

Man and Woman in the Garden

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[0:00] Our gracious Father, we do thank you for this, your word. We thank you that you continue to speak to us today through it, and that what you have to say is still very much authoritative and relevant for us today.

So please give us minds to understand your word, and more than that, hearts that would seek to live it out. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, I wonder what you would regard as the perfect day.

A day where you thought, ah, this is the life. Perhaps it's when your footy team wins the premiership, like on this next slide, the day when the dog is won. Is Len here?

I got this specially for Len, and he's not here. Maybe it could be something like that. I did a search on social media to see what people thought made a perfect day, how they thought life ought to be. So on the next slide is a man who thought it was kayaking in New Zealand at Milford Sound with his friends. Look at that view. It's beautiful. Perfect day, he says. For the girl on the next slide, it was shopping with her best friend.

[1:07] That's a perfect day, as life as it should be. For one family, it was skiing. On the next slide, in the Alps, in France. And on the next slide, this is the family in action.

I'd like to say that this is exactly how Michelle and my kids look when we ski. Not at all. Or perhaps it's staying at a chateau, like on the next slide. How beautiful is that?

This is actually a real photo of a real place, a chateau in Switzerland. And on the left there, you can just see a family playing on the side. Or for one couple, on the next slide, it was sleeping in a hammock in the Bahamas.

So the husband took the photo and the wife said on her social media, this is the life. Of course, we all know that it isn't always the life, is it?

I mean, when was the last time you were in the Bahamas? Never. We don't always get to enjoy God's creation, nor the relationships in it. And it's interesting to note that all those photos involve some sort of relationship.

[2:12] But we don't always get to enjoy God's creation, all the relationships in it. And as we come to Genesis 2 today, we're going to build on what we saw last week at the end of Genesis 1. And we will see life as we were created to enjoy it, including the relationships.

So we're at point 1 in your outlines and verse 5 in your Bibles. Well, verse 4 says, Notice in verse 5 the repetition of no.

There is no shrub, no plant. Why? Well, because literally it says there is no rain and no man to work the ground.

It seems the earth is not yet filled like we saw in chapter 1, because there is no rain to water the ground and no man to work the ground. And yet the odd thing is there is actually plenty of water.

Look at verse 6. But streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. And so even though there is no rain, there is still plenty of water.

[3:35] And so I take it the missing ingredient, the main reason why there's no shrubs and plants and so on, is actually the fact that there is no man.

In other words, again, we see man is highlighted as the important part of God's creation, just like we saw last week. For look who God creates in the very next verse.

See verse 7? See, man was the missing ingredient in creation.

He is still part of creation, do you notice? He's formed from the ground, the dust of the ground. In fact, the two Hebrew words for man, one of them is used here is Adam, which is why we call him Adam.

It means man. And the Hebrew word for ground is Adamar. It sounds very similar. There's a close link, you see, between man and the ground. He comes from it and is part of creation.

[4 : 36] And yet, he's a very special part of creation. I mean, look at how he's made in verse 7. God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.

He's the first example of CPR in history. Well, it's not quite CPR, is it? Because the man was never alive before. But now he is. No other part of creation had the breath of God breathed into it like this. I mean, to breathe breath into someone's nostrils, you've got to get pretty up close and personal, don't you? And so it's very similar to what we saw last week in chapter 1, verse 26, just on the other column in your Bibles.

Back there, remember, I point out that for everything else in creation, God said, let there be, let there be, or let the land produce. And when it comes to man, it changes to let us make.

God gets very personal when making man, you see. And so while man may be part of creation, he is the most important part of creation.

[5 : 41] As I said last week, I am more important than my in-law's beloved dog, Sam, if you remember that photo and story I told you. But it's also worth noticing that the writer uses the word formed here, not made.

God formed man. And the word formed implies design and shaping for a particular purpose. It's the word used for shaping pottery in the Bible. God is like the potter here, forming and shaping man for a purpose.

And we saw last week that man's twofold purpose was to rule like God and to rest in relationship with God. That was the goal, the seventh day.

And so God now provides a place for man to do both those things. At point two in your outlines, verse eight in your Bibles. Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden, and there he put the man he had formed.

The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground, trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

[6 : 50] Here God provides a garden for the man. And notice first that this garden is meant to be a picture of paradise. In fact, the word for garden in the Greek version of the Old Testament is actually paradise.

