

Lesson 4: September 23, 2018
God Created The Family
Bible Background • GENESIS 2:18-24; 4:1-2
Printed Text • GENESIS 2:18-24; 4:1-2 | Devotional Reading • LEVITICUS 19:11-18

Humans often wonder what their purpose is in life and how they relate to all that is around them. What is our purpose and where do we fit in? God created families to support and care for one another and to care for all of God's creation.

Words You Should Know

- A. Help 'ezer (Heb.)—To aid or uplift.
- B. Cleave dabaq (Heb.)—To adhere, to follow closely.

Say It Correctly

- Conceive. kuhn-SEEV.
- Abel. AY-buhl.

Aim for Change

"I don't need your help, I can do it myself I've got this," Ernest said sharply to his wife, Diane. They had been trying for an hour to put together his new bird fountain and were frustrated. They had attended a workshop at church on ways to beautify and care for the community, and Ernest had decided he would build a large bird fountain for their backyard as a result.

"Fine, I was just trying to be helpful You don't have to be so mean about it," Diane said. As Ernest struggled to put a small piece into the fountain, he realized his hands were too big. "Diane's hands would be the perfect size..." he said to himself. He paused for a minute, took a deep breath, and called as sweetly as he could, "Hey babe, can you come help me with this? I need your hands!"

"Oh, so now you want my help? Always think you know everything until you need something," remarked Diane.

"I'm sorry, honey, I just get so focused I'm glad for a helpmate like you." Ernest said smiling "You're lucky I love you," Diane responded. "Let me read the directions."

Why is it difficult for us to recognize our need for help sometimes? Why can it be difficult to ask those closest to us for help?

Keep in Mind

"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:24, KJV).

Focal Verses

KJV

Genesis 2:18 And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.

19 And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.

20 And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.

21 And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;

22 And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

23 And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.

24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

4:1 And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD.

2 And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

NLT Genesis 2:18 Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him."

19 So the LORD God formed from the ground all the wild animals and all the birds of the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would call them, and the man chose a name for each one.

20 He gave names to all the livestock, all the birds of the sky, and all the wild animals. But still there was no helper just right for him.

21 So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While the man slept, the LORD God took out one of the man's ribs and closed up the opening.

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

23 "At last!" the man exclaimed. "This one is bone from my bone, and flesh from my flesh! She will be called 'woman,' because she was taken from 'man.'"

24 This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.

4:1 Now Adam had sexual relations with his wife, Eve, and she became pregnant. When she gave birth to Cain, she said, "With the LORD's help, I have produced a man!"

2 Later she gave birth to his brother and named him Abel. When they grew up, Abel became a shepherd, while Cain cultivated the ground.

People, Places, and Times and Background

Adam/adamah. Adam was the Biblical name given to the first man created. The Hebrew word 'adamah makes reference to the earth from which he was formed. The concept of "redness of color" is inherent in the name 'Adam/'adamah. The word 'adamah is also used to refer to the soil with which pottery is made (Isaiah 45:9) and the altars (Exodus 20:24) during the days of Moses. The word 'adam appears in three primary contexts in the Old Testament. The most common usage for 'adam is in reference to all of humanity. The word is also used to refer to a specific man. Lastly, as a proper name, Adam is the first man and a city beside Zaretan on the Jordan River (Joshua 3:16).

Eve. The name of the first woman created, Eve means "life." She and Adam are the original ancestors of all people. Her giving in to temptation from the serpent's scheme illustrates the ease with which all human beings may fall into sin. Unlike Adam, Eve is only used in reference to Adam's wife.

Background

Genesis 2 (beginning at verse 4) differs from chapter 1 in that it provides a narrative of the Creation that begins with humanity. God creates the first man, then the garden, animals, and the woman. Genesis 2 sets the stage for the story of humanity's fall from grace. It provides an explanation of the human condition and why humanity has a troubled relationship with God. Genesis 2:15–17 explains the reasoning behind placing the man in the Garden of Eden. Adam had a vocation (to till the land), a permit (to freely enjoy the fruit of the land), and a prohibition (against eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil). Genesis 1:26 presents humans as primarily spiritual and powerful, made in God's image. In Genesis 2, however, we learn the spiritual and natural duality of humans. God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed life into his nostrils. His formation from dust anticipates his work as a tiller of soil and his return to the earth after death. The divine breath in his nostrils indicates that life-breath belongs to God; a person without life-breath returns to God.

We also learn God determined human relationships during Creation. Man needed a helper. In Genesis 4, we meet the second generation of humanity, the extension of the family. They arrive through the sexual relationship between members of the preceding generation, and they continue the behavior of transgression against God and each other found in the first generation.

How is your destiny intertwined with that of your relatives?

