

FAITHFUL TO THE WORD

Systematic Theology Series

ANTHROPOLOGY

The Doctrine of Humanity

Created, Fallen, and Redeemable — What It Means to Be Human Before God

UNIT 2

The Creation of Humanity

Lesson 4

Built from the Side

The Creation of Eve

“The Woman as the Crown and Completion of God’s Creative Work”

Key Texts: Genesis 2:18–25; 1 Corinthians 11:8–12; 1 Timothy 2:13

*“Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper
suitable for him.’”*

Genesis 2:18, NASB 1995

Dr. Joshua Nichols

Pastor, Theologian, Author

faithfultotheword.com

Introduction

The creation of Eve is, in the judgment of the text itself, the crown and completion of the creative week. In Genesis 1, God surveys each act of creation and pronounces it good. The light is good. The dry land is good. The vegetation is good. The stars are good. The creatures of sea and sky and land are good. And the creation of the human being in the image of God, male and female, is pronounced very good (Genesis 1:31). But tucked within the more detailed narrative of Genesis 2 is a single, striking interruption to this chorus of divine satisfaction: “It is not good for the man to be alone” (Genesis 2:18, NASB 1995). This is the first “not good” in a creation that God has repeatedly declared good, and it arrives before the fall, before sin enters the world, before any disorder disrupts the created order. The incompleteness it identifies is not a defect; it is a design. Adam, as yet alone, is not yet what God intends him to be, and the act that completes him, the creation of the woman, is as theologically significant as the act that began him.

Lesson 4 is devoted to the creation of Eve: its manner, its meaning, its Hebrew vocabulary, and its enduring implications for the biblical theology of human sexuality, marriage, and the complementary dignity of male and female. This is not a lesson about a secondary figure. Eve is not an afterthought to Adam’s creation, a convenient companion created because the task of creation needed to be completed before God could rest. She is, in the structure of the Genesis narrative, the answer to the only deficiency that existed in the pre-fall creation, the incompleteness of a humanity that consisted of only one of its two constitutive expressions. The creation of Eve is the creation of the human race in its fullness, and the moment of Adam’s recognition of her, “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh” (Genesis 2:23, NASB 1995), is the first human utterance in Scripture that deserves the name of poetry, a cry of wonder and delight from a creature encountering, for the first time, one who is genuinely like him.

This lesson will proceed in six movements. We begin with the divine declaration that it is not good for man to be alone, examining what this statement implies about the nature of human beings as relational creatures made for community and communion. We then turn to the naming of the animals, that curious interlude whose purpose is to make Adam’s need for a companion tangibly evident. From there we examine the creation of Eve itself, the deep sleep, the rib, and the divine fashioning, with attention to the Hebrew vocabulary that characterizes the act. We then engage the theological significance of Eve’s derivation from Adam: not from the dust as Adam was, but from Adam’s own body, with all that this implies for the unity of the human race and the nature of marriage. The fifth section examines the crucial Hebrew phrase *ezer kenegdo*, “helper suitable for him,” and defends its proper interpretation against both egalitarian and subordinationist misreadings. We close with the doxological significance of the creation of Eve: the completion of the image of God in humanity, the foundation of marriage as a creation ordinance, and the first glimpse of the covenant union of Christ and His church that Paul will later identify as the ultimate meaning of the one-flesh mystery.

A note on scope is necessary. The biblical theology of human sexuality, marriage as a creation ordinance, and the complementarian vision of male and female relationships will be treated in full in Unit 6 of this series (Lessons 17–19). This lesson establishes the exegetical foundations upon which Unit 6 will build. The purpose here is not to develop a complete theology of gender and marriage but to hear, carefully and precisely, what Genesis 2:18–25 actually says about the creation of the woman, and to allow those exegetical findings to frame the theological questions that the subsequent lessons in Unit 6 will answer.

I. It Is Not Good to Be Alone: The Relational Constitution of Humanity

What the First 'Not Good' in Eden Reveals About What Human Beings Are Made For

A. The Declaration and Its Theological Weight

The declaration of Genesis 2:18, “It is not good for the man to be alone” (NASB 1995), is one of the most theologically pregnant statements in the entire creation narrative, and its significance is easy to underestimate precisely because it is so familiar. The context sharpens its force considerably. The preceding verses have established Adam as a fully functioning human being: he has been formed from the dust, animated by the divine breath, placed in the garden of Eden, given a vocation (to cultivate and keep it), and subjected to a moral test (the prohibition of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil). He is, by every measure the text has so far employed, a complete human being. And yet God declares that his situation is not good. The incompleteness that God identifies is not a defect in Adam’s individual constitution; it is a relational deficiency, an absence of the kind of correspondence that his nature requires and his dignity demands.

The Hebrew word translated “alone” is levado (לבדו), from the root badad (בדד), which denotes isolation or separation. Its use in this context is not merely descriptive of Adam’s social circumstances; it is an evaluative judgment on the part of the Creator about what the human creature requires for its flourishing. God does not say that Adam is lonely, though the narrative implies something like loneliness in the fruitless search for a companion among the animals. He says that the condition of aloneness is not good, that it represents a deficiency in the creaturely situation that He intends to remedy. This divine judgment about human aloneness carries a theological implication of far-reaching significance: the human creature is not constituted for isolation. It is constituted for relationship, for communion, for the kind of mutual knowledge and love that only a genuine counterpart can provide. The relational constitution of human beings is not a consequence of the fall; it is a feature of the creation, built into the nature of the creature by the Creator who is Himself the eternal community of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Trinitarian dimension of this declaration is worth pausing over. The God who declares that it is not good for man to be alone is the God who exists eternally in the fellowship of the three persons of the Trinity, the God whose own inner life is a life of perfect, eternal, mutually self-giving love between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. When this God creates a being in His own image, it is not surprising that He creates a being whose image-bearing is most fully realized not in individual isolation but in the communion of persons. The human being made in the image of the Trinitarian God is a being made for community, made for the knowing and being known, the loving and being loved, that the Trinity enjoys in its own eternal life and that the creation of the woman is designed to provide in creaturely form. The “not good” of Genesis 2:18 is thus not merely a social observation; it is a theological statement about what it means to bear the image of a God who is, in His own eternal being, a community of love.

