

The Completion of Man

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[0 : 00] Well, once again, we turn to the creation story in Genesis chapters 1 and 2. Why spend so much time in the first chapters of Genesis?

Well, there's a very good reason. We cannot have an accurate understanding of anything until we understand, in the beginning, God.

And this is particularly true of men because the creation story in Genesis not only tells us about God's creation of really the entire universe, it tells us about God's very unique creation of man.

And not only that, but the creation story goes on to give us what we often call the masculine mandate, or what Richard Phillips refers to as the masculine mandate, which helps us to understand what God created men to be and what He created us to do.

Okay? So, let's follow the creation story starting in Genesis chapter 1. Verse 1 says, of course, In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

[1 : 41] The Lord makes the heavens and the earth out of nothing. Then He proceeds to create light, separating light from darkness. He separates the waters. He forms dry land and vegetation and seasons and the sun and the moon and the stars and the animals and so on.

And at each step, He essentially evaluates what He has done and He determines it is good.

Repeatedly, we're told, and God saw that it was good.

Then in verse 26, something special happens. Unlike every other part of creation, God doesn't simply speak and watch His words form more of creation.

Instead, the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, they are speaking to one another or within themselves. And they say, verse 26, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.

So, first of all, God's act of creating man is different than the rest of creation. And second, man himself is made different.

[2 : 52] By God's intentional design, man is made to reflect God, to bear His image, to reflect His likeness.

But you'll also notice in verse 27 that both man and woman were made to reflect God. It says, God created man in His own image. In the image of God, He created him.

Male and female, He created them. And we'll come back to that. Then in verse 28, God says to the first man and woman, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion.

There's part of that cultural mandate. Then in verse 31, we read, And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good.

So, as God looks at the entirety of His creation, He determines that it's not only good, as each individual part was, but the now completed creation is very good.

[4 : 00] But, of course, this does not tell us the whole story of creation. For that, we have to continue into chapter 2 of Genesis, which takes us really back into the events of chapter 1, and supplies us with a few more details.

So, we're told more about the garden that Adam was placed into. Then, in verse 15, we're given more of that cultural or masculine mandate. The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

This is more or less an extension of what we read in Genesis 1.28. Man was to be fruitful and multiply, extending the image of God more and more throughout the earth.

He was to fill the earth. He was to subdue the earth by cultivating order and flourishing out of creation's raw potential, and he was to exercise dominion over it.

In other words, he was to act as a kind of under-shepherd, over-creation, stewarding what God had given him. And that subduing and stewarding would require working and protecting or keeping God's creation.

[5 : 11] And, by the way, this mandate is repeated in Genesis 9 after the flood. So, it's reaffirmed even after sin entered the world. Next, God warns Adam not to eat from the forbidden tree.

Then he says in verse 18, It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him a helper fit for him. Now, if you're following the narrative, assuming you don't already know how all of this plays out, this is kind of a surprising statement.

Because we're led to believe in the first chapter that everything was good from start to finish. We never read anything different than that. The light was good. The separation of land and water was good.

Each and every part of creation was good. And once we reach what appears to be God's crowning achievement, the creation of the first man, Adam, we're told that God deemed it very good.

And yet, as chapter 2 supplies us with some more details, we find something here is missing. We find the Lord saying, It is not good.

[6 : 26] Now, to be clear, God is not talking about Adam. Adam was, in fact, good. Here, he is referring to the state of man.

He's referring specifically to Adam's isolation, his aloneness, if you will. The Lord very specifically says, It is not good that the man should be alone.

So as it happens, God's crowning achievement, if you will, in creation isn't Adam alone. Genesis 1 may leave that impression, but let's not overlook the fact that Eve's creation is in the text as well.

Going back to chapter 1, Male and female He created them, and God blessed them. No, it's not until Adam and Eve were created and were brought together as husband and wife that God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good.

So, Adam was created good, but Adam alone was not good because God intended for Adam alone to be incomplete.

[7 : 45] In fact, He makes it a point to prove this to Adam. Notice how God says Adam needs a helper, but He doesn't immediately form Eve. Instead, He gives Adam the task of naming every animal.

So, God parades all of the animals, one after another, in front of Adam, as if to say, look at your options. Here's every living creature I have made.

Do you see a suitable companion among them? You know, I can't help but wonder whether Adam tried. You know, maybe he tried befriending some of the animals just to try it out, just to see.

Maybe he wrestled with a tiger for fun or took a dog for a walk or talked to a parrot. I don't know, but the text says, but for Adam, there was not found a helper fit for him.

