

The First Couple

SESSION 2

Genesis 2:7-9,12-15

Memory Verse: Genesis 2:23-24

God created man and woman to work together as one in His creation.

Genesis 2:7 and following is an expansion of the creation narrative provided in Genesis 1:26-31. It is not a retelling from a different perspective or the work of a different author as has been proposed by scholars who question the authorship of Moses. Instead, this passage was simply Moses's way of building on the details of how "God created man in his own image" (Gen. 1:27). These details include the separate creation of woman from the man's rib and the institution of marriage.

As you prepare to lead this session, spend time reflecting on the original design for marriage, a design that is still God's plan today. Use this study to reaffirm the critical place of marriage in God's design for His created world.



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In places all over the globe you can find street markets where local artisans display their handcrafted products. It is amazing to watch master artisans as they apply their honed skills and techniques to their craft. The work of these craftsmen not only reveals something about their abilities but also something about who they are. When we look at Genesis 2, we see God as Master Artisan who formed the man from the dust of the ground, perfectly working out His wonderful design for humanity. (PSG, p. 19)

What are ways God displays Himself as the Master Artisan in creation?



Understand the Context (Genesis 2:4-25)

Genesis 2:4-25 begins with the formulary statement: “These are the records of the heavens and the earth.” Such a formulary statement serves as the central organizing device for the entire book of Genesis. Each new section in Genesis begins with a similar statement.

This first section is followed by the records of the family of Adam beginning in 5:1. Next comes the records pertaining to the family of Noah in 6:9 and following. Genesis 10:1 brings the reader to the records of Noah’s three sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Shem’s family is singled out starting in Genesis 11:10. In Genesis 11:27, we are introduced to the family of Terah, the father of Abram (Abraham).

The continuity of the book flows next into the families of Ishmael (25:12) and Isaac (25:19). Two more family records or “generations” are highlighted in 36:1 (Esau) and 37:2 (Jacob). These family records and narratives are important because they establish the links between the creation of humanity in the garden of Eden and God’s ongoing relationship with the children of Israel.

Again, readers need to recognize that the Israelites, God’s chosen people under Moses, were the original audience for these writings. As a result, it was vital for them to understand these connections. These accounts were mile markers in Israel’s ongoing journey with God. The lessons He was teaching them in the wilderness were rooted in the lessons He had been teaching His people for generations.

These stories also reminded Israel of God’s unique care and blessing over His creation, including His highest creation, human beings. Genesis 2 illustrates this clearly by showing God’s provision of the fruitful garden in Eden. Here, we see the loving, tender care that God used—first to create man and then to create woman. The first couple was given meaningful work as a part of their assigned task of exercising dominion over the animals and birds. This assignment to tend the garden affirmed the validity of work as a God-given establishment.

Genesis 2 closes with a picture of God’s care for His creation when He created woman as the complement for man. This is the establishment of the marriage commitment between man and woman. The interpretive statements in verses 24-25 provide enduring principles for strong marriages. First, there is leaving, as the parent-child relationship is redefined. Next comes cleaving, as the spouses come together in building a home. The word speaks of being attached with “strong glue” that nothing can tear apart. Finally, there is uniting, which indicates the intertwining of all aspects of a husband and wife’s life together.

As you read Genesis 2:7-9,15-25, consider what God reveals about Himself with regard to humanity. (PSG, p. 20)



PREPARE: Prior to the group time, display a piece of artwork (painting, sculpture, pottery, photo, so forth) on a table. Be prepared to share information about the item.

INTRODUCE: As the group arrives, instruct them to think about any special pieces of artwork created by an artisan that they may have at home. Share the information you have about the created piece you have displayed on the table. Allow time for the group to talk about some of their examples.

ASK: **What can you learn about the skills of artisans by watching them create something?**

EXPLAIN: Read the opening paragraph on page 19 of the PSG. Share that we can learn a lot about God as we look at His creation, especially of the first man and woman.

DISCUSS: **What are ways God displays Himself as the Master Artisan in creation?** (PSG, p. 19)

TRANSITION: *Today's study from Genesis 2 will reveal how God created man and woman to work together as one in His creation.*

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Music

Distribute hymnals or copies of the lyrics to the hymn "God Will Take Care of You" (*Baptist Hymnal 2008*, No. 90). Lead the group to sing or read aloud the lyrics to the hymn. You might also consider searching for the song online and playing it for the group. Ask: **Based on these lyrics, how does God feel about us? How does that make you feel?** Highlight that God cares for us because He loves us and because He made us in His image.

