



The First Couple

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

GENESIS 2:7-9,15-25

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.

- **What are ways God displays Himself as the Master Artisan in creation?**
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UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

GENESIS 2:4-25

Genesis 1:1–2:3 provides an overview of creation, whereas Genesis 2:4–25 is a retelling of the account with a more specific focus on the climax of God’s creation, the creation of man and woman on the sixth day. It transitions from talking about all of creation to a narrowed focus on the garden of Eden and the events that took place there. Therefore, Genesis 2:4–25 provides some important, specific details to what is previously described in a more general way.

Genesis 2:4 is the first of eleven times in the book of Genesis that the Hebrew word, *toledoth*, translated “records,” is used to begin a new section of narrative (2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10,27; 25:12,19; 36:1,9; 37:2). Genesis 2:4–25 begins the recorded history of God’s creation as it relates particularly to those who were created in His image. The narrative has two main sections. The first (2:4–17) relates how God created man and a garden for him, and the second (2:18–25) recounts how God surrounded man with wildlife and a partner suitable for him, woman.

God formed the man and breathed the breath of life into him, and he became a living being. Then the Lord God planted the garden of Eden and placed the man in it. God permitted the man to eat from any tree in the garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, warning man that if he ate from it then he would certainly die. Next, God brought every type of domestic animal and wildlife into the garden for the man to name. However, none of them were a suitable partner for man. Therefore, God caused the man to go to sleep, took one of his ribs, and fashioned it into a woman. When God brought her before the man, the man recognized she had been fashioned from him and called her “woman.” This relationship laid the foundation for the principles every man and woman should follow who enter into the covenant of marriage with one another.

 **As you read Genesis 2:7-9,15-25, consider what God reveals about Himself with regard to humanity.**

EXPLORE THE TEXT

PLACED (GEN. 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.

VERSE 7

God is depicted as a potter who formed the man using the ground as His raw material. The Hebrew word translated **formed** conveys skill and intentionality. Prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah used this word to describe the work of a potter (Jer. 18:4-6). God used this word when speaking of His forming the nation of Israel (Isa. 45:9,11), when forming Jeremiah in his mother's womb (Jer. 1:5), and when forming the Servant of the Lord, Jesus, in His mother's womb (Isa. 49:5). The Hebrew word, *adamah*, **dust**, is a play on words indicating God formed the man, *adam*, from the *adamah*.

God **breathed the breath of life into** the man's **nostrils**, and **the man became a living being**. People live and breathe like other living creatures. But unlike other creatures, God breathed into human beings His divine breath. We have a unique relationship with God both by having been created in His image (Gen. 1:26-27) and having been created as spiritual beings sharing the breath of God. People need this breath to live (Job 27:3; Ps. 104:29-30).

VERSES 8-9

After making man a living being, God **planted a garden in Eden** to provide everything the man would need to live. **In the east** indicates that it was east of where Moses and the children of Israel were when he wrote these words. Moses gave more details about the garden in verses 10-14, indicating that it was probably located somewhere in northern Mesopotamia. Eden was a geographical region, and it means "pleasantness" or "delight." Its fertility is highlighted by the expressions, **every tree, pleasing**, and **good**. The garden God planted for the man was one of wonderful beauty, bountiful provision, and succulent delight.

God **caused** all of this to grow for the man, displaying God's goodness to him.

Of special note are ***the tree of life*** and ***the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*** located prominently in the middle of the garden (Gen. 3:3). Although it is central to what transpires in Genesis 3, *the tree of the knowledge of good and evil* is only called by its name here and in 2:17. However, *the tree of life* appears in several Old and New Testament verses, anticipating events in end times (Gen. 3:22,24; Prov. 3:18; 11:30; 13:12; 15:4; Rev. 2:7; 22:2,14,19). The tree of life indicates that life is a gift from God. Eating from this tree will result in continued life.

 **How does God's provision extend beyond food?**

EMPLOYED (GEN. 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.”**

VERSE 15

It is incorrect to believe that work is part of the curse of the fall. On the contrary, it was God's kindness to place man in the garden of Eden so that he could work it and watch over it. In Exodus 20:8-11, Moses not only instructed the people to rest on the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week, but to also work the other six days of the week. What's more, both the keeping of the Sabbath and working six days are meant to be reminders of what God did when He created the heavens and the earth. As image bearers, we are to be reflections of God. Just as God took pleasure in seeing the completion of His work of creation, He has gifted us with the pleasure of appreciating a job well done when we have completed it. Having such a stewardship is part of what it means to be made in the image of God. Man was made for a purpose that includes both work and rest, reflecting the glory of the God who worked six days and rested on the seventh. However, in Genesis 3, we discover that as a consequence of sin, while at times we may enjoy the fruits of our labor, it has also been made difficult and burdensome.