Now, I'll talk about that word helper in a moment, but obviously, none of the animals were suitable companions for Adam, and that was the point. Yes, Adam is exercising dominion.

[8 : 57] He's performing some intellectual, creative work by naming the animals, but the Lord is also showing that something else was needed before Adam would be complete, before creation would be very good.

Adam needed a complementary counterpart. In other words, he needed a wife. And I find it fascinating, not to mention enlightening, that God didn't merely create Eve.

He could have. He could have made Adam and Eve at the same time, but instead, he makes it a point to say it is not good that the man should be alone, and then he parades all of the animals in front of him, essentially to prove it.

So he makes it abundantly clear, even to Adam, that yes, man needs woman. Richard Phillips puts it this way, you and I are designed incomplete.

Men are made by God not to stand in isolation, but in need of companionship. And the one companion who fulfills God's intention in our lives is a woman.

[10 : 12] So, let's continue reading here in Genesis 2, verse 21. 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. Then 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. Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. So, we want to be clear here. Adam was not in need of a pet. None of the animals were sufficient to fill the void.

And Adam's need was not for guy friends. Adam needed a woman. By God's design, Adam needed a woman.

[11:21] And we should be even more specific. Adam needed more than a girlfriend. He needed a wife. I love the imagery here of God making Eve and then we're told He brought her to the man.

And I've heard it said many times that this appears to be the first time in history when a father walked his daughter down the aisle to give her away to be married. And if that's not enough to convince us that Adam and Eve were in fact becoming husband and wife here, verse 24 says, Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife.

And they shall become one flesh. And the man, Adam, and his wife were both naked and not ashamed. Adam needed a wife.

Only a wife could complete him and only after this marriage between Adam and Eve could God evaluate his creation and say it is very good.

And Adam agrees with this. Notice what he says in verse 23 again. This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.

[12:33] I believe the NIV says this is now bone of my bones. The word literally means step. In other words, Adam's excited because this this is it.

He's seen all the other living creatures on earth and he knows Eve is the one to complete him, to bring an end to his loneliness, to fill this need that he has.

He's basically saying this time it's right. This is the last step that needs to be taken. I don't need to walk any further because I now have what I need. You see, what Adam needed was not merely companionship.

Yes, that's a big part of it. But only a woman equal in dignity, remember that she was also created in the image of God, could be a suitable companion for man because only a woman compliments him in all the ways that he needs.

Procreation may be the most obvious example of that. A man cannot multiply and fill the earth without a woman. But procreation is not the only example and we'll talk about that eventually.

[13:53] Proverbs 18:22 says, He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord. Matthew Henry has said, A good wife is a great blessing to man, a jewel of great value which will not only contribute more than anything to his comfort in this life, but will forward him in the way to heaven.

That's a statement. The chief end of man is to glorify God, right? Well, a wife will not only help in temporal matters, of course she does, but she will also be a great help in eternal matters.

A good wife can help us to glorify God and help us, as Matthew Henry says, forward us in the way to heaven. I don't know about you, but I know that the Lord has certainly used my wife to teach me, to grow me, to sanctify me, sometimes painfully, but always for the good.

So the first main point is this, it is not good that the man should be alone. My second point also comes from verse 18.

The Lord says, I will make him a helper fit for him. The NIV says, I will make a helper suitable for him. Of course, many of us still have the old King James in our minds.

[15:29] I will make and help meet for him. So the second main point is that a wife is man's God-given helper.

Now, the term helper does not imply inferiority. In fact, this can be easily proven by looking at how the Old Testament most commonly uses this word.

It is a word that is used most commonly to refer to God himself. For example, Psalm 33, 20 says, Our soul waits for the Lord.

He is our help and our shield. Psalm 115, O Israel, trust in the Lord. He is their help and their shield. O house of Aaron, trust in the Lord. He is their help and their shield. You who fear the Lord, trust in the Lord. He is their help and their shield.

[16:32] There is nothing degrading in that term whatsoever. On the contrary, it's really a title of honor. I don't know that we should go quite this far, but one could argue that it's actually man here who's degraded because he's the one who needs help.

God made the woman to be a helper to the man because the man needs her help. Now, she's also a helper fit for him or suitable for him because she corresponds to her husband.

She's his counterpart. They are of the same kind, both made in the image of God, yet the woman was made to complement the man. They are different in all of the ways they need to be different to

fulfill their purpose together.

Again, listen to what Matthew Henry says. The woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam, not made out of his head to top 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.

