, when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies; and you shall go in, uncover his feet, and lie down; and he will tell you what you should do.”

The procedure that Naomi gives to Ruth will allow Ruth and Boaz to discuss the matter privately. In the normal threshing procedure, during the late afternoon, the harvested stalks of grain are placed on the ground and walked on by the animals to separate the heavier grain material from the lighter plant material. As the evening winds pick up, the men pick up the separated material with pitchforks and throw it into the air, which allows the wind to blow the plant material away from the grain itself. The grain is then shoveled into a heap, which will be bagged the next morning and put into the place in which the grain is stored. In order to provide security for the grain during the night, the threshers and their families generally sleep on the threshing floor by the heap of grain. In this case, Boaz, as the owner of the field, is going to provide security by sleeping there as well. Threshing involves first the work, then an evening meal for the group, and then, as darkness falls, the group goes to sleep around the grain.

So Ruth follows her mother-in-law's instructions, goes to the threshing floor and avoids Boaz until the threshing and the meal are over and the night has fully fallen. Then, in the dark at midnight, Ruth lay down at Boaz's feet. **Ruth 3:8-9** records:

8 Now it happened at midnight that the man [Boaz] was startled, and turned himself; and there, a woman was lying at his feet.

9 And he said, “Who are you?” So she answered, “I am Ruth, your maidservant. Take your maidservant under your wing, for you are a close relative.”

But Ruth was a Moabite, of the incestuous offspring of Lot, who escaped the destruction of Sodom only because the angels sent by God to destroy the city of Sodom dragged Lot and his family out of it. Ruth was of the people of Moab, who were the result of a drunken orgy that Lot had with his own daughters because their mother loved the pleasure of sin in Sodom too much to avoid looking back, longingly, at the city of sin even as fire and brimstone were falling upon it. If there was a nation that was not worthy of existence because of its origins, it was Moab.

But the sinfulness of the origins of Moab is by no means unique in human history. The Israel that existed during the time of Ruth was no more worthy of existence than was Moab. The very mantra of the book of the Judges tells us, in **Judges 21:25**:



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

Israel rejected the sovereignty of God, and played the harlot, practicing ritual prostitution and prostrating themselves at the idolatrous altar of sexual immorality rather than maintaining the moral uprightness of the worship of God. God was not rejecting Israel, but Israel was rejecting God, because Israel preferred the passing pleasures of sin rather than the enriching righteousness of God. **Judges 2:16-19** tells us:

16 Nevertheless, the LORD raised up judges who delivered them out of the hand of those who plundered them.

17 Yet they would not listen to their judges, but they played the harlot with other gods, and bowed down to them. They turned quickly from the way in which their fathers walked, in obeying the commandments of the LORD; they did not do so.

18 And when the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed them and harassed them.

19 And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they reverted and behaved more corruptly than their fathers, by following other gods, to serve them and bow down to them. They did not cease from their own doings nor from their stubborn way.

The culture of Israel, like that of our current society, rejected God at every opportunity, and only accepted God under the duress of being plundered by their enemies. The Israelites did not want God; they wanted relief from oppression, but once the relief was received, they returned to the licentiousness that brought them into oppression as surely as a dog returns to its vomit.

Nevertheless, God continued to rescue Israel, even as Israel continued to reject God. God continued to raise up men of faith from the midst of a faithless society to bring the society back in line with His Word. **Hebrews 11:32-40** tells us:

32 And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets:

33 who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,

34 quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

35 Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

36 Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment.

37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—

38 of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.

39 And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise,

40 God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

Ultimately, God brought us that better promise, to secure the redemption of mankind. Ultimately, God did not raise up a man of faith, but came to the earth as a Man Himself, Jesus Christ, to pay, once for all, the penalty that we owe for the sins that we have committed. Jesus Christ came as our Redeemer, with the riches in glory to pay our penalty, even as Boaz had the riches in his field and the position in the family to redeem Ruth from her sinful background.

We all owe the penalty of sin, as **Romans 3:23** and **6:23** tells us:

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

23 For the wages of sin is death.

For the evil that each of us has personally done, for the disobedience to God of which we are universally guilty, the penalty, in the cosmic scheme of God's Kingdom, is death. And since we have all sinned, none of us are worthy to escape the penalty of sin, which is death, the grave and hell. Even as Ruth came to Bethlehem destitute and penniless with nothing to recommend her, we all stand before God sinful and disobedient, with nothing to recommend us.

But Ruth applied to Boaz, not with arrogance or with a sense of entitlement, but on the basis of her faith in God. She travelled to Israel from Moab by faith in God. She went out to glean in the fields by faith that God would provide someone to give her a chance. And Ruth's faith was rewarded by the chance to glean, and ultimately, the opportunity to appeal to Boaz to be her redeemer.

And we are called to have the faith that Ruth had, understanding that our sins make us destitute and penniless before God, sinful and disobedient with nothing to recommend us, except for the fact that we have faith that God has provided us with a Redeemer, Jesus Christ, the one with the riches that He has earned by living a perfect and a sinless life on earth, fully obeying the law that we rejected. Jesus suffered an unearned death for us, a death in our place, a substitutionary death to pay the penalty that we owe for the sins that we have committed. As **Galatians 3:13-14** tells us:

13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"),



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

14 that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

And, **Galatians 3:6-7** describes the blessing of Abraham to us:

6 just as Abraham “believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”

7 Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.

Just as Abraham and those of which we have read in the book of Hebrews believed God, Ruth believed God, and followed the instructions of the one that God sent her to acquaint her with His Word. Ruth believed God so much that she gleaned in Boaz’s field and was rewarded for her work. Then Ruth went to Boaz to apply for his redemption, and was received by Boaz. Boaz tells Ruth in **Ruth 3:12-13**:

12 Now it is true that I am a close relative; however, there is a relative closer than I.

13 Stay this night, and in the morning it shall be that if he will perform the duty of a close relative for you—good; let him do it. But if he does not want to perform the duty for you, then I will perform the duty for you, as the LORD lives! Lie down until morning.”

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.

God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to redeem sinners from the curse of the law, that being, that the wages of sin is death. And God did not send Jesus Christ because we are worthy, but because God wishes to redeem those of us, by His grace, that will actually exercise our faith in Him, go into His field, and glean among His sheaves. And, as Ruth was rewarded for her faithfulness, there is a reward for the people of faith in our generation, as **Titus 3:4-7** says:

4 But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared,

5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,

6 whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior,

7 that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

There is an eternal life, and this life is preparation for that one. We prepare to enter our eternal life, not because of our goodness or by our righteousness, but by the grace of the one that redeems us from our sinfulness, Jesus Christ, who loves us and gave Himself for us. Let us emulate His example on earth, and grow in our knowledge of His grace, that we might be able to perfect ourselves



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

through faith, mature past self-centeredness, and develop the maturity to become fully human, as 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. Jesus tells us, in **John 13:34-35**:

34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

So let us love one another, and give ourselves for one another, especially in our primary marital relationship, in order to emulate the example of Jesus Christ and provide an example for those watching us in the world.

Pastor Darryl R. Curtis
Family Life Baptist Church