

Man and Woman in the Garden

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[0 : 00] Our gracious Heavenly Father, we do thank you for your word to us. We thank you that what you say to us is still relevant for us today, indeed still authoritative for us today.

And so we do pray, Heavenly Father, that you would help us to understand your word and how it might apply to our lives, that we might live for the glory of your name. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, I wonder what you would regard as the perfect day. You know, a day where you thought, ah, this is life.

Perhaps it's the day your footy team won. So on the next slide is the Bulldogs premiership last year for a man at 9 o'clock. That was the perfect day.

He's a Bulldogs fan. He's been waiting a long time. I did a search on social media to see what people thought made a perfect day and how they thought life ought to be. So on the next slide is a man. We'll not worry about that one. We'll keep going.

[0 : 58] A man kayaking in New Zealand in the Milford Sound. Look at that view. How nice is that? He's kayaking with some mates there. For him, that was the perfect day.

On the next slide, for one girl, it was shopping with her best friend. That was the perfect day. On the next slide is a family who are skiing in the Alps in France.

The whole family went skiing. So on the next slide, here they are. This is roughly how Michelle and the kids look when we go skiing. So for one family, this is what it meant, the perfect day, what life at its best looked like.

Or perhaps for others, on the next slide, it's living in a chateau in Switzerland over Lake Geneva. That's a photograph. It looks a bit like a painting, but it's an actual photograph. And there's a family just off to the left of the castle there.

So perhaps that's the perfect day, perfect life. Or perhaps it's just sleeping in a hammock. On the next slide, in the Bahamas. So the husband took a photo and the wife put on her Twitter account, this is the life, she said.

[2 : 06] Unfortunately, though, we all know this isn't always the life, is it? I mean, when was the last time you were in the Bahamas? We don't always get to enjoy God's creation, nor the relationships we have in it.

It's interesting to note that all those pictures involve relationships, as well as God's creation. But we don't always get to enjoy either. And so as we come to Genesis 2 today, we're going to build on last week, and we'll see the life we were created to have, including the relationships in it.

And so we're going to start at point one in your outlines, and verse four and five in your Bibles. This is the account, or literally, these are the generations of the heavens and the earth, when they were created, and when the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.

Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth, and no plant had yet sprung up. For the Lord God had not sent rain on the earth, and there was no man to work the ground.

Notice here in verse five, there's a repetition of no. There is no shrub and no plant. Why?

[3 : 17] Well, because literally there is no rain and no man. It seems the earth is not yet filled like we saw at the end of chapter one, 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. So see verse six? But the 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. And so I take it the author is really trying to get us to realize that the missing ingredient for shrubs and plants and so on is actually man.

For who does God create in the very next verse? Man. Verse seven. Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

Man is the missing ingredient in creation in this account. He is still part of creation. In fact, there's two Hebrew words for man, and one of them is Adam.

[4 : 29] That's why he's called Adam. And the Hebrew word for ground sounds similar, Adamah. And so the point is there's a close link between man and the ground. He comes from it and is part of creation.

And yet he is a special part and the most important part of creation. For look at how he is made in verse seven. God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.

He's the first example of CPR in history. Although it's not CPR really, is it? Because the man was never alive in the first place. But now he is. And no other part of creation has the breath of God breathed into it like this.

I mean, to breathe breath into someone's nostrils, you've got to get up. You know, it's pretty up close and personal stuff, isn't it? And so it's very similar to what we saw last week in chapter one, verse 26.

If you look across to the column next to it, the left-hand column there, remember I said last week that everything else in creation, it started with, and God said, let there be, let there be, let the land, and so on. But when it comes to man, it changes to, let us make man in our image.

[5 : 36] You see, God gets very personal when making man. And so while man may be part of creation, he is the most important part of creation. As I said last week, people are more important than pets and plants.

I was more important than my in-law's beloved dog, Sam, if you remember the photo and story from last week. But it's also worth noticing here that the writer uses the word formed. 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 Old Testament. God is like the potter, shaping and forming man for a purpose.

