

*God's Design for Manhood and Womanhood: Genesis 2:4-25*  
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Let's turn to Genesis 2 as we continue our study through the first book of the Bible. This morning we'll focus on God's Design for Manhood and Womanhood. This passage should leave us awe-struck at how God created us male and female. We are equal in essence and have equal worth and value as creatures made in the likeness of God. And yet at the same time we are beautifully and wonderfully and mysteriously different!

I hope this passage will be an encouragement to all of us as we seek to fulfill the roles God has given us as male and female. I pray that men will step up and fulfill the role of servant leader and provider and protector. And I pray that women will embrace their role of helping and supporting and nurturing. One of my goals in this sermon, since it's Mother's Day, is that we will all have a greater appreciation for our Mothers, and for those who are married, that we will have a greater appreciation for our wives. I hope on this Mother's Day we will all seize this opportunity to honor the women in our lives, as we marvel at the beauty of God's design for men and women. God made us male and female by design, and we'll see here in the creation account the basic structure of manhood and womanhood.

As I said last week, chapter 2:1-3 are really the conclusion to chapter 1. Chapter 1 describes the six days of creation, then 2:1-3 tells about the seventh day on which God rested. Now verse 4 begins the next section. And you can think of this section like a more detailed (a more up-close) account of the creation of man and woman. Chapter 1 was the big picture account of the six days of creation. Chapter 2 zooms in and focuses on the man and the woman.

Before we look at the differences between men and women, let's back up and remind ourselves of what chapter one says about the absolute equality between men and women. In chapter 1:26-27 God says, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." A fundamental thing we learn from the story of creation is that ALL human beings are equal before God. No one is more important than anyone else. No matter what your age or gender or skin color or intelligence level or financial status, we all have equal worth and value as creatures made in God's image.

The New Testament makes this point as well, in verses like Galatians 3:28, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." This verse stresses our equality in Christ.

Before we begin to talk about the differences between men and women, it's important that we firmly establish this point of equality. Because it's a sad truth that many men have taken what the Bible teaches about role differences between men and women, and have used that teaching to domineer over their wives and even abuse their wives. Oh, what sinful creatures we are, that we take God's good and beautiful plans and pervert them in such horrific ways to serve our sinful passions. In order to rightly

understand God's design for male and female, we first have to understand the equality between male and female. God assigns distinct roles to each gender, but that does NOT mean (and I want to be as emphatic as I can be on this point) . . . it does NOT mean that one gender is better than the other. Just because the man is to be the leader does not mean he is better, or more important, or smarter, or more competent. In fact, he may be (and often is), *less* intelligent, *less* competent in many areas, *less* spiritual, and yet he is still commanded by God to lead and provide for and protect his wife and children.

We are equal in essence, and distinct in role. Men and women have the same value and worth as human beings, and in God's good plan we are given different roles in the marriage relationship. A deep and profound reality that this is an illustration of is the relationship of God the Father and God the Son. The Father and the Son are EQUAL in essence. They are equal. They share the same essence. Jesus said, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:31). But they also have different roles. They relate to one another as Father and Son. The Father is the head, and the Son submits to the Father. 1 Corinthians 11:3 shows the similarity between that relationship and the husband / wife relationship. Paul writes, "But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God." God the Father is the head over Christ. The Father and Son are equal, yet function in different roles in the relationship. Likewise, the husband is head over his wife. They are equal, and yet they are given different roles.

Hopefully now you're convinced that differences in role do not mean differences in importance or worth. Many who disagree with the biblical teaching on manhood and womanhood would object at this very point. They would say that you can't have differences in role without implying inequality. They would say if the man is to be the leader and the wife is to submit to him, then that necessarily means the woman is inferior to the man. But the Trinity seems to be such a clear and persuasive example of how equality and role distinction can be present in the same relationship. The Father and Son are equal and different. And likewise, men and women are equal and different. Equal in essence, distinct in role.

Now let's look at Genesis 2 where we'll continue to see the equality between men and women, and we'll also see God's design for their differences. I think there are several indications here that God created the man to be the leader and the women to be the helper.