Placed (Genesis 2:7-9)

7 Then the LORD God formed the man out of the dust from the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being. **8** The LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he placed the man he had formed. **9** The LORD God caused to grow out of the ground every tree pleasing in appearance and good for food, including the tree of life in the middle of the garden, as well as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

(v. 7) LORD God: The covenant name for God (*Yahweh*) first appears in verse 4. This the name God gave to Moses at the burning bush (see Ex. 3:14), and it speaks of the relationship between Israel and God. In most English Bibles, it appears in small capital letters to distinguish it from other names of God.

Here, **LORD** is paired with *Elohim*, which is God's name most closely associated with creation. This combination is used eleven times in Genesis 2, making it clear to the original audience (and contemporary readers) that the God of the covenant relationship with Israel is the same God who created the world. This is significant because it reveals God's desire for an intimate relationship with those He created from the very beginning of human history.

(v. 7) Formed: The Hebrew wording speaks of shaping and molding, like a potter making a vessel.

(v. 7) Man: The Hebrew wording (*adam*) can refer to both genders (Gen. 1:27) or, generically, to a man. The name of the first man, Adam, is derived from this term, which sounds very similar to the Hebrew word for "ground" (*adamah*). Many scholars believe this alludes to the fact that Adam was made from the dust of the ground and that all humans return to dust after death (see 3:19).

(v. 7) Breath of life: The Hebrew word for "breath" has several meanings including wind, spirit, and breath. Most likely, there is little difference between God's breath and God's Spirit because one of the biblical designations for the Holy Spirit is the "Spirit of life" (Rom. 8:2). The creation of Adam included the physical—"out of the dust from the ground"—and the non-physical—"the **breath of life**."

Animals are called "living creatures" (1:20), while the man is called a "**living being**." While both are created and are alive in a way that is different from plants, the text consistently draws a sharp distinction between the spiritual nature of humans and animals. Human beings are not divine, but they do possess a

unique relationship with God because they are made in His image (Gen. 1:26-27) and because they received God's breath in a unique and personal way.

(v. 8) Eden: The name refers to abundant water. It can also mean a place of "delight." Notice that **Eden** appears to represent both the region where this garden was placed, as well as the garden itself, elsewhere called the "garden of God" (Ezek. 28:13). Even with the information in verses 10-14, scholars are unsure of the specific location of Eden. Two of the rivers mentioned are unidentifiable to modern scholarship.

Key Phrase

Tree of life

This was one of two significant trees mentioned in the garden of Eden. Although listed first in the Genesis account, the **tree of life** was secondary to **the tree of the knowledge of good and evil**. The name of this tree apparently derived from the effect it had on the one eating its fruit. The fruit of the tree of life was the source of life in the garden.

However, readers should understand that this life came not from the fruit itself, but from the Creator of the tree. The tree of life is also mentioned in several passages in Proverbs (3:18; 11:30; 13:12) and in the book of Revelation (2:7; 22:2,14,19).

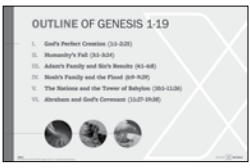
(v. 9) Tree of the knowledge of good and evil: This tree was located in the **middle of the garden** and, like the **tree of life**, took its name from the results that came from eating its fruit. This tree is given its full name only in verses 9 and 17. In Genesis 3, it is simply called "the tree." See the discussion of 2:15-17 on page 30 for a fuller explanation of this tree.

EXPLORE Genesis 2:7-9



APPLICATION POINT: Humanity benefits from God's provision.

PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of Genesis 1-19*) on a focal wall. Introduce the title and theme for this session.



CONTEXT: Use Understand the Context (PSG, p. 20) to briefly explain how Genesis 2 retells the creation account in greater detail. Challenge the group to consider what God reveals about Himself in regard to humanity in these verses.

ASK: **When you go grocery shopping, what is your go-to store? Why do you shop there?** Affirm that, along with price, we often pick a store because it has all the things on our list.



READ: **Invite a volunteer to read aloud Genesis 2:7-9**, as the group listens for how God provided for Adam. Review **Pack Item 7** (*Handout: Genesis Time Line*) and **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Background of Genesis*) to set the context for these verses.

EXPLAIN: Contrast how God created Adam (2:7) and how He created other animals (1:24-25). Talk about what this says about the value God placed on people compared to animals. Refer to information about verses 8-9 (PSG, pp. 21-22) to explain how God also demonstrated His care for people by serving as the Source of provision for all Adam needed.