And as we saw last week, man's twofold purpose was to rule like God and to rest in relationship with God. And so now God provides a place for man to do both those things.

Now, point to in your outlines, verse 8 in your Bibles. The Lord God planted a garden in the east, in Eden, and there he put the man he had formed.

[6 : 36] 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.

You see, God provides a garden for the man. And notice this garden is full of life. It's meant to be like a paradise.

In fact, when the Greek people translated the Old Testament, the Greek word for garden is paradise. And the word for Eden means delight.

For there were 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.

Or for me, it was like when I went to Fiji to teach for a while. And while I was there, I stayed at this resort on the next slide. But so here's the pool, which overlooks the ocean. On the next slide is the beach that, you know, wrapped around this resort.

[7 : 40] And then the water was crystal clear. So on the next slide, you can see down through the coral underneath. I even took my surfboard and went for a surf. And on the next slide is not me. But you can still see the coral underneath.

That was beautiful until I came off my surfboard and scratched my back on the coral underneath. But it was paradise. 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. So that man could live forever like God. And in verse 10, there was a river flowing through the garden, which brought 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 in verses 10 to 14, these details and place names, which seem at first glance a bit random.

You could actually read from verse 9 in your Bibles to verse 15 and not skip a beat. The writer didn't actually need to add verses 10 to 14 to make sense of the chapter.

[8 : 49] And 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 in such a way in Genesis to teach us about who God is and who we are.

He doesn't write a scientific account, giving all the details and the mechanics. Nor does he always write in a chronological account, actually. Sometimes he'll leave details out to focus our attention on something to teach us about God or us.

But that doesn't mean for one second that these places are therefore not real or that Adam was not a real person. And so the writer gives all these details and names here, some of which we still know are real places today, like the Euphrates River, so that we might know the garden was a real place and the man a real person.

It's like if I said I went to Fiji last weekend, you might not believe me. But if I then told you that I flew out of Melbourne at 9 a.m. on Qantas 785 and landed in Nandy where the weather was sunny, and then I'd caught a taxi down towards Singatoka and then along the Coral Coast and got to the Hideaway Resort, you'd start thinking, oh, maybe he did go.

You see all these details and place names back up the story. I didn't go. I was here, for the record. But that's what the writer is doing here. He deliberately adds all these names and details, some of which we still know today, so that we might know he's talking about a real place and a real person in history.

[10 : 21] And then in verse 15, the writer picks up where he left off in verse 9 and continues to describe life for the man in the garden. So verse 15, 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. So notice here, the man is given purpose for life, to work the ground and take care of it.

And then the man is given God's word, which gives freedom in life. You can eat anything you like from the multitude of trees. And yet God's word also 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 us as people. Not only is the garden beautiful to enjoy life and bountiful to provide food for life, and not only is there the tree of life, but man is given purpose for life.

[11 : 29] And he's given God's word, which gives freedom in life and a warning to preserve life. It's all about life, you see. God created us to enjoy life to the full, to life in paradise, ruling over it like him, but in relationship with him, obeying his word.

And again, they're the twofold purpose we saw last week. Remember, the man was firstly made to rule over creation like God. That's primarily what it meant to be in his image, and that's verse 15 there.

And secondly, the man was made to enjoy relationship with God, which is verse 16 and 17 here. This is life as God meant it to be. Or actually, not quite.

Something, or rather someone significant, is missing. Which brings us to point three and verse 18. The Lord God said, It is not good for the man to be alone.

I will make a helper suitable for him. Now, we need to notice here, or realize here, that being alone does not equal being lonely.

[12 : 33] 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 to 17, he is to rule the garden under his word. And then in verse 18, he says, Oh, actually, it's not good for you to be alone to do this, basically. He needs a helper. Not a companion, because he's lonely, but a helper to help him. Because ruling is too hard to do alone, especially if ruling includes increasing in number and filling the earth, as we saw last week. It's pretty hard to increase in number by yourself. And so, the search for a helper begins. Do you see verse 19? Now, the Lord God had formed out of the ground.

