

## The Creation of Community and Companionship

<sup>18</sup> And the LORD God said, "*It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.*" <sup>19</sup> Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought *them* to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. <sup>20</sup> So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him. <sup>21</sup> And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. <sup>22</sup> Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. <sup>23</sup> And Adam said: "This *is* now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man." <sup>24</sup> Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. <sup>25</sup> And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed. (Genesis 2:18–25)

Simeon the Stylite was a Syrian man born in 395 A. D. in northern Syria. He became zealous for Christianity at age 13, and joined a monastery at 16. But he was so extreme in his views that he was asked to leave the monastery. So he shut himself up in a hut for 1 and a half years, and did not eat or drink during the season of Lent, which was hailed as a miracle. He then chose to live alone on a small rocky place less than 20 meters in diameter, but pilgrims began to seek him out. To get away from them, he found a pillar with a small platform on it. He moved to one or two others, with platforms of about 1 metre square. For sustenance small boys from the nearby village would climb up the pillar and pass him parcels of flat bread and goats' milk. He may also have pulled up food in buckets via a pulley. There he lived for 37 years.

His example of extreme asceticism and isolation has become admired, adored, and canonised by some. But you'd have to search high and low in the Bible to find anywhere in Scripture where isolation from others is celebrated and venerated. On the contrary, the Bible is a book about community, companionship, relationship, family. There is nothing venerated in cutting yourself off from people. In fact, Proverbs tells us <sup>1</sup> A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; He rages against all wise judgment. (Proverbs 18:1)

We see the original, perfect design for mankind was not isolationism, but community. That is found in Genesis 2.

Genesis 2 is an expansion and magnification of what is summarised in chapter 1. The creation of man is given just five verses in chapter 1, but chapter 2 is entirely given to the creation of mankind. We saw last time that Genesis 2 explained that man is a unique creation, made of the dust of the earth and God's Spirit, placed in a unique country, the orderly garden of Eden, given a unique commission, to tend and keep the Garden, with one unique commandment: eat of every tree except one.

But the story of man is not complete when we talk about his creation, his home, his task, and his commandment. For a large section of Genesis 2 is taken up with the creation of companionship. Verses 18 to 25 zoom into what was described in one phrase in chapter 1 – He made them male and female. Here this passage gives us how this companionship unfolded: first the call for it, then the craving for it, and finally the creation of it.

### I. The Call for Companionship

<sup>18</sup> And the LORD God said, "*It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.*"

Now this verse should jar us. For all of chapter 1 and 2, we have only heard God see, know or say that it is good, it is good. This is the very first time we read that something is not good. But this is not evil, caused by man's sin. This 'not good' situation is by design. It is not an error or a mistake; it

is a deliberate incompleteness, a designed method of creating humanity in stages so as to highlight and accentuate who we are and what we need.

Here we are told that it is not good that man be alone. If man is solitary, alone, isolated, it is not part of the good plan of God for creation. Man by himself is not the completed picture of shalom, of wholeness, goodness. Had God left man in this state, creation would have been deficient, incomplete.

What this tells us is that man is made for companionship. Man is not like some of the animals that live solitary lives except for mating: bears, snow leopards, sharks. Man is made to be with other humans. That companionship is of different kinds. The first, and most basic, is marriage, as we'll see as the chapter goes on. The bond of male and female in marriage leads to another form of companionship: family. The nuclear family of parents and children. And then as time progresses, it becomes the extended family of grandparents and grandchildren, aunts and uncles, nephews and nieces, and cousins.

The next kind of companionship is friendship. The bond of shared and mutual interests, of having something in common that draws two people together to just enjoy each other's company and do things together.

Beyond friendship, there is community. A larger group of people, standing in different kinds of relationship to each other, several families, several friends, but united around a shared interest: it could be the neighbourhood, or a religion, or education, or sport, or science, or really anything. An ethnic group is a community united by language and customs.

The largest and broadest kind of companionship is what we call a culture. A culture is when a people share the same religion, the same worldview, and then flesh that out in art, and language, and politics, and justice, and social customs.

Now, not every human being is going to get married, not everyone grows up in a family, some never enjoy friendship. But no one really can live without some level of companionship. Even the man who fancies himself a lone wolf gives himself away because he wants others to notice he is a lone wolf and come and ask him about his lone wolfness. He might not want a lot of companionship, but he still wants some. A true solipsist, someone who thinks that he is all that really exists, is very rare, and is probably a mental condition needing help. We are all naturally and unavoidably social beings.

That should also tell us something about God Himself. If God has made us in His own image, and it is not good for us to be alone, what does that mean about God? Isn't God alone? And if God is alone, why couldn't it be fine if we were alone?

Well, perhaps this shows us that God is not alone, and has never been alone. G. K. Chesterton once wrote eloquently on what happens when God is thought to be a lonely, single, solitary Person instead of a tri-unity of Persons:

“The complex God of the Athanasian Creed may be an enigma for the intellect; but He is far less likely to gather the mystery and cruelty of a Sultan than the lonely god of Omar... The god who is a mere awful unity is not only a king but an Eastern king.

