

Title: Bonds of Love

Let us pray.

Most holy, Lord God, the prophet Micah told us what you require in order to reflect your love, “do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God.” Help us in reflecting your love, transforming the world one person at a time, through the power of Christ Jesus, in whom we pray. Amen.

This isn't very new, but I assume most of you are aware that some genius somewhere researched female DNA (because it only works with female DNA) going back in time to discover the first *Homo sapiens* mother. Somebody had to be the first of us.

Now I am guessing here, I'm guessing that her name was not Eve. Maybe it was Ugh. Up until now, we needed a woman and a man to make a human being all of these thousands and thousands of generations. Now we just need a woman. The time when we won't even need a woman anymore is just around the corner. The question that needs to be asked with any new technology is, “Given we can do it, should we?”



SPECIAL 40TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION OF
MY LIFE AS THE WORLD'S FIRST TEST-TUBE BABY

On July 25th, Louise Brown will turn 40 years old. I expect a lot of media attention toward the end of next month. You might be asking, “Who is Louise Brown?” She is quite famous, but not for anything she did. She is famous for being born. Her birth weight was five pounds twelve ounces. Louise Brown was conceived in a petri dish. She is the first baby born from IVF, In Vitro Fertilization. This was an ethical challenge for the church, for medicine, and for politicians. But it was also hope for millions of childless couples.

Louise lives in Bristol, England. She works in a shipping office. She is also available and does many speaking events. IVF co-creator Robert Edwards received the 2010

Nobel Prize for medicine and attended Louise's wedding. By the way, she has naturally conceived children.

Shortly before the death of [Pope Paul VI](#), when asked for his reaction to Brown's birth, the patriarch of Venice, Cardinal Albino Luciani (later [Pope John Paul I](#)), expressed concerns about the possibility that artificial insemination could lead to women being used as "baby factories," but also refused to condemn the parents of the child, noting they simply wanted to have a baby.

Even for an IVF baby, having a family the old fashioned way was what Louise did. A child raised by a mother and a father, statistically, has a better chance of becoming a stable adult. Yet there are many successful people who were raised by one parent. There is not enough data yet to measure children raised by gay parents.

There are natural bonds created with the birth of a child. We know of instances where that has failed, but these are rare exceptions. For years and years, I have heard of the love and attention that grandparents have for their grandchildren. Until we had a grandchild, I had no idea how strong that bond is. And the kid isn't actually ours! I don't know about anyone else, but the hopes and dreams I had for our children was just the same as for our grandchildren. Amazing how that works.

Yet the bonds of love between anyone can be broken. We do things that are not loving toward those we love. That is the human condition. Maybe we should blame Ugh. Though I think it happened with our ancestors before Ugh. The danger of these bad actions is to harm or even break the bonds of love between two or more people. Recovery and forgiveness takes time.

Except for sociopaths, we feel shame when we break the bonds of affection. So, Boogah or Adam and Ugh or Eve, hid themselves when they broke the only rule God gave them. Rather than take personal responsibility, the blame game ensued. "It wasn't my fault. It was her fault." "It wasn't my fault. It was the serpent's fault." After all the dust had settled and trust was broken, Adam and Eve were banished from the garden, but they still had each other. The example of God's love continued and life went on.

The serpent, on the other hand, was cursed to run around without legs. We often associate the serpent with Satan, but God was pretty explicit in saying the serpent is an animal. I guess this serpent was the Boogah or Ugh of all snakes. It seems though that the serpent did act very Satan like. Satan is the heavenly district attorney. Satan never understood why God would bother with humanity and repeatedly tried to sabotage the relationship. Sometimes, bonds are sabotaged.

The story of Adam and Eve is a story to try to explain how evil entered the world. It was perplexing to humanity for many, many centuries to explain why we continually mess up. For the ancients, anything that could not be naturally explained was explained supernaturally. When things were amiss, either the gods or some evil entity was to blame.

It also took many centuries for the idea of there being only one God to be settled among first, the Israelites, and then the Jews. After they accepted one God, the question became, "What do we do with the gentile deities who seem real, at least for the gentiles?" The solution was not to dismiss them but to reclassify them as enemies of God and therefore they became demons.

Jesus attracted attention for casting out demons. Apparently, Jesus raised such a ruckus that people began acting irrationally. They had no concern to even eat. This was becoming a scandal in Nazareth. The neighbors were talking. All the things they had heard about their Jesus just sounded crazy. Jesus must no longer be of a sound mind. Jesus' family was embarrassed. They left Nazareth to try to restrain him.

