



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

“The Biblical Design of Gender, Part 47”

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Informed. Insightful. Intelligent.



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1 Samuel 1:8

8 Then Elkanah, [Hannah's] husband said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? And why is your heart grieved? Am I not better to you than ten sons?"

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.

The next episode in our series examines a bigamous marriage. The protagonist in this episode is Hannah, one of the two wives of Elkanah, of the Israelite tribe of Ephraim. Elkanah's other wife was named Peninnah, and her distinction from Hannah was that Peninnah was able to have children, while Hannah was not. As in the case that we previously examined with Jacob's wives Rachel and Leah, Hannah, the wife with no children was loved while Peninnah was as fertile as a field in the fall, but was not Elkanah's favorite.

I would have come to the conclusion from reading Biblical episodes detailing the relationships of men with multiple wives that a man with more than one woman is a man with a problem, even if the Scripture did not make the point directly. Unlike Rachel and Leah, who were sisters and were engaged in sort of a friendly competition over Jacob, it appears that Hannah and Peninnah were not related to one another and were actually rivals.

The specific point of contention between Hannah and Peninnah occurred when the Israelites celebrated their religious festivals to the Lord, when the cattle were slaughtered for sacrifice and the meat was allocated so that the bounty provided by the Lord could be shared with the Levites, who received their sustenance from the offerings of the people. **Deuteronomy 12:17–19** tells the Israelites:

17 You may not eat within your gates the tithe of your grain or your new wine or your oil, of the firstborn of your herd or your flock, of any of your offerings which you vow, of your freewill offerings, or of the heave offering of your hand.



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18 But you must eat them before the LORD your God in the place which the LORD your God chooses, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, and the Levite who is within your gates; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God in all to which you put your hands.

19 Take heed to yourself that you do not forsake the Levite as long as you live in your land.

And Elkanah, being a good Israelite, followed the admonition of **Deuteronomy 12**. But **1 Samuel 1:4–5** records:

4 And whenever the time came for Elkanah to make an offering, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and daughters.

5 But to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah, although the LORD had closed her womb.

It is clear that Peninnah and her children received the largest portion of the meat, but that fact notwithstanding, Elkanah made his greater love for Hannah known by making her individual share larger than Peninnah's individual share. This caused Peninnah to be jealous of Hannah.

Based upon my limited knowledge of interpersonal relationships, most of which was learned from my study of the Scripture rather than my experience in the world, people seem to lack the ability to be sanguine about sharing the solicitude, meaning love, of their spouses. In **Matthew 19:4–6**:

4 And [Jesus] answered and said to them, “Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’

5 and said, ‘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.”

Since a man and woman becoming one flesh with one another has been the design of God for marital relationships from the beginning, people always want their spouse to have an exclusive relationship with them. The term that defines this type of relationship is “bonded”.

Bonding in marriage mirrors the initial bonding in life, which occurs between a child and his or her mother. The child receives sustenance from physical contact with his or her mother, while the mother is positively stimulated by her physical contact with her child. The mutual pleasure that the two receive from their interaction causes both the mother and the child to desire to repeat their interaction as often as is feasible. And this mutually pleasurable relationship is the paradigm for nuclear familial relationships in which physical touch is a factor, those being mother/child relationships and husband/wife relationships.

Interestingly, familial relationships that are exclusive of physical touch tend not to create bonding, but rather, rivalry between the people involved. Sibling rivalry is jealousy between siblings based on the fact that the sibling relationship



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is not a physical one, and also that parents cannot have an exclusive relationship with more than one sibling simultaneously.

Husbands may develop, hopefully less often, a sort of sibling type of rivalry with their children when their wives do not allocate time for the necessary level of intimacy with their husbands because of their preoccupation with the care of their children. In the type of bigamous relationship that we are discussing, the same sibling type of rivalry may develop because the husband generally leaves one wife alone to tend to the other.

In the “a” portion of **Genesis 2:18**:

18 And the LORD God said, “It is not good that man should be alone.”

God makes the point that it is not good for anyone to feel as though their need for intimately bonded relationships is being neglected. You can count on conflict occurring when people feel neglected. As a matter of fact, Jesus differentiates the hundreds of dictates in the Mosaic Law from the Law of Christ by telling 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.”