The heart of humanity,... is certainly much more satisfied by the strange hints and symbols that gather round the Trinitarian idea, the image of a council at which mercy pleads as well as justice,

the conception of a sort of liberty and variety existing even in the inmost chamber of the world. For Western religion has always felt keenly the idea 'it is not well for man to be alone.'...For to us Trinitarians (if I may say it with reverence) – to us God Himself is a society...Suffice it to say here that this triple enigma is as comforting as wine and open as an English fireside; that this thing that bewilders the intellect utterly quiets the heart: but out of the desert, from the dry places and, the dreadful suns, come the cruel children of the lonely God; the real Unitarians who with scimitar in hand have laid waste the world. For it is not well for God to be alone."

Here is why it is not good for man to be alone: because man is made in God's image, and God is love. God has always been love, love within Himself before the worlds began circling their stars.

So, to complete the image of God in man, God announces what He will do. "I will make him a helper comparable to him."

A helper, comparable to him. The word for helper, ezer is used of God Himself. It means one who assists, who contributes to your purposes, who joins you in your endeavours. The idea behind comparable means someone like you in nature who fits. The word is deliberately chosen to show that this companion will not be his superior, nor will it be his inferior. The companion is like him in every way, a polarity to him, as the south pole is to the north.

Well, the next thing that the Lord does is to create an awareness of this need in Adam. He creates a craving for companionship.

## II. The Craving for Companionship

<sup>19</sup> Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought *them* to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that *was* its name.

<sup>20</sup> So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.

Now verse 19 may be simply recalling the fact that God had created all the living creatures of the world. It may be that God created more of them and brought them to Adam. More likely, this just refers back to their creation. Verse 5 is rightly translated, "the Lord God had formed every beast." The Bible doesn't say if God brought just samples of creatures, or perhaps just the creatures endemic to the Garden. Naming the creatures is something we are still doing, thousands of years later. Likely he brought representatives of species, and only those land and birds creatures close to Eden. As mankind expanded, the naming would continue. He now brings these to Adam to see what he would call them.

This is very significant. If you look back in chapter 1, you can see who is doing the naming.

<sup>5</sup> God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day. (Genesis 1:5)

<sup>8</sup> And God called the firmament Heaven. So the evening and the morning were the second day. (Genesis 1:8)

<sup>10</sup> And God called the dry *land* Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas. And God saw that *it was* good. (Genesis 1:10)

God gives names to all the realms of creation. But now when it comes to the living creatures of Earth, God delegates this role to Adam.

By naming it, two things happen. First, Adam asserts dominion. Only by naming is there the ability to lead, control, shape. Without each creature having a name, you cannot identify it, describe it,

know it, understand it, and thereby bring God's authority to bear on it. Naming something is the only way we can have a mental concept of it. The first thing children do with their teddy-bears is name them. The great joy of bird-watching and game drives is not just to spot the animal, but to quote its name. You wouldn't get much pleasure out of saying "Look, another grayish four-footed creature." The specific name is the joy of knowing it specifically. You can see God graciously giving Adam the role of sub-creator, bringing order to the world which always begins with naming. It is a great kindness and great insight into the heart of God to see a God so generous, so kind as to make these fabulously beautiful creatures, and then let Adam name them. The text is clear: And whatever Adam called each living creature, that *was* its name. God did not correct Adam's names, or reject them.

The second thing that happens is not an effect on creation, but an internal effect on Adam. As Adam names them, he sees a pattern in all creation: a polarity, a duality, a symmetry. Male and female. He realises the creation comes in pairs that create groups and then those many plural words we use for groups of animals: flocks, herds, packs, schools, colonies, prides, troops, swarms. Something is not found, according to verse 28. It is that helper comparable to Adam. The very same words God used to describe what He would make. Adam realises that he does not have a symmetrical counterpart. That's also problematic for evolution. If Adam was merely an evolved primate, he would surely have found many similar ape like creatures to be a counterpart for himself. Clearly he was different, physically, and spiritually.

He also realises that amongst all these animals, as delightful as they are, he has no fellowship with any of them. None of them share his image. None can commune with him, know him.

So why didn't God just make the companion without this?

It seems this is another window into the heart of God. It seems God delights to create anticipation and longing before meeting the need. It seems God delights to create desire and hunger, before gladly satisfying the need. We're like this too, because we're in His image. When we have a great present, or gift ready for our children, we spend time building anticipation. We talk about the great birthday, about the wonderful surprise, about the incredible gifts. The building of anticipation will maximise the joy of when the child opens the present, and the joy of the parent in seeing desire turn into filled delight. That's what is going on here. God has a present for Adam that is going to absolutely overwhelm him with her beauty and perfection. But God isn't just going to plop her under the nearest tree. God is building desire in Adam, and that means creating loneliness in Adam.

Perhaps that helps us understand the purpose of some of our trials, and some of the delays in answering our prayers. In some of those cases, a good God is not only preparing the gift, but preparing our hearts to better appreciate the gift. Sometimes the gift is deliverance, sometimes relief, sometimes healing, sometimes provision, sometimes protection. But often, since being ungrateful is part of our fallen condition, it is wise of God to get our hearts ready for the gift when it comes.