I. The first observation is that God made the man first (in verse 7), and then He made the woman (in verse 22). And we might not think that's very significant. After all, the animals were created before Adam, and that certainly doesn't imply that the animals are head over man. But in the creation of humankind, who are entirely distinct from animals, God chose to make the man before the woman. He could have created them simultaneously. He could have made the man and the woman in the same moment. But instead, I believe, He was revealing His design for male and female in the order of creation. He was revealing His plan for male headship and leadership. In the New Testament Paul points to this order as a reason for male leadership in the church. In 1 Timothy 2:12 he writes, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet." And then he gives the reason in verse 13, "For Adam was formed first, then Eve."

Now that prohibition does not mean that women cannot use their gifts or cannot teach. There are endless ways that women can and should use their spiritual gifts for the benefit of the church. And in many cases that will involve a teaching function. I'm so grateful for the women who teach the children's Sunday School classes in our church and lead women's Bible studies and minister in so many important ways. What Paul is instructing here is that women should not teach or have authority OVER men. And then he points to the order of creation as the reason for this. So if we had a woman serving as one of the elders in this congregation, or if we had a woman preach here to this group of men and women, that would violate the order of creation. It would go against God's design for the roles of men and women. So we see first of all the significance of the fact that the man was created first and then the woman. In the order of creation we see God revealing His plan for the man to be the leader and for the woman to be the helper.

II. The second observation is in Genesis 2:18, "Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him a helper fit for him.'" Do you recall how chapter 1 recorded God's delight in His creation? Over and over (7 times to be exact), the text says, "God saw that it was good" (vv. 4, 9, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). The last time, in verse 31, it says, "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was VERY good."

After hearing that refrain over and over, we come to chapter 2:18, and this statement is startling. "It is NOT good." Something about God's creation is said to be NOT good. And what's not good? The fact that Adam is alone. He is without a human companion. He doesn't have an equal. None of the animals are equal to him. They aren't FIT for him. So God says He will make a helper fit for him.

Now, ladies, don't get puffed up with pride about this, but God's good creation was not complete until he made the woman. He created light, and it was good. He separated the waters and the land, and it was good. He made the sun and moon and stars, and it was good. He made all the animals, and it was good. And then he created Adam, and He saw that Adam was by himself (even though he was surrounded by animals). And God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him a helper fit for him." In the goodness of God's creation, the absence of the woman was NOT good. In this process God wanted to show Adam what he was missing. He wanted Adam to feel the need for a companion, the need for a helper who was fit for him, equal to him.

Look what God does next. He brings all the animals to Adam in order for Adam to name them. Verse 20 says, "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." A couple things are going on here. Adam was exercising his dominion over creation, as God had instructed him to do. He was to rule the world for God, and his naming of the animals was one way in which this played out.

But the other thing that's happening here is that Adam is realizing the inadequacy of the animal kingdom. The animals are wonderful. They are each beautiful and unique, but none of them are fit for the man. They don't share his essence. They aren't equal to him.

Think about Adam's loneliness as he came to the end of this task. He had named all the animals, and not one of those animals was a suitable helper for him. Now, in a much deeper way, he felt the need for a companion. He desired fellowship with one of his own kind. Men, as we read this it should make us grateful for the women in our lives.

Think about Adam's loneliness, and be grateful for your wife (if you have a wife). And be grateful for your mother, and be grateful for your sisters in Christ within this church.

Thank God that He did not leave the man alone. He made a helper fit for him. I think in that phrase, "helper fit for him," we see both the equality and the difference between the man and the woman. She is fit for him, meaning she is equal to him. And she is also created as a helper for him, which clearly demonstrates a difference in role. God didn't create the man as a helper for the women, but rather He created the woman as a helper for the man. Don't think, though, that the word helper implies inferiority in any way. The Bible refers to God as our helper in several places, so the word certainly doesn't imply a lower status at all. But in this context it does emphasize God's design for male headship and leadership, and the woman's role of coming alongside him and supporting that leadership. Equal but different.

III. Third, we read in verses 21-22 of how God created the woman. What an amazing miracle this was! "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. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man." Again, the equality between man and woman is seen in the fact that the woman was made *from* the man. God made her from the man's rib. And in verse 23 when Adam woke up he was elated to meet this woman. He was no longer alone. "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman (*ishah*), because she was taken out of Man (*ish*)."

