

The Creation of the Woman - More Details

Genesis 2:18-25

¹⁸ The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

¹⁹ Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. 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. ²⁰ So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field.

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. 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 closed up the place with flesh. ²² Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

²³ 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."

²⁴ For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

²⁵ The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

Fulfilling a Need (2:18-20)

The events recorded in these early chapters of Genesis are not mere "stories," designed to show us "timeless principles." They are historical facts, a record of what God did. They *do* teach us truths and principles about reality, but that is because God planned what he would do in a way that would illustrate those truths. Even the events which happened *after* sin entered the world are presented in a way that teaches us truths about reality. (The apostle Paul understood this and showed that these facts should influence the way people live. See 1 Timothy 2:13-14 and 1 Corinthians 11:8-9, 12.)

God created male and female in such a way that, working *together*, they would be best suited for reflecting the nature and character of God, as God's *image bearers* (Genesis 1:26-27). Though they have much in common, each has unique capabilities that the other does *not* have. When they work together, each encouraging the other, they both become more capable of fulfilling the glorious task to which God has called them. The way this relationship was created is the focus of this passage. (Unfortunately, the way much of its beauty and harmony was destroyed is the focus of chapter 3.)

The Need (2:18)

At the end of Day 6, we read that everything God created was "very good." Yet what was the condition like,

while the man was still *alone* (v. 18a)? _____

What was still needed (v. 18b)? _____

What is a "helper"?

- It was God, not the man, who used this word "helper," to define the purpose or function of the "creature" he was about to create. After sin entered the world (Genesis 3), people began to distort (or rebel against) this concept, so that today we rarely see it being fulfilled in the manner that God intended. Yet modern-day distortions of this relationship do not define what *God* intended when he gave us this passage, and we should not let them influence the way *we* interpret it!
- Today, people often give the word "helper" a connotation of *inferiority* to the one being helped. Such was *not* the case here! In this context, the word has connotations of being a "partner" or "companion." (Some translations will use these words.) When we look at other Scripture passages, we discover that the Hebrew word translated as "helper" is commonly used in reference to *God* helping people (see Psalm 70: 5 and 115:9-11). Obviously, there is no inferiority implied in that!
- The phrase that is used to describe the relationship of this "helper" to the man is "*suitable* for him." It can also be translated as *corresponding to* him, *matching* him, or *right for* him. She would reflect and complement him in a way that no other created being would be capable of doing. The two would go together - not just physically, but in every aspect of life.
- The man's leadership role is *not* based on any supposed "superiority" over the woman, for (as shown in the following verses) the *two* were to work together as *one*. The man's gifts and abilities would be *complemented* by the woman's gifts and abilities - resulting in an awareness of her value and importance. Knowing this would result in a humble spirit, rather than an attitude of superiority!

Based on these things, what is a "helper" (as the word is used here)? _____

The Man Learns about His Need (2:19-20)

What was the man's assignment (v. 19-20)? _____

- In this passage, the word "all" is used in the sense of "all kinds of," or "all that were present in the garden." He didn't need to examine *every* species on earth, to get an understanding of his need!
- Before sin entered the world, it was *normal* for God to personally interact with people - the Creator with his creatures. In the book of Revelation, we are told of a future day, in which this will happen again.
- Scripture often uses nature to teach us. (Many of Jesus' parables are examples of this.) In Genesis 2, the man could observe that each of the species brought to him came in groups of two, and that the two *complemented* each other. Then, when he considered himself, he would realize that *his* complement was missing.
- In Old Testament Hebrew, this word "man" is the same word as "Adam." At some point in the account, it seems that there is a transition from simply referring to him as "the man," to using that word as his name. Translations will sometimes vary, as to which English word they use in a specific passage. But either way, it communicates the same message, and refers to the same person.

What was the man's conclusion, at the end of this assignment (v. 20b)? _____

- What does it mean to "name" something? The Old Testament concept of "name" had a greater significance than it often does today. (Names conveyed a lot more meaning.) The man didn't merely blurt out some syllables! He would have studied the creatures (even if just briefly), and given them names that expressed something about them. Because of this, the name would *represent* the creature.

God Provides for the Need (2:21-22)

What was the man's "contribution" (v. 21b)? _____

- Verse 23 suggests that this would have included both bone and flesh. Also, it didn't have to be an entire rib!
- After this "surgery," there was a complete (and painless!) healing.

What did God do with these "parts" (v. 22)? _____

- God had the *ability* to do anything he wanted, to make the woman. But he chose this specific method for a *purpose* - to teach us about the relationship between husband and wife (and to some degree, between male and female).
- Today, sin influences (and fractures) every aspect of human relationships. This makes it difficult for us to fully appreciate God's purpose and design in what he did. Yet the more we understand these things, *and the more our own attitudes change from being self-focused to being God-and-others-focused*, the more we will be able to interact in harmony, and in a way that enhances each other's ability to reflect the nature and character of God.
- Adam *needed* his wife. But this "need" was totally unlike the "need" that people often express today - a desire to use another person for the fulfillment of one's own desires.