ASK: **How does God's provision extend beyond food?** (PSG, p. 22)

TRANSITION: *God gave Adam a beautiful place to live and provided the food that he needed. But God also gave Adam a job to do.*

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Nature

Prior to the session, collect some dirt in a clear, plastic bag. During the session, show adults the bag of dirt. Ask: **What are some things people can do with dirt?** Record responses on the board. Enlist a volunteer to read, Genesis 2:7-9. Ask: **What did God do with dirt?** Emphasize God's creativity and power as He capped His work with His highest creation: human beings.

Employed (Genesis 2:15-17)

15 The LORD God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to work it and watch over it. **16** And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree of the garden, **17** but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for on the day you eat from it, you will certainly die.”

(v. 15) Work it: If Genesis is the book of “firsts,” here we see the first work assignments for humans. This is the beginning of God-ordained work. Work was not a curse, but a sacred part of the task of having dominion over the created world.

Human beings were made from the ground, and they were given the task of tilling the ground. After the fall, humans would do their work in sweat and back-breaking toil. This, however, was not true initially. Tending and watching over the garden was a partnership that Adam had with God the Creator of all things. He was a steward of what God provided.

Key Doctrine

Man

Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God’s creation. (See Proverbs 18:22; Mark 10:6-12.)

(v. 16) Commanded: This Hebrew word is used twenty-five times in Genesis and carries the idea of a superior delegating orders to a subordinate. Verse 16 is the only place where it’s used with this particular phrasing. This command begins with a positive affirmation of God’s goodness to humanity through His provision of fruit from every tree except one. This pronouncement of great generosity illustrated God’s care and provision for every creature, especially humans.

The exception to this provision was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Thus, the second half of this command was a clear warning of the consequence of disobeying the injunction concerning the forbidden tree.

(v. 17) Must not eat: The placement of **the tree of the knowledge of good and evil** was ultimately a test of loyalty and obedience for the first man and woman to their Creator. The presence of this tree speaks directly to the fact that the man and woman were created with

the ability to obey or not obey God. Forced love is not love at all, so God created Adam and Eve with the ability to choose.

This tree, then, was a test of their faithfulness in following God. Eating of the fruit of this tree would make them like God in the sense they would know good from evil. But unlike God, they would face death for their actions.

Key Concept

God’s sovereign power and authority in creation established His power and authority in the garden, and His authority continues over our lives today. He has the right to make the rules because He created it all and is Lord of all. Adam and Eve were responsible as God’s stewards to lead creation properly and to make the proper moral choice by obeying God’s only rule. Without sin, they were able to make that choice.

(v. 17) Certainly die: Disobedience to God’s commands leads to death. The pronouncement of the Old Testament is that the soul that sins will suffer the consequences of death.

Die is most likely used in two senses here. First it speaks of physical death. The “breath of life” ceases in the physical body and that body enters a state of decay. Second, it speaks of spiritual death. Sin separates us from holy God. As such, the spiritual relationship between God and human beings is broken. Just as physical death separates the breath of life from the physical body, so spiritual death separates people from God for all of eternity.

EXPLORE Genesis 2:15-17



APPLICATION POINT: Humans were tasked to work for the benefit or creation.

READ: Call for a volunteer to read aloud **Genesis 2:15-17**, directing the group to consider the role of work in Eden and today.

MINI-LECTURE: Using the information from page 22 in the PSG, explain that God assigned a job to Adam, and it was a good thing. Note that God also gave Adam the freedom to eat from any tree except one. Review the bullet points on page 23 of the PSG to summarize God's commands.

DISCUSS: Call for volunteers to share the type of work they do and if they find fulfillment in it.

ASK: **How can a person find joy in their work?** (PSG, p. 23)

TRANSITION: *God had provided so much for Adam, but He had one more incredible gift in store for the first man.*

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Art

Encourage adults to get into groups of three or four. Give each group a sheet of paper and some colored pencils. Direct the groups to read Genesis 2:15-17 and to identify the jobs God gave Adam in Eden. Instruct them to use their paper and pencils to create a “help wanted” ad that describes the job Adam had. Encourage adults to be as creative as possible. After a few minutes, allow the groups to share their work.

Alone (Genesis 2:18-20)

18 Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper corresponding to him.” **19** The LORD God formed out of the ground every wild animal and every bird of the sky, and brought each to the man to see what he would call it. And whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. **20** The man gave names to all the livestock, to the birds of the sky, and to every wild animal; but for the man no helper was found corresponding to him.

(v. 18) Not good: The opening sentence in verse 18 begins with the declaration **not good**. This sharp emphasis stands in contrast to the declarations in Genesis 1 where God declared that everything He created was excellent in every way. The absence of a fitting companion for Adam was unacceptable to God.

