

Creation: Fulfilled
Genesis 2:4-25

Introduction: If you are a collector of anything valuable, be it coins, stamps, or toys (there really is a market for these), you know that so much value is placed on the condition of the item: how close is it to its original state. Is the coin worn away or does it have buildup over time? Is the toy in the original box? When I was a pre-teen, I spent many a summer collecting baseball cards of my favorite players from my favorite teams. In the beginning, we used to take them out and handle them, pass them around, creating frayed edges and smudges, meaning they were worth way less later on than when they were first opened. Or how many of us have realized that driving a brand new car off the lot means that it immediately begins to lose value as it is in a state of disrepair, depreciating quickly as scratches and wear-and-tear take place. With most things, we want to keep them in their original condition, but know that nothing stays that way for long.

As we come to Genesis 2, we have a unique window into God's plan, purpose, and original design. When we turn the page to chapter 3, the world is given over to its sinful condition, both in mankind and creation itself, and the effects are felt today. Genesis 3 to Revelation 20 explain life in a broken world. But for a brief chapter we see what it was supposed to be, where Revelation 21-22 tells us what perfection WILL BE. Genesis 2 gives us incredible understanding into our **purpose of work, gender equality and diversity, and the institution of marriage**. Without understanding Genesis 2 and by extension *how* sin affected each of these, we cannot get our minds and hearts around *how* the gospel restores and reconciles, bringing us back not only to a right relationship with God Himself, but with new ability to play out God's original design in these areas. Since everything in chapter 2 was perfect, all that was done would have **brought glory to God**, meaning all things were worship since there was no tension between acknowledging God and worshipping self. We will have the same experience someday.

Perfect Placement of Man in the Garden (4-14)

⁴ These are the **generations** of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.

⁵When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—**for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land**, and there was no man to work the ground, ⁶and a **mist** was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground— ⁷then the LORD God formed the man **of dust** from the ground and **breathed into his nostrils the breath of life**, and the man became a living creature. ⁸And **the LORD God planted** a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. ⁹And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. ¹¹The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹²And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. ¹³The name of the second river is the Gihon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Cush. ¹⁴And the name of the third river is the Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

As we closed out the creation of the universe, we highlighted some critical points:

God spoke the world into existence in **6 days**, each having a morning and evening
There was a logical sequence, as the first 3 days laid the foundation for living things on days 4-6

The creation of man and woman was the pinnacle, as this day was **very good**, not only since it was all accomplished, but because man was the focus

Man and woman was made after the likeness of a single God with multiple persons (us, our - plural pronouns describing God)

Man AND woman was made in the **image of God**, differently than all of the animals

Man was to expand and **fill the earth**, procreating and subduing the earth

Man was given **dominion over the earth**, which we will see in Adam naming the animals
Man and animal were both **vegetarians** (1:29-30), and man will be so until after the flood (Gen. 9:3)

God **rested** on the seventh day to make it holy, giving mankind a pattern to follow, and pointing to the rest that God gives us from our works in Christ (Heb. 4:1-13)

Each of these carry implications into chapter 2 and beyond.

Explanation of “generations” or spotlight on mankind

As we start in 2:4, there has been considerable confusion as to the place and intention of this narrative. Is this a **second creation**? Since the first 7 days were done, when did this narrative take place? These are good questions, as are most as it pertains to what Scripture actually say. To answer the question, we must understand how this verse is functioning. Does this verse close out the end of the seven days, leaving a gap between verse 4 and 5? The key **word** is "generations", or in Hebrew *Toledot*. This is the first of 10 uses of the word in Genesis (6:9, 10:1, 11:10, 27; 25:12,19; 36:1, 9; 37:2 - i.e. "*These are the generations of Noah...the sons of Noah...Shem....Terah...etc*). Genesis can easily be titled a book of generations, tracing the growth, expansion, and story of mankind from the Garden, to the choice of Abraham, Israel, and multiplying in Egypt. Genesis 2:4 functions as a type of *superscription*, a headline that then goes on to unpack that title line. It's like saying "**The Warriors won the series**", and then goes on to explain how each game or a particular game went. What Moses did in writing chapter two was to focus in on the **6th day**, and what chapter 1 told in a general way, chapter 2 goes into detail. "In the **day** that the LORD God made the earth and heavens" is a reference to the whole of the seven days, since "day" is functioning as an undefined period of time, here being 6 total days. Chapter 1 focused on the creation of the world, chapter two begins a focus on mankind.

Man created in a real location

One of the other realities that strike us in these first few verses in the fact that the earth and Garden were real places, not representative of something else or simply a legendary story. The reason this is so important is that what God will recreate, our future home will have many of the same features as the original Garden, and we look forward to a time where we will be in a material universe with Jesus, reigning, ruling, serving, and worshipping in the ways we were intended. Its amazing how many have claimed that the description of the Garden really represented something else, i.e. the four rivers represented the four qualities of mankind.