And the word for Eden here in the Hebrew is delight. It's a paradise of delight. For there are all kinds of trees there.

Trees that were pleasing to the eye, which made it beautiful. And trees that were good for food, which made it bountiful. It was like some of those pictures I showed you at the start.

For me, it kind of reminds me of the time I went to Fiji to teach over there for a while. And I stayed at this resort. On the next slide, here's a picture of the pool overlooking the ocean there.

On the next slide is kind of the beach view. It was amazing. And as you went out into the water of the ocean, it was crystal clear like the next slide. You could see the coral underneath.

[7 : 50] I even managed to take my surfboard over with me and I went for a surf. So on the next slide, that is not me. But you can still see the coral through the water so clear.

And then I wiped out and scraped my back on the coral. But anyway, up until then, it was paradise. It was beautiful and bountiful like the garden. What's more, the garden not only had lots of trees which gave food for life, it also had the tree of life that meant man could live forever.

And in verse 10, there was a river flowing through the garden which brought more life. You see, God created man to enjoy life to the full in paradise.

Unless we think this is all too good to be true, the writer adds verses 10 to 14 with these details and place names, rivers and places and things like that.

Some of these places and rivers we know are real in history, like the Euphrates, for example. Now, why does he add these details? I mean, you could read in your Bibles from verse 9 to verse 15 and you wouldn't skip a beat.

[9 : 01] The writer didn't need to add verses 10 to 14 to make sense of this chapter. So why does he? Well, I take it to show us that this place and this person really existed in history.

You see, the writer writes these chapters in such a way to teach us about who God is and who we are. I've been saying over the last couple of weeks that he doesn't write a scientific account with all the details.

In fact, he doesn't always write in chronological order. Sometimes he'll leave details out to focus our attention and make lessons, teach us lessons about who God is and who we are.

But that does not mean for one moment that these places were not real. And so the writer gives us all these details and names here, some of which we know today, so that we might know the garden was a real place.

The man was a real person. For example, if I said I went to Fiji last weekend, you might not believe me. But if I added all these details, like I flew out of Melbourne on Qantas flight Q784, I landed in Nandy where I took a taxi down to Singatoka and rode along the Coral Coast, the weather was fine, and then I arrived at my hideaway resort.

[10:18] The details and names of places that I gave you help back up my story, don't they? If I visited last week. I was here last week. I wasn't in Fiji, just for the record.

And it seems the writer deliberately adds all these names and details, some of which we know today, so that we might know he's talking about a real place and a real person in history.

And then he picks it up again in verse 15, where he left off in verse 9 and continues to describe life for the man in the garden. Do you see verse 15? Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

And the Lord God commanded the man, you are free to eat from any tree in the garden. But you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. For when you eat from it, you will certainly die.

I hear the man is given purpose for life, which is to work and care for the garden. Then the man is given God's word, which in turn gives freedom in life.

[11:17] God says you're free to eat anything you like from the multitude of trees. And God's word gives a warning to preserve his life. Don't eat from this one tree so you don't die.

You see, the garden is full of life because that's what God wants for people. Not only is the garden beautiful to enjoy life and bountiful to provide food for life, not only is there the tree of life, but man is given purpose for life.

He's given God's word, which brings freedom in life and a warning to preserve his life. It's full of life, you see. This is what God has created us to enjoy.

Life in paradise, ruling over it like him, but in relationship with him, obeying his word. And so that's really the two purposes we saw last week.

Remember that man was firstly made to rule over creation like God. That's there in verse 15 again. And man secondly was made to enjoy relationship with God. That's there in verses 16 and 17.

[12:25] This is life as God meant it to be. Well, not quite. Something or rather someone significant is missing, which brings us to point three in your outlines in verse 18 in your Bibles.

The Lord God said, it is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him. And notice here that being alone is not about being lonely.

Adam is not lonely for someone as though being single is not enough for him. After all, he is in a perfect relationship with God. Rather, he cannot rule creation alone.

You see, God says in verses 15 and 17, you are the rule the garden under my word. And then he says in verse 18, oh, actually, it's not good for you to be alone. He needs a helper.

Why? Because ruling is too hard to do alone, especially if ruling, as we saw last week, includes increasing in number and filling the earth. That's a bit hard to do on your own.