Well, Adam is now suitably ready for the gift.

### **III. God's Creation of the Companion**

<sup>21</sup> And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. <sup>22</sup> Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.

So a few questions arise as we think about this creation of the woman. First, why didn't God create male and female in the same moment? Why the staggered creation?  
Second, why didn't God create another man?  
Third, why didn't God create the woman from the dust? Why the rib?

Paul actually gives us the answer to the first question.

<sup>12</sup> And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. <sup>13</sup> For Adam was formed first, then Eve. (1 Timothy 2:12–13)

<sup>8</sup> For man is not from woman, but woman from man. <sup>9</sup> Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man. (1 Corinthians 11:8–9)

Paul tells us that God created men and women separately to distinguish their roles. He was creating an order. One was going to assume the burden of headship, the other of helpship. Had God made them both simultaneously, that distinction in roles would have been lost.

The answer to the second question, why didn't God create another man? is that God was not creating a replica of Adam, but a counterpart to him. Male and female are in every way, complements to each other.

Modern genetic science has confirmed this. Males carry both X and Y chromosomes; X chromosomes that engender females; Y chromosomes that engender males. Females carry only X chromosomes. If the female was created first and the male taken from her body, reproduction would have been impossible, for there would have been nothing but X chromosomes, so only females could have been produced. The Bible is absolutely binary when it comes to sex. Male and female.

Why then, the rib? Well, actually, the Hebrew word translated rib is usually translated side. It may well simply refer to God taking one of the portions of Adam's side and creating Eve from that. This is all part of the design between masculinity and femininity. God creates the race from dust and His own breath. If God had repeated that, males and females might think of themselves as two different human races, taken separately and independently from the ground. But by making the woman from the rib of man, it showed that she and he are the same essence, the same race, the same family. The woman is of the same essence as the man. The rib is likely also the best place to symbolise a companion. Taken from his head; it might suggest his superior, taken from his feet his inferior. But from his side suggests his equal, his companion, and yet one under his arm's protection and close to his heart.

And now when Adam wakes up, it is the ultimate Christmas morning for him. He beholds the most beautiful thing he has ever seen in the Garden. More splendid in form than the most glorious animal, more beautiful than any of the flowers of Eden, more desirable than anything in the Garden. This is more than one of the creatures he must rule and lead. This is him, but not him. This is his companion, his friend, his lover, his family, his community.

So three things result from this presentation: poetry, a pronouncement and perfect fellowship.

The first thing is that Adam explodes in the first recorded words by a human being, and in the Hebrew this is in poetic form.

<sup>23</sup> And Adam said: "This *is* now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man." (Genesis 2:23)

Adam is exclaiming that she is not something separate from him, but part of him. My bone and flesh speaks of deep relationship of relationship, but even of covenant loyalty. When the tribes of

Israel come to David at Hebron to anoint him king, they say, “we are your bone and flesh”. They don't mean, we are relatives; they mean, we swear loyalty to you. So this may be almost a kind of wedding vow, a formula of loyalty. Flesh and bone may even be a Hebraism for weakness and strength, similar our modern formula “in sickness and in health”. She shall be called woman – in the Hebrew *ishah* – because she was taken from man – *ish*.

The second thing that happens is a pronouncement. And this is not said by Adam, so it is either the comment made by Moses, or the direct words of God said as He brought these two together in the first wedding ceremony on Earth. The pronouncement is made even before there are fathers and mothers on the earth, but it anticipates what will be. Marriage will be the moment of a man leaving his family and beginning a new family. This doesn't mean the daughter does not leave her family. The emphasis is laid on the man leaving, because if he remains with his parents, then you don't have a new family. The leaving is not just physically, it is also emotionally, making the spouse the closest and truest family. It is also financial leaving, becoming independent. Marriage is a two-sided coin: leaving and cleaving. Cleaving means joining, uniting, and it refers to a union of two becoming one. Two lives unite in a covenant agreement to be one: spiritually, emotionally, and physically. The woman who was taken from man's flesh, now the two return, and become one. In that moment of companionship, the two halves of humanity make up humanity in its fullness, and God beholds it and says, “it is very good”

The third thing that we read of in this moment is perfect companionship. <sup>25</sup> And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

In this moment of unfallen innocence, Adam and Eve had no concept of Self, with a capital S. Each was so focused on loving the other, that there was no self-consciousness, self-doubt, self-awareness to ruin perfect fellowship. In this moment of innocence, there was perfect union and perfect unity, without a hint of selfishness. In perfect fellowship you want to know and be known in fullness. Nakedness before the Fall is the state of perfect openness, total selflessness with no guilt and no shame.

The Fall not only ruined fellowship with our Creator, it ruined fellowship with each other. No longer could we know and be known without selfishness and self-awareness. It is not that nakedness is now our ideal state. We are supposed to feel shame in the presence of public nudity. Our nakedness could no longer be tolerated by fallen natures now filled with sexual sins, with selfishness, with the desire to use and be used. Nakedness could now only exist lawfully in the privacy of a married couple in covenant union.

But God never did away with companionship, and never will, because God Himself lives in fellowship and in love.