

The sermon

Intro

We're in day six. There was no man to work the ground. So God formed Adam from the dust of the ground. God then planted a garden. God then placed Adam in this garden. God then gave Adam a covenant. Essentially, obey me by not eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you obey me, you will live forever. If you eat of the forbidden tree, you will die.

That's where we're at.

READ PASSAGE

Body

Passage Focus

We'll work our way through the passage step by step. Then I'll close with several applications.

Genesis 2:18-25

Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." – 2:18

Adam's alone. There's no Eve. Which isn't good. Adam needs someone like him. Isolation isn't good.

Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment. – **Proverbs 18:1**

We were created as relational beings. For relationship with God and humans. Interestingly, relationship with God isn't enough. We need humans too! Just God and Adam wasn't good.

"helper" ≠ inferiority of the one who provides the help. Most often the word **"helper"** is used of God, often in a military context.

*I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my **help** come? ² My **help** comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.* – **Psalm 121:1-2**

"fit for him" = literally "according to the opposite of him." Adam needs someone who is different than him, yet corresponds to him. Adam needs companionship that suits him, complements him.

*Now out of the ground the LORD God **had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.***

– 2:19

Do we have a contradiction?

Maybe you don't have an ESV. So you have a slightly different translation. If you have a NASB, CSB, NET, KJV, NKJV, NRSV your Bible reads "the LORD God formed." If you have an NIV, it agrees with the ESV. The ESV has 2:19 going back in time before Adam was created. The other translations have God forming this animal life after forming Adam.

Why am I bringing this up? There's a sticky chronological matter if we don't go with the ESV. This came up on the job in Kittery, Maine. I had a co-worker who told me the Bible was full of mistakes. He raised the issue of Genesis 2:19. I had an ESV on me, so nothing stood out. What's your point I asked? Using his KJV, he pointed out that Genesis 1 has land animals created before man. But in Genesis 2:19, we have Adam created before **"every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens."** Do you see his point? In the KJV, there appears to be chronological disagreement in the Bible.

What would you tell him?

I believe the ESV and the NIV are attempting to harmonize Genesis when they don't have to. The ESV has a note "Or *And out of the ground the LORD God formed.*" Analyzing the Hebrew, the ESV translation is remotely possible, but unlikely. The Hebrew construction is one event happening after another. Just like in chapter one: each day follows the next. Genesis 2:19 going back in time is highly unlikely. The KJV, NKJV, NRSV, NASB, CSB, NET are correct.

So if the alternate ESV translation is correct, how do I resolve the chronological problem? The best response is this. Animal life (birds, livestock, creeping things, beasts of the field) was created before Adam as described in chapter one. As for Genesis two, we're talking about the garden. Beasts of the field and birds exist elsewhere on earth, but not in the garden. God forms birds and beasts of the field specifically for the garden after forming Adam, because there's none in the garden. Much like God planted the garden (2:8), then after forming the garden, he formed fruit trees (2:9).

My point? The chronological problem can be resolved by noting Genesis 2:19 refers to a localized creation in the garden, not the initial creation of birds and beasts of the field.

Back to the narrative...

God brings beasts of the field and birds of the heavens to Adam to name. Naming indicates Adam's ruling function over animal life. Like God named the objects he spoke into existence. Like parents naming their children.

The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. – 2:20

Where did the livestock come from? Apparently, they were already in the garden and none needed to be created.

Some ask, how could Adam have named all the animals in a 24 hour day? Answer. We don't know how many animals were brought to Adam. We're talking the garden, a small area. Not the entire earth. And a subset of animal life: livestock (domesticated animals), beasts of the field, and birds of the sky. Not every sort of animal on the face of the earth.

The point is "***there was not found a helper fit for him.***" None of these animals was Adam's corresponding opposite.

The point isn't that God had to do some trial and error to figure out what sort of companionship was suitable for Adam. The exercise was a learning one for Adam. Exposure to animal life would show Adam that none of those sort of creatures were fit to be his companion.