To love one another means that we provide one another with the appropriate level of intimacy. And how is that defined? Jesus, speaking of the two greatest commandments in the law, says, in **Mark 12:31**:

31 And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

The Bible teaches us that when we promise to love someone, it becomes our responsibility to consider their needs, wants and desires with the same intensity that we consider our own. When mothers are sound asleep in the middle of the night, they can hear their babies crying and will wake up to feed them. That is the level of bonding that qualifies as loving your neighbor as yourself.

And Elkanah loved his wives. Peninnah brought his children into the world, and Elkanah was a good provider and took good care of her and all of the children. But Hannah, being barren, was able to concentrate on Elkanah and be his consistent lover. When Peninnah was indisposed by pregnancy or consumed by issues with her children, Elkanah could turn to Hannah for solace, and Hannah could provide him with the companionship, physical and otherwise, that he needed. And **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.”

Hannah, being barren, had the time to concentrate on being Elkanah’s wife and dedicated helper to the exclusion of all other relationships. She had no responsibilities, no children and nothing else to interfere with her relationship with



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her husband. So while Elkanah had Peninnah, a wife that concentrated on being his children's mother, Elkanah also had Hannah, a wife that could give her undivided attention to being her husband's companion and girlfriend. Elkanah was more than satisfied with his situation because he literally had the best of both worlds, as far as female relationships were concerned.

But, as much as Hannah took care of Elkanah's needs and Elkanah took care of hers, Hannah could not completely enjoy with her position. She might have been able to do so, but her rival Peninnah would not let her. **1 Samuel 1:6–7:** tells us:

6 And [Hannah's] rival [Peninnah] also provoked [Hannah] severely, to make her miserable, because the LORD had closed her womb.

7 So it was, year by year, when [Hannah] went up to the house of the LORD, that [Peninnah] provoked [Hannah]; therefore [Hannah] wept and did not eat.

So, while Elkanah greatly enjoyed his position with Hannah, Peninnah would not allow Hannah to enjoy with her position with Elkanah. The "a" portion of **Genesis 1:28** tells us:

28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it;

Hannah was not satisfied with just being Elkanah's lover because she was not participating in God's prime directive. Although Hannah was Elkanah's favorite, Peninnah had Elkanah's children and possessed most of his resources. In our text, Elkanah tried to convince Hannah to be satisfied. **1 Samuel 1:8** says: **8 Then Elkanah, [Hannah's] husband said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? And why is your heart grieved? Am I not better to you than ten sons?"**

Elkanah is a husband that is trying, with all of his heart, to make Hannah happy. He gives her the material possessions that she desires in abundance, even twice the amount as he gives Peninnah. But Elkanah is not able to give Hannah children, and rather than being satisfied with and focusing on all that that Elkanah can provide, Hannah is fixated on the one thing that Elkanah can not give her.

One of the keys to good relationships is obedience to the tenth commandment. **Deuteronomy 5:21** tells us:

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

This commandment is the relationship commandment. The more we violate this commandment, the more we ruin our relationships.

God gives us all certain abilities, possessions and relationships in life, and He gives other people different abilities, possessions and relationships. God tells us, in this commandment, to be satisfied with that which He gives us, and to not



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have a craving or a passionate desire for something that belongs to another. If we can keep this commandment, our relationships with other people will be pleasurable, because each of us will have our own role to play.

Just think of a football team in which each player is adept at his own position, and is satisfied with his role on the team. One player that will not be on this team is Terrell Owens, who is one of the most gifted athletes in the NFL, but has been shipped around the league from team to team because he is a covetous player. Owens appears to only be happy if he is the center of attention on his team, if he catches more passes than any other player on his team, and if his team is a winning team.

Now, it is probably true that every player would like to do well and would like to be the dominant player on his team, but more than having the desire to be dominant, Owens covets, meaning, that not only does he desire to be dominant, he will actually disrupt the team if he can not get his way for any reason.

If the quarterback is more well known than Owens, Owens covets the quarterback's status, and attacks the quarterback in the press. If there is a wide receiver on the team that catches more passes than Owens, Owens covets the position of number 1 receiver and attacks the coaches in the press for not calling plays for him to get the ball more.

Owens disrupts teams. He feuded with the quarterback on his original team, San Francisco, which was glad to be rid of him when they sent him to Philadelphia. Philadelphia was only able to play him for a year and a half, because which he was so disruptive that they suspended him, with pay, for the second half of his second season there, basically paying him to not come to the stadium. At the end of the season, they traded Owens to the Dallas Cowboys.

