

In 2015... researchers at the University of California at Berkeley announced they would be part of a \$100 million dollar project for space travel... in order to see if there's intelligent life in the universe. ... The plan was to send tiny spacecrafts into outer space (which they called "nanocrafts.") These nanocrafts are like spaceship butterflies — and they are traveling at one-fifth the speed of light to Alpha Centauri (our neighboring galaxy.) Stephen Hawking expressed the purpose poignantly: ***"It is important to know if we are alone in the dark."***

You know... in a different way... I am sure that we can all agree that it is important to know if we are alone in the dark. ... I am... of course talking about our great need for close friendships.

One of my favorite authors... John Ortberg... wrote about this... as he drew the following spiritual allusions from this Berkley study:

*The folks at Berkeley are not the only ones who want to know. We're all constantly sending out tiny little probes, **emotional** nanocrafts, to find out whether we're alone in the dark. They travel at high speeds, and it's easy to miss them. They can be small: "Did you see the game last night?" They can be poignant: "I don't think I'll ever call my dad again." They can be deep: "I'm not sure my wife loves me anymore." They can be urgent: "I have no one else to talk to; can I speak to you confidentially?"*

*These **emotional** nanocrafts are what researcher John Gottman calls "bids" for emotional connection." We start issuing these bids before we can talk. A baby's cry is a bid to connect. As we grow older, these bids—or invitations—for intimacy take other forms. "A bid can be a question, a gesture, a look, a touch—any single expression that says, 'I want to feel connected to you.'" Intimacy of every kind is either built up or eroded, based on how well we handle the subtle little nanocrafts of relational life.*

Over the last 50 years... while society has been growing more and more prosperous and individualistic... our social connections have been dissolving. Emily Esfahni Smith from *The Atlantic* describes the price for our social disconnection:

We volunteer less. We entertain guests at our homes less often. We are getting married less. We are having fewer children. And we have fewer and fewer close friends with whom we'd share the intimate details of our lives. We are denying our social nature, and paying a price for it. Over the same period of time that social isolation has increased, our levels of happiness have gone down, while rates of suicide and depression have multiplied.

A 2012 *New York Times* article added that this scarcity of close friends has especially impacted mid-lifers. During midlife it's harder to meet the three conditions required for making new friends—proximity; repeated connections; and a setting that encourages people to let their guard down and confide in each other.

The Times article went on to state:

In your 30s and 40s, plenty of new people enter your life, through work, children's play dates and, of course, Facebook. But actual close friends—the kind you make in college, the kind you call in a crisis—those are in shorter supply. As people approach midlife, the days of youthful exploration, when life felt like one big blind date, are fading. Schedules compress, priorities change and people often become pickier in what they want in their friends. No matter how many friends you make, a sense of fatalism can creep in: the period for making B.F.F.'s [best friends forever], the way you did in your teens or early 20s, is pretty much over. It's time to resign yourself to situational friends...

Would you agree with me... that it is a universal human need... to have intimate friendships...? Has God wired us to seek intimate relationships...? What if I were to tell you that God designed us for intimate relationships...

(in part)... because that is exactly what He wants to have with each and every one of us – personally...? He wants an intimate relationship with you. It's true. This truth is clearly seen in this morning's passage in Genesis.

In our study through Genesis... so far... we have examined how God's creation came into existence. This morning... as we continue in the second chapter... we pick up a new subject... that will take us into chapter 4. God has made... formed... and fashioned His creation... in chapter one... of Genesis. ... Now (starting today) we will see why ... (and the reason is incredible.) ... It is because God wanted to act in very personal ways with His creation.

First let me show you how we can know for certain that today's passage begins something entirely new. Look at our first verse for today...

Genesis 2:4

The phrase "*these are the generations*" (or this is the "toledoth" in the Hebrew) – is a significant phrase. ... "This is the toledoth" occurs fourteen times in Genesis. The word *toledoth* means "family history"... and it also means "the account of." In the case where we see it in today's passage... it means: "*This is the account of this newly created Heavens and the earth...*" or "*Now I am going to tell you what **happened** to the creation that God has just perfected...*"

In Genesis... Moses... every so often... writes "This is the toledoth of..." He will do this just before he introduces the family histories of Adam... Noah... the sons of Noah... Terah... Ishmael... Isaac... Esau... the sons of Esau and Jacob. ... With each telling of these family stories... Moses...

gives a toledoth announcement to show that he is finished... and is now ready to begin a new one. These are like headings... It is as if Moses is writing “Chapter two”... “Chapter three...” “Chapter four.” etc.

“*This is the toledoth of...*” he writes at the beginning of every new section. ... And every section throughout Genesis follows the **same** pattern... Here is the pattern of every one of these toledoth chapters: generation... degeneration... regeneration.