[13:32] And so, the search for a helper begins. Do you see verse 19? Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground, well, the word had is not actually there.

Now the Lord God 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 living livestock, the birds in the sky, and all the wild animals. But for Adam, no suitable helper was found.

Notice here, we see Adam ruling over creation by naming the animals that God brings. And yet, not one that God brings is a suitable helper for him. And so it continues in verse 21.

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.

[14:31] Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of 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. I saw a joke listing all the reasons why God made women.

And one reason was because when God finished the creation of Adam, he stepped back, scratched his head, and said, you know what? I can do better. Now, while my wife is better than me at many things, it's actually not about one gender being better than the other.

That's the point of Adam's poem in verse 23. The woman is made from the same stuff as Adam, you notice. Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh.

Same stuff. So they are equal. As we heard last week in chapter 1, verse 27, they are both made in God's image. And so they are equally of great worth in God's eyes.

[15:41] Yes, they are also different. God does not create Adam and Steve, but Adam and Eve. One is man, one is woman. And these differences extend to their roles.

So Adam is the one who is given God's word and names the animals and even names Eve. While Eve is the helper made for Adam. In other words, Adam is given the role of being the head and Eve is given the role of being the helper.

And they are given different roles to complement each other, to work together to help humanity rule like God. That's primarily what it meant to be made in God's image.

Humanity just with men would not work. Humanity needed women to complete it. I mean, for all of us who are married, we know we cannot find lots of things at home without our wives.

We are hopeless. We need them. And humanity was made in God's image as both man and woman. Two genders that complement each other.

[16:46] Just like a knife and a fork complement each other and help work together so we can eat the meal. So the man and woman were created to complement each other and work together to help humanity rule like God.

Of course, we think that this makes the woman inferior, you know, being a helper and not the head. But for starters, God is called helper several times in the Bible. And God himself is one God made up of different persons who have different roles.

So the Father is the head and he sends the Son into the world and never the other way around in Scripture. And the Son submits to the Father and never the other way around in Scripture.

Yet, none of us would say that that makes Jesus inferior to the Father, would we? I hope not. The Son is still equal to the Father. You see, God himself is equal but different.

And so again, being made in God's images, male and female, means being made equal but different so that together we can rule the world in complementary ways just like God rules in complementary ways.

[17:56] the problem our society has is that we find our identity and self-worth in what we do, our role, rather than who we are, made in God's image.

Remember last week how I said people often ask one another when they meet them, what do you do for work? It's one of the first questions we ask. And if you're a builder, well that's pretty worthwhile.

So they'll talk to you and even try and get some tips for their building project from you. And as I said last week, I've said I'm a church minister and then they suddenly realise they've got to be somewhere and have to leave me because that's not worthwhile.

You see, people find worth in what they do, their role, rather than who they are, God's image. That's not how God works though. He sees our worth in who we are as those made in God's image, both as men and women in our own right.

It's just that we have different roles. Man is given the role of headship and the rest of the Bible makes it clear that this headship is servant headship. He is to use his authority as the head to serve.

[19:04] And the woman is given the role of helper so that together we can rule like God. For this is what it means to be made in his image, to rule as male and female, equal in worth but different in roles, just like God.

I once heard a story of a man who was asked to speak about headship to a group of women and he was a little worried about how they would take it. But the woman organising it said, don't worry, we're not women's servers, we're Adam's servers.

You see, this organiser knew that she was of equal worth, just had different roles. And this is true for us just as men and women. And then in verse 24, it gives us one example of how this plays out.

And that example is marriage. So verse 24, that is why, the fact that men and women are the same but different, 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. Now the word marriage is not used here but that's what's happening when a man leaves his parents and cleaves or is united to his wife, although Adam never had parents to leave, of course.

[20 : 19] And they become one flesh. And in this marriage, certainly in the Garden of Eden, they are naked and yet unashamed. In other words, there was complete trust and openness and harmony.

There was no sin to cover up, no guilt to feel ashamed of. Remember in chapter 3, we'll look at this next week, when they sin against God, what do they do? They hide and try and cover themselves. And so being naked and unashamed is really a picture of there being no sin, no sin with God and with each other. It's harmonious relationships. And marriage is meant to be a picture of humanity's equal but difference, a picture of humanity's complementarian nature with man as the head and woman as the helper under God.