VERSES 16-17

Working the garden and watching over it came with prescribed parameters from God, stating that the man was **free to eat from any tree in the garden** with the exception of one: **the tree of the knowledge of good and evil**. Several points should be noted.

- This prohibition is a commandment.
- To eat from *the tree of the knowledge of good and evil* came with a warning, stating that **on the day that you eat from it, you will certainly die**. This last phrase is emphatic in Hebrew.
- God commanded this prohibition after having demonstrated His generosity to the man, saying he was free to eat from any tree in the garden. God's generosity is vast; God's prohibition is limited to one.
- This prohibition was for the man's good, keeping in mind the tree of the knowledge of good and evil stood next to the tree of life.
- God's prohibition against eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil provided the man with an opportunity to demonstrate his love, devotion, and trust to God.
- This prohibition serves as a reminder that, as the Creator, everything belongs to God and that He has the authority to order how it is to function.
- God's giving man this prohibition demonstrates that man was created a moral creature with the prerogative to obey or disobey God and, consequently, to experience the fullness of life that accompanies obedience and the loss of life that comes with disobedience.

How can people find joy in their work?

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.)

ALONE (GEN. 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.

VERSE 18

After placing the man in the garden of Eden, God stated that it was ***not good for the man to be alone***. He would make the man ***a helper corresponding to him***. Placed at the beginning of God’s declaration, the expression *not good* is emphatic. God asserted that while He had created a wonderful place with a bountiful habitat for the man to live in the garden of Eden, there was still something God needed to do so that His blessing of man would be complete. God had not created man to be alone. We were not created for isolation but for community.

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What’s more, man needed someone *corresponding to him*. This implies that while the animals were a blessing, they were not suitable for what the man needed. No other creature was able to be the *helper* that man needed. The word “helper” is most frequently used of God in the Bible (see, for example, Ex. 15:2; Ps. 54:4). Therefore, the woman is of great worth. She is as valuable as the man and was needed to provide indispensable aid and support to the man. Together they would be complete. She was made for man so that he could fulfill God’s purpose for him, and the woman could not be what she was created to be apart from the man.

VERSES 19-20

After forming the animals from the ground, the Lord brought all of the animals before the man to name. The man’s naming each of the animals demonstrated his authority over them as God established in Genesis 1:26,28. Even though the man was surrounded by these wonderful creatures, it appears this event only served to heighten this social being’s loneliness as he observed that ***no helper was found corresponding to him***.

- What was the significance of God allowing the man to name the animals?
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UNITED (GEN. 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.

VERSES 21-22

After every creature had been created, and after man had named every bird and animal, it was apparent he still did not have a helper corresponding to him. So God ***caused a deep sleep to come over the man***. Then God took a rib from the man and made the woman. She is the only created being that came from another created being. The woman was made of the same stuff that the man was made of. She was made in the image of God like the man was, and both completed the other. The Hebrew word translated ***made*** is more often understood to mean “build.” As the Potter, God “formed” the man from dirt; as the Builder, God “made” the woman from the man’s rib. Perhaps, the woman was made from a rib on the man’s side so that the two could stand together side by side.

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VERSES 23-25

God brought the woman to Adam and presented her to him. Adam’s first recorded words reveal that he recognized God made her using his own bone and flesh; they were made of the same stuff. After failing to find a helper corresponding to him as he named all of the animals, he saw what he had been hoping for ***at last***. Furthermore, Adam calling her

woman, a word derived from the word **man**, emphasizes the equality and correspondence they shared with one another.

Verse 24 establishes the principles for every marriage to follow—leaving and clinging. Before marriage, one’s highest loyalty is to God and the next highest loyalty is to one’s parents. In the covenant of marriage, one’s greatest loyalty besides to God is to be to one’s spouse. The covenant of marriage is intended to be a picture of spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical harmony.

Verse 25 highlights that the man and the woman were innocent. The shame and barriers that sin causes did not exist. Yet the statement anticipates the devastating events that happen in Genesis 3.

○ **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?**

BIBLE SKILL: *Memorize a verse and apply it to a real-life situation.*

Memorize Genesis 2:23-24 by writing it out and committing it to memory one phrase at a time. Rewrite it in your own words. Ask yourself what these verses say that is applicable to your own family situation.

APPLY THE TEXT

- + Humanity benefits from God's provision.
- + Humans were tasked to work for the benefit of creation.
- + Humanity has the freedom to accomplish God's assigned purposes.
- + Believers should celebrate a covenant marriage between a man and a woman.

Discuss as a group how all of humanity benefits from God's provision. How should God's provision for us impact our relationship to Him and to others?

What particular work has God tasked you with to benefit His creation? How should you think about and approach this work?

Memorize Genesis 2:23-24.

Prayer Needs