B. The Naming of the Animals: Making the Need Visible

Before God creates Eve, He leads all the living creatures before Adam to be named. The episode of Genesis 2:19–20 has sometimes puzzled readers who wonder why the text interrupts the narrative of Eve’s creation with what seems like a zoological digression. But the interruption is deliberate and theologically purposeful: it is designed to make Adam’s need for a companion tangibly and experientially evident to Adam himself. As Adam exercises his God-given authority over the animal kingdom by naming each creature, he makes a discovery that no amount of theoretical reflection could have produced: “But for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him” (Genesis 2:20, NASB 1995). The parade of creatures before Adam is not a failure of the divine search strategy; it is the pedagogical means by which Adam comes to understand, from within his own experience of surveying every living creature, that none of them is what he needs.

The act of naming in Genesis 2 is itself a significant theological and anthropological datum. When Adam names the creatures, he exercises the kind of cognitive and moral authority that the image of God confers: the capacity

to perceive the essential character of each creature and to give it a name that corresponds to that character. This is not arbitrary designation; it is the exercise of the vice-regent's knowledge and authority over the created order that was commissioned in Genesis 1:28. And in the exercise of that authority, Adam discovers the limits of the creaturely community available to him: the animals are genuinely other, genuinely distinct from him, genuinely not-him in a way that makes their company, however rich in its own way, inadequate to the deep need for correspondence that his nature has.

The Hebrew phrase used for the absence discovered at the end of the naming episode, “not found” (lo matza, לא מצא), is worth attending to carefully, because it frames the creation of Eve not as God's response to a problem He had not anticipated but as the divinely orchestrated conclusion of a pedagogical process designed to prepare Adam for the gift he is about to receive. God knew before the naming of the animals that no suitable helper would be found among them; He leads Adam through the exercise so that Adam will know it too, and so that when Eve is brought to him, he will recognize her with the full force of wonder and gratitude that the narrative requires. The “This is now!” of Adam's response in verse 23, the exclamatory particle zot hapa'am (זאת הפעם), which could be rendered “at last!” or “finally this one!”, is the cry of a man who has been waiting, and who recognizes in an instant that what he has been waiting for has arrived.

“For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve.”

1 Timothy 2:13, NASB 1995

II. The Deep Sleep and the Fashioned Rib: The Manner of Eve's Creation

What the Text of Genesis 2:21–22 Says and What It Means

A. The Deep Sleep: God's Personal Surgical Act

The creation of Eve, as Genesis 2:21–22 describes it, is as deliberate and as personally engaged an act of the Creator as the formation of Adam in Genesis 2:7, but it is accomplished by a different means. God does not form Eve from the dust; He causes a deep sleep (tardemah, תרדמה) to fall upon Adam, takes one of his ribs (tsela, צלע), and closes up the flesh in its place. He then builds (bana, בנה) the woman from the rib He has taken and brings her to the man. Each element of this procedure carries theological significance that careful exegesis must not overlook. The tardemah, the deep sleep, is the same word used in Genesis 15:12 for the deep sleep that falls upon Abram when God enacts the covenant of the pieces, and its appearance here suggests a divine initiative that operates in a realm beyond human consciousness or participation. Adam does not contribute to the creation of Eve; he receives her. The creation of the woman is entirely God's act, and Adam's deep sleep ensures that he is present for it in the only way that is appropriate: as a recipient of the divine gift, not as a participant in the divine work.

The word tsela (צלע), conventionally translated “rib,” is used elsewhere in the Old Testament to denote a side or a lateral section, the side of the tabernacle (Exodus 26:20), the side chambers of the temple (Ezekiel 41:5–6), and in 2 Samuel 16:13, the side of a hill. Some scholars have argued, on the basis of this broader usage, that the text intends to say that God took an entire side of Adam, not merely a rib, that Eve was formed from half of Adam, as it were, which would make the union of man and woman in marriage literally the reunion of the two halves of a single whole. This reading, while speculative, captures something of the theological point that the text is making by whichever translation is preferred: the material from which Eve is made is not separate from Adam but taken from his very body, from within his own flesh, establishing a bond between them that is qualitatively different from any bond that could be established between Adam and any creature formed from the dust of the ground.

Eve is not created beside Adam; she is created from Adam, and this derivation is the material basis for the “one flesh” that Genesis 2:24 will declare to be the goal of marriage.

The verb used for God’s creative work with the material of Adam’s rib is *banah* (בנה), to build or to construct, a different word from the *yatsar* (יצר) used for Adam’s formation in Genesis 2:7. The shift in vocabulary is not accidental. *Banah* is used in the Old Testament for the building of structures, houses, cities, altars, the temple. Its application to the creation of Eve suggests a kind of purposeful architectural design: the woman is not merely shaped like a vessel from raw material but constructed from a specific component for a specific structural purpose, the way a craftsman builds a structure that is designed to fit together with something else. Eve is built to fit Adam, not as an inferior fits a superior, but as two complementary elements of a single designed whole fit together to form something neither could constitute alone. The theological implication is clear and will be developed fully in Unit 6: the complementarity of male and female is not a cultural convention or a patriarchal imposition; it is a structural feature of the creation, built into the respective constitutions of man and woman by the divine Architect who built the woman from the man.

B. Matthew Henry and the Theological Tradition on the Rib

The exegetical tradition has recognized the theological freight of the rib narrative from the earliest commentators onward, and no observation about it has proven more enduring, more pastorally apt, or more theologically precise than the comment of Matthew Henry (1662–1714) in his *Commentary on the Whole Bible*. Henry writes, with characteristic pastoral eloquence: “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.” This observation has been repeated so often that it risks becoming a cliché, but it is a cliché worth redeeming, because it captures in a single memorable sentence the theological meaning of the anatomical location from which Eve is taken.

Henry’s observation is not merely sentimental. It is a careful exegetical inference from the narrative details of Genesis 2:21–22, and it draws out three distinct theological truths about the nature of the male-female relationship as God designed it in creation. First, the equality of nature that the rib establishes: Eve is not made from a lesser material than Adam, not formed from the dust at a remove from him, but from his own body, “bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh” (v. 23). She is Adam’s equal in dignity, in nature, in the bearing of the divine image, and in the worth that the Creator has conferred upon her. The creation of Eve from Adam’s rib is the narrative embodiment of the theological claim of Genesis 1:27 that God created humanity “male and female” in His own image, not male in His image and female as a lesser reflection of that image, but both, equally and fully, bearing the image of God. Second, the protection that the side implies: the woman is created to be “under his arm,” in Henry’s phrase, suggesting the kind of covering, shelter, and headship that the New Testament will develop in the husband’s calling to love his wife as Christ loved the church. Third, the intimacy that the proximity to the heart implies: the relationship of husband and wife is not merely functional or hierarchical but profoundly affective, a bond of the deepest personal love that the placement of the rib, near the heart, symbolizes with anatomical precision.