Dallas had such star power that Owens was not able to disrupt the team, at first. Sometime during his second season, however, Owens was quoted as being angry with, once again, the quarterback, who did not pass him the ball enough. Owens protested that he didn't say some of the things of which he was accused, which may have been true, but his reputation was such that when his three year contract was up, although he was one of the best receivers in the league, Dallas didn't renew his contract.

Owens has been able to get a job in the league playing for someone every year. He bounces around from team to team, landing a position somewhere just before training camp starts, because he has great talent. Unfortunately for him, he has such a reputation of being a disruptive player that no one seems to want him after experiencing his talent for one season.

Owens' problem is covetousness. He wants the star position on the team that someone else has, and is willing to throw the team under the bus to get it.

Well, both Hannah and Peninnah suffer from covetousness. Peninnah wants the most favored position that Hannah has, and Hannah wants the



motherly position that Peninnah has. Elkanah wants both of them to play the positions on his team that he has given them, but that's not happening.

Peninnah has little leverage with Elkanah. Peninnah has Elkanah's children, but since Hannah is available to Elkanah, Peninnah has a limited ability to harass Elkanah. And Elkanah is going to keep it that way. He has the wisdom of **Proverbs 21:9**, which says:

9 Better to dwell in a corner of a housetop, than in a house shared with a contentious woman.

A contentious woman exhibits an often perverse and wearisome tendency to quarrels and disputes. I'm not sure what makes Peninnah think that being contentious is attractive. I've often heard the extra-Biblical proverb that you can catch more flies with sugar than with vinegar, which means that you can attract people more effectively by being sweet than you can by being sour.

Just consider how attractive an angry, argumentative person is. Not very, not even to themselves. So, why would anyone want to be around someone that is angry? Solomon, the wisest man that ever lived, tells us that it is not good to be around angry people, and he didn't need his great wisdom to come to that conclusion. And since it is not good to be around angry people, and the purpose of marriage is to create a bond between husband and wife, an angry spouse is counterproductive to the point of marriage in the first place.

And what creates anger in a marriage? Covetousness. When we are covetous of someone else's position, and we want to be the Terrell Owens of the marriage. In our example, Peninnah harassed Hannah because Peninnah wanted Hannah's position with Elkanah, just as, when Terrell Owens was in Philadelphia, he harassed Donovan McNabb until Andy Reid, the coach, sent him home to sit out the second half of the season.

It is important for us to understand that we can't necessarily have that which we want. We are much better off, spiritually, if, rather than coveting that which we want, we make the decision to want that which we have. In **Luke 12:15–21**:

15 And [Jesus] said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."

16 Then [Jesus] spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully.

17 And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?'

18 So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods.

19 And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry." '

20 But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'



21 “So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

We are not the ultimate arbiter of how well we do. God is. And God tells us not to covet. So when we covet, it is likely that we will not gain that which we want, but rather, we will lose that which we have. Jesus tells us, **Matthew 13:12: 12 For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.**

Penninah did not have the equilibrium to be grateful for the relationship that she had with Elkanah as the mother of his children. Rather than using her relationship to draw Elkanah closer, she decided to covet Hannah’s position as Elkanah’s lover, and, in effect, push Elkanah away by harassing Hannah. The more Penninah harassed Hannah, the more Elkanah tried to comfort Hannah. And Elkanah was better to Hannah than having ten sons, because Hannah was more attractive to be around than Peninnah.

A calm, sweet, grateful, loving person is extremely attractive. But in our society, our marriages often fall apart because that sweet person that we married decides, once the ceremony is over, that they are no longer going to be our lover, but rather our drill sergeant.

And covetousness is contagious; if you hang around people that are consistently covetous, you will find covetousness creeping into your personality. Hannah found herself coveting Peninnah’s position as mother, but Hannah was blessed by God with wisdom from her knowledge of the Scriptures. Hannah knew the episode of **Genesis 30:1–2:**

1 Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister, and said to

Jacob, “Give me children, or else I die!”

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

Rachel, being covetous of her sister’s children, became contentious with her husband Jacob, who loved her. But although Jacob loved Rachel dearly, he responded to Rachel’s contentious demand with anger.