So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. – 2:21

God puts Adam into a deep sleep. Presumably to prevent physical pain (divine anesthesia). God removes one of Adam's ribs and closes the incision.

And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. – 2:22

We're not told how God turned one rib into a functioning woman. The point isn't the mechanics. The point is the woman comes from a part of man. Distinguishing her from animal life. The point is that God built ("*made*") a new creature for the man called woman. God's constructing a special living creature.

Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." – 2:23

There's something different about the woman. "***at last***" = I've finally found someone like me ("***bone of my bones and flesh and my flesh***"). There's correspondence, complementarity. Then Adam names her "***Woman***." Adam naming the woman indicates a ruling/leadership function.

The apostle Paul observations confirm this understanding:

1. In 1 Corinthians 11:8-10, Paul finds male authority in the home because woman was made from man and because woman was created for man.
2. In 1 Timothy 2:11-13, Paul finds male authority in the church because Adam was created before Eve.

The point is I have someone who corresponds to me. **“helper fit for him”** means God gives Adam the woman to help him accomplish the five-fold purpose of Genesis 1:28. The woman given to Adam is his opposite, but she’s like him in ways animal life isn’t. **She’s his perfect fit!** She’s the image and likeness of God just like him. On the other hand, she’s different. She possesses elements Adam doesn’t have, which makes her the perfect fit/complement to fill and rule with him. He’s no longer alone. He has someone to assist him in the Genesis 1:28 task.

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. – 2:24

Here Moses inserts a comment connecting the first marriage with marriage in Moses’ day. Why do we do marriage? Because God fitted Eve for Adam.

“a man shall leave” = relationally, functionally, not physically. Generally, the man didn’t physically leave his parents in Israel. After he married, he stayed with his parents to work the family land. It was actually his wife that left her parents to live with his family. Rebekah left her family to be with Isaac. When Jacob finally got out from Laban, he took his wives with him.

1. The man’s roles have changed.
2. Leads his wife instead of obeying his parents.

The looks different depending on whether or not the man still lives with his parents.

3. Parent takes on advising role and relinquishes authority.

Parents don’t try to make it a four person marriage. Husband and wife make decisions together. Parents offer biblical wisdom without trying to run their child’s home.

4. Duty to honor and care for parents remains (1 Tim 5:3-4).

“hold fast to his wife” = Literally sticking together (e.g., bones sticking to flesh; tongue sticking to the mouth). Keeping close to someone in terms of physical proximity. Figuratively meaning affection, loyalty, devotion. In marriage, two individuals join themselves to one another relationally. They stick together in loyalty/devotion. They stay joined together. They don’t drift apart over time. **“hold fast”** indicates a permanence. Till death do us part. An inseparable relationship.

“shall become one flesh” = circumstances have changed. A bonding/joining between the two has happened. The two individuals have become one.

In terms of the polygamy we’ll find later in Genesis, God’s design from the beginning was monogamy. Married to only one person. The two have become one. To introduce another wife into the picture would be to undo the one flesh relationship.

One flesh physically. One flesh relationally. One flesh spiritually. They’re not two isolated individuals living in the same house. They do life together. Everything done together. Church. Finances. Parenting. Recreation. Vision.

And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. – 2:25

The first marriage ceremony was complete.

Before fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was consumed, there was no shame, guilt, awkwardness in nakedness. Eating from the forbidden tree introduced new knowledge into the human experience that created shame in nakedness.

We're made for human companionship

Animals aren't a substitute for humans. There's nothing wrong with enjoying a pet and caring for a living creature. Feeding it, keeping it clean, protecting it from danger, etc. To deal kindly with animals is a good thing. But, we're made for human relationship.

Adam was designed for exclusive relationship with one woman in marriage. But what about people who aren't married? What about people who never marry?

