
Introduction

- † **[Slide 1: Title]** Go ahead and open up your Bible to Genesis 2.18. We have learned that the one, eternal, all powerful, creator and sustainer God, Yahweh, carefully designed the first person, Adam... and God gave Adam a great relationship and direct communication with God himself... and God gave Adam all the food and water [really everything] he would need... and God gave Adam both fulfilling work to do and a Sabbath day of rest and worship... and God gave Adam a paradise garden in which to live and work... and God gave Adam a simple moral philosophy... and all this was designed to help Adam succeed in his purpose as God's image, which was to reflect God's character, represent God, reproduce God's image throughout the earth, and rule over creation in God's name.
- But there was one problem... do you know what it was? There was no football! Adam was not allowed to kill a pig for its skin and the gazelles kept outrunning the rocks he threw to them. No? that was not the problem?
 - Ok. You know, the problem was not even that there were no women; flirting with women or flirting with camels can be less than rewarding. No, the problem was that Adam was alone. There was no woman, singular; Adam lacked a wife, a friend, a partner, and so paradise was not fully paradise yet. But God had a plan.
 - So let's take a look at Genesis 2.18-25. We will read a few verses, I will clarify a few things, we will continue, and then we will discuss the big ideas at the end.

[Slide 2: 2.18-20] Genesis 2.18-20 NIV: **The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals. But for Adam no suitable helper was found.**

- † The Hebrew could say God formed or [as the NIV has it] God had formed the animals.
- So v.19 could suggest God made each animal right in front of Adam [as he had planted fully grown fruit trees in the garden] or that God already had formed these animals at creation, and now paraded them before Adam.
 - Either way, note that Adam here begins his work of representing God and ruling in God's name, by naming the animals. You have to wonder how long this took! It might have been a long first day of work for Adam.
- † **[Slide 3: by Adam]** The purpose of this exercise might have been to get Adam into the right frame of mind to appreciate the blessing God was about to bring him.
- In v.18, it was God who judged Adam's aloneness to be not good; the text does not indicate that Adam complained or was even aware of being alone.
 - By letting Adam realize that he was alone and nothing then on the Earth could rectify that problem, God brought Adam to a sense of his need for blessing, and an appreciation that only God could meet that need.

- This is food for thought as we struggle and suffer today. When your life is a mess, it is a good approach to focus on getting yourself right with God and getting healthy. This optimizes your wellbeing in any situation, and it prepares you to receive God's blessing and appreciate the blessing when it comes.

[Slide 4: 2.21-22] Genesis 2.21-22 NIV: So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

- † When my life is a mess, I like to remember passages like this: God can do miraculous, tremendous things super-fast, even while I am sleeping. So I try to rest in him, trusting he will take care of me.
- † To counter pagan teachings, we should remark that God did not remove a whole woman from the man; nor was the man multi-gender before this. Rather God took a non-sexual part of the man, and with it God crafted a woman, giving her life as a divine act, just as he had done for the man.
 - Traditionally, the English translations say God took a rib from Adam; that would be a rare use of the Hebrew word. It is a little confusing in the Hebrew: one rib, part of a side, one of each side... God took part of Adam; it doesn't matter which way you translate it.
 - I like what the seventeenth century Presbyterian minister Matthew Henry wrote, that the woman is "not made out of his [Adam's] head to top him, not out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved" [*Commentary on the Holy Bible*]. I don't know if God intended all that symbolism, but it is nice in any case.

[Slide 5: 2.23-25] Genesis 2.23-25 NIV: The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

- † Before we get to the big ideas, I will mention that Adam says two confusing things here.
 - In v.23, he says the woman is bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh. This could simply mean she was made from him or that she is of the same species, unlike the animals he had named earlier. But it is such a peculiar phrase, that people try to find more meaning in it.
 - So some have speculated that bone symbolized strength and flesh weakness, so Adam was saying that the woman shared his strengths and weaknesses.
 - Others suggest Adam was making a covenant commitment to the woman, because when all the tribes of Israel came to pledge their loyalty to King David, what they said was [2 Samuel 5.1 NASB], "Behold, we are your bone and your flesh." That signified their commitment to David; or at least it signified their willingness to identify with David, which would imply Adam recognized this woman belonged with him.
- † **[Slide 6: woman]** The second confusing thing is the way Adam called the woman "woman" and himself "man." We saw earlier that God had called the first man [אָדָם], Adam, which came to mean "man" or "humankind," but was derived from the word for earth, land, or ground.