Human beings are made for relationship with God and with others. Community is a part of God’s design, as opposed to isolation. Living as an “island” unto ourselves is not healthy. It is “not good.”

(v. 18) Helper: This word means so much more than simply the idea of an unskilled laborer who assists a skilled worker. The Hebrew word *‘ezer* carries the idea of one standing face-to-face as an equal. The picture is that woman corresponds perfectly to the man and completes that which is lacking in him. It is a word that pictures equality between the genders.

The word is used twenty-one times in the Old Testament, often referring to God as the helper of Israel (see Pss. 33:20; 121:1-2). It is also used in military context, portraying the *‘ezer* as a warrior. Thus, the woman was to be a strong helper to man, completing that which he lacked, standing back-to-back, equal in the fight.

(v. 19) Every wild animal and every bird of the sky: Just as He did with Adam, God formed the animals and birds from the ground. Unlike animals, though, Adam came to life through the breath of God.

This second account of the creation of animals and birds doesn’t contradict chapter 1 concerning creation of living creatures on days five and six. Instead, this account sets the stage for the creation of Eve. These animals and birds did not fulfill the need that man had for a suitable partner. Something different was needed—different from the animals and birds, yet akin to what man was.

(v. 19) Call: Adam’s job of giving names to the animals and birds was a part of his responsibility to exercise dominion over them. The word translated **call** means to specify something by a title or to give it an identity.

The purpose in this context was to exercise authority over the animals and birds. Compare this thought with Genesis 1:5 where God “called” the light “day” and the darkness “night,” thus exercising sovereignty over His creation.

(v. 20) Gave: This is the same Hebrew word rendered “call” in verse 19. Adam named the livestock, birds, and wild animals; and those names stuck. Many Bible scholars suggest a limited number of species were paraded before Adam, perhaps only those present in Eden at the time. Regardless, Adam fulfilled his responsibility and completed his task.

(v. 20) Livestock: Verse 20 specifies three categories of creatures: **livestock, birds, and every wild animal**. Livestock refers to cattle (see Gen. 1:20) and includes oxen, bulls and cows, sheep, and goats. “Every wild animal” designated animals that were not domesticated. After the flood (9:1-3), many of these undomesticated animals developed a fear of people, possibly because some would be hunted for food. Of course, many humans developed a fear of some undomesticated animals as well.

Key Phrase

Corresponding to him

The animals that Adam named were of a different flesh and nature than he was (1 Cor. 15:39). The assumption here is that each male animal had its corresponding female helper/mate. But none of them were appropriate for Adam. Of course, God already knew what He was going to do (Gen 2:18). He was just preparing Adam for what was coming.

EXPLORE Genesis 2:18-20



APPLICATION POINT: Humanity has freedom to accomplish God's assigned purposes.

READ: Call for the group to read silently **Genesis 2:18-20**, looking for why God brought all the animals before Adam.

EMPHASIZE: Lead the group to review the information about man needing a corresponding helper in verse 18 (PSG, p. 24).

ASK: **What was the significance of God allowing the man to name the animals?** (PSG, p. 25) Emphasize that while no animal was a good fit for Adam, God was preparing Adam for the perfect helper.

TRANSITION: *God provided food, resources, and work for Adam. Next, God would provide a mate for Adam.*

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Wedding Rings

Display a set of wedding rings or ask married couples to show their rings. Allow volunteers to share any significant stories about their rings. Ask: *Why is it traditional to exchange and wear wedding rings?* Share that the ring ceremony in a wedding symbolizes a public covenant between the couple and God, as well as being a constant reminder of the sacred commitment they are making. Point out that the sacred nature of marriage can be traced to the garden of Eden. Emphasize that God established marriage when He brought Adam and Eve together.

United (Genesis 2:21-25)

21 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to come over the man, and he slept. God took one of his ribs and closed the flesh at that place. **22** Then the LORD God made the rib he had taken from the man into a woman and brought her to the man. **23** And the man said: This one, at last, is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; this one will be called “woman,” for she was taken from man. **24** This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh. **25** Both the man and his wife were naked, yet felt no shame.

(vv. 21-22) LORD God: Just as He was with the creation of the man, God was actively involved in the creation of woman. These verses emphasize His work: **God caused, God took, and God made.**

(v. 22) Woman: The Hebrew wording indicates that God fashioned or built the **woman**. Elsewhere in the Old Testament, the word is used to describe construction projects, such as the temple.