Chapter one was the first section and we saw it there. **GENERATION**: In the beginning God created the Heavens and the earth. **DEGENERATION**: and the earth became formless and void with darkness over the deep and restless waters. **REGENERATION**: Days 1-6 God took chaotic mess that we see in Genesis 1:2... and for the next six 24hour periods... He brought forth a perfect creation.

The new section that we are starting today will tell us what happened to it and it will follow this pattern once again: Generation – Degeneration – Regeneration... Watch for it in every section of Genesis. And we easily recognize each new section because of the toledoth chapter heading.

In the first toledoth chapter of Genesis... we already saw that God created man... (Look at it again with me... in the first toledoth...)

Genesis 1:26-27

Now today... in toledoth chapter two... we see God create man all over again... as if these two verses in Genesis 1 did not exist. Why didn't Moses include the details of man's creation that we will read in today's passage... when he first wrote about it in chapter one...? ... At first... the

two separate accounts of God's creation of man... is very confusing – UNTIL we recognize Moses' toledoth movements of Generation – Degeneration – Regeneration pattern... throughout the book. ... The first toledoth chapter had its own cycle... and our new one today will have its own. ... We see man's creation again... because there is a deep impact intended for us... when we get the details of how deeply God wanted an intimate relationship with man IN THE VERY WAY THAT HE CREATED US. ... We will clearly see His desire... and then next week we will see how man chose something else (instead of God) - and in doing so... he became degenerate.

Look again with me at Genesis 2:4...

Genesis 2:4

We see a new name for God... here. Throughout Genesis one... He is named (in Hebrew) by the general... ancient name for deity... ("*Elohim*".) But now suddenly... in verses 4, 5, 7 of chapter two... the English translation reads 'Lord God'. ... This places two names together... 'Yahweh Elohim'.

Yahweh is the name that God revealed to Moses when Moses asked for a name. ... It is by this Name that Israel refers to their intimacy with God. They use it in terms of His relationship with them.

It is appropriate that the intimate name of God would be introduced in this passage of Scripture. It is here that God begins to act in very personal ways with his creation.

Genesis 2:5-6

Remember that this is the second toledoth. In the first one... God had already created plants and vegetation... as well as man. We are entering into another cycle of GENERATION – DEGENERATION – REGENERATION... and man will be the primary focus of this toledoth's cycle.

Preparing us for this toledoth's creation of man... we are reminded that man would have a role in creation. ... We read here... that before the flood of Noah's day... God had a different system of watering the earth... It was something OTHER THAN rain. But even this earlier system (***just as*** when rain was finally introduced)... God's creation would ***need*** man... who would water and cultivate the plant-life. ... In other words... Man... who God is about to create in this toledoth... had a recognized ***responsibility*** to creation.

Before Adam and Eve sinned – when everything was perfect... man and all of creation were co-dependent on each other. Man would work the earth... and creation would feed him.

Humans are prone to think of work as a curse. Genesis teaches that work was a gift of God. (LISTEN) Work isn't a curse... (and it never was.) ... After man sinned... work became ***burdensome*** (Gen. 3:17-19) – there's the curse! But that wasn't God's original intention.

Work was (back then)... and still is today... an opportunity to use our abilities and opportunities ***in cooperating with God*** and ***being faithful stewards of His creation***. ... We all have different abilities and opportunities... and we must discover what God wants us to do with our lives in this world... for the good of others and the glory of God.

Genesis 2:7

Here in verse seven... it is revealed that God '...breathed into his nostrils the breath of life....' This is a sublime act of intimacy between the Creator and his creation. ... It is a special kind of activity with humans and is not given to animals. ... The beasts receive life by means of the spoken Word of God. Humans receive it in a way that clearly lifts them above the animals.

Often ... the Genesis account of creation is read without understanding the biblical expression of God's **special attention** to humans. ... Humankind was created by a very unique touch from God. ... As the work of God among men is contemplated... it is well to return to this moment of creation. There is a tender... loving... care... expressed in God's work with humans.

In the very beginning... God acted to show His intention for this creation. There is the picture of **face-to-face intimacy**. Metaphorically... one might say that the breath of life... was bestowed with a kiss.

No human can know the force of God's desire for intimacy with His creation. God's intention for humans to be in a special relationship with Him is revealed graphically ... by Moses' depiction of God giving to man the 'breath of life'. ... It is an awesome expression of the affection God has for this being called 'man'.

As the passage moves ahead... it is necessary to establish the situation which will satisfy the demands of a true relationship. Clearly, God has affection for His creation. Will the creation have the same affection for Him? Well... next week... we will see that a test will be presented.

But for now... what is the breath of God? What is there about God's breath that caused God to breathe His own breath into man? The breath of God is at least two things.

1. The breath of God is *the Spirit of God*. This is seen in the Hebrew word for spirit, *ruach*. The word *ruach* means wind, breath, air, spirit. When God breathed into the nostrils of Adam, He was not just breathing air into Adam's lungs so that Adam could live. If this was all God was doing—giving life to Adam—He did not have to breathe His own breath into Adam. God could have simply spoken the word and caused Adam to become a living soul just like He did when He created the animals. What God was doing was symbolizing and picturing for all generations to come this one fact: God has given man His Spirit, the very Spirit of God Himself. God has actually breathed into man His very own Spirit. This means a most wonderful thing: God has connected Himself to man in the most intimate way possible. God has put within man His very own Spirit. Man is related to God, bound to God, connected to God. Both God and man have the same breath, the very same Spirit. Man has within his body the very breath and Spirit of God Himself.

2. The breath of God is the life of God. When God breathed into man, God gave His very own life to man. What is the life of God? It is life that lives on and on, the life of eternity, the power to live eternally. God's breath is not temporal; God's breath lives forever. God's breath never ceases to exist. Therefore, man was to breathe and live forever; man was to live eternally with God. Man was given the very breath of God Himself, the power of immortality, the power to live forever.

God made no other creature like He made man. God gave no other creature His breath... neither His Spirit nor His life of immortality. This makes man's creation distinctive, of the highest order and being, of the highest honor and glory, of the highest worth and value.

Why has God given His own breath to man... given man His own Spirit and life? ... So that man can freely choose to love and worship God. ... God has given man (despite man's fall) enough of Himself... to make man hunger and seek after God. ... Man has a sense... a consciousness... that he has lost God's Spirit and lost the power to live eternally with God. Mankind... in general... has just enough awareness of God to seek after immortality with God... to seek a lost intimacy... to seek after God and the privilege of living forever with Him.

With this special act of creation... you and I can appreciate the significance of the Fall. ... When sin entered the human race... the spiritual capacities were ruined... making a re-creation (regeneration) essential for fellowship with God. ... Since the Fall... regeneration by the divine Breath... (which we know as the Holy Spirit)... is essential for us to be restored to the life God had intended us to have from the beginning.

There is a sense in which man is a paradox. He was created with all the dignity and honor possible... (given the very breath of God.) Yet... he was also created out of the most base and lowly stuff of all – dirt (!)

"Of the dust of the ground." That is what God used to make man. That is what the body of man shall return to when his body dies.

Genesis 3:19 (ESV)

...for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

Indeed! What do we have to be proud of...? ... Nothing! ... Absolutely nothing... for we are made of nothing more than a handful of dust. ... From dust we have come, and to dust we shall return. ... Before we know it... our bodies will be nothing more than a small cup of dust lying someplace within the ground of the earth.

The point of Scripture is this: we come from the humblest of beginnings. Our bodies are fragile and frail. They are as nothing. Therefore... we must depend upon God to look after us... and we must seek the glory and dignity that God alone can give. ... No matter how much glory and dignity we achieve upon earth... we shall soon be nothing more than a handful of dust. ... Therefore... we must walk humbly before God... depending upon God to make us eternal and glorious beings — beings who shall arise out of the dirt of the earth and live forever. ... We must depend upon God to give us a body that will never age or pass away... a body that will never die... but that will live forever.

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So... try now... to picture the scene: man had just been created. The LORD God Himself had just formed man from the dust of the ground, and had breathed His very breath into his nostrils. ... Man stood there upon earth for the very first time in human history... stood there in the midst of all the lush green of the forest... and the radiant reds... oranges... yellows...

blues... purples... whites and all the other colors of the flowers and bushes that displayed their wild beauty. God now had...

- the universe which He had planned and purposed.
- the man whom He had planned and purposed.
- the perfection—the perfect man and the perfect universe—which He had planned and purposed.

But something else was needed. Man needed a residence... a home... a place to live.

Genesis 2:8

Notice that God's glorious goodness is seen in His design of the Garden. The features of the Garden clearly show that God **cares** deeply for man—for man's welfare... provision... security... joy... and happiness. ... "Eden" means either "delight" or "place of much water" and suggests that this garden was a paradise from the hand of God.

That man was "*put*" in the garden by God says that he was created outside the garden.

Genesis 2:9

"All kinds"... "pleasing"... and "good" evidence the extravagance the garden offered. ... A great variety of trees were grown in the garden. They were for (1) beauty, (2) food, (3) life—to prevent physical death, and (4) knowledge. The last two trees were singular... (one of a kind... special trees.) The last tree mentioned was the tree involved in the fall of man. ... We are already getting set-up for the DEGENERATION part of this toledoth's

cycle. ... The human couple will not be able to plead deprivation as the excuse for eating the forbidden fruit.