Meanwhile word had gotten back all the way to Jerusalem. Some scribes were dispatched to take care of the problem. The scribes make copies of scriptures and so are well versed on what the scriptures say. The things they heard about Jesus had a different explanation than the one floating around Nazareth. This Jesus fellow must be possessed by demons. Not only is Jesus possessed, he is possessed by the granddaddy of all demons, Beelzebul. No one can cast out demons except the ruler of demons. Beelzebul was the head god of the Philistine pantheon. The Canaanites called it Baal.

The accusation made no logical sense and was easily picked apart by Jesus. Would Satan remove Satan from heaven? No. Besides, if demons were casting out demons then they would not survive. I guess even demons have a

sense of self-preservation. It is interesting that Jesus shifts the personification of evil from Beelzebul to Satan. From a gentile being to a Hebrew being. Jesus will not accept the existence of a supernatural, gentile being. For Jesus, Beelzebul does not exist.

But that does not take away from Jesus' argument. Satan cannot defeat Satan. If Satan were to do such an irrational act, Satan would be finished. Jesus illustrates this with a short parable. If someone wanted to take on something like a Goliath type man, that would require getting that big man out of the way. Satan is very strong, but Jesus is stronger. Jesus can subdue Satan and retrieve all the souls that Satan has imprisoned.

Jesus says that sins are forgiven. But Jesus draws the line when it comes to blaspheming the Holy Spirit. They will go too far if they do that. Blaspheming the Holy Spirit is unforgiveable. Blaspheming the Holy Spirit is an eternal sin. The scribes calling Jesus' spirit, the Holy Spirit, an unclean spirit gives them an eternal sin that can never be forgiven.

In spite of Jesus' ingenious defense of being possessed, Mary and Jesus' brothers are unconvinced that Jesus is sane. They ask someone to go and ask Jesus to come out to them. Such family matters are best done between family and not with a crowd of Jesus worshippers around.

Jesus rejects their request and Jesus rejects his bonds with them. Rather, Jesus extends his bonds of affection to all the people gathered there. If Jesus' family wants to say something to Jesus, then they can come and say it in front of everyone. For everyone there are members of Jesus' family. In fact, all who do the will of God are members of Jesus' family.

Mary had a unique bond with Jesus as a son and her first born. She must have been devastated by this rejection. Mary and Jesus' siblings were doing what was done in those days. Anything a family member does brings shame or pride to the whole family. In modern parlance, they were trying to do an intervention.

It seems that in spite of Mary's spiritual experiences of Jesus' birth and of what kind of person Jesus is, Mary was not yet on board as the mother of the son of God. There is no evidence that Jesus' siblings were ever on board

during his lifetime. It was only after the resurrection that some joined the movement.

If Mary had been onboard before this embarrassing encounter, Mary would have known that Jesus' bonds go beyond his biological family. Jesus did not come to give the word of God to just his family. Jesus was sent to the world and not just Nazareth.

Jesus calls himself the son of man and the son of God. As son of man, Jesus belongs to humanity. The human race is Jesus' family. "Whoever does the will of God is (Jesus') brother and sister and mother." (Mark 3:35) The son of man will come to restore Eden to the world, paraphrasing Daniel 7.

As son of God, Jesus is bonded to God and lord over creation. The love God has for creation and in particular, us, is the same love that Jesus has for creation and us, all bonded together by the Holy Spirit. Jesus becomes incarnate to cement God's love for us for all time.

People misinterpreted Jesus' casting out of demons. The Jerusalem authorities assumed that if it was not sanctioned by them then it must be some evil entering the world. Jesus' family thought he was nuts.

Jesus' healings were signs of a return to Eden. It was a beginning. Jesus' actions may have seemed abnormal because it did not reflect human nature. And not just human nature, they were acts of power. People fear unexplained power. Instead of fear, Jesus' intent was to spread love for one another, one person at a time.

How do we transform the world? One person at a time. Though we were not made to bond with every child, every grandchild born in the world, we can choose to do so. If bonds don't come naturally, we can form our own. Thereby, we will fulfill Jesus' command to love one another.

Text: **Mark 3:20–35** (NRSV)

²⁰ and the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat. ²¹ When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, "He has gone out of his mind." ²² And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons." ²³ And he called them to him, and spoke to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? ²⁴ If a kingdom is divided against

itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵ And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. ²⁶ And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come. ²⁷ But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered.

²⁸ "Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter; ²⁹ but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin"— ³⁰ for they had said, "He has an unclean spirit."

³¹ Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. ³² A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers and sisters^c are outside, asking for you." ³³ And he replied, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" ³⁴ And looking at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! ³⁵ Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."¹

^c Other ancient authorities lack *and sisters*#

¹ [The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version](#). (1989). (Mk 3:20–35). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.