It is significant to note the difference between the creation of man and the creation of the woman. Adam (and the animals) were created from the ground, while the woman was created from the side of the man. Because she was taken from his side, she holds an elevated status. Women are equal partners in exercising dominion over the created world. This reaffirms the command to rule over God’s created order (Gen. 1:27-28).

(v. 23) Bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh: Upon waking, the man expressed an exclamation of deep amazement and satisfaction in the helper God had created. In modern terms, Adam was saying, “This is it! This is what I’ve needed all along!” Verse 23 represents a human being’s first spoken words in Scripture. Adam’s response is poetic in form, adding glad emphasis to his explanation. Throughout the Old Testament the words **bone** and **flesh** speak of close relationship or even kinship.

Upon seeing Eve, Adam declared that God’s newest creation would be known as “**woman**.” **Called** is the same word used in verse 19 in the naming of the other creatures. The name man gave to this companion is *ishshah*, the feminine form of *iysh* (the common word for “male”). This play on words is seen in our English language of “woman” containing the word “man.”

(v. 24) Leaves . . . bonds: Verses 24-25 form Moses’s concluding statement for these chapters. Because of the close kinship and the idea that man and woman

complete one another, it is only natural (and certainly part of God’s plan) that man and woman leave their parents and come together in the marriage relationship.

These verses reflect the foundation of marriage and family. They set out two major factors in the marriage relationship: leaving the home of origin and uniting with one another. These two factors are essential for a strong marriage. Also imbedded in these verses is the clear understanding and affirmation that marriage is between one man and one woman.

Key Phrase

One flesh

The commitment of marriage is pictured as a unity that eclipses two lives and blends them into one. The Hebrew text speaks of uniting into one flesh and recalls how Adam described Eve as “bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh.” While this language alludes to physical intimacy, readers should not overlook the impact of emotional and spiritual intimacy.

(v. 25) Naked . . . no shame: This statement forms a transitional link between the innocent state of the first humans in the garden and their subsequent disobedience which led to guilt and shame. The absence of shame was an original part of God’s created order. It was not until their disobedience that they felt shame over their nakedness and attempted to hide from God and from one another.

EXPLORE Genesis 2:21-25



APPLICATION POINT: Believers should celebrate a covenant marriage between a man and a woman.

READ: Call for the group to read silently **Genesis 2:21-25**, looking for the unique way in which Eve was created.

DIRECT: Lead the group to form two smaller groups. Instruct one group to use information from page 25 of the PSG to discuss the main takeaway from verses 21-22. Instruct the second group to use information from pages 25-26 of the PSG to discuss the main takeaway from verses 23-25. After several minutes, call for each group to share their findings with the larger group.

ASK: **What marriage principles were established in the uniting of the first man and woman? What results when society adheres to these principles? What happens when it fails to do so?** (PSG, p. 26)

STATE: *Believers should celebrate a covenant marriage between a man and a woman.*

TRANSITION: *God created man and woman to work together as one in His creation.*

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Bible Skill

Encourage the group to complete the Bible Skill activity for this session (PSG, p. 26). The memory verse for this session is Genesis 2:23-24. Memorize it by writing it out and committing it to memory one phrase at a time. Then take a moment to rewrite it in your own words. Ask yourself what this verse says that is applicable to your own family situation.

CHALLENGE

- SUMMARIZE:** Review these points from Apply the Text on page 27 of the Personal Study Guide:
- *Humanity benefits from God's provision.*
 - *Humans were tasked to work for the benefit of creation.*
 - *Humanity has freedom to accomplish God's assigned purposes.*
 - *Believers should celebrate a covenant marriage between a man and a woman.*
- REVIEW:** Call for a few volunteers to share which statement resonates most deeply with them. Challenge the group to identify some practical ways they can apply these truths to their lives and share them with others this week.
- DISCUSS:** Guide the group to discuss the second question set on page 27 of the PSG: **What particular work has God tasked you with to benefit His creation? How should you think about and approach this work?**
- PRAY:** Close in prayer, thanking God for the sanctity of the marriage covenant. If you lead a group of married couples, direct the couples to pray together, thanking God for their marriage.

After the Session

Reinforce the session by texting the group during the week and encouraging them to celebrate God's covenant of marriage. For married couples, urge spouses to pray for one another. For singles, challenge them to pray for a couple who provides a great example of a godly marriage in their lives.

ADULT COMMENTARY



Want to go deeper in your study?
Explore the Bible Adult Commentary offers additional information and biblical insights related to the key passages.
(Available for purchase at **Lifeway.com.**)

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