Well, actually, the word had is not there. The Lord God formed then 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.

[13:34] That would have been fun. Notice here, we're given a glimpse of Adam ruling over creation again by naming the animals that God brings to him.

And yet, not one that God brings is a suitable helper. And so, we read on 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. 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. Amen. I saw a joke listing all the reasons why God made woman.

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

[14:52] That's the point of Adam's poem in verse 23. The woman is made from the same stuff as Adam, do you know? Bone from bone, flesh from flesh.

They're made of the 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.

And yet they are also different. God does not create Adam and Steve, but Adam and Eve, as the old joke goes. One is man, the other is woman. They are different. And this difference extends to their roles.

So Adam is the one who is given God's word and names the animal 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 and work together to help humanity rule like God, in God's image.

[15:57] Humanity with just men would not work. Humanity needed women to complete it. Reminds me of that movie, Jerry Maguire. Do you remember that? You complete me? Anyway.

Women completed humanity, for humanity was made in God's image as both man and woman, two genders that complement each other. It's like a knife and a fork complement each other and work together to help us eat a meal.

So a man and a woman are created to complement each other and work together to help humanity rule like God. Of course, we think this makes women inferior, being the helper and not the head.

But we need to realize a few things. Firstly, God is called helper in the Bible more times than anyone else. And he's not inferior to us. Secondly, God himself is made up of one God, but different persons.

Father, Son, Spirit, who have different roles. And so the Father is the head who sends the Son into the world, never the other way around. And the Son submits to the Father, and never the other way around.

[16:59] Yet the Son is still equal to the Father. No one here would say that Jesus is less than God. You see, God himself is equal, but different. And so again, being made in God's image as male and female means being made equal, but different.

To rule together in complementary ways, just like God rules in complementary ways in himself. 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.

God's image. Remember last week how I said people would often ask you in a conversation what you did for a living, what role you had. And if you're a builder, well, that's pretty worthwhile. And so they'll talk to you and even try and get some building tips for their home project off you.

But if you say that, like I've said, I'm a church minister, then suddenly they've got somewhere else they need to be. Because I'm not so worthwhile. You see, people find their worth in what they do, their role, rather than who they are in God's image.

It's not how God works. He sees our worth in who we are, as those made in his image, as men and as women. And so both genders have equal worth.

[18:11] It's just that we have different roles. Man is given the role of headship, and the rest of the Bible make it clear that this headship is a servant headship.

He's to use his authority as head to serve, just like Christ did. And woman is given the role of helper, so that together we can rule the creation as God created us to.

And this is what it means to be made in his image, to rule as male and female, equal in worth, but different in role. I once heard a story of a man who was asked to speak about headship to a group of women.

He was a little worried about how they would take it. But the woman organizing it said, oh, look, don't worry. We're not women's libbers. We're Adam's ribbers. That was kind of cute. See, she knew that she was equal in worth.

It just had a different role. And one example of this is marriage. So that's where it heads to next. It's not the only example, but this is one example.

[19 : 11] So it starts in verse 24. That is why, because we are made equal but different, that is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

Adam and his wife were both naked and they felt no shame. The word marriage is not used here, but that's what's happening when the man leaves his parents, even though Adam didn't have any at this stage, ever, and cleaves and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

And in this marriage, it says they were naked and yet unashamed. In other words, there was complete trust and openness and harmony in the relationship, not only between them, but between God as well.

Remember what happens in chapter 3 next week? When they sin against God, what do they do? They try and hide and cover themselves, cover their nakedness.

And so this is a sign here that there's complete trust and harmony. There's no sin against God that they need to cover up, no guilt they need to feel ashamed of.

[20 : 17] It's just perfect relationships between God and each other. But here, 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 will give us details about what that looks like in different areas of marriage, whether it's as single or married or in the church or in the world. Can I just say very quickly that in marriage, again, it's servant headship.

It's where you lay down your life for your wife and then the wife willingly submits to that. So the example I've often used is me saying to Michelle, don't do the dishes, I'll do them.