Understanding the Significance of What God Did (2:23-24)

The "Oneness" of the Two (2:23)

What did Adam understand, as far as the *origin* of this newly-created "being" (v. 23a)? _____

- The phrase, "This is now," could also be translated as, "This one!" or perhaps, "Now at last!" Perhaps we could loosely translate the line as, "Now at last! My counterpart!" Adam had now found the complement to himself - a counterpart who would be "part of him" in a way that the animals could *never* be.
- How much "one" were they? They were the *same* "bone and flesh"!

What did he call this newly-created "being"? Why (v. 23b)? _____

- Just as he had given names to the animals, indicating that he understood their significance, so also he named this new "creature," who was designed to be his counterpart. He *understood* why God had made her.
- In Hebrew, the words "man" and "woman" sound similar (*'ish* and *'ishah*). The emphasis here is on male and female. The word used in previous verses (which is the basis for the name "Adam") comes from a different word, that can refer to humans collectively (regardless of gender).
- Adam *acknowledged* the significance and importance of what God had done. He did not *invent* this relationship.

The Significance for Future Generations (2:24)

This event in the garden was to *define* the nature of marriage and sexuality *for all future generations*.

What was the man to do (two things - v. 24a)? _____

- Note that verse 24 is *God's* explanation of the significance of marriage. (Matthew 19:4-5 also affirms this fact.)
- In marriage, the man's temporary "union" with his parents (as a child) was to be broken and replaced by a permanent union with his wife.
- In future generations, these "man-woman units" would not come into existence the same way as it happened here (the woman from the man's side). Nevertheless, the "oneness" of those relationships - which involves every aspect of their interaction with each other - would be patterned after it. It was to be *as though* they were biologically the same "being." The man would not live (and use his wife) for himself; the woman would not live (and use her husband) for herself. (Sin has fractured these relationships, so we don't often see them functioning the way God created them to function.)

What would be the result of these two actions (v. 24b)? _____

- Obviously, the term "one flesh" focuses on a physical relationship. Yet this physical "oneness" was created for the purpose of reflecting the non-physical "oneness" that was to exist between the two. When such a relationship degenerates into nothing more than physical activity, it loses all its significance; and the two become not much different than animals in their conduct (and sometimes *worse* than animals). When this happens, *neither* has the capability to experience the fullness of the relationship that God created.
- Adam and his wife understood the reproduction aspect of sexuality; after all, God taught them about it. (Otherwise, he couldn't have told them to "be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth," in Genesis 1:28.)
- *God* defined marriage and sexuality. Humans - whether individuals or governments - have no right or authority to do this! Our obligation is to simply *accept* what God said and grow in our understanding of it.
- Note that this statement about marriage is not a *command*. Remaining *unmarried* (without committing sexual sin) is a perfectly acceptable alternative, and at times can even be considered a *gift* (see 1 Corinthians 7:1-9). However, if marriage *does* occur, then God's "definition" defines what it must be. (Anything else is a distorted perversion, encouraged by one's corrupt sinful nature.)
- This statement in Genesis 2:24, implies a *permanency* to marriage. They are now *one* - and *joined by God* (Mark 10:6-9; Malachi 2:13-16; 1 Corinthians 7:10-11+; etc.).

Living in a Sinless World (2:25)

What two terms are used in this passage, to describe the condition of the man and his wife, before sin entered the world (v. 25)? _____

At that time, being naked implied innocence and purity. The physical condition reflected the non-physical realities. Had they *not* sinned (Genesis 3), things would have continued this way, and there would have been no need for us to wear clothes today.

Today, we need clothes because we *aren't* innocent and pure. The significance of nakedness has changed, because of sin, and those who try to go around without clothes are living a pretension and a lie! Because our natures have become corrupt, we *need* clothes.

Sin has totally warped our concepts of nakedness and shame. We cannot even *think* clearly about these concepts. Today, if someone suddenly stood in front of us naked, our initial reaction would be nothing like what it would have been, before sin entered the world.

In Genesis 3, we read that the need for clothes was the result of our gaining an understanding of good and evil. But it wasn't the *knowledge* of good and evil that caused the problem. Rather, it was the way that we (the human race, collectively, in our first parents) chose to get it - by doing the *evil*. (Either choice would have resulted in understanding the difference.) Now, we are all sinners by *nature*, and every time we sin, our actions confirm this choice. We may begin our lives appearing to be rather "innocent," but we still have a sinful *nature*. As we grow older (and as we grow in our understanding of good and evil), we choose to follow the inclinations of our nature. And because of this, our *wrong* response to nakedness - a reflection of our heart condition - increases. (This is why very young children don't respond the same way that older children and adults do.)

It is important to realize that the ultimate issue goes far beyond the presence (or absence) of a covering on our bodies. Sin influences one's total comprehension of reality, starting at the foundation of how we think. It changes our love for *anything* into a type of lust (self-centered desires) and self-gratification - and this is not just in sexual matters, but in *all* areas of life. It results in the fracturing of *all* one's relationships - with God, other people and all of creation. It leaves us naked and exposed in the presence of a holy God... and in need of a covering that extends to the very depths of our souls.

Nevertheless, even in this condition, there is hope. Just as various other "physical entities" in this account of creation are presented in a way that can teach us non-physical and spiritual truths, so also this "physical" need for clothes teaches us non-physical and spiritual truths - such as our need to be "clothed" with righteousness (Romans 13:14 and Revelation 19:8).