- Now Adam refers to himself as [אִישׁ], which thus comes to mean “man”; and he says the woman will be called [אִשָּׁה], “woman,” because of the way God created her from part of the man.
- I am not sure what to make of this. Apparently Adam did not like being named after his origins in the dirt, so he called himself [אִישׁ], and then he called the woman after her origins in himself [אִשָּׁה]. Yet scripture continues to refer to Adam as “Adam,” perhaps reflecting a limitation of Adam’s autonomy: Adam could name the animals, but only God was authorized to name Adam.
- Scholars today like to argue that [אִישׁ] and [אִשָּׁה] are not related in the Hebrew language, but that’s the kind of nonsense that can happen when you stare at jots and tittles too much; you lose sight of the forest for the trees.

Women

- † **[Slide 7: not good]** Let’s talk about the woman. Before I met LeeAnn [and she hit me on the head with her club and dragged me away from my groupies, back to her cave], I had an appreciation for women, but I was pretty set in my bachelor ways. God had a different plan for Adam.
- Remember, God declared everything in creation to be “good,” but after creating Adam and placing him in the Garden of Eden, God knew this was “not good,” because Adam was alone. The Hebrew for “not good” in this verse is highly emphatic; God is making a point.
 - As I said, Adam wasn’t even aware yet that he was alone, and he could have worked out a way to play football with the animals, but his aloneness was not good in God’s sight. To understand that, we have to remember that everything in creation was good in that it was pure and useful for God’s purposes; so we have to remember that God’s purposes for mankind were to reflect God’s character, represent God, reproduce God’s image throughout the earth, and rule over creation in God’s name. It would be impossible for Adam to accomplish these purposes alone.
 - And as God exists in an eternal fellowship of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, he created people in his image to thrive in community, and the basic form of community God had in mind was the family, starting with marriage.
- † **[Slide 8: helper]** So let’s talk about the woman for a little bit, starting again with v.18.
- The traditional English translation of v.18 is that God would provide a “helper” for Adam. The Hebrew term [עֲזָרָה] means a “help” or a “helpful thing,” so “helper” is a good translation. This term, however, often is misunderstood to be derogatory, like the woman was just the man’s servant. This is silly, since this term [עֲזָרָה] is most often used in the Old Testament [sixteen out of the nineteen times] to describe God!
 - So unless you are prepared to think of God as merely your little helper, your Santa Claus or servant boy, you cannot argue that this verse says woman is subservient to man. You might not want to swing all the way the other way, and say that as God delivers the man, so woman delivers the man [that might be a little too feministic], but we should realize that God had a grand purpose for the woman well beyond domestic servitude.
 - God created the woman to help Adam fulfill the purposes for which God created people in his image. *Together* they would reflect God’s character, represent God, reproduce God’s image, and rule in God’s name.