Hannah, being Elkanah’s lover, realized that it was not wise to contentiously harass her husband to give her children, as Peninnah was harassing her. Elkanah was doing all he could do to give Hannah children, but the Lord was withholding the fruit of the womb from Hannah, just as He had with Rachel. So Hannah recognized that it would be better to go to the source of the problem than to harass the middleman, who was doing all he could do. **1 Samuel 1:9–11** records:

9 So Hannah arose after they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat by the doorpost of the tabernacle of the LORD.

10 And [Hannah]s was in bitterness of soul, and prayed to the LORD and wept in anguish.



11 Then [Hannah] made a vow and said, “O LORD of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head.”

Hannah made a vow to the Lord. Her vow was extraordinary, but it was not original. **Exodus 13:1–2** tells us:

1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

2 “Consecrate to Me all the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and beast; it is Mine.”

Exodus 13:13–16 continues:

13 But every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb; and if you will not redeem it, then you shall break its neck. And all the firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem.

14 So it shall be, when your son asks you in time to come, saying, ‘What is this?’ that you shall say to him, ‘By strength of hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

15 And it came to pass, when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, that the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast. Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all males that open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.’

16 It shall be as a sign on your hand and as frontlets between your eyes, for by strength of hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt.”

Numbers 18:15-16 continues:

15 “Everything that first opens the womb of all flesh, which they bring to the LORD, whether man or beast, shall be yours; nevertheless the firstborn of man you shall surely redeem, and the firstborn of unclean animals you shall redeem.

16 And those redeemed of the devoted things you shall redeem when one month old, according to your valuation, for five shekels of silver, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, which is twenty gerahs.

God has a special affinity for the firstborn, because they belong to Him. And Hannah is vowing to go beyond the norm; rather than redeeming her firstborn son with silver, she is vowing to actually give him to God.

Hannah shows that she has matured past coveting Peninnah’s children, but rather, wants to conform to the prime directive of God to be fruitful and multiply. Hannah is willing to devote the child that God gives her back to God, because she recognizes that God is her refuge and her strength, a very present help in time of trouble.

Hannah does not harass her husband or even covet a child, but rather makes a vow to let God know that she simply wants to be a participant on His



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program. As Mary said, when the Angel of the Lord told her of God's desire to use her womb to bring the Christ into the world, in **Luke 1:38**:

38 Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

Hannah is asking the Lord to use her womb to bring a judge for the Nation of Israel into the world. You may remember our review of the birth of Samson to Manoah's wife, in **Judges 13:5** when the Angel of the Lord told her:

5 For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines."

So, in her vow, Hannah is not asking God to give her a child, but to allow her to bring a judge into the world, one that will be set apart for Him.

That which we want becomes a blessing if we give it to the Lord. God tells us, in **Proverbs 22:6**:

6 Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.

God's purpose in giving us children is to build up His Kingdom. To have a child is the most sacred responsibility that we can have. Each child has an eternal spirit, and it is the job of the parents to dedicate that spirit to God, not just by prayer, but by training and by example.

God's prime directive is given to us in the "a" portion of **Genesis 1:28**:
28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it;

Car, cash, creature comforts, Caribbean cruises, cottages in the country and condominiums in the city are all cool to contemplate, but the characteristic that they have in common is that they are temporary. Pleasant possessions do not produce the prescription of Prince of Peace.

God blessed Israel with a nation; fertile land to conquer and resources to build the greatest kingdom in the history of the world, but where is it now? All of the resources that Solomon amassed in his great kingdom were gone from Israel within just a few generations, the great golden shields in the Temple were replaced with bronze, then iron, and then taken away entirely, because, regardless of how precious are things are, they will not last. But God gives us the ability to create children, which have eternal souls that will last forever. And God tells us to devote our children's lives back to Him.

Even as He devoted His child to us. **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 devoted His son to us. Jesus Christ died a death of devotion on the Cross of Calvary that we might be saved from the penalty and the power of our



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sins. Jesus Christ left us a legacy of sacrifice, and gave us the command to emulate His sacrifice by sacrificing ourselves for one another. Not to covet the possessions of this world that we see in the hands of others, but to follow His New Commandment that He gives 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 replace our covetousness with cherishing, and let us replace our contentiousness with caring, and let us love one another, as Christ has loved us.

Pastor Darryl R. Curtis
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