

One of the things that I really like about smartphones and tablets is that you can put your fingers on the screen and go like this (zoom in motion) if you want to zoom in on something. Font's not big enough? Go like this - (zoom in motion). Want to look at the detail on a picture? Go like this - (zoom in motion).

Have you ever done this though? You're looking at a newspaper or a book and you want a closer look and then you go like this? (zoom in motion). Doesn't work, does it? I've done that. Doesn't work like that with a book. #firstworldproblems

But it does work like that in the book of Genesis - (zoom in motion). Genesis 2 is doing this - (zoom in motion) – to Genesis 1. It's like the author tells us about the creation of the world – the whole world – in Genesis 1 – and then he goes like this - (zoom in motion) – and zooms in on the creation of human beings in Genesis 2. Creation of the world – Genesis 1. Creation of people – Genesis 2.

And while Genesis 1 gives us the broadstrokes of being made in the image of God, Genesis 2 gives us a better sense of what it means to be made in His image and answers some really interesting questions. For example, what is the relationship between men and women? Are we essentially the same or are we essentially different? Are gender distinctions between male and female something to affirm or something to ignore? Genesis 2 addresses all of those questions, so let's – zoom in – and see what God has to say. Genesis 2, starting in verse 4.

4 This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens--

5 and no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth and
no plant of the field had yet sprung up,

for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and
there was no man to work the ground,

6 but streams came up from the earth and
watered the whole surface of the ground--

7 the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

Now that's the mother of all run-on sentences. But when you map it out, here's what you get. 'When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens... the LORD God formed the man from the dust... and he became a living being.'

And that's a really a beautiful picture. In the beginning, the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground. YHWH stooped down and gathered up the dust – the soil and dirt from the ground – and carefully fashioned those materials into a person. He's like a potter here, taking a lump of clay and turning it into something beautiful and valuable. He created a person.

But any old Joe can go out and make a mud pie. Anybody could make a mud pie shaped like a person. But God alone could give it life. And so God shared Himself with this person He had made – He breathed life into the man – and the man became a living being. Made from dust, brought to life by the very breath of God. That's how it started – God formed us from the earth and brought us life with the breath of Heaven.

Now, just a quick aside. The timing on all of this has given some people trouble. Because if this is the creation of human beings, then this is day six that we're talking about. Genesis 1 though says that God created vegetation on day 3 and here it is – day 6 – and Genesis 2 says that there are no plants or shrubberies. How does that work?

The answer is actually pretty easy and it really comes down to language. Genesis 1 says God created 'vegetation' – grass and trees – things that grow on their own. And then Genesis 2 talks about domesticated plants – grains and vegetables and roots that require people to collect them or to cultivate them. So day three, God created 'vegetation' in general, and then sometime after He made people to care for them, He created crops and vegetables that needed tending. So that's what's going on here.

But the main event here is not the creation of vegetation; Genesis 2 is really all about the creation of the people who will care for that vegetation (and really all that God created).

And verse 8 tells us what God did with the man that He had just created. Verse 8 -

8 Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. (Eden literally means 'abundance' and 'luxury;'¹ the implication being that God had made this man and then put him into a beautiful nature reserve where he would be fully provided for).

And that's what He did. Verse 9 -

9 And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground--trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Now here in verse 10 we get a little geographical digression that tells us that the garden was somewhere in Turkey or Iraq, but I want us to skip down to verse 15, because it really picks up from verse 9.

15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. (Remember last week? God's the Creator, we're the caretakers? That's this right here. God made us to care for all that He had made).

16 And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden;
17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

So remember, verse 8, God planted this garden and committed Himself to ensuring that the man would have everything he needed. He made the trees and the fruit and said – 'you see all these trees, everything I have made? It's yours for food. You can eat any of it.'

Except. Except for the fruit of one tree. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil. There are ninety nine other things that he can eat; just not the fruit of that tree.

As you know, that's going to become an issue down the line, but for now, it just adds an element of accountability to the Creation story. God has created the man, given him everything he needs, and

asked him to obey Him in ONE thing. He's giving the man the opportunity to freely choose to honour Him; Adam is not an automaton forced to obey; he has a choice; will he honour his creator in this or will he go his own way? Stay tuned on that one.

So the man is in the garden and then verse 18, God says to Himself:

18 The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

19 Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name.

Now's there's an echo here of something from last week. Think back to Genesis 1 – who gave names to things? God, right? God said 'let there be' 'and there was' and 'He called it day/night, sky/sea, land/earth.' God gives things names in Genesis 1; man gives things names in Genesis 2. This is the image of God at work, as the man exercises the same authority to name things as did.

20 So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. ⁱⁱ

Now through the years, this idea of a 'suitable helper' or 'helpmate' has gotten a bad rap. Some people have taken this to mean that the 'helper' is somehow inferior to the one who is being helped, but that couldn't be further from the truth. In fact, that word 'helper' is often used to describe God as He rescues Israel later in the OT, so really, something like ally or back up is more accurate. ⁱⁱⁱ

The point is here that the man will need someone to help him, someone to complete him, someone for him to love and support, even as that someone loves and supports him. So God decided to provide that someone. And here's how He did it.

21 So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh.

22 Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

In order to provide the man with a helper that he too would love and support, God created woman.

23 The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman, ' for she was taken out of man."

And it's this connection that is the basis for marriage - 24 For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. That is, because God made men and women to love and support one another, God established marriage to join a man and a woman in that love relationship.

25 The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

God created human beings in His image; male and female He created them.

Now let's think for a minute about what all of this means. I'll put it to you like this – God created us, male and female, to be similar but different but equally important. Let's take that one part at a time.