At a Glance and In Depth

At-A-Glance

1. Humans Need Help (Genesis 2:18–20)
2. Woman is Man's Helpmate (Genesis 2:21–24)
3. Family Matters (Genesis 4:1–2)

In Depth

1. Humans Need Help (Genesis 2:18–20)

God created a complete world. The world included the 'adam, the Garden, rivers, and trees. As a perfect God surveyed what should have been a perfect creation, something was missing. God formed every kind of animal and the birds of the air and brought them to the man. Humanity was designed to care for the rest of creation. The man was empowered by God to give each creature its name, but among all the animals, no suitable helpmate for the man was found. Man was himself an animal, but no animal was like the man. He had power over all the animals as evidenced by his ability to name them. Creation was incomplete until the man had another human to be his helper in carrying out his vocational and spiritual work. The human needed family to be complete.

How does the knowledge that God created humans to be helpers for one another help you understand your role in society differently?

2. Woman is Man's Helpmate (Genesis 2:21–24)

Woman is so named because she was taken from the man. For the first time in Scripture, we see the use of gendered language to describe human beings. These gendered bodies are one, as the man explains, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh" (from v. 23). They are both literally and figuratively one another's kin. Genesis 2 does not indicate that the woman is to be subservient to the man; rather, they are partners in the work God had assigned to him. The creation of the woman's body from the body of the man explains the motive for their sexuality. They were separated from one another, but she is part of the man. They are sexually complementary; the two physically reunite and again become one flesh. Together the man and the woman unite to form necessary and whole community. Through this positive bond, they are to bear children who, in turn, leave home and form new families fulfilling God's command to be fruitful and multiply. They should leave to cleave. In Genesis 2:24, the man and the woman are aware of the sexual differences but their sexuality is yet to be expressed.

How can men and women better honor our divinely created connection to one another?

3. Family Matters (Genesis 4:1–2)

The man and woman carry out the physical relationship that was set up for them in the Garden. The word "know" as a euphemism for sexual relations furthers the concept that there is a connection between sexuality and knowledge. For the first time in Scripture, a sexual relationship is mentioned. They have two sons. Throughout Genesis, firstborn sons do not fare well (e.g. Ishmael, Esau). Cain and Abel are the first examples of the tension between elder sons and their younger brothers. As the firstborn son, Cain embodied the family's hope for the future. Abel's name in Hebrew means "vapor" or "nothingness." As the younger son, he was dismissed. In the New Testament, however, Abel is called a man of faith (Hebrews 11:4), and Cain is described as evil (1 John 3:12; Jude 11). Cain and Abel split the purposeful work set out in the Garden. Cain was a worker of the land, and Abel cared for the animals. The broken relationship that later develops between the brothers relates to the broken relationship that was developing between God and humanity.

How can we foster wholeness within our families?

Search the Scriptures and Discuss the Meaning

Search the Scriptures

1. Adam observed every type of animal to see which one might make an ideal helper for him, but none of them could be the man's partner. Why do you think God made humans so different from birds, fish, and land animals?

2. What do we learn about the proper division of labor from the fact that the first two humans who were born divided the purposeful work given to the first generation of humans right down the middle?

Discuss the Meaning

1. The family is the foundation for shaping all of our relationships with one another as human beings. How our family members relate to one another from parents to siblings to children impacts how we relate to people in our extended families, communities, and beyond. How can we be more intentional about giving and receiving love and respect within our natural, adopted, chosen, and spiritual families?

2. How can we learn from negative experiences to relate well to the next generation?

Lesson in Our Society and Make it Happen

Liberating Lesson

Scripture teaches that without our human family, we are incomplete. We live in a world that prioritizes independence and self-sufficiency. We are celebrated when we can do things without help. Musical artists sing about their love of “independent women” or “self-made men” and many people follow suit, proudly proclaiming that in this life all we need is ourselves. No doubt, we all must learn the importance of self-respect and self-love, but the Genesis 2 passage is clear; it is through our relationships with other human beings that we more fully appreciate our humanity. We need God and one another, too, if we desire to thrive in this life.

Application for Activation

Consider the people who are your helpers or partners in this life. Talk to them about how you can better serve one another. Pray for the people you are in a relationship with, and ask God to make you a better partner to the people you love. Do not believe the myth that all you need is yourself. If you struggle to ask for help, be open to asking for it. If you have placed undue pressure on the people who help you, consider ways that you can better support others. In the work that you do both within your household and outside of it, divide labor with respect to the gifts and abilities of each helper.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light On The Text

Genesis 2:18

18 And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.

Until verse 18, God had declared everything good. The first thing that God declares as “not good” is the idea of being alone. The word “alone” is taken from the Hebrew word bad (BOD). It speaks to the fact that Adam, the first human being, needed another human being to be complete. In many African cultures, this is a revelation that a human is a communal being.

Genesis 2:19-20

19 And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. 20 And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.