There was no rain on the earth yet - so some plants/shrubs had not yet sprung up (5)

God watered the land by a flow or spring that was continuous, since the normal water cycle would not have started yet (6)

God breathed life into the man - this was not a process but immediate. We are made of the stuff of earth, so when we die our bodies go back to the dust. Man was made in God's image immediately, and did not somehow evolve into it. (7)

God is seen as a GARDENER, creating a special place for man to flourish, a place of beauty (trees pleasant to the sight) and provision (good to eat). The river flowing from Eden created four rivers, which meant the Garden would have been well watered with beautiful minerals and stones pleasing to the eye. In other words, this would have been the ideal place for Adam to accomplish his mission and enjoy the Creator. We get a general sense of *where* this Garden was, but it is futile to try to figure it out in modern geography since the world got turned upside down in the flood.

Righteous Responsibility Given to Man (15-17)

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden **to work it and keep it**.¹⁶ And the LORD **God commanded the man**, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden,¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

Eden was a place of work, not relaxation

Often we get this picture in our mind (at least I do) that since Eden was this perfect Garden experience, it somehow was a place of lounging and eating grapes, with the focus on the rest **man experienced**. This comes out of our tainted view of our life in this world. We are convinced that work is simply a duty and necessity and somehow I want to get to a point that I no longer have to work and focus on what's most important: myself, my relaxation, and my experiences. Whether this is pictured on the weekend or retirement, we can easily get lulled into thinking that somehow this world is about us, rather than God's glory.

Notice that before the Fall Adam was put in the Garden to **work it and keep it**. The idea of work here has the connotation of *dress it up* or *serve it*, while keeping it has the idea of *guarding it*. Now this work was completely different than what we experience, or even what he experienced later, since there were no thorns, thistles, or weeds, and that it would not come at the sweat of his brow. The trees gave up their fruit easily, God watered everything (as opposed to waiting on the rain), and there was not planting or weeding required. If you've ever done gardening in your yard, you know that there is a great sense of joy and pleasure when plants flower, or fruit comes, or vegetables appear. There is **beauty, honor, and enjoyment** in this kind of work. Adam was to work the Garden this way.

This gives us some important implications today:

Work is hard, but was designed as an act of worship - Worship is inclusive in our life, meaning that everything that we do is an act of worship, not simply formal or corporate times. Work has deep meaning, as we are not only getting a paycheck to provide for our family, but have an opportunity to focus on pleasing God through our effort, what we produce, and serve others along the way. **Work was NOT a RESULT of the Fall, but hard work was**. This is why we train our kids that whether they are studying for a history test, practicing the piano, or learning to kick a soccer ball, it's all an opportunity to give glory to God. One of the best ways to differentiate yourself as one who worships at work rather than doing out of selfish duty is by yielding your attitude to the grace of Christ and refusing to **complain**, which so many others join in.

We are designed to work 6 days, and rest 1 - It is a modern invention to have a 5 day work week and 2 day weekend, which is not wrong by any means but actually can gain freedom. We are designed to work 6 days as a normal rhythm. That does not mean we have to seek to make money 6 days, but be active in God's creation. But we are also designed to **rest**. God called His people to rest not

only as a covenant reality (Exodus 31:12-18), but also to remind them they were no longer slaves (Deut. 5:12-15), and could trust God with the yield of the ground, rather than always being on the hustle. Very rarely do we purpose ourselves to differentiate days of the week, incorporating a day of rest would only serve to ignite our hearts for God and others, but also create freshness in the other 6 days of work.

Test Required: Moral agency, not moral autonomy

Now, in the middle of the Garden God had placed **two trees**, which would have been seen and known by Adam and in turn, Eve. Here is what we know about these. The **Tree of Life** was given, apparently, that if man would eat it, they'd live forever. We see this tree again in the new heaven and earth (Rev. 22:2, 14), which serves as healing for the nations. However, the **Tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil** is only seen here in the Garden. This tree served an important function: *it was a test for mankind*. Notice that the command God had given to Adam was overwhelmingly **positive!** Eat everything from the entirety of the Garden, filled with fruit that was pleasing to the eye and stomach. God is the giver of good gifts, NOT a cosmic killjoy. We think wrongly about Him when we simply see Him as restrictive, keeping us from what we want. His commands are always for our good. But this command was **as brief as it was clear**: *do not eat from it or you will die*. **Two things we note here:**

1. **Mankind was created as free standing moral agents, but not with moral autonomy** - We love the idea of free will, and the reality is that each of our wills is tainted by sin, since we are born slaves of sin and under the wrath of God (Eph. 2:1-3). In fact, it is the fact that we need faith by grace to believe that informs us that our wills are unable to make a choice of following God in Christ on our own. However, Adam and Eve were not created with a **sin nature**, so they had true freedom but also the potential to sin. We all are so drawn to what we are not supposed to have (like saying "don't touch that" to your kids). They could make choices not to sin but could **not define what was moral, right, and wrong**. Morality is created by God, not culture and thus is not a social construct. The main temptation of Adam and Eve was to **BE LIKE GOD, which is exactly what we do today each and every time we sin**. As believers, our will is freer, meaning we have choices each day whether we will trust God or ourselves, whether we will yield to the authority of God or succumb to the autonomy we think we deserve.