And then she going, okay. 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.

That's why marriage is a picture of our humanity. And 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 before the fall and they kind of needed to get married to increase in number.

[21 : 28] And Jesus, who was the perfect man, did not get married. So marriage itself is not the point. It's only a picture. The point Genesis 2 is making is that we were created as one humanity who are of equal worth but just made up of different genders with different roles.

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

The problem is that it's not always life today, is it? We don't live in paradise which is full of life and harmonious relationships. We live in a fallen world which is full of death and fractured relationships. What's more, our society seems to be intent on denying our gender differences. You see, because we are so caught up with finding our worth in our role, society thinks that if men and women are to be equal in worth, they must do the same role.

Men must be able to do everything women do and women must be able to do everything men does. And by and large they can anyway but society says if we are to be worth the same we must do the same. We must get rid of all differences.

[22 : 48] It's part of the reason why society is fine with same-sex marriage. It's no big deal for society. I heard a presenter on the program called The Project on Channel 10 this week. She was talking to someone in New Zealand and the presenter on the project said oh at least you guys are ahead of us because you've legalised same-sex marriage.

And the person in New Zealand said yes we like to treat humans as humans. But she hadn't understood what she'd said. You see to be human is actually to be made up of complementary genders male and female.

To have just one gender is actually not to be human. It's to have your gender and not try and change it or alter it. Or take society's push to encourage kids to choose their own gender because there's no real difference.

So at East Doncaster Secondary College down the road they've had to make a toilet available for students who are gender neutral or transitioning gender. Now I understand that there's cases where biological there's issues or there's mental health issues associated with all this but they are very often the minority cases not the norm.

But society is pushing it to become the norm. Even in hospitals I heard of one hospital that isn't allowed to give out blue and pink blankets. It's crazy.

[24 : 09] But gender is a good thing. It's part of our humanity. It's part of being made in God's image. And so it's part of what God gives us or makes us valuable in God's eyes.

Our worth does not come from doing everything the other gender does. our worth comes from actually being a man or being a woman in God's image as he created us to be.

And what's more our complementary genders actually enable us to work together to rule like God as those who are made in God's image. And so in Christ we see that our genders are not gotten rid of.

Both our equality and our differences men and women is actually upheld. And so on the next slide Paul writes this in 1 Corinthians 11. He says, I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, the head of every woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

Again, head here is servant leadership just like Christ served us. But you see, Paul's upholding the differences here. And yet a few verses later on the next bit he also upholds the equality.

[25 : 16] He says, Nevertheless, in the Lord Jesus woman is not independent of man and nor is man independent of woman. In other words, men need women just as much as women need men and so on.

One is not better than the other. We are equal and need each other equally. What's more, in Christ, paradise will also be restored.

As we heard in our second reading on the next slide, I'm not going to read all this through, but the picture of heaven is described like Eden, isn't it? There's a river that flows through the middle and there's a tree of life which kind of stands either side of the river and its leaves bring healing to the nations and there's lots of fruit being born.

It's a picture of life like in the garden. And notice the last line there, we will reign forever. That is, we will rule over the creation like we were created to.

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.

[26 : 25] And so until that day, whether we are single or married, men be men, women be women, who are both equal in worth but different in gender and role.

Keep seeking to rule this world together like God and under God's word. We don't have time to flesh out how that looks in detail but that's what we're to do in principle.

Don't buy into the world's lies but celebrate both the gender equality and differences we have as humans. For that is who God has created us to be in his image.

You see. Let's pray. Our gracious heavenly father, we do thank you for this chapter of scripture scripture which speaks to some controversial issues today.

Father, we thank you though that it reminds us that we as men and women are equal in worth before you even though we have differences. And so Father, we pray that you would help us to keep living as men and women in your world.

[27 : 32] Help us to keep ruling under your word as Adam and Eve were to do and help us to keep doing this until we reach paradise restored in heaven. We ask it all in Jesus' name.

Amen.