Verse 19 confirms that God created the first beast from earth. We also find that God gives man responsibility for naming the beasts. This task of naming also gives human beings certain authority over all the creation. Here we also find that God respected the naming ability that He gave to man. The relationship and responsibility of man to the animal world began in the garden.

In the process of naming, Adam realized that there was no companion fit for a human being. The Hebrew word ‘ezer or “help” simply means to give someone aid or uplift them. There was no one to lift up the heart of the first man Adam. There was no one like Adam and yet sufficiently different to challenge and stimulate him intellectually, emotionally, or spiritually. The knowledge that one is alone is one of the deepest realizations of human feelings. It can either lead one to seek fellowship or to despair.

Genesis 2:21-22

21 And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; 22 And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

God understands the danger of loneliness. He helped Adam out of his lonely state before it resulted in problems for Adam. God sent a “deep sleep,” (Heb. tardemah, tar-deh-MAH) placing Adam in an unconscious state similar to those in trances or receiving visions (Genesis 15:12; Job 33:15).

Another key word is the Hebrew for rib. The word tsela (tsay-LAH) is an architectural term referring to a side support, usually one that has a matching support in the opposite side; in this case “rib” means from the side of a person. It was the side of Adam that God opened to form the woman, according to the text. We are told that God “brought the woman to Adam.” God, therefore, formed this relationship.

Genesis 2:23

23 And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.

Adam’s response to this new relationship is to acknowledge the deep connection between himself and this other human being. The Hebrew word ‘etsem (ET-sem) translated as “bone,” could also mean “strength,” thus meaning “strength of my strength.” By extension it can refer figuratively to the strong identity of an individual.

Therefore, Adam could also mean to call Eve “the very substance of my being.” “Flesh,” of course, refers to similarity of bodily form, which must have been quite striking to Adam.

After naming all the animals, Adam names one more piece of creation. He calls her “woman” (Heb. ‘ishshah, ee-SHAH) because she was taken from the man (‘ish, EESH). Later he would name her Eve (Genesis 3:20).

Genesis 2:24

24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

We see the responsibility that this new relationship calls forth for men. The Hebrew word azab (ah-ZOB) translated “leave” denotes the loosening of a bond, here the parental relationship. This permits the adult male to begin his own household. It does not imply a lack of commitment or a failure to care for one’s parents, or to forsake them—denying help when necessary. The loosening of the parental relation gives way within the text for the tightening of a new relationship.

The King James Version uses the phrase “cleave unto his wife.” Cleave (Heb. dabaq, dah-BOK) means to cling or adhere. By implication, it could also mean to pursue or to stick together and to follow her closely. Therefore, the man shall loosen the parental relation and take a wife. One must leave in order to cleave. They shall be “one flesh” is vital for it calls forth a deep sharing that is to characterize the marriage relation. The Hebrew word basar (bah- SAR), translated “flesh,” simply refers to the human body. But it can also refer to the sharing of the whole person.

Genesis 4:1-2

4:1 And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD. 2 And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

Adam and Eve sinned against God and are now removed from the Garden of Eden. They heeded the words of the serpent and ate from the fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden from which God forbid them to eat. As a result, sin entered the world. The perfect relationship God had with humanity was broken. God informed Eve that bearing children would be painful and told Adam he would have difficulty tilling the ground or farm. They were cut off from the Garden and the tree of life. The whole world now feels the curse from the effect of sin.

Nevertheless the fact that sin separated Adam and Eve from God did not negate the command of God to “be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it” (from Genesis 1:28). Adam “knew” (Heb. yada, yah-DAH) Eve, which in this case is used as a euphemism for sex but included more fully experiencing Eve. There were no sexual relations between humans until they were expelled from the Garden. Adam and Eve conceived, and Eve gave birth to her first children, Cain and Abel. Cain means “acquired” in Hebrew, and Eve said that she has acquired a son from the Lord. This speaks to the reality that all life comes from God. Eve conceived not because of simple sexual reproduction but because God willed her to have children. God gave Cain to her intentionally. The name of her second son Abel (Heb. hebel, HEH-vel) means “breath,” in this case referring to vapor. His name was foreshadowing in the narrative that he would not live long, but like a breath be temporary.

Cain and Abel are described as working (v. 2:2); Cain was a tiller of the field (farmer) and Abel a keeper of the sheep (shepherd). Cain and Abel were born and began to fulfill the purpose that God had for humanity to subdue the earth, and have dominion over it by farming the land and caring for God’s creation. God intentionally gave humans a purpose, which is fulfilled through living and work. The work was meant to be

easy, as Adam and Eve were able to care for creation before, but the introduction of sin made it difficult. The entrance of sin into the world did not change God's purposes; it simply made it difficult for us to fulfill our God-given purpose. The work God has called us to is a fulfillment of His purpose for our lives. Cain and Abel demonstrated this by continuing to be stewards of creation by shepherding and farming respectively.