



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

“The Biblical Design of Gender, Part 61”

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Informed. Insightful. Intelligent.



The Biblical Design of Gender, Part 61

Ecclesiastes 9:9

9 Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life which He has given you under the sun, all your days of vanity; for that is your portion in life, and in the labor which you perform under the sun.

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 few lessons, we have been looking at the thinking of Solomon, the son of David, the King of Israel after David, and the wisest man who ever lived, because of his application to God for the gift of wisdom, which God granted Solomon in **1Kings 3:11-12**:

11 Then God said to [Solomon]: “Because you have asked this thing [that is, wisdom], and have not asked long life for yourself, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice,

12 behold, I have done according to your words; see, I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you.

And Solomon showed his wisdom to all Israel. **1Kings 4:30–34** records:
30 Thus Solomon’s wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt.

31 For he was wiser than all men—and his fame was in all the surrounding nations.

32 He spoke three thousand proverbs, and his songs were one thousand and five.

34 And men of all nations, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom, came to hear the wisdom of Solomon.

But as Solomon exercised his wisdom to understand the meaning of life, Solomon quickly came to an inescapable conclusion and transmitted it to us as he wrote that which we know as the book of Ecclesiastes. In the first four verses of that book, Solomon tells us, in **Ecclesiastes 1:1-4**:



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1 The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

2 “Vanity of vanities,” says the Preacher; “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.”

3 What profit has a man from all his labor in which he toils under the sun?

4 One generation passes away, and another generation comes; But the earth abides forever.

Vanity, as Solomon uses it in verse 2 of Ecclesiastes 1, means meaninglessness. Solomon’s wisdom has brought him to the conclusion that that which a man acquires in life is meaningless. And why? Verses 3 and 4 teach that acquisitions in life are meaningless because the earth has been constructed in such a way as to dwarf the ingenuity of man.

Regardless of that which a man does or builds, his work always proves to be merely temporary, because a man can only live for a finite period of time, after which he is destined for death. That which man constructs, even if it lasts past the death of the man that constructs it, will ultimately come under the dominion of someone other than the man that built it, and the person that inherits that which a man builds might or might not have the wisdom to control that which is left to him with the wisdom on the one that built it. Solomon tells us, in **Ecclesiastes 2:4-11**:

4 I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards.

5 I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them.

6 I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees.

7 I bought male and female slaves and had other slaves who were born in my house. I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me.

8 I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired men and women singers, and a harem as well—the delights of the heart of man.

9 I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. In all this my wisdom stayed with me.

10 I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my work, and this was the reward for all my labor.

11 Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.

My Dad has kept up his house in Chicago, Illinois since the 1950’s. He keeps the grass mowed, the snow shoveled, and paints the house every two years. Last year, when Dad was 87, he hired a guy to paint the house, but the guy delayed in coming to paint, so Dad fired him and painted the house himself.

But my brother has a house near South Bend, Indiana, and I have a house here in Lansing. It is an excellent possibility that when my father hears the steady march of the chariot wheels from the sky and goes home to meet the Lord and



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reunite with my mom, that my brother and I will sell the house that Dad has been maintaining for over sixty years. And what will the next owner do? Will he maintain the house like Dad did, or will he allow it to fall into disrepair? And how will I know that which he does? And even if I knew, what could I do about it? And why would I care?

And that's what Solomon means about vanity, or meaninglessness. One generation comes onto the scene, does that which they do, and moves off. The next generation may take up the mantle of the previous generation, or may decide to do something else altogether different. Solomon tells us of the final value of building his great city, in **Ecclesiastes 2:18-23**:

18 I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me.

19 And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the work into which I have poured my effort and skill under the sun. This too is meaningless.

20 So my heart began to despair over all my toilsome labor under the sun.

21 For a man may do his work with wisdom, knowledge and skill, and then he must leave all he owns to someone who has not worked for it. This too is meaningless and a great misfortune.

22 What does a man get for all the toil and anxious striving with which he labors under the sun?

23 All his days his work is pain and grief; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is meaningless.

After wise investigation, Solomon recognized that the things of this world are irrelevant because they are temporary. The Apostle John echoes Solomon's wisdom, as he speaks in **1John 2:15-17**:

15 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

16 For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world.

17 The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

Let us begin to understand the wisdom that Solomon found in his search. The wisest way to live life on earth is to understand that earthly life is not an end point, but rather, the place of preparation for the future. All the possessions that we acquire on earth are as meaningless as the grades that we receive on our report cards in school.