The patristic and medieval tradition found in the creation of Eve from Adam’s side a typological prefiguration of the creation of the church from the pierced side of the crucified Christ, and while typological readings must always be held carefully, this particular typology is not an imposition on the text but a development of it. When John records that a soldier pierced the side of the crucified Jesus and blood and water came out (John 19:34), and when Paul declares that Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her (Ephesians 5:25), and when the author of Revelation presents the church as the bride of the Lamb (Revelation 21:9), the trajectory from the sleeping Adam and the fashioned rib to the crucified Christ and the redeemed church becomes visible as a single line of typological development within the unity of the Scriptures. The marriage of Adam and Eve is not merely a human institution; it is a type of the covenant union of Christ and His people, and the creation of Eve from Adam’s side is the first act in the narrative that will culminate in the creation of the church from the side of the Last Adam on the cross.

III. Ezer Kenegdo: Helper Suitable, The Most Misunderstood Phrase in Genesis

What the Hebrew Actually Says, and What It Does Not Say, About Eve's Calling

A. Ezer: Strength, Not Subordination

The phrase that Genesis 2:18 uses to describe Eve's role, ezer kenegdo (עֶזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ), is among the most exegetically contested phrases in the entire Old Testament, and its misreading in both egalitarian and subordinationist directions has produced significant confusion about what the creation narrative actually teaches about the relationship of male and female. A careful examination of the Hebrew is therefore not a matter of mere academic precision but of pastoral and theological urgency. The word ezer (עֶזֶר) is straightforwardly translated "helper" in most English versions, and the translation is not wrong, but it carries an English connotation, of assistant, subordinate, auxiliary, that the Hebrew word does not carry. The Hebrew ezer does not denote a being of lesser status who assists a being of greater status; it denotes the act or capacity of providing the kind of help that is genuinely needed and genuinely effective.

The most decisive evidence for the proper understanding of ezer is its consistent use in the Old Testament as a designation for God Himself in His relationship to Israel. In Psalm 121:2, the Psalmist declares: "My help (ezri, עֲזָרִי) comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth" (NASB 1995). In Psalm 124:8: "Our help (ezrenu) is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth." In Exodus 18:4, Moses names his son Eliezer (אֱלִיעֶזֶר), meaning "my God is my helper," because God delivered him from Pharaoh's sword. In Deuteronomy 33:7, 26, 29, the same vocabulary is applied to God as the shield and helper of Israel. The God who is called ezer is not a subordinate assistant; He is the Sovereign who stoops to help from a position of superior strength and ability. When the same word is used of Eve in Genesis 2:18, it does not imply that Eve is Adam's inferior; it implies that she is his indispensable complement, the one who provides what he cannot provide for himself, who supplies from her own strength what his situation genuinely requires. The ezer is not less than the one helped; in the most important biblical uses of the term, the ezer is greater.

The implications of this exegetical point for the contemporary debates about the relationship of male and female are significant and must be handled with care. The proper understanding of ezer neither eliminates the relational order that Genesis 2 establishes (Adam is created first; Eve is brought to him; Paul grounds creation-order arguments in this sequence in both 1 Timothy 2:13 and 1 Corinthians 11:8–9) nor reduces Eve to a subordinate whose role is merely to assist Adam in tasks he could otherwise perform without her. She is a genuine helper in the sense that God is a genuine helper: she provides, from her own distinct constitution and calling, something that Adam genuinely lacks and genuinely needs. The egalitarian error is to deny any relational order; the subordinationist error is to reduce the ezer to mere assistance. The biblical account holds creation order and co-equal dignity together, because the God who designed the relationship is the God in whose Trinitarian life there is eternal order (the Son submits to the Father; the Spirit proceeds from both) without any diminishment of co-equal divine glory.

B. Kenegdo: Correspondence and Complementarity

The second element of the phrase, kenegdo (כְּנֶגְדּוֹ), is equally important and equally misunderstood. The word is a compound: the preposition ke (כִּי), meaning "like" or "according to," combined with neged (נֶגֶד), meaning "in front of," "opposite," or "corresponding to," plus the third-person masculine singular suffix o (וֹ), meaning "him." The combination is sometimes translated "fit for him," "suitable for him," or "corresponding to him," and each of these translations captures a dimension of the Hebrew. The basic image is of something that stands over against another, face to face, as a genuine counterpart, not a copy, not a lesser version, not a subordinate reflection, but something that is genuinely other while also genuinely corresponding.

The kenegdo dimension of Eve's description establishes the complementarity that is the structural principle of the male-female relationship as God designed it. Eve is not Adam's mirror image; she is his counterpart, genuinely like him (bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh) and genuinely unlike him (made differently, constituted differently, calling differently to different aspects of the created order and human vocation). The complementarity of male and female is not a socially constructed arrangement that reflects the power dynamics of ancient patriarchal culture; it is a structural feature of the creation, written into the respective constitutions of Adam and Eve by the Creator who built the woman from the man and brought her to him as his kenegdo, his genuine correspondent, his proper counterpart, his necessary complement. The English word "suitability" in most translations catches something of this: Eve is suitable for Adam in the precise sense that a key is suitable for a lock, not interchangeable with it, not identical to it, but perfectly designed to correspond to it and to accomplish together what neither could accomplish alone.

The practical and pastoral import of kenegdo for the contemporary church is considerable. In a cultural moment that has attempted to eliminate the category of complementarity altogether, declaring male and female to be interchangeable expressions of a single generic humanity, differentiated only by biological accident and social convention, the doctrine of the creation of Eve as kenegdo stands as a direct and unflinching counter-affirmation. The differences between male and female are not defects to be overcome, not social constructs to be dismantled, not forms of oppression to be resisted; they are features of the creation that reflect the wisdom of the Creator who made them. The church that has been formed by a careful reading of Genesis 2:18–25 will not find it difficult to know what it believes about gender, because the text itself is sufficiently clear, and sufficiently counter-cultural, to leave no room for the comfortable ambiguity that the therapeutic culture demands.

"For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake. However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman."