Now, there is an order here. Man was created first, man was made to lead his wife, but man was also made so that he needs the help of his wife to fulfill his purpose.

[18:12] She's equal in dignity, she's equal in worth, yet God formed her for a role that corresponds and complements man's role of leadership.

Put another way, the husband possesses headship while his wife possesses what we might call helpship. As John Calvin says, the sweetest harmony would reign in marriage if both parties embraced God's creation order.

So, as Christians, we really need to push back against the culture's high praise of rugged individualism and autonomy.

the world says it's demeaning to think of women as helpers to men, but God doesn't. God himself is called our helper many times in scripture.

It's sung as praise to God. Hebrews 13, the Lord has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you, so we can confidently say the Lord is my helper.

[19:20] I will not fear. What can man do to me? You know, I think about this every time I officiate the funeral of a wife and mother, especially when her kids are as young as mine.

In particular, I think about the husband she leaves behind. Because I know if that were me, I would be lost. Now, emotionally, I'd be devastated, of course, but I'd practically be lost in so many ways. You know, Danae can whip up a restaurant-quality meal in half the time it makes me to make a grilled cheese sandwich. Whenever I'm filling in for her, my kids are often reminding me, that's not the way mom does it.

To which I reply, I know, but she's not here. It'll have to do. Proverbs 12, 4 says, an excellent wife is the crown of her husband.

It's somewhat amusing to think about a husband's domestic ineptitude, but the truth is, a husband's dependence on his wife is precisely how God designed us to be.

[20:42] She possesses strengths and instincts and perspectives that we simply don't have. So, we need to reject that manly notion that we as men are just fine without women.

We don't need them. Yes, there are exceptions to the rule. Jesus spoke of those who remain unmarried for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul talks about those who can remain single as a gift, but it's always presented as an exception to the rule.

It's never the rule. It's a rare thing because the natural order of creation is for men to need a wife. For the vast majority of men, it is not good to be alone and pursuing a godly wife is precisely what God intends because it's precisely how God made us.

Now, before we look at the last part of Genesis 2, I'll mention one more thing about the complementary nature of men and women. This is a point that Phillips makes in his book.

He writes, many a man ruse the differences between himself and his wife, especially as they are magnified by sin. Why does she like to shop for hours when it takes only a few minutes to buy what she needs?

[22:07] Why does she always want to talk about our relationship? Why doesn't she like my solutions, preferring instead to dwell on the problems? Why is it so hard to communicate? And why is it sometimes difficult to get along?

And I'm sure we can all relate to some degree or another. And Phillips' answers, even apart from considerations of sin, the answer to all these questions is, God designed it this way.

God made us different. While it isn't true that men are from Mars and women are from Venus, it is true that there is a degree of mystery between us.

There will always be some minor level of disconnect because God made us different. And he made us different to complement one another.

In other words, we're different for a very good reason. You know, when I was a young man, I had this really strange notion that I should find a girl who was just like me.

[23:18] She should think like me, she should like the same music as me, she should appreciate the same kind of humor, and so on and so forth. But then I met Danae.

And I remember sitting across the table from her on what I think was one of our first official dates, and I thought to myself, this is not the kind of girl you date.

This is the kind of girl you marry. And that thought came as a surprise to me, a much-needed revelation, but a surprise, because Danae and I were polar opposites in many respects.

We did not listen to the same kind of music. Our personalities were very different. For instance, she was one to worry about everything, and I didn't worry about anything to a fault.

So if I had evaluated her according to my shallow, immature standards, she wouldn't have passed. I would have gone on dating all the wrong kinds of girls and missed really the greatest opportunity of my life, not realizing that what I needed was not a female version of myself, I needed someone to help me by complimenting me.

[24 : 36] And as I would later tell Danae, true story, in my usual eloquent way, Danae, you were nothing I ever wanted.

Now, a few years ago, I wrote her a song for her anniversary, and I used that line, but I amended it to say, you were nothing I ever wanted, but everything I need. So I don't know that I made up the deficit, but I got some points.

In short, the differences between husband and wife are to some degree intentional. Yes, magnified by sin, which we'll talk about next time, but they are intentional.

God made us this way. Think of husband and wife as like harmonizing notes in the same chord. If my wife does worry too much, and I don't worry enough, so to speak, guess what happens?

Our marriage finds this wonderful, helpful balance. So, man is incomplete without a wife, and the wife is his God given helper.

[25 : 46] And the last point I'll draw from Genesis 2 is concerning the nature of this union between husband and wife. wife. It is a mysterious and glorious covenant.