2. **Adam was given this command BEFORE Eve was created** - Tuck this bit of information away. This will be key as we discuss the roles in marriage and the Fall. But write a note in your Bible or underline verse 16 as it is clear that Eve did not receive direct revelation from God.

Creative Covenant Gifted to Man (18-25)

¹⁸Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." ¹⁹Now 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. ²⁰The 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. ²¹So 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. ²²And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³Then 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."

²⁴Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. ²⁵And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

First thing *lacking* in God's creation

All that God created was good, meaning it was not tainted by sin, death, or brokenness. There was no disease, weeds, or sickness. This culminated in the creation of mankind, which was *very good*. As we come to verse 18, we see that there was the first mention of something **NOT BEING GOOD**. This was not something that was sinful or morally corrupt, but rather that recognition that man was not created to be alone, isolated, or outside of relationship. We were created to have an ongoing, worshipful, intimate relationship with God Himself, but also to play that out together. The creation of Eve and establishment of marriage did NOT mean everyone had to be married to experience this, but rather that it is in the context of interpersonal relationships that we are to glorify God. We have said it before that we want everything that we do here in our church to revolve around relationships. This means that we need each other, playing out the **one-another's** in our pursuit of God through Christ. One of the greatest deceptions that our enemy will throw at us, besides the temptation for self-autonomy, is the fact that no one understands us, or no one is like us, so we move away from people rather than toward them. It is not good for us to be alone since we were created to walk life together, encouraging each other toward love and good deeds.

Study in equality and difference

Now, besides the creation of the institution of marriage, we see how God created men and women. This point cannot be stressed enough, as in our world and churches today, this is misunderstood, fought against, with a desire to create something that God never intended. Here is what we learn from Genesis 2 about men and women:

Men and women are equal - Both men and women were created in the image of God, meaning there was no subset or language of better/worse. This means that both men and women have high value, dignity, and honor. Men and women are fellow heirs of the promise of salvation, meaning we come to Christ the same way. That is why Paul said "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Gal. 3:28). It's obvious that there were differences among the comparisons, but in Christ all are one. There is nowhere in Scripture where men and women are valued differently, or that their personhood and dignity are differentiated, or that men are seen as better/worse than women. It is imperative that we see this. When Adam first saw the woman God had created, there is no sense that he saw her as anything but his equal. His first statement was a poem of commitment, a covenant that he pledged to her. He did not see her as a servant or slave, weak or less than, but a co-heir and partner in the purpose of glorifying God in the Garden.

Men and women are different - This seems so obvious, but needs to be clarified. Differences are not bad, wrong, or diminishing. Differences between men and women are **God given with purpose**. Our culture today is trying its best to nullify the differences, which not only leads to confusion but demotivates men to act like Biblical men and women to act like Biblical women. Here is what we see in Genesis 2:

Adam and Eve were created in a different order - God created Adam first, and then formed Eve out of the flesh of his side. Not only did this mean Adam had responsibility over the animals and earth, he was given leadership over the home. **1 Timothy 2:12** cites the created order when talking about functions in God's church "For Adam was formed first, then Eve."

Adam and Eve had different roles - Which role was easier, Adam's or Eve's? Which was more advantageous? Which would you rather have? The answer is that they are both difficult and actually impossible apart from the filling of the Spirit (Eph. 5:18) and redemption in the gospel. In Genesis, we

see clear roles. 1) Eve was created to be a helpmate, a helper for Adam as he pursued the God given purpose in the Garden. 2) Adam named the animals, which was the first expression of dominion over the earth. Adam also gave Eve her name (she shall be called Woman). This meant that Adam had responsibility of leadership over his wife to provide, protect, serve and guard her. 3) Adam was given a command by God, not Eve - Adam was to guide her in the truth, just as husbands today (Eph. 5:25-28). This is in play today in the home and church, as men are given the **responsibility** to shepherd God's flock (1 Peter 5:1-5; 1 Timothy 3:1-8; Titus 1:5-9). Does this mean women have no responsibility? By no means. Titus 2 shows us how men and women function similarly in training and teaching, men with men and women with women. Men and women have different strengths, as Paul said he functioned like a mother and father (1 Thess. 2:8-13). Remember, Adam's responsibility will be seen glaringly when, even though Eve sinned first, Adam was held responsible for allowing sin to enter into the world, not Eve (Rom. 5:12).

Adam and Eve had different physiologies - Back in Genesis 2, we see that men and women were called to procreate as part of the created order. Each had a different role in this, as Eve was designed to carry children, not Adam. Is this demeaning? By no means. It was out of the seed of the woman that the Savior would come (Gen. 3:15; 1 Tim. 2:15).

Adam and Eve were created equal yet different. When they each played their roles, they had an opportunity to glorify God together, encouraging each other to pursue the purpose by which they were created. We need each other. *Why is this so hard today?* Genesis 3 messed everything up.

First Established Institution: Purpose, roles, and freedom in marriage