1 Corinthians 11:8–11, NASB 1995

IV. Adam's Response: The First Poem in Scripture

A Song of Wonder, Delight, and Covenant Recognition

A. Bone of My Bones: The Poetry of Recognition

When God brings Eve to Adam in Genesis 2:22, Adam's response is a speech act of extraordinary beauty and theological density that the English translations struggle to convey with adequate force. "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man" (Genesis 2:23, NASB 1995). The exegetical tradition is virtually unanimous in recognizing this as poetry, the first poem in the entire Bible, spoken by the first human being, in response to the first sight of the one who is his genuine counterpart. Hebrew poetry does not depend primarily on rhyme but on parallelism, the correspondence of line to line, image to image, meaning to meaning, and Genesis 2:23 exhibits this structure with crystalline clarity: "bone of my bones / flesh of my flesh; / she shall be called Woman / because she was taken out of Man." The parallelism is perfect, the rhythm is recognizable, and the emotional register, the astonished, rapturous recognition of the creature who has at last found what he has been searching for, is unmistakable.

The phrase "bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh" is a Hebrew idiom for the closest possible kinship, a formula of covenant solidarity that appears elsewhere in the Old Testament (2 Samuel 5:1, where the tribes of Israel declare their kinship with David: "Behold, we are your bone and your flesh"). Its application by Adam to Eve is the recognition not merely of biological connection but of covenantal bond: she is not merely derived from him; she is as close to him as it is possible for another person to be, a closeness that is simultaneously natural (they share

the same material) and covenantal (the formula invokes the language of binding commitment). Adam's first words about Eve are not a description but a declaration, not an observation about a new creature God has made, but the enunciation of a covenant bond by the one to whom God is bringing his bride. And the fact that these words are spoken in poetry, the first poem in human history, suggests that the proper response to the encounter with the woman is not merely cognitive but aesthetic, not merely analytical but worshipful: the response of a creature in the presence of something that exceeds the capacity of ordinary prose to contain.

The naming in verse 23, "she shall be called Woman (ishah, אִשָּׁה), because she was taken out of Man (ish, אִישׁ)", is not merely a play on words; it is an etymology that encodes a theological claim. The Hebrew words for man and woman, ish and ishah, are linguistically related in a way that is not accidental but revelatory: the woman is named from the man because she is derived from him, and her name carries within it the perpetual reminder of the relationship from which she comes. This is not a claim of male superiority; it is a statement of origin and derivation that is the basis for the intimacy that verse 24 will declare to be the goal of marriage. And the naming itself, Adam naming Eve as he named the animals, is an exercise of the loving authority that the creation order establishes: the husband as the head who names, protects, and is responsible for the one brought to him by God.

B. *Therefore a Man Shall Leave: Marriage as a Creation Ordinance*

The narrative comment of Genesis 2:24, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh" (NASB 1995), is one of the most theologically consequential single verses in the Old Testament, and its importance is underscored by the fact that Jesus quotes it in Matthew 19:5 and Paul quotes it in Ephesians 5:31. This verse is not part of Adam's speech to Eve; it is a divine commentary on the significance of the event that has just occurred, an authorial aside that draws the universal principle from the specific instance. The creation of Eve from Adam, and Adam's covenantal recognition of her as bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh, establishes the institution of marriage as a creation ordinance, a structure built into the fabric of the created order by the Creator Himself, before the fall, before the law, before any human cultural development, as the normative pattern for the union of male and female.

Three features of Genesis 2:24 deserve careful attention. First, the leaving: "a man shall leave his father and his mother." The fact that this principle is stated in terms of the son leaving his parents is significant in the context of a culture where the creation of new households was a major social event, but the theological point is universal: marriage creates a new primary bond that takes precedence over the bond of origin. The husband and wife, in their union, constitute a new social unit, a new "one flesh" entity, that is not merely an extension of the families from which they come but a genuinely new institution with its own integrity and priority. Second, the cleaving: the verb *dabaq* (דָּבַק), translated "joined" or "cleave," is used throughout the Old Testament for the most intimate forms of covenant loyalty and personal attachment, including Israel's covenant loyalty to God (Deuteronomy 10:20; Joshua 23:8). The marriage bond is a covenant bond, established by oath, sustained by loyalty, and characterized by the same quality of committed faithfulness that the covenant between God and His people demands. Third, the one flesh: the union of husband and wife in "one flesh" is simultaneously physical (the sexual union of two bodies), personal (the union of two selves in the most intimate possible knowledge of each other), and covenantal (the merger of two lives into a single social and spiritual unit). It is the creaturely analogue to the union of the three persons of the Trinity, a genuine oneness that does not abolish the distinct identities of the two persons who constitute it.

The Pauline application of Genesis 2:24 in Ephesians 5:31–32 reveals the ultimate theological significance of this creation ordinance: "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church." Marriage, Paul declares, is a great mystery, not in the sense that it is incomprehensible, but in the sense that it conceals within itself a reality that only the full revelation of the gospel can disclose. The one-flesh union of husband and wife is a visible, creaturely sign of the covenant union of Christ and His church: the loving, self-giving headship of the husband pointing to the self-giving love of Christ; the responsive, trusting submission of the wife

pointing to the glad dependence of the church on her Lord. The creation of Eve from Adam's side, and the marriage covenant that flows from it, was designed from the beginning to be a parable of the gospel, which is why its redefinition by the culture is not merely a social concern but a theological one: to redefine marriage is to distort the sign that God has placed in creation to point to the union of Christ and His bride.

V. Equal Dignity, Distinct Calling: What the Creation of Eve Establishes

The Foundation of Biblical Complementarity in the Creation Narrative

A. Co-Equal Bearers of the Image of God

Genesis 1:27 establishes with unambiguous clarity that both male and female bear the image of God: "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (NASB 1995). The image of God is not a male attribute into which the female is incorporated by association; it is the shared dignity of both, constituting the worth and inviolability of every human being regardless of sex. The creation of Eve in Genesis 2 develops this affirmation by showing that the image-bearing community of humanity requires both its constitutive expressions to be complete: the "not good" of verse 18 applies to a humanity that consists only of Adam, suggesting that the full expression of the image of God in the human creature requires both male and female in their created complementarity.

The equal dignity of male and female as bearers of the divine image has implications that extend across the entire range of the church's life and witness. It means that every ethical and social system that treats women as inferior in dignity, as less than fully human, as instruments of male purpose, as beings whose worth is entirely contingent on their usefulness to men, is a violation of the created order. It means that the church's proclamation of the gospel must be addressed equally to men and women as bearers of the same image and recipients of the same grace, not a gospel for the more spiritually capable that is then trickled down to the less capable. It means that the theological reflection of the church, including the reflection of this series, must take seriously the full humanity of the women whom Genesis 1:27 declares to be equally made in the image of God, and that a doctrine of humanity that does not reckon seriously with what it means for the woman to bear that image is an incomplete doctrine of humanity. The creation of Eve is not a footnote to the creation of Adam; it is the completion of the creation of humanity.