Verse 24 says, Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife and they shall become one flesh. Now, by the way, this statement is clearly significant because when Jesus talks about marriage in Matthew 19, he goes straight to this verse.

When Paul talks about marriage in Ephesians 5, he goes straight to this verse. This is the foundational definition of marriage in Scripture, if you will.

One man and one woman bound in lifelong covenant becoming one flesh. So, let's break this down into three parts.

First, the man must leave father and mother. This is not to say that a man must move across the country and get as far away from his parents as possible.

[26 : 53] This is certainly not to say that a man stops honoring his parents. There is no expiration date on that command. But this is a new start. This is the man shifting his primary loyalty away from his parents to his wife.

And by the way, this would also mean that a man's primary loyalty prior to getting married would be to his parents. parents. Just because a man turns 18, just because he moves out of the house, does not mean he's supposed to think of himself as completely, utterly dependent, independent, I should say, and completely walk away from his parents.

For you young, single men, trust me when I say that you'll want to remain loyal to your parents, but not only that, continue to accept their counsel and their wisdom.

For me, my mom always knew when I was dating the wrong kind of girl, and she knew Danae was the right one. In fact, for a brief time, Danae dumped me, and my mom's first response was, what did you do?

Fix it. She knew. She knew. So, once the right girl does come along, a man's loyalty should shift.

[28 : 18] His wife becomes first, so their union and their family can flourish as its own entity, if you will, under God. Second, a man must hold fast or cleave to his wife.

He binds himself to her in a covenantal relationship. This means that the relationship is exclusive, there can be no one else, there can be no infidelity, and it is permanent.

Exclusive and permanent. Jesus said, what therefore God has joined together, let not man separate. And that not only highlights its permanence, but also the fact that it is God who joins husband and wife together.

this is more than a mere agreement or contract between two people. That's the way the world thinks of it. That's not what it is.

This is God himself yoking a man and a woman together for the rest of their lives. Needless to say, it's not something to enter into lightly, and it's not something to be broken.

[29 : 40] Even in cases when divorce is permitted, technically, separation is not presented in Scripture as the ideal. Even in cases of adultery, forgiveness and reconciliation are the best possible things that could happen to them.

third and final, husband and wife become one flesh. I believe this phrase really speaks to the deep level of intimacy and union shared between a husband and his wife.

Yes, there is a physical union between them, and yes, they literally become one flesh in the conception of a child, but even more than that, there is a sharing of life in every possible way. I've heard it said that husband and wife becomes more than one flesh, they become one soul. There's indivisibility here. A husband and his wife should no longer think of themselves as individuals.

There's no more mine and yours, there's just ours. What does Paul say in Ephesians 5? Husbands should love their wives as their own bodies.

[30 : 58] He who loves his wife loves himself, for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it. Now, having said that, we don't want to completely overlook the physical component.

In fact, this is a very important part of what it means to become one flesh. What's our mandate in Genesis? Be fruitful and multiply. I've heard a lot of debates over gay marriage and I put marriage in quotes.

And one of the primary arguments made by proponents for gay marriage is that marriage is merely a social contract between two consenting adults to share life together and maybe benefit from a few tax breaks.

But no, not according to the Bible. by definition, marriage can only be between one man and one woman, as we see here, who can physically come together as one flesh for the purpose of procreation.

Be fruitful and multiply, God says. This is why he made men and women the way he did and he brought them together. This is why the first marriage union was between a man and a woman.

[32 : 25] So that's an important consideration. Yes, marriage is for companionship. It is a help to both the husband and the wife and it is a spiritual union between them, but it was also intended to be a physical union between them.

One of the primary purposes of marriage, and I should add, one of the primary blessings of marriage is that two people can come together and create new life in a child.

But we can take the physical aspect of marriage even further. God designed us to have a physical attraction to the opposite sex. And while that means we are attracted to our wives, it can also mean that we are sinfully attracted to other women.

So the physical union in marriage serves as a safeguard against those temptations. And Paul addresses this in 1 Corinthians 7.

At the start of the chapter he writes, because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights and likewise the wife to her husband.

[33 : 43] For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, but then come together again so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

And if you're unmarried, Paul goes on to write, to the unmarried and the widows, I say that it is good for them to remain single as I am, but if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

Now, to be clear, the physical attraction we have is not the only reason to marry, but it is a consideration according to the Bible.

Paul says it is better to pursue a wife than to succumb to the constant temptation that we may feel to lust or to commit sexual sins outside of marriage.