In 2011, no one is hired for a professional job by showing an interviewer a report card from a school. Employers now verify the bona fides of job applicants either by investigation or testing rather than relying on grades from a school.



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The real benefit of a school is not the grade that you receive, but in the information that you learn.

Likewise, the real benefit of life is not the possessions that you amass, because those possessions, like school grades, are only relevant in the academic situation of life on earth. But we are all going to pass away, or graduate from life on earth, and once we leave this earthly school, neither the possessions, nor the grades will be relevant, but rather, the information with which we have prepared ourselves will be relevant. The possessions that we have acquired will be no more relevant than the grades that we received in school.

So, that which will be relevant, as we say in the beginning of our sermon each week, 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.

And of what will our duties in our eternal life consist? Paul tells us, in **1 Corinthians 6:2-3**:

2 Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases?

3 Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!

So our objective in this life is to learn how to judge. In order to judge correctly, we must know the law of God experientially, not just academically. So, Solomon goes on to tell us that how we deal with amassing possessions is one of the exercises that God gives us. Solomon tells us, in **Ecclesiastes 4:4-6**:

4 And I saw that all labor and all achievement spring from man's envy of his neighbor. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

6 Better one handful with tranquillity than two handfuls with toil and chasing after the wind.

In other words, there is such a thing as enough, especially if our motivation for obtaining more is to comfort our feelings of envy. And this is true because the amount that we possess is really meaningless, as we may lose all of it on any given day. And our loss may not necessarily be because of our carelessness. 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.'



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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.”

Building a bigger storehouse may seem to be the intelligent thing to do when receiving a windfall, but we have to understand that the acquisition of possessions is like the acquisition of grades; a great report card is of no benefit if one does not use the information acquired for a useful purpose. And God never finds selfishness attractive. Solomon’s wisdom tells us, in **Ecclesiastes 4:7-8**:

7 Then I returned, and I saw vanity under the sun:

8 There is one alone, without companion: He has neither son nor brother. Yet there is no end to all his labors, Nor is his eye satisfied with riches. But he never asks, “For whom do I toil and deprive myself of good?” This also is vanity and a grave misfortune.

The act of acquiring possessions can take on a life of its own, but the acquisition of possessions for selfishness sake is not the plan of God. Solomon leads us to an interesting conclusion, in **Ecclesiastes 4:9-11**:

9 Two are better than one, Because they have a good reward for their labor.

10 For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up.

11 Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; But how can one be warm alone?

Now we come to the Biblical design in our lesson for today. God does not intend that we develop our relationship with Him in a vacuum, but as part of a twosome. 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.”

And Solomon, in his wisdom, ratifies the wisdom of the plan of God and identifies the other member of our twosome, in **Ecclesiastes 9:9** which says:

9 Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life which He has given you under the sun, all your days of vanity; for that is your portion in life, and in the labor which you perform under the sun.

Unlike the acquisition of possessions, which is temporarily and meaningless, the purpose of marriage is to bring joy to a man. A man that is alone can acquire possessions, but never be satisfied, as **Ecclesiastes 4:7-8** told us, but a man with a wife has someone to lift him up, keep him warm and bring him joy.

And that is the purpose of marriage. Any man that can get his wife to do that which he asks has someone to lift him up, keep him warm and bring him joy.

Ephesians 5:22-24 tells us:

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



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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.

A wife is designed to be a helper and a companion. The marital relationship is the main way that we learn about our role in the Kingdom of God, as **1Peter 3:7** tells us:

7 Husbands, likewise, dwell with [your wife] with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.

Without the grace gift of a wife from God, a man has a limited opportunity to learn love and to show his appreciation to God. Men need wives because they cannot learn to love from a book; a married man has the opportunity to escape the vanity of the acquisition of possessions and develop understanding and empathy for his wife, as he learns to honor her and reaps the benefit of joy from their interaction with and love for one another.

With the rationale of making money, I can remember when I virtually abandoned my family and moved to Chicago for work. Had my wife not called me back home to love her and my son, I would never have had that relevant and revealing conversation with my boss about his family troubles, and my entire life would have taken a very different turn, as would the life of my wife and son.

And the same applies to women. A life that demands that a woman work for the acquisition of possessions does not make a woman happy. A woman's happiness comes from the nurturance of relationships, not the acquisition of possessions. Women are created specifically to nurture husbands and children, and when the acquisition of possessions gets women off track, women become unhappy, simply because they have too much to do, without the relationship benefit. No one that is overwhelmed by too much to do can be happy. Love requires time and attention, and a woman with too much to do does not have the inclination to give her husband either of them.