The Pauline affirmation of Galatians 3:28, "there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (NASB 1995), is sometimes cited as a Pauline egalitarianism that supersedes the creation-order distinctions of Genesis 2. But this reading misunderstands the verse's context and function. Galatians 3:28 is not a statement about the abolition of created distinctions; it is a statement about the equal access of all human beings, regardless of ethnicity, social status, or sex, to the righteousness of God that comes through faith in Christ Jesus (v. 26). It affirms the equal spiritual standing of male and female before God in the matter of justification, which the creation narrative also affirms, in its own way, by declaring both male and female to be image-bearers. But this equal spiritual standing is entirely compatible with the distinct callings and ordered relationships that the creation narrative establishes and that Paul himself upholds in his letters to the Corinthians, the Ephesians, the Colossians, and Timothy.

B. The Creation Order and Its Ongoing Significance

The creation-order argument, the argument that the sequence of Adam's creation before Eve, and Eve's derivation from Adam, establishes a pattern of relational order that carries ongoing theological significance for the male-female relationship, is not a post-fall imposition on an originally egalitarian creation; it is an inference from the structure of the creation narrative itself that the Apostle Paul draws explicitly and with apostolic authority. In 1 Timothy 2:13, Paul grounds his instruction about the role of women in the gathered church in the sequence of creation: "For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve" (NASB 1995). In 1 Corinthians 11:8–9, he grounds his instructions about head coverings in the same sequence: "For man does not originate from

woman, but woman from man; for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake." Paul is not creating a new apostolic regulation; he is drawing out the theological implications of the creation narrative that Genesis 2 itself establishes.

The relational order that the creation narrative establishes is an order of loving headship and willing responsiveness, not domination and subjugation. The husband's headship in marriage, and the male eldership in the gathered church, are not claims of superior worth but expressions of the pattern of authority and care that God established in creation and that the gospel of Christ's headship over the church is designed to display. The husband who loves his wife as Christ loved the church, who gives himself for her, who nourishes and cherishes her, who exercises his headship as a form of self-donation rather than self-assertion, is not oppressing her; he is imitating his Lord. And the wife who submits to her husband as to the Lord, who responds to his loving headship with the willing trust of the church in her Savior, is not demeaned by her submission; she is displaying the most glorious reality in the universe: the relationship of the redeemed people of God to the One who loved them and gave Himself for them. The creation of Eve from Adam's side is the beginning of this story, and it will not reach its conclusion until the marriage supper of the Lamb, when the church, bone of His bones and flesh of His flesh, purchased by His blood and formed by His Spirit, stands before her Lord in the full glory of her completed redemption.

The egalitarian alternative, which argues that the creation-order argument of Paul is a cultural accommodation to the patriarchal assumptions of the ancient world and should be set aside in the contemporary church, requires the interpreter to posit that Paul's appeal to the creation narrative is something less than a transcultural theological argument. But Paul does not ground his instructions in cultural convention; he grounds them in the order of creation itself, which is precisely what prevents them from being merely cultural. The grammatical-historical interpreter who applies to Pauline anthropology the same hermeneutical consistency she applies to every other portion of Scripture will find that the creation-order argument leads, inevitably and inescapably, to the complementarian conclusion that male and female are equal in dignity and distinct in calling, equally made in the image of God and differently ordered in their relationship to one another, a conclusion that is not a burden for those who hold it with the joyful conviction that the Creator's design is good, but a liberation from the endless negotiation of an egalitarianism that has no stable ground on which to stand.

VI. The Doxological Conclusion: Eve and the Completion of the Image

The Creation of the Woman Is the Beginning of the Story That Ends at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb

The creation of Eve is not the end of a narrative about human origins; it is the beginning of a story whose end the Scriptures will not disclose until the final pages of Revelation. When Adam cries out in wonder, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh!", he is uttering the first line of a poem that will take the whole of redemptive history to complete. The union of male and female in marriage, which that cry inaugurates, is a sign, the sign that Paul calls a great mystery in Ephesians 5:32, of the union of Christ and His church that the entire biblical narrative is moving toward. The creation of Eve from Adam's side is the first act; the creation of the church from the side of the crucified Christ is the decisive act; and the marriage supper of the Lamb at the consummation of all things is the final act toward which both of the earlier acts are pointing.

The proper response to the creation of Eve, then, is not merely admiration for the divine creativity that produced her or satisfaction at the anthropological completeness that her creation achieves. It is the response of those who have read the whole story and understand what the first chapter of it is setting in motion. The one-flesh union of Adam and Eve in the garden is the creaturely parable of the covenant of grace, the union of the God who stoops to take the creature as His own and the creature who, awakened by the gift of the Beloved, responds in the language of wonder and covenant: "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh." The church that has been formed by Christ, built from His side as Eve was built from Adam's, will one day stand before her Lord and echo that cry in the fullness of its eschatological meaning: bone of the bone of the One who gave Himself for her,

flesh of the flesh of the Last Adam, united to Him in a covenant that neither death nor sin nor the passage of ages can dissolve.

The creation of Eve from the side of Adam is thus, in miniature, the entire gospel. The Creator who stoops; the creative act performed while the man sleeps; the building from the opened side; the bringing of the completed work to the one for whom it was made; the cry of recognition and covenant; the declaration of one-flesh union; and the great mystery that Paul sees shimmering within all of it, Christ and His church. The student of biblical anthropology who has understood what Genesis 2:18–25 actually contains has understood something of what the whole of Scripture is about, and the appropriate response is not merely better theology but deeper worship: the worship of the God who, from before the foundation of the world, was building His bride from the side of the One He had appointed to sleep in death that she might live forever in the joy of His resurrection.

“This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.”

Ephesians 5:32, NASB 1995

Theological Terms and Definitions

Term	Definition
Ezer (עזר)	Hebrew for “helper” or “one who helps,” used in Genesis 2:18, 20 to describe Eve’s calling in relation to Adam. Ezer does not imply inferiority; in its most prominent Old Testament uses it describes God Himself as the helper of Israel (Psalm 121:2; 124:8; Deuteronomy 33:26, 29). The ezer provides what the one helped genuinely needs and cannot provide for himself, a function of strength and competence, not subordination. Applied to Eve, it denotes her as the indispensable complement to Adam: the one who brings from her own distinct constitution what Adam’s situation genuinely requires.
Kenegdo (כנגדו)	Hebrew compound meaning “corresponding to him” or “suitable for him,” from ke (כ, like) + neged (נגד, in front of / opposite) + o (ו, him). Used in Genesis 2:18, 20 with ezer to describe Eve as Adam’s proper counterpart. Kenegdo suggests a face-to-face correspondence, genuine likeness combined with genuine otherness, establishing the complementarity of male and female as a structural feature of creation rather than a cultural arrangement. The woman is not Adam’s copy or lesser version but his genuine correspondent, designed to fit with him as complementary elements of a single created whole.
Tardemah (תרדמה)	Hebrew for “deep sleep,” used in Genesis 2:21 for the divinely induced sleep that falls upon Adam during Eve’s creation. The same word is used in Genesis 15:12 for the deep sleep that falls upon Abram during the covenant of the pieces. In both cases, tardemah marks a divine initiative that operates beyond the conscious participation of the human party, ensuring that the creative or covenantal act is entirely God’s work. Adam does not create Eve; he receives her as a gift from the God who acts while he sleeps.
Tsela (צלע)	Hebrew conventionally translated “rib,” used in Genesis 2:21–22 for the material from which Eve is built. Tsela elsewhere in the Old Testament often denotes a “side” or “lateral section” (Exodus 26:20; 2 Samuel 16:13), leading some scholars to interpret the creation of Eve as her being formed from Adam’s side rather than merely a rib. Either reading establishes that Eve is formed from the substance of Adam’s own body, not from the dust of the ground, a derivation that is the material basis for the one-flesh union of marriage and the theological basis for the equal dignity of male and female.
Banah (בנה)	Hebrew for “to build” or “to construct,” used in Genesis 2:22 for God’s creative act in forming Eve from Adam’s rib. The word differs from yatsar (יצר, to form/shape like a potter), used for Adam’s creation in Genesis 2:7. Banah suggests purposeful architectural design, the construction of something designed to fit together with something else as complementary elements of a single structure. Eve is built to correspond to Adam as a divinely designed complement, not as an afterthought or an inferior addition.
Creation Ordinance	An institution or pattern established by God in creation, before the fall, as a permanent feature of the moral and social order that remains normative for human beings in all subsequent epochs of redemptive history. Marriage is the premier creation ordinance (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4–6), but the Sabbath (Genesis 2:1–3; Exodus 20:11) and work (Genesis 2:15) are also creation ordinances. Creation ordinances are distinguished from ceremonial or civil laws

	given to Israel, which have a specifically redemptive-historical function; they are binding on all human beings as creatures because they are built into the structure of creation itself.
Complementarianism	The position, grounded in the creation narrative of Genesis 1–2 and developed throughout the Pauline epistles, that male and female are equally made in the image of God and equally recipients of the grace of Christ, while also being distinctly designed for different callings in the family and the gathered church: the husband and father as the loving, servant-hearted head of the household; the wife and mother as the willing, capable complement who manages the household; and male eldership as the appointed form of spiritual oversight in the gathered congregation. Complementarianism is distinguished from both egalitarianism (which denies creation-order distinctions) and patriarchalism (which denies co-equal dignity).
One Flesh	The phrase of Genesis 2:24 that describes the union of husband and wife in marriage: “they shall become one flesh” (basar echad, בֶּשַׁר אֶחָד). One-flesh union is simultaneously physical (sexual consummation), personal (the most intimate mutual knowledge of two selves), and covenantal (the merger of two lives into a single social and spiritual unit). Paul in Ephesians 5:31–32 identifies the one-flesh union of husband and wife as a “great mystery” that speaks of the covenant union of Christ and His church, establishing marriage as the primary creaturely sign of the gospel.
Ishah / Ish (אשה / איש)	Hebrew for “woman” and “man” respectively, used in Genesis 2:23 in the first human naming of the female: “she shall be called Woman (ishah), because she was taken out of Man (ish).” The linguistic relationship between the two words encodes a theological claim about the derivation of the woman from the man and the intimacy of their bond. Ishah does not mean merely “female”; it means “the female who comes from the male”, a designation of origin that is simultaneously a declaration of the deepest possible creaturely kinship.
The Great Mystery	Paul’s designation in Ephesians 5:32 for the typological significance of the one-flesh union of marriage: “This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.” The mysterion in Paul generally denotes a reality hidden in the Old Testament and now disclosed in the gospel (Ephesians 3:4–6; Colossians 1:26–27). The great mystery of marriage is that its one-flesh union was designed from the beginning as a creaturely sign of the covenant union of Christ and His church, which is why the redefinition of marriage by the surrounding culture is not merely a social concern but a theological one: to redefine marriage is to distort the sign that points to the gospel.
Federal Headship (Adam)	The doctrine that Adam functioned not merely as an individual but as the federal, that is, covenantal and representative, head of the entire human race, such that his act of disobedience in the garden is reckoned to all who descend from him by natural generation. Relevant to Lesson 4 because the creation of Eve from Adam’s body establishes her as part of Adam’s humanity in a way that makes her, and through her, all who descend from Adam, subject to the covenantal consequences of Adam’s representative act. The creation order (Adam first, then Eve from Adam) that Paul cites in his anthropological arguments is the same creation order that grounds the federal headship of Adam.

Practical Application

A. *For the Mind: What Must We Believe?*

We must believe that the creation of Eve is as theologically serious and as exegetically rich as the creation of Adam, that Genesis 2:18–25 is not a supplementary detail to the creation narrative but its completion, the act that brings the image of God in humanity to its full creaturely expression. The church that treats the creation of Eve as a minor narrative addition to the main event of Adam’s creation has not read Genesis 2 carefully enough, and it will lack the exegetical resources to engage either the egalitarian revision of the text or the broader cultural dismantling of the male-female distinction that flows from the same anthropological errors.

We must believe that the complementarity of male and female, equal in dignity as image-bearers, distinct in calling as the Creator’s design, is not a cultural imposition on the creation narrative but a theological conclusion demanded by it. The ezer kenegdo of Genesis 2:18 is not compatible with either pure egalitarianism or with a subordinationism that denies Eve’s co-equal dignity. It requires both: the dignity that makes her genuine helper rather than mere instrument, and the order that makes her his counterpart rather than his equivalent. The church that holds this tension with biblical precision will neither capitulate to the culture’s egalitarianism nor drift into a patriarchalism that the text itself rejects.

B. *For the Heart: What Must We Feel and Desire?*

Let the wonder of Adam’s cry press itself upon your imagination: a creature who has surveyed the entire animal kingdom and found nothing that corresponds to him, who is brought by God to the one who is his genuine counterpart, and who responds not with analysis but with poetry, the first poem in human history, spoken in the moment of recognition. This is not merely a pleasant narrative detail; it is a theological statement about what the proper response to the gift of human companionship and creaturely love is: not calculation but wonder, not transaction but covenant, not the weighing of utility but the cry of recognition from the depths of the self.