We aren't subhuman if we're single. Think of it this way. No matter who you are, you will spend a good deal of your life single. You grow up as a child single. Some people take a good number of years to get married. I was married at 32. Eventually one of spouses is going to die. Which means a return to the single life. Some lose their spouse at a young age. Divorce happens. What I'm saying is singleness is part of God's design for our lives too.

And singleness isn't for isolation. Singles experience friendship/relationship outside of marriage. Through parents, siblings, children, grandchildren, brothers and sisters in Christ, neighbors. There's avenues for relationship outside of marriage. Instruction to the churches assumes fellowship in the local church.

Those longing for marriage. Make yourself marriageable. Be a godly man or woman. Desire a godly man or woman.

Created in the image of God, we're made for relationship with God and humans.

Practical question: where in life am I experiencing intimate relationship?

Women and men are opposites

This really sticks out in my study (literally "according to the opposite of him"). The exact differences aren't spelled out. We don't need to speculate and make it up. The idea is Adam lacks left to himself. Eve helps where Adam lacks. She's like Adam, yet unlike Adam. She's perfectly fit to complement him.

In context, Eve's needed to carry out the fivefold mandate: be fruitful, multiply, fill, subdue, have dominion. No Eve = no multiplication. No multiplication = earth isn't subdued.

Death/divorce is a big deal

Because marriage is a hold fast/one flesh relationship, the death of a spouse is a big deal! Not to mention divorce. Nor adultery which, might not end in divorce, yet is a break in the one flesh relationship.

As for death and divorce, the severing of such an intimate relationship where two people do all of life together is a major blow. Life has been radically altered. The loss shouldn't be minimized if we believe one flesh is a big deal.

The end of marriage is a return to the single state. Thankfully, the believer has relationship with God to sustain them. As a marriage ends, God provides human companionship in other ways, particularly through the local church and family. The return to singleness is a new way of doing life with other humans.

Marriage is between one man and one woman

God fitted Adam and Eve together for marriage. To be fruitful, multiply, fill, subdue, have dominion. The man and woman were uniquely designed to correspond for reproductive purposes. Elsewhere, the Bible forbids sexual relations between the same gender in clear, unmistakable language (Rom 1:26-28). Marriage, from the beginning, is one man and one woman. God's fivefold mandate is carried out by marriage and family. God designed the family unit to achieve his intent for mankind. The family unit stems from God's common grace. An unmerited gift to all mankind. To mess with the family unit is to mess with God and oppose his design. As I noted last week, things don't go well with us when we take a stand against God. God has spoken clearly on the family unit in his word. We don't make it up on our own.

Like singleness doesn't make us subhuman, neither does barrenness in marriage. Barrenness becomes a trial, a test to trust God's goodness. Barrenness could be God nudging to adopt? If adoption is financially unfeasible, there's still the purpose of subduing the earth and having dominion. There's still the one flesh relationship to nurture. There's still God's purposes in the local church.

Conclusion

Earlier, Brandon read from Ephesians five. There Paul told us that marriage "*refers to Christ and his church*" (Eph 5:32). The joining of the first man and first woman in marriage pointed to something greater. From the very beginning, God intended that the male-female marriage relationship would be a picture of Christ's relationship with his church.

How does Jesus relate to his church? He loved the church by dying for it on the cross. Having died for her, Jesus sanctifies his church. He purifies her with the Scriptures, doing the work of progressive sanctification, getting sin out of our lives. Working in us new thinking, new desires, new goals, new behavior. Jesus nourishes and cherishes his church = Jesus takes care of and values his church. He watches over us, he protects us, he guides our steps, he works all things for our good, he gives us the grace/strength needed for the moment.

On the cross, Jesus died for a people, the church, by taking the punishment their sins deserved, in their place, so they could have forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Then he rose from the dead. Vindicating his claims. Become one of God's people, become part of the church, be forgiven of your sins, acquire eternal life, by trusting in Jesus' death and resurrection. Tell us if you believe.