Some, like the thief on the Cross, may receive grace individually, but in God's design, grace is not an individual gift, because grace is a function of love. We have the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ because of His love for us.

2Thessalonians 2:16-17 tells us:

16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace,

17 comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.

A man and his wife are co-heirs of grace, because once we receive the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we cannot hold it in a vacuum, even as Jesus instructs us, in **John 13:34-35**:

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



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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.”

And marriage is the laboratory in which the Lord Jesus Christ commands us to display this love, as **Ephesians 5:25** describes to us:

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

Our love in marriage is intended to parallel the love that Christ had for the church, which is far, far, far more important than possessions. Let me tell you a story about love and possessions, one that is set in the 1800's, back in the days in which money was money.

One dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all. And sixty cents of it was in pennies. Pennies saved one and two at a time by bulldozing the grocer and the vegetable man and the butcher until one's cheeks burned with the excessive frugality that such close dealing implied. Three times Della counted it, crying. One dollar and eighty-seven cents. And the next day would be Christmas.

Della finished her cry and powdered her cheeks. Della had been saving every penny she could for months, with this result. Only \$1.87 to buy a present for Jim. Her Jim. Many a happy hour she had spent planning for something nice for him. Something fine and rare and near to being worthy of the honor of being owned by Jim.

Now, James Dillingham Young and his wife Della were a young married couple. Jim was a good worker, but the times were hard and his pay had been cut from \$30 per week to \$20 per week. But Jim and Della owned two possessions which they both treasured. One was Della's hair, and the other was Jim's gold pocket watch that had been his father's and his grandfather's. Had the queen of Sheba lived in the flat across the airshaft, Della would have let her hair hang out the window to dry just to make Her Majesty jealous. And had King Solomon lived downstairs, with all his treasures piled up in the basement, Jim would have pulled out his pocket watch every time he passed, just to see the King pluck at his beard from envy.

Della took down her hair, which fell about her rippling and shining like a cascade of brown waters. It reached below her knee and made itself almost a garment for her. And then she did it up again nervously and quickly. She faltered and stood still while a tear splashed on the worn red carpet.

On went her old brown jacket; on went her old brown hat. With a whirl of skirts and with the brilliant sparkle still in her eyes, she fluttered out the door and down the stairs to the street.

Where she stopped the sign read: "Madam Sofronie. Hair Goods of All Kinds." One flight up Della ran, and collected herself, panting. "Will you buy my hair?" asked Della.



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“I buy hair,” said Madame. “Take your hat off and let’s have a look at it.”
Down rippled the brown cascade.

“Twenty dollars,” said Madame, lifting the mass of hair with a practiced hand.

“Give it to me quick,” said Della.

The next two hours flew by. Della ransacked the stores for Jim’s present. She found it at last. It was a platinum watch chain simple in design, properly proclaiming its value by substance alone – as all good things should do. It was even worthy of The Watch. Twenty-one dollars they took from her for it, and she hurried home with the 87 cents. With that chain on his watch Jim might find himself checking the time in any company. Grand as the watch was, Jim sometimes looked at it on the sly on account of the old leather strap that he used for a chain.

When Della reached home, she got out her curling irons, lit the gas and went to work repairing the ravages to her head made by generosity added to love. Within forty minutes her head was covered with tiny, close-lying curls that made her look like a schoolboy. She looked at her reflection in the mirror carefully and critically. “If Jim doesn’t kill me before he takes a second look at me”, she said to herself, “he’ll say I look like a Coney Island chorus girl. But what could I do with \$1.87?”

At 7 o’clock the coffee was made and the frying-pan was on the back of the stove hot and ready to cook the chops. Then she heard Jim on the first flight of steps. She had a habit for saying little silent prayers about the simplest everyday things, and now she whispered: “Please God, make him think I am still pretty.”

The door opened and Jim stepped in and closed it. Jim stopped inside the door, as immovable as a setter at the scent of quail. His eyes were fixed upon Della, and there was an expression in them that she could not read, and it terrified her. It was not anger, nor surprise, nor disapproval, nor horror, nor any of the sentiments for which she had been prepared. He simply stared at her fixedly with that peculiar blank expression on his face.

Della wriggled off the table and went for him. “Jim, darling,” she cried, “don’t look at me that way. I had my hair cut off and sold because I couldn’t have lived through Christmas without giving you a present. It’ll grow out again – you won’t mind, will you? I just had to do it. My hair grows awfully fast. Say ‘Merry Christmas!’ Jim, and be happy. You don’t know what a beautiful gift I’ve got for you.”