- † **[Slide 9: suitable]** Still in v.18, the Hebrew term [תָּאֵלֵף], translated as “suitable,” means here something that is different but appropriate. So the woman would not be exactly like the man, but she would be appropriate for him, in contrast to all the animals.
- Thus God made her to be a different gender than Adam, to be woman instead of man, so that they could reproduce God’s image and fill the earth with that image for the purposes of reflection, representation, and rule.
- † Before we delve more into God’s plan for this couple, let’s pause to reflect on the value of women in general. I have known and respected several women who were my supervisors in the workplace, my professors in school, or my peers in some way. And I very much love and respect my wife as my partner in life and ministry and as a blue belt in some obscure martial art.
- † **[Slide 10: 1.27]** Let’s go back to the account of God creating people in **Genesis 1.27 NIV: So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them.**
- Both man and woman were created in the image of God. So whatever we said that meant a few weeks ago, it applies to the woman as much as the man.
 - I keep calling her “the woman” because in my mind she did not have a proper name yet. Adam was calling her [אִשָּׁה], which meant “woman”; he had not yet named her “Eve.” But we can call her Eve now, if we want.
 - Eve was made in God’s image just as much as Adam. You might want to think less of her, because she was made from Adam, but Adam was made from dirt, so that’s not a very convincing argument!
 - Eve was created with all the spiritual awareness, the heightened intellectual capacities, and the direct access to God that Adam had.
 - Eve had the same purpose as Adam to be God’s image. Thus Eve had the same identity and validation as Adam. She was no less important: God created her in his image, in part because Adam could not be that image without her.
- † **[Slide 11: biblical roles]** Scholar Bruce Waltke notes that in the Bible, women pray directly to God,ⁱ participate in sacrifice and ministry,ⁱⁱ take the vows as Nazarites,ⁱⁱⁱ parent with equal standing,^{iv} receive and communicate divine revelation,^v and serve in the church.^{vi}
- While Jesus walked the earth, women financially supported his ministry [Luke 8.3], women ministered directly to Jesus and his team [Matthew 27.55], and women produced special events for his ministry [John 12.2].
 - In the early church, women were considered true disciples of Jesus [Acts 1.14] and were targeted for evangelism [Acts 16.13-15], women were filled by the Holy Spirit [Acts 2.4] and prophesied [Acts 2.16-18; 21.8-9], women served in church ministries [Acts 9.36] and even hosted church in their houses [Acts 16.40], women helped instruct and mentor those younger in the faith [Acts 18.26; Titus 2.3-5] and baptized female new believers [early church literature].
- † There should be no doubt in our minds that God values women as much as he values men, that women are created and procreated in God’s image as much as men, and women are as gifted in every way as men. Yet, despite being equal, they are not the same.

- **[Slide 12: differences]** Obviously we know they are not the same in gender: God made Eve to be suitable, to be different but appropriate, designed so that she and Adam could procreate and reproduce the image of God throughout the Earth.
 - God also gave them different roles. In Old Testament Israel, a woman could be a prophet or judge, but not a priest. In the ministry of Jesus, women were important disciples who played important roles in the ministry, but they were not apostles. In the early church, women took on every other role in the church, but not pastor/elder.
 - This reflects the situation in the godhead itself: God the Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit are each fully divine, of the same essence, completely equal and in unity in every way. And they all do some of the same things, like communicating with people and healing. Yet scripture shows them having different roles to play in creation, in salvation, in sustaining the universe, and in the events of the final judgment and kingdom at the end of time.
 - Likewise, God has different roles in mind for men and women in the family even though they are equal in value and are designed to do some of the same things.
- † **[Slide 13: 1 Peter 3]** In 1 Peter 3, Peter laid out a pattern of family life that makes the man responsible to God for the family's health, which we represent by putting "man" uppermost in the family circle of our three circles paradigm.
- The husband is the head of the family, but he rules the family in God's name – i.e., yes, by God's authority and by God's will, but also by God's direction and for God's glory – so he is to care for his wife sacrificially and selflessly, putting her needs before his own, seeking to bless her with his authority, not use her for his own benefit.
 - The husband is to submit to God as he leads his family; if he fails in this by getting selfish and not treating his wife right, then Peter implied that the husband's own prayers would be hindered!
 - **[Slide 14: Ephesians 5]** Paul wrote to the **Ephesians [5.24-25 NIV]: Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her...** So the husband is the head of the family, but that is a position of sacrifice and selflessness, of showering the wife with love, meeting her needs at the husband's own expense, and ensuring the wife's safety and wellbeing.
 - We also see later that God holds Adam accountable for mankind's descent into sinfulness, even though Eve was instrumental in that rebellion.
 - So God created woman to help man represent and rule for God, and both man and woman are equal in importance before God, but in marriage man has the greater responsibility before God.

Marriage

- † **[Slide 15: 2.22-24]** Let's talk about marriage. I want to point out that what we see here is the first marriage. The first married couple were Adam and Eve. Marriage was part of God's original design to bless and equip people to live out their purposes as his image.
- Look at vv.22-24 again [NIV]: **Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.**