1. God created us. We're not accidents. We're formed intentionally and purposefully by a loving Creator who fashioned us the way the potter forms the clay. Psalm 139:13-16^{iv} uses the same language as Genesis when it says that God knits us together in our mother's womb; that means that what God did for Adam, God did for each of us before we were born.

2. God created us male and female. He could have made one sex; He could have made three. Theoretically, He could have made us asexual, but He didn't. He made us male and female. He gave us sexual compatibility and then He gave us marriage as the context within which to exercise that sexual compatibility.

3. God created us male and female to be similar. Verse 20 – God trots out all the animals in front of man so that man will realize that none of these is really a good companion for him. 'For Adam no suitable helper was found.' The man needed someone like him, to share the image of God, to be a suitable helper and ally for him. And so to address that situation, God ultimately created another human. Similar... and yet, different.

4. God created us male and female to be similar and yet different. He didn't create another man. He didn't create an exact replica of the man to be his ally; He made a woman. Someone who was like him in his humanity, but someone who was different from him in his sex.

And this is really interesting to me. Rachel Gilson points out that we're so used to babies being born that we don't really think about what's going on, but think about. What's the one thing that we know about God from Genesis 1 and 2? He's the Creator. He can make something out of nothing. Who else can make something out of practically nothing? A man and a woman. You need one of each, but together, they can give life to another living being, a living being with an eternal soul. That's the image of God at work and it requires the difference of male and female to work.

But 5 – that difference does not imply a difference in value. God created us, male and female, to be similar but different but equally important. Throughout history, men have sometimes thought of women as nothing more than baby-making machines, but that's just not true. There's no hierarchy of value between men and women in the Creation account.

Matthew Henry put it quite memorably in the 1700's – "Observe... that the woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his 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."

Yes, men and women have things that are unique to their biological sex, but that doesn't imply a difference in value in God's eyes. We are equal in value before God.

God created us, male and female, to be similar but different but equally important.

That's how it started. How's it going?

There are people who want to say that there is no inherent difference between men and women. We are all just people and we should all that we can to break down the distinction between male and female.

Some men still treat women as less important than they are. I'm horrified to see the reports of drug induced rapes at Western University (and those are only the ones that are being reported); that's men treating women not as equal beings made in the image of God. That's men reducing women to playthings that they can use for their own sexual pleasure.

And homosexuality and transgenderism and even sex outside of marriage, those all run counter to what God intended, in the beginning.

What do we, as sinners, struggling with our own issues, redeemed by the blood of Jesus, do in light of these situations? Let me give you a few thoughts.

With regard to gender distinctions – I think it's clear from Genesis 2 that God created us male and female for a reason. We are similar and yet different and those differences are worth affirming. That doesn't mean that women should be paid less for their work, and that doesn't mean that we should perpetuate gender stereotypes; women should receive equal pay and there's way more to masculinity and femininity than what you see on Leave it to Beaver. I do though think that we should recognize that there are differences between men and women and that those differences are good.

Second, with regard to sexual inequalities, I think that we need to start at home. I mean, Ephesians 5:25 says that husbands should love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. Do you hear what that says? Husbands ought to lay down their lives to protect the honour and dignity of their wives, the way that Jesus died to rescue us from sin. Imagine if young men going off to university saw that acted out at home – how would that change the way they treat women out in public? I don't know what we can do on campus, but we can certainly set an example in our homes.

And third, LGBTQ+ and sex outside of marriage. I mean, they all run counter to God's intention at Creation.

Sex is such a powerful thing, making two into one, with the potential to create another human being that God intended for it to be exercised only within marriage. That's something that we need to affirm and encourage.

Homosexuality, I don't want to say too much about that because we just spent a sermon on that two weeks ago, but again, when God addressed the problem of a person needing a partner and helpmate, He created a similar yet sexually different being rather than a similar being with the same sex.

And transgenderism – I have to admit that I'm really early in my journey thinking about this one – and acknowledging that it is a very sensitive situation – I have to admit that I think that Genesis establishes the difference between male and female and the rest of Scripture maintains rather than blurs that difference. For example, Deuteronomy 22:5 says 5 A woman must not wear men's clothing, nor a man wear women's clothing, for the LORD your God detests anyone who does this. (Deu 22:5 NIV). And 1 Corinthians 11 encourages us to dress in a way that reflects our cultures norms for our sex and so I have a hard time saying that God approves of transgenderism. Again though, that being said, they are made in God's image, and so need our respect and honour, even if we disagree with their convictions.

Things are not going the way they started.

How do we change that? Well, like I said before, start at home. Husbands, love your wives and lay down your lives for her wellbeing and holiness. Wives, love your husbands with honour and respect. Treat each other as the equal and valuable back up that God has made you to be. If you are not married, you still bear the image of God and whether by choice or circumstance, you're living what Paul says is 'better still' than marriage.^v

Be men and women in Christ, brothers and sisters in the Lord, knowing that God created us, male and female, to be similar but different but equally important.

ⁱ Tremper Longman, *Genesis (Story of God Bible Commentary)*, 49.

ⁱⁱ Peter Martyr Vermigli: "The animals weren't brought before Adam as if God wanted to find out whether some suitable helper for the man might be found among them. The Lord perfectly well knew that one would not be discovered, but he brought the animals so that his gift would be welcomed by Adam all the more, lest he happen to think that there was no need for the creation of woman, because something could have been discovered among the animals as suitable for him as the woman was. God wanted Adam to learn for himself that no such helper was to be found." *Reformation Commentary on Scripture: Genesis 2:20*.

ⁱⁱⁱ 'Ally' – Longman, 50; 'back up' – Gladstone.

^{iv} 13 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. 14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. 15 My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, 16 your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be (Psa 139:13-16 NIV).

^v 1 Corinthians 7:1, 7, 8, 38.