Now, in the time remaining, I want to draw a few practical lessons from what we've talked about, and I'll begin with the married men among us. So I have four points for you.

[35 : 06] Number one, rejoice in your wife. When God gave Eve to Adam, He sang out, this, at last, is bone of my bones, the flesh of my flesh.

When's the last time you rejoiced over your wife like that? When's the last time you told her that she is your delight and your crown?

Wear that crown with thanksgiving and joy. Number two, remember your incompleteness. Adam alone was not good.

God made you so that you need a wife. So don't treat your wife as an accessory to your life.

You know what I mean? recognize that she is God's gracious provision to make you whole in your calling as a man.

[36 : 12] Number three, embrace her as God's helper. Your wife, again, has gifts and instincts and strengths that you do not have.

By God's design, you do not have them. So embrace your wife as God's help to you. You may be very different in some respects, but that shouldn't be a source of frustration.

That's a blessing. She is there to help and to complete you. And number four, live as one flesh. You are no longer two, but one.

So there's no yours and mine, there's just ours. Your life is bound up with her in every way. Treat her well. For in loving her, you're loving yourself.

And for the unmarried among us, I have three points for you. Number one, don't avoid marriage.

The culture may downplay marriage, may delay it, may redefine it, but Genesis shows us that God's good design for men is to find a godly woman and get married.

[37 : 35] So unless you feel that God has uniquely called you to lifelong singleness, and that's not true for most of us, it is not good for you to be alone.

Number two, pursue marriage wisely. You need a complimentary helper. Specifically, you need a woman who will be even more than a companion.

You need a woman who will help you fulfill your God-given calling. So she may not be everything you thought she would be. She may not match the vision you have of the perfect woman, but you need a woman who will help you very specifically to glorify God and to live out your masculine mandate.

And number three, don't waste your singleness. I've had many friends over the years who were convinced they did not have the gift of singleness as Paul described it, but the Lord had not led them to a wife either.

So the first part of this is trusting in the Lord and acknowledging his perfect timing. Ecclesiastes says he has made everything beautiful in its time.

[38 : 58] So wait on the Lord, trust in his timing. The second part of this is to affirm that your desire to get married is a good desire, a wonderful desire.

Again, Proverbs calls a wife a good thing, favor from the Lord, so you're not wrong for wanting a wife. And the third part of this is to realize that your life doesn't begin only after you find a wife.

You can be a great blessing to your employer, to your community, to your church, even while you're single. And furthermore, and this may be the most important thing I could say, you have an opportunity right now to to grow in your maturity and in your responsibility and in your godliness while you're waiting for the Lord to send you a wife.

Even now, you can cultivate the kind of character that you will absolutely need when the time comes for you to become a godly husband. I told you a few weeks ago about some of these guys I've known who quit their jobs, sold their stuff, and moved into their cars.

And I was talking to one in particular, and he was telling me that I want nothing more than to find a good woman. I want a wife. And I said, don't you think living in your car kind of hinders your opportunities?

[40 : 38] And he said, well, no, that's not the way I look at it. The way I look at it is once I find her, I'll get a place. I'll settle down. And I try to encourage him to the best of my ability that you're doing things backwards.

You need to be ready. You need to prepare yourself for God to send you that wonderful gift of a wife. Well, Paul says the unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord.

How to please the Lord. But the married man is anxious about worldly things. How to please his wife and his interests are divided. So while you still have an opportunity to give your undivided attention to the Lord, do it.

Don't waste your singleness. And of course, the last thing I should say is that we want to recognize that single men are not lesser men.

Christ himself was single. The apostle Paul was single. So to summarize, Genesis shows us that man was made in God's image to work and to keep, to subdue and steward, and ordinarily to be joined to a wife as a complimentary helper in a lifelong covenant becoming one flesh for companionship and for holiness and for fruitfulness in more ways than one.

[42 : 03] And whether married or unmarried, the call is really the same. We should reject the loneliness and the self-sufficiency that our culture seems to celebrate and walk in the masculine mandate through your faithful labor and your glad, glad dependence on a wife if the Lord gives you one.

and if he does, rejoice in her. You need her. Let's pray. Lord, our creator and our sustainer, you are wise in all your ways and all that you made is good.

You made us in your image and though sin once made us your enemies, you have reconciled us to yourself through the death and life of your son. And we ask that you would help us now to live as men who reflect your good design, teach us to rejoice in your good gifts, and to glorify you in our marriages and in our singleness and in every part of life.

And it's in Jesus' name we pray, Amen.