Desire, in your own marriage or in your reflection on marriage as a creation ordinance, the quality of theological seriousness that Genesis 2:24 demands: the understanding that the one-flesh union of husband and wife is not merely a social arrangement or an emotional bond but a “great mystery” that speaks of Christ and His church. Every Christian marriage is a signpost pointing toward the covenant union of the Last Adam and His bride, and the faithfulness, the self-giving love, the mutual honor, and the joyful complementarity that Scripture calls for in marriage are not merely good for the couple; they are good for the watching world, which needs to see in the marriages of the church a visible parable of the gospel.

C. *For the Hands: What Must We Do?*

- Read Genesis 2:18–25 slowly in full, attending to the sequence of events and the theological weight of each: the declaration of “not good,” the naming of the animals, the deep sleep, the fashioned rib, the bringing of Eve to Adam, Adam’s poem of recognition, the divine commentary of verse 24, and the state of unashamed nakedness in verse 25. Ask: what does each element add to the theological picture? What would be lost if any one of these elements were absent? What is the cumulative theological claim that the whole passage makes about the nature of the male-female relationship and the institution of marriage?
- Meditate on Ephesians 5:22–33 in light of Genesis 2:18–25. Read Paul’s instructions about marriage as a theological exposition of the creation narrative: the husband’s headship as Adam’s loving authority, the wife’s responsiveness as Eve’s willing complementarity, and the one-flesh union as the great mystery that speaks of Christ and His church. Ask yourself: does the marriage I have, or the vision of marriage I hold, reflect the great mystery that Paul says it is designed to display? What specific adjustments in attitude, behavior, or priority does this text demand?

- **Engage one primary source on biblical complementarity.** The most exegetically thorough defense of the complementarian reading of Genesis 2 and the Pauline texts is found in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem (revised edition, 2006). Thomas Schreiner and Andreas Köstenberger's *Women in the Church* (third edition, 2016) provides the most detailed exegetical treatment of 1 Timothy 2:9–15 and its creation-order argument. For a pastoral and accessible treatment, Andreas Köstenberger's *God, Marriage, and Family* (second edition, 2010) develops the full biblical theology of marriage from Genesis 2 through Revelation 19.
- If you are married, identify one specific way in which the theological framework of Genesis 2:18–25, equal dignity and distinct calling, the great mystery of Christ and the church, should reshape the way you relate to your spouse this week. It may be a specific act of loving headship for a husband, a specific expression of trusting responsiveness for a wife, or a specific conversation about the theological meaning of your marriage. Bring the creation narrative to bear not merely as a doctrinal category but as a pastoral claim on the specific patterns of your specific marriage.
- Pray for the marriages in the congregation you serve, or in the community of faith to which you belong, with the theological vision of Ephesians 5:31–32 explicitly in view: pray that every Christian marriage would display the great mystery of Christ and His church with enough clarity and faithfulness that the watching world, formed by the therapeutic culture's vision of marriage as a mutual-benefit contract between equal parties, would see something in the marriages of the church that it cannot account for on its own terms, and would be drawn by what it sees toward the One whom those marriages are designed to display.

Study and Discussion Questions

Opening Question

- What is your initial reaction to the statement that the creation of Eve is “the crown and completion” of the creative week? Does this seem like an overstatement, or does the text of Genesis 2:18–25 support it? What specifically in the text leads you to your judgment, and has that judgment shifted at all by the end of this lesson?

Observation Questions (What Do the Texts Say?)

- Read Genesis 2:18–25 carefully. What is the sequence of events, and what is the theological function of each step in the sequence? Why does the naming of the animals (vv. 19–20) precede the creation of Eve? What would be lost from the narrative’s theological argument if the naming episode were removed? What does the exclamatory character of Adam’s response in verse 23 suggest about the emotional and theological register of the moment?
- Compare the vocabulary used for Adam’s creation in Genesis 2:7 (yatsar, “formed”) with the vocabulary used for Eve’s creation in Genesis 2:22 (banah, “built”). What does each word suggest about the character of the creative act? What does the choice of different words for the two acts suggest about the distinction between the man and the woman and the different manner of their creation?
- Read Psalm 121:1–2 and Psalm 124:8. What is the word used for help/helper in these texts, and who is the ezer? What does the application of the same word to Eve in Genesis 2:18 imply about the character of the helping role she is designed to fulfill? How does this usage challenge the common assumption that “helper” implies inferiority?
- Read 1 Timothy 2:11–14 and 1 Corinthians 11:7–12. What specific appeals does Paul make to the creation narrative in each text? What creation-order principles does he draw from Genesis 2, and what practical instructions does he ground in those principles? How does Paul’s exegetical use of Genesis 2 in these texts inform the interpretation of the creation narrative itself?
- Read Ephesians 5:25–32. How does Paul’s interpretation of Genesis 2:24 as a “great mystery” speaking of Christ and the church change the way you understand the creation of Eve? What does it imply about the purpose for which marriage was designed from the beginning? How does the creation narrative look different when read in the light of Paul’s Christological interpretation of it?

Interpretation Questions (What Does It Mean?)

- The lesson argues that ezer does not imply subordination but strength and competence, that the “helper” of Genesis 2:18 provides from her own distinct constitution something that Adam genuinely lacks and genuinely needs. How does this understanding of ezer affect your reading of the male-female relationship in Genesis 2? Does it resolve the tension between Eve’s complementary role and her co-equal dignity, or does it create new interpretive questions? How would you explain this to someone who assumes that “helper” implies inferiority?
- Matthew Henry’s observation, that Eve was made not from Adam’s head to rule over him, not from his feet to be trampled upon, but from his side to be equal with him, has been criticized by some as sentimental and by others as insufficiently attentive to the relational order that the creation narrative establishes. Is Henry’s observation a faithful theological inference from the anatomical detail of the rib, or does it impose a meaning that the text does not intend? What is the relationship between the equal dignity that the rib location symbolizes and the creation-order distinctions that the sequence of creation establishes?
- The lesson identifies the creation of Eve from Adam’s side as a typological prefiguration of the creation of the church from the pierced side of the crucified Christ. Is this typological reading legitimate? What criteria would you use to evaluate a typological reading of the Old Testament? Does the New Testament’s own use

of the Adam-Christ parallel (Romans 5; 1 Corinthians 15; Ephesians 5) provide sufficient warrant for this specific typological connection?