- God brought Eve to Adam, in the garden. “That is why” a man breaks with his parents to unite with his wife. This first match up by God of Adam and Eve is the forerunner and reason for subsequent marriages. God instituted marriage, designed for one man and one woman, as part of equipping people to carry out God’s creation purposes for them.
 - When asked a question about divorce, Jesus quoted from Genesis 2.24 and then said [**Matthew 19.6 NIV**]: “**So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.**” That verifies we are talking about marriage here, that marriage is for one man and one woman, and that marriage involves a mysterious covenantal union which should not be broken.
- † [**Slide 16: 2.23**] Let’s talk about that union. Do you know, the first words we hear from Adam and the only ones we hear from him before his fall into sin are his joy at seeing Eve in v.23?
- Adam [v.23] and God [v.24] emphasized the unity of the bride and the groom: When God brings them together, Adam and Eve become “one flesh.”
 - [**Slide 17: one flesh**] As the NET interprets, they become one family, a new family, defined by the unity of their bodies in sex [so, literally, “one flesh”] and by their unity in law, before God, and in operation as a new family. All that affects one affects the other; to hurt or bless one is to do the same to the other.
 - [**Slide 18: united**] Man and woman are “united” or “joined”: the Hebrew verb [דָּבַק] means “to cling to” something. One man and one woman, who cling to each other permanently. “One flesh” implies not only unity and sexual unity, but also permanence and monogamy.
 - [**Slide 19: leave**] The verbs “to leave” and “to unite” were used often in the Old Testament to describe Israel’s forsaking their covenant with God or maintaining that covenant relationship; thus to leave parents to unite with a wife is to sever one loyalty and commence another; it signals that marriage is a covenant before God, not a makeshift legal arrangement.
 - V.24 shows the priority of the marriage covenant even over parental bonds or bonds of procreation. We reproduce God’s image into our children, raising and launching them to become reproducers themselves. Parents who interfere in the marriage of their children, or married couples who repeatedly turn to their parents, are not following the scriptural model.
- † [**Slide 20: shame**] One more thing. In v.25 we see Adam and Eve felt no shame. Partly this reflects the lack of sin in their lives at this time.
- Also, because they lacked sin, Adam and Eve had complete openness and trust with each other. They were physically naked, but also emotionally naked, without any barrier between them, and thus they could trust each other and feel no shame about being vulnerable before each other.
 - Scholar Bruce Waltke wrote, “Man and woman are never more like God than on their wedding day when they commit themselves unconditionally to one another.” “In marriage we imitate the gospel, giving up our rights and even our life for the other.”

Conclusion

- † [**Slide 21: purpose**] This completes the literary setting of our biblical narrative. We have been studying the beginning of the Bible, the genesis of Genesis, and we have been learning the

foundational truths that explain the rest of the Bible, and we have been learning the setting for our literary narrative in the rest of the Bible.

- **[Slide 22: protagonist]** We have met our protagonist, God. We learned God is the eternal, transcendent, omnipotent, sovereign, capable, and good creator and sustainer of the universe and all of life. We realized that God is beyond our comprehension, but we take solace in knowing he is loving and good. The Bible is God's story.
 - **[Slide 23: setting place]** In an exciting beginning to our narrative, God has created the earth to be suitable for his purposes, populating it with animals, with plants for food, springs and rivers for fresh water, and an Eden Paradise as an especially sanctified area.
 - **[Slide 24: setting people]** And God created and equipped man and woman to be his image, reflecting his character, representing him, reproducing his image, and ruling over creation in his name. With God's breath of life, direct communication with God himself and spiritual awareness, heightened intellectual powers, all the food and water they could want, a sense of identity and purpose, delegated authority and work they could enjoy and find fulfilling, the regular celebration of the Sabbath for rest and worship, the paradise garden setting, God's revelation of promises and commands, a simple moral philosophy, marriage and fruitfulness, God equipped Adam and Eve with everything they would need to be successful, as his image, so they could bring him glory.
- † **[Slide 25: next]** Do you know what comes next in a literary narrative? No, not football. Next week, we will read about the villain! and about the crisis he will introduce, the literary tension that will drive the plot for the rest of the biblical narrative, and indeed for the rest of history! Let's pray . . .

ⁱ Genesis 30.1-2; 1 Samuel 1.9-14; 2.1-10

ⁱⁱ Leviticus 12.6; Luke 8.1-3

ⁱⁱⁱ Numbers 6.2; 1 Corinthians 7.32-35

^{iv} Leviticus 19.3; Proverbs 1.8; 31.26

^v Genesis 25.22-23; Exodus 15.20; Judges 4.4-7; 2 Kings 22.13-20; Isaiah 8.3 [see also Joel and Acts 2.4, 16-18]

^{vi} Acts 21.9; Romans 16.1-7; Philippians 4.2-3