The rest of the Bible gives us more details about what that looks like in marriage and in church and in the world. We don't have time to kind of flesh out all the details but let me do say that in marriage, again, it's servant headship.

And so I often use the example, it's meant to look like this. I say to my wife, Michelle, let me do the dishes and then she says, okay. Servant headship.

[21 : 39] That's what it's meant to look like. But here we see that the one flesh of marriage represents the one flesh of humanity and the different genders and roles in marriage represent the different genders and roles in humanity.

Some people say that because everyone was married before the fall then God created us all to be married. But for starters, there was only two people who kind of needed to get married to increase in number and Jesus, who was the perfect man, did not get married.

So marriage is not itself the point. It's only a picture. The point Genesis 2 is making is that we are created as one humanity who are equal in worth but made up of different genders with different roles.

And we had to work together in complementary ways to rule like God under the word of God and in paradise with God. That's the picture of Genesis 2. That's life as it was meant to be.

The problem is life is not always like that today, is it? We don't live in paradise which is full of life and harmonious relationships. Rather, we live in a fallen world which is full of death and fractured relationships.

[22 : 52] What's more, our society seems to be intent on denying our gender differences. You see, because we're so caught up with finding our identity and worth in our role, society thinks that if men and women are to be equal, then they must do the same role.

Men must be able to do everything women do and women must be able to do everything men do. Society says if we're to be of the same worth, then we have to have the same role. There shouldn't be any differences between the genders.

Which means society, it's one of the reasons society says same-sex marriage is no big deal. I heard a presenter on the program called The Project on Channel 10 last week and they were talking to people in New Zealand and the presenter here in Australia said, well at least you in New Zealand have legalized same-sex marriage.

You're ahead of us on that one. And the New Zealand person responded, yes, we like to treat humans as humans. But they've not understood what it means to be human. To be human, to be made in the image of God means to be male and female for there to be different genders, not the same gender.

Or today, society's pushed to encourage children to choose their own gender now because again, society says there's no difference or there oughtn't to be. So at East Doncaster Secretary College down the road, they've had to make one toilet available for students who are gender neutral or are deciding what gender they will be.

[24 : 21] It's happening at the moment. It's crazy. But you see, the Bible says gender is a good thing. It's part of our humanity. It's part of being made in God's image. And it's actually what gives us worth in God's eyes.

Our worth does not come from doing everything the other gender does. It simply comes from being a man or being a woman made in God's image.

That's where our worth comes. What's more, our complementary genders actually enable us to work together in ruling like God as those made in God's image. And so when we come to the New Testament in Christ, we see that both our equality and our difference as men and women are actually upheld.

So on the next slide, Paul writes this in 1 Corinthians. He says, I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ and that the head of the woman is man and that the head of Christ is God. You see, our differences in gender and roles are upheld. Remember, headship still is servant headship. That's how Christ was our head. He served us by giving his life for us.

[25 : 34] And yet, Paul adds just a few verses later that we are still equal. He says, nevertheless, in the Lord, woman is not independent of man nor is man independent of woman.

In other words, men need women just as much as women need men. One is not better than the other. We are equal and need each other equally. What's more, in Christ, paradise will be restored. As we heard in our second reading, which is on the next slide, heaven is described like a new Eden. There is a river that brings life flowing through it.

There's the tree of life which kind of stands either side of the river and its leaves bring healing to the nations. Again, a picture of abundant life here. There's fruit and so on.

Life. And notice at the end of the reading, we will reign forever. That is, we will rule over the new creation like where we were created to.

[26 : 40] We will rule together as man and woman in the garden again. And that will be better than Fiji or skiing on the slopes or a chateau in Switzerland. So until that day, can I say, men be men, women be women.

We are both equal in God's sight, just different in gender and roles. and keep seeking to rule this world together like God but under God's word, just like Adam was to do.

And don't buy into the world's lies, but celebrate both gender equality and differences. For that is how we have been made as humans in God's image.

Let's pray. Our gracious Father, we do thank you for the way you have made us to be, that we have a special place in your creation, that we are made in your image.

And Father, we thank you that part of being human means to be male or female. And so Father, rather than buying to the world's lies and trying to squash these differences, we pray that you would help us to celebrate them and enjoy them.

[27 : 55] But help us to live this life under your word, looking forward to the life to come, where there will be Eden again. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen.