



Part 13 – What it Means to be Human (2)

Genesis 2:18-25

What is written in the second half of Genesis 2 sets the moral and theological trajectory of the Bible's teachings on sex, gender, human dignity, and marriage. Of these verses, Derek Kidner writes:

The naming of the animals, a scene which portrays man as monarch of all he surveys, poignantly reveals him as a social being, made for fellowship, not power: he will not live until he loves, giving himself away (vs. 24) to another on his own level. So the woman is presented wholly as his partner and counterpart; nothing is yet said of her as child-bearer. She is valued for herself alone (p. 65).

God made the man to be irreducibly relational. That is, he can never be fully man apart from being in relationship with other humans. The first human community was constituted through marriage between the man and woman. It was not until Adam saw the woman that he truly understood what he was. Not until the creation of the woman did man have a complete understanding of his role and his place in the world. He would never have fully understood himself fully in isolation – or without an allied and complementary partner. Adam experienced what he was when he first met his complementary opposite, and he accepted the female as complementing his maleness. “This is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.”

Supremely, mankind is equipped to have relationship with God. It is necessary that God initiate that relationship. This is grace. But it is the unique capacity of man to know himself and his Maker. As Francis Schaeffer writes, “I understand the possibility of fellowship and of personality. I understand that because I am made in the image of God and because God is personal, both a personal relationship with God and the concept of fellowship has validity” (p. 47).

What it means to be human...

1. We are Embodied

Vs. 7 – “...then 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.”

2. We are irreducibly relational

Vs. 18 - Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”

- In order to know ourselves truly then we need to look not to our own desires or feelings. Rather in order to understand what it means to be human we must look outside ourselves. We need to look to God in whose image we have been created. In the opening chapters of the Bible we learn that relationships are not secondary markers of our identity. Rather, we find that relationships are central to who we are – they are in fact identity-forming. And this is so because that is the way that God made us.

A) God is eternally relational

Genesis 1:26a - Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...”

- In the opening words of his book, God begins to reveal to us that he is both one and three. God is one in essence; eternally indivisible. And yet the one God exists eternally as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As early as creation, God's powerful Word is bringing forth the universe (John 1:1ff). In the second verse of the Bible the Holy Spirit is described as “hovering” over the waters. In creating man, God speaks in an intra-trinitarian dialogue – “Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness...”
- We can have confidence that God is love (1 John 4:8, 16) because of his triune nature. Love, by its very nature, must be given and received. And so it has always been between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Jesus consistently affirmed his divine nature. His final words to his disciples was an affirmation of the Trinity: "...baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).

B) Humanity is incomplete without companionship

Vs. 18 - Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."

- The only thing that was not precisely as it should be in the Garden was that the man was alone. God established a pattern among the other living creatures where all of the various species consisted of complementary pairs. Among all the living creatures were male and female. And noticing this, Adam begins to wonder why he does not have a complementary partner. There is a God-designed incompleteness to human isolation.

C) God made marriage for his glory and mankind's good

Vv. 22-23 – 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."

- As far as we can tell, Adam was not dreaming of women or describing to God what a complementary companion should look like. On the contrary, the entire initiative was God's. Woman was the Lord's wonderful gift to man. God created the woman by supernatural means to be both like and unlike the man in all the ways she needed to be in order to be a fit companion.

* *God does not call everyone to marriage. There are some, like the Apostle Paul, whom the Lord calls to celibacy. Even our Lord remained unmarried. However, marriage is normative for most.*

i. The limits in which marriage flourishes

Vs. 24a – "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife..."

- God has established patterns in the creation of the man and woman, which were and remain expressions of his goodness and orderliness. History is in part the tragic story of man's rebellion against the boundaries God designed for the physical, emotional, and spiritual flourishing of his human creatures.

ii. The blessings marriage provides

Vv. 24-25 – "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."

- Companionship – It was not until Adam saw the woman that he could fully understand what he was. Not until the creation of the woman did man have a complete understanding of his role and his place in the world. Adam would never have fully understood himself in isolation – or without an allied and complementary partner. Adam experienced what he was when he first met his complementary opposite, and he accepted the female as complementing his maleness. "This is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh."
- One-flesh intimacy – Marriage provides the most profound experience of human intimacy. The one-flesh union is both physical and emotional. It depends both upon the physical complementarity of the male/female gender construct and the marriage bond.
- Procreation – The creation mandate to fill the earth and have dominion over it (Genesis 1:28) is fulfilled by the marriage relationship through the gift of procreation.

iii. The love marriage illustrates

Ephesians 5:22-33

- Marriage between a man and woman is uniquely fit to illustrate Christ's love for his church. The unique roles of sacrificial love and willing submission within marriage point to how Christ relates to his church and how the church is to relate to Christ. One of the reasons we promote the biblical boundaries within which marriage flourishes is because of the great love marriage illustrates.