Verses 10-14 form a long parenthesis in the narrative... they describe the richness of the world that God had made for mankind. ... We read about rivers flowing out of the Garden... which were God's sustaining provision for life... not only in Eden but in the world. ... The trees... the river... and the pure gold and precious gems we read about in these next verses... emphasize what God had invested in this garden sanctuary. ... It is a bounty of tremendous blessing... for man to enjoy. (By the way... Revelation 21 and 22 reveals that these same elements will also be present in the heavenly sanctuary in the future creation. That will be paradise - restored on the new earth.)

Genesis 2:10-14

Man often blames his shortcomings and failures upon his environment. *"The problems of the poor in society will all go away... if we simply put them in a better environment..."* ... *"All of my troubles would go away... if I only had a better setting... situation... location..."* ... But note how man began his life upon earth - in a perfect environment... in a paradise upon earth. ... God was as good to man as He could be. He gave man a perfect nature and a perfect environment... so that man could have an abundance of life... a life that far exceeded anything for which man could ask.

But as we shall see in Genesis 3... man still fell into sin. He still came short and failed. Man cannot—not the first man... nor any other man—use his environment as an excuse to sin... fail, or come short.

Environment... of course... has an influence upon every one of us. But a person is basically responsible for his own behavior and actions. ... Adam—the first man upon earth... the father of us all — clearly illustrates this. ... We would all fail and come short... even if we had a perfect environment and world. ... Our problem with failure and sin is not a bad environment. Our problem is the heart... (the desire and craving to do what we want... and to have what we want... no matter what effect our behavior has upon the earth and others.) We are without excuse.

It is impossible to say just where the Garden of Eden was located. The closest that we can say (with accuracy)... is that it was someplace in the lands that surround the Tigris and Euphrates rivers... lands that actually cover several nations of the world... such as Armenia... Turkey... Syria... Iraq... and Iran.

The Garden of Eden was a real place... a real Garden planted by God Himself. ... But you know... as well as I do... that the reality of the Garden has been denied by many persons. ... *Secular man* considers the Garden of Eden to be a fictitious story... just a fairy tale or fable. ... He thinks the Garden is just the Biblical author's imagination of how man first began his life upon earth. Even religious leaders (who don't really believe the Bible) look upon the Garden as a symbol... or an ideal earth... that we are all to strive for.

But notice that this passage clearly teaches that the Garden of Eden was a real... historical place — a real... historical Garden created by God Himself. ... The general location of the Garden is given. Real lands are mentioned: Havilah... Ethiopia... and Assyria. ... Real rivers are also given:

Pison... Gihon... Tigris... and the Euphrates. ... Apparently... the Garden lay toward the East... and was located around four rivers that flowed through lands or countries well known to the people of that day. ... There is nothing fictitious or imaginary about the direction or location of the Garden of Eden. It was a real, historical place, a real, historical Garden.

But why is it important to stress that the Garden of Eden was a real... historical place?

If the Garden was a fictitious place... then it means that the fall of man is a fable. ... Why? ... Because the fall of man took place in the Garden of Eden. Therefore... if the Garden is unreal... then it means there is no such thing as sin... as man being lost in sin and separated from God. ... If the Garden of Eden never existed... then man falling into sin never took place. ... Redemption through Christ is not necessary. ... Man does not need God nor Christ to save him and his world. ... The rest of Scripture become totally unnecessary.

The Garden is real... and what happened there actually occurred. The rest of the Bible is how God is regenerating us... and His perfect creation. ... But only those who want an intimate relationship with God will be restored.

Does this include you...?

I am going to close by reading a brief article by Todd Wilson... which he wrote for a Christianity Today publication... It expresses the **type of intimate relationship** we can have with God.

God is the creator and sustainer and judge of humanity. But the Bible wants us to understand that he is not the Father of everyone. He only becomes our Father when we stand in a unique relationship to him.

Sometimes my kids will slip up or, for fun, call me by my first name: "Todd," they'll say. Of course, they do it in jest, not with disrespect. But I'm always eager to correct them just the same. "Why is it such a big deal to call you by your first name?" they will ask me. "Well, it's not," I say in response. "It's just that you don't want me to start treating you as though you only know me as Todd. You want me, you need me, to be *dad* or *father*, not *Todd*. Friends call me Todd. But I wouldn't die for most of my friends. I'd die for you. So you call me *dad* or *father*."

None of us has a right, by virtue of birth, to call God our Father. Only one person has that right: Jesus Christ. In fact, only through Jesus do we learn to call God "Father"; only through Jesus *can* we call God our Father. You can't have the fatherhood of God without embracing the Son-ship of Jesus.