

The Creation of Woman

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Genesis 2:18–24 graphically describes God’s creation of the first woman. It begins with the LORD God’s remarkable statement, “It is not good that man should be alone.” The negative, “not good,” is emphatic. Until now, God has done everything good; He has pronounced His benediction upon all of His creation. Here, for the first time, we find that something is lacking. Without female companionship and a partner in reproduction, man could not fully realize his humanity. Out of this need comes the creation of the woman who will be Adam’s wife and companion.

The creation of woman in Genesis 2 has far-reaching consequences. It sets the foundation for:

1. the relationship of a husband and a wife within marriage,
2. the relationship of Jesus Christ, the Husband of His church, and the church as Christ’s bride,
3. the function of a man and a woman within the church.

This article addresses primarily on the first of these.

The woman made for man

God’s creation of Eve is set within the context of the creation story. The first part of that story is the preparation of the man for the woman’s arrival. Adam had been made in God’s image. He was filled with God’s pristine glory. And yet, God showed Adam that in all the created order, with all its variety, there was no creature suited to be his companion.

God chose a fascinating way to teach Adam this lesson. God had stood side by side with Adam while a great variety of animals passed before Adam. As they passed by—from the ant to the zebra—Adam studied each animal, then named it. That was no arbitrary naming. Adam noted each animal’s nature and relationship. In the back of his mind, he must have wondered if one might be suitable as his companion. Yet there was none. As Genesis 2:20 says, “For Adam there was not found an help meet for him.”

After he named all the animals, Adam realized that not one had been created in the image of God. Each had a body, and even, in a sense, a personality. But none had a soul. Adam could not commune with any on a spiritual level. No matter how good Adam’s relationship was with an animal, something was missing. Let me illustrate.

Perhaps you have an excellent relationship with your dog. You have great fellowship with that animal. You share many enjoyable hours with him. You play games with him; you show affection. But all your fellowship must be on a dog’s level because a dog can only communicate on that level. Adam no doubt

realized that if he was to have a companion, the companion would have to be specially created by God in His image, just as Adam himself had been.

So Adam was prepared for a woman, and the woman was now to be prepared for him. She was to be created as his ideal counterpart in the world. Man and woman were made differently, and yet, by God's creating act, they were to be more alike than anything else in creation.

Eve was created as a perfect woman. What a striking woman she must have been! When commenting on the creation of man, Luther said that Adam must have been an extraordinary specimen. He thought that Adam must have excelled the animals even in those points in which they excelled; he'd have power greater than a lion's, and eyesight sharper than an eagle's. But if that was true of Adam, what are we to say of Eve? Luther thought Eve would have been as strong, fast, clear-sighted, and brilliant as Adam. In addition, Luther said, she must have had a beauty and grace that excelled him. This much we can say for sure: Eve, too, was created in pristine glory.

In spite of Eve's physical, mental, and moral excellence, verse 18 says she was made "for" the man, "an help meet [or suitable] for him." In this perfect pre-fall condition, every woman has a clue to her unique, God-given position in marriage. She is to be a "help meet" for her husband.

Genesis 2:18 greatly angers radical feminists and is sometimes a cause for concern, if not anxiety, for other women as well. To speak of woman being made for man, or of her need to be obedient to the man in marriage, is anathema. Many women—and even men—think such ideas outdated, unjust, and prejudiced against women.

Our fallen human nature never likes to surrender its desired independence. Man doesn't want to be subject to God, and woman doesn't want to be subject to man. Rev. J. Fraanje once wrote that "Independency"—today, we would perhaps say "autonomy"—is the word written on the inside of the gate that led out of Paradise.

We need clear thinking today on this issue. We need to understand, first of all, that the word *help* is not a derogatory term. God created us to serve Him and to help our neighbor. It is an honor for a woman to help her husband, for *help* is a word frequently used in reference to God Himself in the Psalms (10:14; 22:11; 28:7; 46:1; 54:4; 72:12; 86:17; 119:173, 175; 121:1-2). If God is not ashamed to be the help of fallen sinners, why should we look askance on Eve being the "help" of her unfallen husband? Being a help meet is not a degrading position. The verb form of this word basically means to aid or supply that which an individual cannot provide for himself. The Septuagint translates it with a word that the New Testament uses in the sense of "physician" (Matt. 15:25). It conveys the idea of aiding someone in need, such as the oppressed. Certainly a godly wife delights to meet the needs of her husband.

Meet comes from the Hebrew word meaning “opposite.” Literally it is “according to the opposite of him,” meaning that a woman will complement and correspond to her husband. She is to be equal to and be adequate for the man.

In what way is she to be equal? We need to grapple with this word *equality*, which we hear so much about today. Are men and women truly equal?

Yes and no. There are important ways in which men and women are equal. (1) They were both equally created in the image of God. That is what made them fit companions for each other. It explains why animals are not fit companions for us. (2) They were both placed under the moral command of God and thus were given moral responsibility. (3) They were both guilty of disobeying the command of God and were therefore judged by God for their disobedience. (4) Paul tells us in Galatians 3:28 that both men and women are equally objects of God’s gracious redemption in Jesus Christ. (5) As husband and wife, a man and a woman are equally called to leave father and mother, to cleave to each other, and to love each other as one flesh.

In another sense, however, man and woman were not created equal. Because the woman was created for the man, they were not created equal in authority. God has a different structure of authority laid out for husbands than He does for wives. The inequality of that authority structure doesn’t mean that a husband has the advantage over his wife or that one position is better than another, however. Nor does it mean that one position is higher than another. We have to purge our minds of that way of thinking, which is all too common in the business world of our day. The higher we are on the corporate business ladder, many think, the better off they are.

That’s not what God has in mind with man and woman. In the God-given structure of authority, a husband and wife mutually submit to Christ (Eph. 5:20), then, under Christ, to each other, fulfilling each other’s needs. Already in paradise, there is glory and humility in both the man and the woman. The man’s glory is that he is the head; his humility is that he is not complete without the woman. The woman’s glory is that only she can give the man fulfillment; her humility is that she is made of man.

Post-fall, these complementary roles come out even stronger, especially for husbands and wives who desire to model their marriages in Christ according to God’s directions. Paul enlightens us on these roles in Ephesians 5. The husband is to love his wife as Christ loves the church—absolutely (He gave Himself, v. 25b), realistically (Christ realized that the church, in herself, needed cleansing, v. 26), purposely (i.e., to make the church holy and blemish-free, v. 27), and sacrificially (i.e., to care for the bride as one cares for his own body, vv. 28–29).

In turn, the wife is to show her husband reverence and submission, Paul says (vv. 22, 33). Elsewhere, Paul gives us four reasons why: because the woman is made from man (1 Cor. 11:3, 8), because the woman is made for man (1 Cor. 11:9), because the man was created first (1 Tim. 2:12-13), and because sin entered

the world by the woman (1 Tim. 2:14). As the man is to show loving headship, so the woman is to show loving submission.

Submission is not degrading. It is found even within the persons of the Godhead; in fact, marriage parallels the divine Trinity in this regard. Theologians speak of the *essential* Trinity, which the Westminster Confession defines as “three persons in the Godhead, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.” They also speak of the *economic* Trinity, in which various members of the Godhead deliberately and willingly submit themselves to one another in the work of redemption. The Son submits to the Father as Mediator and Servant. The Holy Spirit submits to the Father and the Son in His salvific work. Paul points to the parallelism between such submissions and marital submission, when he says, “The head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God” (1 Cor. 11:3; see also Eph. 5:22-24).

“Biblical” feminists respond to such texts by arguing that submission is part of the curse, now abrogated by Christ’s atonement. Their arguments, however, don’t reckon with submission among the divine persons, nor with the fact that the subordinate relationship of wife to husband is found first in Genesis 2, *before* the fall and the curse.

Submission within marriage has parallels also within the church, which is the family of God. Though women may and should exercise numerous roles of caring ministries in the church, Paul makes clear that the headship principle prevents them from bearing office in the church. Moreover, this submission in marriage and in the church is to be voluntary. In short, if a woman cannot be a loving, submissive helper to the man who proposes to her, she should not marry him any more than a man should propose marriage to a woman to whom he does not intend to show loving, self-denying leadership.

The woman made by God

The woman is not only made for man; she is also made by God as a special act of creation. Both the man and woman were special creations of God. They were created in equal dignity. Genesis 2:21–22 says, “And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof.”

God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam as an initial step in the creation of woman. This “deep sleep” must have been something like anesthesia today, and the operation that God performed much like medical surgery. God took away one of man’s ribs and filled the empty place with flesh, closing up the wound.

From the rib, God then “made”—literally, in Hebrew, “built” or “constructed” a woman. God miraculously, meticulously, beautifully, laboriously, formed woman with His own hands, making her every bit as special as the man he had created before her.

There is something particularly beautiful, even poetic, about this creation. The woman is made for the man and might therefore be thought of as man's servant. But Genesis says nothing of this. Instead, as Matthew Henry put it: "The woman was not made out of the man's head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved."

Then the loving Father presented the bride that His own hands had carefully formed to the man. He "brought her unto the man" (v. 22b), which is a special phrase in Hebrew that means "presented or conducted her to the man." The word also implies the formal, solemn giving of the woman within the bonds of the marriage covenant, which Proverbs 2:17 calls "the covenant of God." God, as the woman's Creator and Father, brought her to the man, as the Puritans used to say, "as his second self, to be a help meet for him."

In bringing the woman to the man, God established marriage as the first, most basic of all human institutions. Before there were governments or churches or schools or any other social structures, God established a household based on the mutual respect and love of a husband and wife. All other human institutions derived from that. From the authority of the father came the patriarchal systems of human government, which would eventually give rise to monarchies and democracies. From the responsibility of parents to educate their children came the more formal systems of education that we call schools and colleges. From the need to care for the family's health came physicians and hospitals. From the obligation of parents to train their children in the knowledge of God came temples, synagogues, and churches. All human organizations can be traced back to the home, the family, and ultimately to marriage.

Adam, whom God then awakened, immediately recognized Eve as his companion—the perfect fit for the longing that had been awakened in him. In response, he broke into a kind of wedding song, celebrating his similarity and union with the woman by naming her.

The woman named by man

Adam said, "This is now" (v. 23a)—i.e., "this time"—now, at long last, Adam finds that which corresponds to him. The close association is emphasized by their names, since she is called "woman" [*ishah*] because she was taken out of man [*ish*]. The Hebrew word for "woman" is formed simply by adding the feminine ending of "-ah" to the word for "man." A parallel difference would be between lion and lioness, or tiger and tigress. So Adam, by divine revelation, realized the woman was taken out of him. His act of naming his wife reinforced his leadership and authority over her, but her name also indicated that he understood her equality with him as his partner.

The divine miracle that Adam witnessed filled him with inexpressible joy, inspiring him to cry out in beautiful poetry, "This is now bone of my bones, and

flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man” (v. 23).

Adam and Eve then entered into a sinless marriage. “Marriage is honorable,” wrote Matthew Henry, “but this surely was the most honorable marriage that ever was, in which God Himself had all along an immediate hand.”

To Adam’s wedding song, God appends in verse 24 a beautiful, sacred blueprint for marriage, which involves a leaving, a joining, and a oneness: “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” These are probably the words of Moses, the inspired author of Genesis, who provides us with this sacred precept that Jesus repeats in Matthew 19 and Paul repeats in Ephesians 5:31–32, saying, “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” These three essential traits—leaving, cleaving [or joining], and oneness—still exist post-fall, in Christ, in a good marriage.

The woman made to be one with the man

The three parts of God’s blueprint for marriage are important marks of a good marriage:

(1) *Leaving*. Leaving father and mother is a tremendous adjustment. The closeness of family unity must yield to a new family unit with a new head. This new unity takes priority over the parent-child relationship. There’s a chain of reasoned thought here: One must leave in order to cleave, and two must cleave to become one flesh.

(2) *Cleaving*. A newly married couple must join together. The original Greek word can be translated “cemented together.” The bridegroom and bride form a new relationship inseparable from each other. The woman becomes part of the man, and vice versa. They become more than each other’s intimate companion, best friend, and faithful partner.

(3) *Oneness*. The expression *one flesh* is the strongest Hebrew construction to indicate a change of state. This is implied already in Eve’s being formed out of Adam. The goal of marriage, however, is not just to become one physically, as important and fulfilling as that may be, but in every aspect of the relationship: one in heart, one in love, one in trust, one in purpose, one in thinking, and, above all, one in Christ. A oneness that is no deeper than physical will soon dissipate and most likely end in an unhappy marriage or in a divorce court. But a marriage that has an overall oneness in heart, mind, and action will have special physical oneness as well! Physical oneness does not produce a great marriage; but a great marriage, in Christ, produces great physical oneness as well as a great intellectual, emotional, and spiritual oneness.

Oneness is the great goal of marriage—to be one with God through Christ, then, out of that oneness, to be one with another. But how can a sinner, who has

separated from God, become one with God? Only through the Savior, Jesus Christ, who Himself engaged in a leaving, a joining, and a oneness in wooing and winning His bride. Paul puts it this way, “This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Eph. 5:32). Here is how He did that:

(1) Christ left His Father willingly. He left the crown and throne and courts of glory to come into this world, to seek out His bride. He endured heart-wrenching separation from His Father on the cross. He thus paid the dowry price for His bride so that she might become part of His body, His flesh, and His bones.

(2) On Calvary’s cross, Christ joined Himself to His bride. As He was dying, she was mystically formed out of Him as the Second Adam, just as Eve was formed out of the first Adam when in a deep sleep. As the woman came from Adam’s side to symbolize their being joined together, so from the wounded, bleeding, dying side of our Savior, the church of God was taken out, as it were, to be born, to live, and to be joined with her Savior. This is a great mystery indeed!

(3) The greatest part of this mystery, however, is: “They shall become one flesh.” The church of God, says Paul, makes up the total fullness of Christ as Mediator. He is the Head; the church is the body. “And gave Him to be the Head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all-in-all” (Eph. 1:22–23). This mystical union will be perfected one day in heaven’s ideal, unbreakable union.

When we are born again through the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, we become personally united with Jesus Christ. We become one “in Christ.” That is why Paul never tired of describing a Christian in this way. In his epistles, Paul uses this phrase or a similar phrase—*in Christ, in Christ Jesus, or in Him*—at least 164 times. That is Paul’s favorite way of describing a Christian.

For example, Paul writes, “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature,” or, as the original has it, “a new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17). By being united with Christ, a person becomes a new creation. He is one in Christ; he is united with Christ. Likewise, in Ephesians 1:3, Paul says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places *in Christ.*”

The believer’s union with Christ is profoundly intimate. When Paul speaks of union with Christ, he uses a special prefix in Greek, best translated as “co-,” meaning that tie is indissoluble. Literally, he says in Galatians 2:20, “I am co-crucified with Christ.” That is, when He died, in a sense I also died. In Romans 6:4, Paul speaks of being buried with Christ, in Ephesians 2 of being raised with Christ and of sitting with Him in heavenly places, and in Romans 8 of being glorified together with Christ. Paul is saying that the intimacy of the believer’s union with Christ is so great that there is a sense in which, when He was crucified, the believer was also crucified; when He died, the believer also died; when He was buried, the believer was also buried; when He was raised

from the dead, the believer was also raised; when He ascended, the believer also ascended. Who can comprehend this mystical union? One poet said:

*One in the tomb, one when He arose,
One when He triumphed o'er His foes,
One when in heaven He took His seat,
While seraphs sang all hell's defeat.
With Him our Head we stand or fall,
Our life, our surety, our all.*

Oh, what dignity exists in all this—dignity in Eve's creation as a woman, one with her husband, sharing that dignity with him! And now, through faith, dignity in the recreation of Christ's bride, to be made one with the Bridegroom—to share in His dignity and glory, to be loved by God with some of that very same love with which God loves His own Son! Truly, there is no dignity like the dignity of recreation—of being made the very bride of Jesus Christ.

Closing Applications

What about your marriage—does it reflect oneness in Christ? When it is not what you expect it to be, do you ask: How can I (not my partner) make a more profound oneness? Do you work toward cultivating greater intimacy in your marriage?

Today, marriage is under attack. Hedonism is rampant. Adultery is gaining widespread acceptance. Unbiblical divorces can now be granted via the Internet.

The basic structure of society is falling apart. Too often believers fare little better. We need desperately to understand the value of marriage and to work hard at achieving excellence in marriage through the Lord Jesus. We must strive for oneness so that our marriages may be open epistles of God's grace in an ungodly world.

We must not surrender to the love of self that is fostered by our culture. The only way to have a truly successful marriage is to put Christ first, your spouse second, and yourself third. Love of self must be broken at the foot of the cross of Christ. Only when we see ourselves as sinners in rebellion against God and bow before Him for forgiveness and help in pursuing holiness, will love fill our marriages and spill over into all our other relationships. Then we will truly understand that a marriage does not exist for self but for us—for the children and society, and ultimately for the glory of God.

Are we daily seeking God's glory in our marriage? Husbands, are you striving to be a loving head in your marriage? Wives, are you striving to show loving submission to your husband? There is no room in a biblical marriage for bosses—only for loving headship and loving submission as one man and one woman seek to live out, by God's grace, the Christ-church relationship on earth.

Finally, a word to young people: The oneness that God intends marriage to be in Christ means that you must not marry an unbeliever. If you marry someone who has a personal agenda for marriage rather than God's agenda, you will most likely be setting yourself up for years of heartbreak and sorrow. Second Cor. 6:14 says, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, and what communion hath light with darkness?"

Look for a marriage partner given to you in God's favor and out of His hand. And if you want to be a good marriage partner yourself, wrote Thomas Manton, "Clear up your right and title by Christ" (*Works* 2:164). Make your own calling and election sure. If you and your partner are God-fearing, your marriage will greatly benefit because you will have someone to help you strive to live to God's glory, to live a holy life, to bear the crosses God will send your way, and to confidently approach God through Christ in prayer and worship.

Pray for God's direction and counsel and blessing as you wait on Him to lead you to a God-fearing partner suitable for you. Ask Him for one who is a help meet for you.

Dear friend, are *you* married to Jesus Christ? Adam and Eve were not ashamed because they were clothed with God-given, original righteousness. Are you, too, not ashamed because you are clothed with the God-given righteousness of Jesus Christ? Remember, this blessed Savior demands your faithfulness. He is jealous for your wedded love. You must not stray from Him.

What do you think of this perfect Bridegroom? Are you married to another lord—to the prince of this world? Satan's promises are lies. His dowry is anguish. His embrace is death. His chamber is darkness. His bed is in flames of fire.

Whatever our case may be, let us flee with all our shortcomings in our natural married life and in our spiritual marriage to the perfect Bridegroom, Jesus Christ. Let us leave the godlessness of this world and cleave to Christ, to be one with Him—now and forever.