
Day 1

Learn: Prayerfully read Genesis 2.18-25. God might have paraded animals before Adam or made each arise out of the dirt in front of Adam [like he planted fully formed fruit trees in the garden]. Adam began his work representing God and ruling in God's name by naming the animals. In 2.18, it was God who judged Adam's aloneness to be "not good"; the text does not indicate Adam complained or was even aware of being alone. God's purpose in the naming exercise might have been to get Adam into the right frame of mind to appreciate the blessing God was about to bring him. 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.

Reflect: How do you react when your life is a mess? Do you focus on your problems or focus on getting yourself ready for blessing? It is good to ensure you are right with God and healthy in every way: what steps can you take to get there or maintain that status?

Day 2

Learn: Prayerfully read Genesis 2.18-25 [try a different translation]. God did not remove a whole woman from the man, nor was the man multi-gender before this. God took a non-sexual part of the man, and with it God created a woman. In 2.23, Adam says the woman is bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh. This could mean she was made from him or that she is of the same species, unlike the animals he had named earlier. 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, they said something similar [2 Samuel 5.1].

We saw earlier that God called the first man "Adam" [אָדָם], which came to mean "man" or "humankind," but was derived from the word meaning "earth," "land," or "ground." Now Adam refers to himself as "EESH" [עֵשׂ], which comes to mean "man," and he calls his partner "eesh-SHAH" [חַוָּה], "woman," because God created her from part of the man. Apparently Adam did not like being named after his origins in the dirt, so he renamed himself and then called the woman after her origins in himself. Scripture continues to refer to the man as "Adam," perhaps reflecting a limitation of Adam's autonomy and authority: Adam could name the animals, but only God could name Adam.

Reflect: When have you seen God act quickly to bring change in someone's life? Sometimes God acts overnight, while we sleep, suggesting we should give up our anxiety and rest in him. Is this hard for you? Would reflecting on passages such as this help you over time? Is it significant [3 circles] that God did not let Adam rename himself?

Day 3

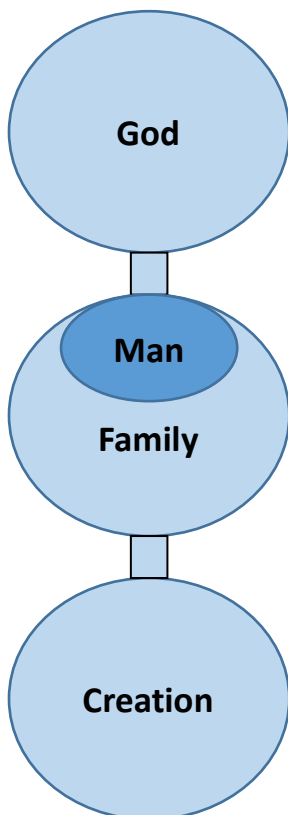
Learn: Prayerfully read Genesis 2.18-20. Everything God created was good, meaning it was pure and useful for God's purposes. God said, however, it was not good that Adam was alone: how would Adam fulfill God's purposes for him as God's image bearer if he was alone? In 2.18, God said he would provide a "helper" [עֵזֶר = AY-zer] for Adam. This term often is misunderstood to be derogatory, like the woman was just the man's servant. This is silly, since this term is most often used in the Old Testament [sixteen out of the nineteen times] to describe God! God had a grand purpose for the woman well beyond domestic servitude: *together* man and woman would reflect God's character, represent God, reproduce God's image, and rule in God's name.

God said he would provide a "suitable" helper for Adam. The term translated as "suitable" [נֶגֶד = NEH-ged] means here something that is different but appropriate: the woman would not be exactly like a man, but she would be appropriate for him, unlike the animals. Look back at Genesis 1.27: woman was made in God's image just as much as man. People might want to think less of woman because she was made from man, but man was made from dirt, so that's not a convincing argument. Woman was created with all the spiritual awareness, heightened intellectual capacities, and direct access to God the man had; woman had the same purpose as man to be God's image, thus she had the same identity and validation as man. She was no less important: God created her in his image, in part because man could not be that image without her. *[continued on next page]*

Reflect: Even though Adam could not have fulfilled God’s purpose for people while alone, that is not true for a celibate single adult today: can you reason why that is? Can you see that woman was just as important to God as man, just as much created in God’s image? Does that change the way you view the importance of women today?

Day 4

Learn: Prayerfully read Genesis 2.18. 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. 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 could not be 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. In 1 Peter 3, we see 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 – by God’s authority and God’s will, but also by God’s direction and for God’s glory – so he must 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 must submit to God as he leads his family, and if he fails in this by getting selfish and not treating his wife well, then the husband’s own prayers might be hindered. In Ephesians 5, we see 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.

Reflect: How do you feel about men and women sharing some duties, but having some different roles too? Does the illustration of how the Father, the Son, and the Spirit work together help? Think of ways men and women have distorted their roles in the family, and how living biblically would be healthier.

Day 5

Learn: Prayerfully read Genesis 2.22-24. 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. Adam [2.23] and God [2.24] emphasized the unity of the bride and the groom: When God brings them together, Adam and Eve become “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. Man and woman are “united” or “joined”: the Hebrew verb [דָּבַק = dah-VAHK] means “to cling to” something. One man and one woman, who cling to each other. “One flesh” implies not only unity and sexual unity, but also permanence and monogamy.

Reflect: Why do you think Adam and Eve felt no shame before each other? Notice they were physically naked; newly created and naïve, they were emotionally naked too. Why were they so comfortable with each other? How has sin complicated things in marriages [any relationships] today? What does that suggest for strengthening them?