Adam names the woman, which shows his headship, but he gives her a name that is like his own. He is *ish*, and he calls her *ishah*. He derives her name from his own, and thus shows the similarity and equality between them.

IV. Fourthly and finally, in verse 24 we see another example of the headship that is assigned to men. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." It's the man who takes the initiative in the marriage relationship. It's the man who leaves his parents in order to hold fast to his wife. The marriage relationship now takes priority over the relationship with parents, and the husband needs to take the lead in separating from the household of his father and mother and establishing the new household with his wife.

This is very practical instruction, because it's important for couples to leave and cleave. Young couples need to distance themselves somewhat from their parents in order to solidify the new relationship. The man needs to leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife. Husbands and wives shouldn't be constantly running back to their parents every time there's a conflict, or they need help. That can be unhealthy and can hinder the development of the new marriage. This is important for parents to hear, too. If you have children who are married, you need to give them their space. Let them make their own decisions, and refrain from giving too much advice, or too much financial help, or trying to be too involved in their lives.

I want to say one more thing about verse 24. Jesus quotes this verse in Matthew 19 in reference to divorce. "Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, 'Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?' He answered, 'Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined

together, let not man separate.” And so it’s clear that the leaving and cleaving and one flesh union is meant to be lifelong. God’s instructions on marriage are rooted in His creation design. He intends for one man and one woman to be married for a lifetime. Divorce violates the creation guidelines for marriage.

Let me try to summarize the things we’ve seen about the creation of man and woman. First of all, man was created before the woman. She was created as his helper. He named her. And he is the one who must initiate the leaving and cleaving in order to establish the new home. In those ways we see God’s creation design for male headship in the home and also male leadership in the church. And remember, all these things happened BEFORE the Fall. You can’t say that the idea of male headship is a result of the Fall, because God’s design is clear BEFORE the Fall. Sin, of course, severely distorts male headship. It causes some men to be domineering and even abusive, and it causes other men to be wimps. But the perfect model for male leadership can be seen in God’s good creation BEFORE the Fall.

The creation account is also very clear that men and women are equally valuable and important, and equally bear the image of God. We saw that in chapter 1:27, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” Chapter 2 describes the woman as *fit* for the man. Also, she was made *from* him. And when Adam saw her he said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh,” and he gave her a name that corresponded to his own. There’s a beautiful mixture of equality and distinction that can be seen in the way that God chose to create man and woman. To deny either emphasis is to miss the beauty of God’s design. Men and women are equals, and are also created to fulfill different roles. This is such a beautiful aspect of God’s creation, and it will bring great joy to those who can see it and live it out.

I want to close by looking briefly at Ephesians 5, where Paul quotes Genesis 2:24, and where he also reveals the deepest meaning of marriage. This passage tells us why marriage exists. Marriage exists to be a drama of Christ’s relationship to the church. Sadly, most marriages are a very poor example of that reality. But the glimmers of beauty we see in good marriages are a portrait of Christ’s love for the church and the church’s submission to Christ. Your marriage (and my marriage) is intended to be a living testimony of the Gospel. Husbands, we are to love our wives sacrificially, giving up our selfish desires. We are to lead our wives with kindness and gentleness, seeking to sanctify them. And as we do that we will reflect the glory of the Gospel, that Jesus laid down His life for us, and sanctifies us, and will one day present us to himself in splendor. And wives, as you submit to your husbands you will reflect the glad submission that Christians should demonstrate toward the Lord. This is the meaning of marriage. It is a pointer to something much greater. It is a pointer to Christ, the Bridegroom, and His Bride, the church. Revelation tells us that Christ is coming for His bride, and when that happens everything that marriage points to will be fulfilled. In fact, in heaven there won’t even be human marriages (none of us will be married in heaven), because the reality to which marriage points will then be the complete focus.

May we all honor the institution of marriage, and for those who are married, let us strive to live out God’s model for marriage that was evident even from creation. May our marriages shine forth the wonder of the Gospel as we joyfully embrace the roles God has given to us. Wives, embrace your role as helper. Show respect for your husband, and

support him, and submit to him as to the Lord. Husbands, step up and be the spiritual leader in your home. Make personal sacrifices in order to please your wife. Love her, provide for her, protect her.

God will be glorified, and we will find much joy, as we live out His plan for manhood and womanhood in our homes and in our church.