- Paul in Galatians 3:28 says there is “neither male nor female” in Christ, while in 1 Timothy 2 and 1 Corinthians 11 he draws creation-order distinctions between male and female. How do you reconcile these texts? Is there a contradiction, or do the two sets of texts address different dimensions of the male-female relationship? How would you explain the relationship between the equal standing of male and female before God in justification and the distinct callings of male and female in the family and the gathered church?
- The lesson argues that the egalitarian reading of Genesis 2 and the Pauline texts requires interpreters to posit that Paul’s creation-order arguments are cultural accommodations rather than transcultural theological arguments. What would it take to establish that a Pauline argument is a cultural accommodation? What hermeneutical criteria would you use to make that judgment? Is the creation-order argument of 1 Timothy 2:13, “For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve”, the kind of argument that is capable of being a cultural accommodation? Why or why not?

Application Questions (What Does It Demand of Us?)

- The lesson argues that every Christian marriage is a sign of the great mystery of Christ and His church, and that the faithfulness, self-giving love, and joyful complementarity of Christian marriages display the gospel to a watching world. Evaluate the marriages in the congregation or community you serve against this standard. Do the marriages of the church function as visible parables of the gospel? What specific patterns in the marriages of the church, in their conflict, their communication, their division of responsibilities, their spiritual life together, most clearly fail to display the great mystery they are designed to exhibit?
- The creation of Eve establishes human beings as irreducibly relational creatures, made not for isolation but for the kind of deep, personal correspondence that only genuine community can provide. How does this creaturely constitution for relationship shape the church’s ministry to those who experience profound loneliness? What specific pastoral resources does the doctrine of the creation of Eve, the divine declaration that aloneness is not good, the divine provision of a genuine counterpart, provide for ministry to the unmarried, the widowed, the socially isolated, and the chronically lonely?
- The lesson identifies kenegdo, the correspondence and complementarity of male and female, as a structural feature of the creation that the culture’s elimination of gender distinctions directly attacks. What specific practical challenges does the church’s affirmation of created male-female complementarity face in the contemporary cultural moment, in its own congregational life, in its ministry to families, in its engagement with schools and workplaces, and in its proclamation of the gospel to a generation formed by gender ideology? What theological and pastoral resources does the creation narrative provide for meeting those challenges?
- Paul grounds his creation-order instructions for the gathered church in the sequence of creation: Adam first, then Eve. How does your own congregation handle the question of male eldership and female ministry roles? Is the position your congregation holds grounded in the kind of exegetical engagement with the creation narrative and the Pauline texts that this lesson has modeled? What specific steps would bring the congregation’s practice and its stated theological convictions into closer alignment?
- Adam’s response to Eve, the first poem in human history, spoken in the language of covenant recognition and wonder, suggests that the proper response to the gift of genuine human correspondence is not merely practical but aesthetic and worshipful. When did you last respond to another human being, your spouse, a child, a friend, a member of your congregation, with the quality of wonder and gratitude that Adam’s cry expresses? What would it look like to cultivate, in your own relationships, the practice of receiving the gift of human correspondence with the theological seriousness and the personal wonder that Genesis 2:23 models?

Prayer Focus

Open this lesson with a slow and meditative reading of Genesis 2:18–25, allowing the narrative to unfold at the pace the text itself sets. Do not rush past the naming of the animals to get to the creation of Eve; sit with the curious interlude of verses 19–20 long enough to feel what Adam must have felt: the survey of all living creatures, the exercise of authority and knowledge in naming each one, and the dawning recognition that for all the richness and variety of the animal kingdom, none of it corresponds to him. Then receive the deep sleep, the divine surgery, the fashioning from his own flesh and bone, and the bringing of the completed work to the one who had been waiting without knowing he was waiting. And then let Adam’s cry, “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh!”, resound in the imagination as what it is: the first human joy in the presence of the first human community. Read it as a prayer of gratitude for the God who saw the not-good and provided the good, who answered the absence with the presence, who completed what was incomplete with the care of a craftsman and the love of a Father.

Spend time in Trinitarian adoration, allowing the doctrine of Eve’s creation to deepen your understanding of each person of the Trinity. Begin with the Father, the Creator who declared “not good” and then provided the “good”, the God whose provision is always more generous, more precise, and more beautiful than the need that prompted it, who gave not merely a companion to Adam but a wife, not merely a helper but a counterpart, not merely a creature but a covenant partner in the calling to fill the earth and bear the divine image. Move to the Son, the Last Adam, who also sleeps, in the sleep of death on the cross, and from whose opened side comes the blood and water that the church has traditionally read as the sacramental birth of the church, the bride whom He purchased with His own body. Conclude with the Spirit, who creates the community of the church as the community of the new creation, who forms in each believer the character of Christ, and who binds the members of the body of Christ to one another and to their Lord in a bond that is, in its own way, as intimate and as irreversible as the one-flesh union of husband and wife.

Pray together for the marriages and the family life of the congregation in three specific directions. First, for theological clarity: that every married couple in the community would understand their marriage not merely as a personal relationship but as a theological institution, a creation ordinance designed from the beginning to display the covenant union of Christ and His church, and therefore subject to the authority and the wisdom of the One who instituted it. Second, for practical faithfulness: that the specific demands of the great mystery, the husband’s self-giving headship, the wife’s willing responsiveness, the mutual honor and service that Paul calls for in Ephesians 5:21–33, would be lived out with increasing consistency and grace in the specific circumstances of each marriage in the community, including the hard circumstances: the conflict, the disappointment, the exhaustion, and the temptation to settle for something less than the great mystery the text envisions. Third, for compassion toward those for whom the creation narrative’s vision of marriage and companionship is, in this present age, a painful absence rather than a present reality: the unmarried who long for a spouse, the widowed who mourn the partner they have lost, the divorced who carry the grief of a covenant broken. Pray that the church would be, for all of these, a community in which the not-good of human aloneness is met with the genuine, embodied, covenantal care that reflects the character of the God who looked at Adam’s aloneness and declared that it was not good.

“This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”

Genesis 2:23, NASB 1995

Key Texts: *Genesis 2:18–25; Psalm 121:1–2; 1 Corinthians 11:7–12; Ephesians 5:22–33; 1 Timothy 2:11–14; Galatians 3:26–28*

Soli Deo Gloria
To God Alone Be the Glory

FAITHFUL TO THE WORD

Dr. Joshua Nichols

josh@faithfultotheword.com | faithfultotheword.com