“You’ve cut off your hair?” asked Jim, laboriously, as if he could not comprehend the fact even after the hardest mental labor.

“Cut it off and sold it,” said Della. “Don’t you like me just as well, anyhow? I’m me without my hair, ain’t I?”

“You say your hair is gone?” he said, sounding almost like an idiot.



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“You needn’t look for it,” said Della. “It’s sold, I tell you – sold and gone, too. It’s Christmas Eve, boy. Be good to me, for it went for you. Maybe the hairs of my head were numbered,” she went on with sudden serious sweetness, “but nobody could ever count my love for you. Shall I put the chops on, Jim?”

Jim suddenly seemed to awaken. He threw a package from his overcoat pocket onto the table.

“Don’t make any mistake about me, Dell,” he said, “I don’t think there’s anything in the way of a haircut or a shave or a shampoo that could make me like my girl any less. But if you’ll unwrap that package you may see why you had me going a while at first.”

Nimble fingers tore at the string and paper. And then an ecstatic scream of joy; and then, alas! a quick feminine change to hysterical tears and wails, necessitating the immediate employment of all the comforting powers of the lord of the flat.

For there lay The Combs – the set of ornamental hair combs, side and back, that Della had worshipped long in a Broadway window. Beautiful combs, pure tortoise shell, with jeweled rims – just the shade to wear in the beautiful vanished hair. They were expensive combs, she knew, and her heart had simply craved and yearned over them without the least hope of possession. And now, they were hers, but the tresses that she had in which to wear the combs were gone. She hugged the combs to her bosom, and finally she was able to look up with tears and a smile and say: “My hair grows so fast, Jim!”

And then Della leaped up and cried, “Oh, oh!”

Jim had not yet seen his beautiful present. She held it out to him eagerly upon her open palm. The dull precious metal seemed to flash with a reflection of her bright and ardent spirit.

“Isn’t it a dandy, Jim?” Della cried, excitedly. “I hunted all over town to find it. You’ll have to look at the time a hundred times a day now. Give me your watch. I want to see how it looks on it.”

Instead of obeying, Jim tumbled down on the couch and put his hands under the back of his head and smiled. “Dell,” Jim said, “let’s put our Christmas presents away and keep ‘em a while. They’re too nice to use just at present. I sold the watch to get the money to buy your combs. And now suppose you put the chops on.”

When someone truly loves you, possessions don’t matter. They are willing to give up that which is most precious to them as a gift to you. For example,

John 3:16-17 records:

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.



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And this is love. **Romans 5:6-8** lets us know how great the love of God is. It says:

6 For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die.

8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

While we were yet sinners.

God did not demand that we straighten up before the Lord Jesus Christ made his sacrifice. **1John 4:10** tells us:

10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation [meaning the sacrifice] for our sins.

So we were sinners, and we did not love God. But God still sent His son to the Cross die for us, to make it possible for His Holy Spirit to come to us, and shed the love of God abroad in our hearts. God loved us, sacrificed His son for us, sent His Spirit to us, and then after all this, God asks us to do one thing, in **1John 4:11**. God says, through the pen of the Apostle John:

11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

Solomon teaches us that possessions are meaningless vanity, because in the final analysis, possessions are temporary. Whatever we acquire in life, we will leave it here on earth. And Jesus warns us to beware of covetousness, as even as God called for the rich man's soul that night, tomorrow is not promised to us. But our job, as Christians, is to learn to love one another, and the laboratory for love is in marriage.

In our marriage ceremony, when we wed one another, we vow to God to love one another, and the wise Solomon tells us, in **Ecclesiastes 5:4-7**:

4 When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; For He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed—

5 Better not to vow than to vow and not pay.

6 Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin, nor say before the messenger of God that it was an error. Why should God be angry at your excuse and destroy the work of your hands?

7 For in the multitude of dreams and many words there is also vanity. But fear God.

And God gives us every chance. God doesn't assign us a wife or husband, but allows us to pick out the one with whom we are to exercise our love. God gives us both physical and emotional benefits for keeping our word, and He gives us the power of His Holy Spirit to enable us to follow His instructions. Because God has designed man as the cooperative coalition of husband and wife so that man can successfully achieve the objective that God



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has given us to exercise dominion over the earth, developing wisdom and knowledge in preparation for further responsibility in our eternal life.

So, with all the benefits and incentives that God gives us when we follow His instructions, we ought to love one another, especially the one that we have vowed to love. In fact, we ought to be afraid to not love one another. The wisdom of Solomon tells us, in **Ecclesiastes 12:13-14**

13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His Commandments, for this is man's all.

14 For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.

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