
Study 2 – Male and Female

Genesis 2 describes life as God originally intended it. This narrative is different in style and angle comparing to the first. Rather than focus on the world, the focus has zoomed to the narrower stage of the Garden of Eden, and on the relationship between God, nature, man and woman. In Genesis 2 the author supplements the brief account of the creation of man in Genesis 1:26-30 with more detailed descriptions.

Read Genesis 2:4-2:25

1. Compare and contrast Genesis 2:4-6 with Genesis 1:2. What have you noticed? From what perspective does the author describe creation in the second account?
2. Compare and contrast Genesis 2:7 with Genesis 1:27? What is added? How is this creation unique from the rest of creation?
3. Describe the design of the Garden of Eden, what is its function (Genesis 2:8-14)?
4. What responsibility, limit and freedom does God give to man (Genesis 2:15-17)? How does each of these reveal God's plan for our life?
5. What does Genesis 2:18 tell us about the life that is intended by God for mankind?
6. Compare and contrast the naming of the living creatures by Adam (Genesis 2:19-20) and the naming of the creation by God (Genesis 1:5, 8, 10), what does it tell you about God's relationship with creation and Adam's relationship with the living creatures?
7. Explain in your own words the purpose of the creation of woman and the teaching about marriage in Genesis 2:20b-25
8. What can we learn about the way God provides for man a garden, a mighty river, trees for food and a suitable helper?
9. How does this passage help you understand your relationship with God, the nature and other people?

LEADER'S NOTES

Question 1. In Genesis 1:2, the earth was "Formless and Empty" (NIV). God creates forms (day 1- day 3) and fillings (day 4 - day 6) in an orderly way. The first account is seen having God as the sole actor. In Genesis 2:4-6, there was no shrub or plant on the earth, and no man to work the ground. Man had no food and God prepares for man through the establishment of a garden in the east. The second creation account is viewed from man's perspective. Notice also linguistically in Genesis 1:1 and 2:4a the phrase "the heavens and the earth" is reversed in Genesis 2:4b, indicating the author is now focusing on the "earthly" matters.

Question 2.

1. Man is formed from the dust of the ground. In Hebrew the word for "man" (adam) sounds like the word for "ground" (adamah).
2. God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life.
3. Man became a living creature.

God spoke to create the world, but here man was created uniquely. The Hebrew word "man" signifies man's strong relationship with the land: he was created from it; his job is to cultivate it (2:5, 15); and on death he returns to it (3:19). Secondly, man is a "living" creature. Although other sea creatures and animals (Genesis 1:20-21, 24) were also created as 'living' creatures, man is still unique in the way he became a living being. Man alone receives the breath from God directly. In a similar way, man is uniquely made in the image of God (1:26-27), implies man's authority over the animals.

Question 3. The Hebrew word Eden means "delight." This geographical description indicates that Eden was not an allegorical or mythical setting but an actual location. The Garden of Eden is established for man's provision. Trees are "pleasant for the eye" and "good for food" (2:9). The river is there to "water" the garden (Genesis 2:10). This river was the source of the two great rivers—the Tigris and the Euphrates (2:14). The Greeks called the region Mesopotamia, "the land between the two rivers" because the people's livelihood depended on those rivers. Gold, bdellium and onyx stone (2:11-12) are to serve man, since they are meaningless for other creatures. God's provision is both thorough and thoughtful.

Question 4. What responsibility, limit and freedom does God give to man (Genesis 2:15-17)? How does each of these reveal God's plan for our life?

- Responsibility: "to work it and keep it" (ESV), "to work it and take care of it" (NIV), "to cultivate it and to keep it" (NAS). Man's life has a purpose. Work is part of God's good purpose for man. John Stott: "Work is the expenditure of energy (manual or mental or both) in the service of others, which brings fulfillment to the worker, benefit to the community, and glory to God." (John Stott, *New Issues Facing Christians Today*, p.196)
- Freedom: "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden" Man's freedom should be under God's sovereignty.
- Limit: "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." Rather than focusing on the "properties" of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, perhaps we should emphasize more on the "prohibition". There is deadly consequence forsaking God's rule.

God wants man to live according to his plan, his rule, avoiding sin which have disastrous consequences. Man's living is fully dependent on God.

Question 5. Man should live within community. Relationship is an important aspect of God's design for mankind.

Question 6. In the ancient world, the right to name something or someone indicated rule or ownership. God has authority over the creation and he entrusts man to mind the animals and the garden. Man now has the responsibility to take care of nature.

Question 7. As the passage unfolds, the author first describes man's relationship with God and the nature, then moves to describe the relationship between man and woman. The action performed by God to take out one of the ribs to form woman has significant theological meaning. It brilliantly depicts the relation of man and wife. "Just as the rib is found at the side of the man and is attached to him, even so the good wife, the rib of her husband, stands at his side to be his helper-counterpart, and her soul is bound up with his" (Cassuto, 134). Further, man should "leave his father and mother" and "become one flesh" (2:24). Marriage relationship should be characterized with harmony, love, and intimacy between the partners. Later Jesus uses this particular verse to forbid divorce (Mark 10:6-12). Yet the bible also guard against disrespect towards parents (Exo. 20:12)

Interestingly man and woman were both naked but they were not ashamed (2:25). In contrast with 3:21, when the couple noticed their nakedness after they sin. In Song of Songs, the married couple was not ashamed of their nakedness, indicating that the sexual relationship between man and woman was originally designed to be good, rather than shameful. Sex is a gift from God, not a curse.

Man should not be 'alone' (2:18) has another social aspect. Man supposes to live within community. "People of God", whether in the OT or NT is a collective term. Worshipping God and fulfilling God's purpose in life is never individualistic but functions within community.

REFERENCES

1. Charles & Anne Hummel, "LifeGuide Bible Study: Genesis", IVP, 1985.
2. The Navigators, "LifeChange: Genesis", NavPress, 1987.