

# What's Love Got To Do with It?

By Adam Andreassen

Meeting Amy was like arriving home at the end of a long day. We had known each other only a few days, but it already seemed as though we had always been together. Suddenly, the phrase made famous by the movie *Jerry Maguire* was no longer a silly cliché. Perhaps you remember the scene. Tom Cruise and Renee Zellweger stand in an elevator watching a deaf couple interact. The man signs to the woman, “You ... complete ... me.” And she melts into his arms.

Here I am, six months into marriage and feeling all the more that I have always been in love with Amy—even before our meeting. The silhouette of this blonde beauty was carved deeply into my heart long before I even knew her name. So when I finally met her, I knew what Jerry Maguire meant when he later repeated those three words, “You complete me.” I understood what Adam experienced when he saw Eve, and said, “at last.” And I comprehended just a little of what God felt when he first saw us, his new creation.

Now I realize why God gave Amy and me to each other—so we could join him in understanding how it feels to fall madly in love.

## Beginnings

In the first century, when a Jewish man fell in love with a woman he went to her father's home and persuaded him to seal an engagement. Then he returned to his own father's house and began to build an addition to the home. For the next year everything the Jewish man did revolved around getting the house ready. When finished, he sent out word and a large party swept the waiting bride off her feet and away to her new home. While everyone else partied, the couple went together into the home and sealed their unity forever. Then they returned to the party, where the new bride was officially welcomed into their new home.<sup>1</sup>



After his resurrection, Jesus said to his disciples, "There are many rooms in my Father's home, and I am going to prepare a place for you. If this were not so, I would tell you plainly. When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am" (John 14:12-13 NLT).

The disciples understood what Jesus said. These were the words of a man who had just become engaged.

## The story of Genesis introduces a theme developed in the rest of Scripture—the image of God as a passionately determined husband who will pay any price to reclaim his wife.

Jesus' death and resurrection had accomplished the renewal of a broken love affair—one that had begun in Genesis. But without an adequate understanding of "beginnings," we see only dry theology in action on the cross. The story of Genesis introduces a theme developed in the rest of Scripture—the image of God as a passionately determined husband who will pay any price to reclaim his wife.

In this context we also find the beginnings of an answer to another question that has plagued us for thousands of years—did God institute a male-dominated society and religion?

### Separation and Fulfillment

When God first speaks in the Bible his creation work begins with separation—taking something out of what had already existed.<sup>2</sup> "Then God says, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness" (Gen. 1:3-4). God brings light out of darkness, a fact confirmed by Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:6, "For God... said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness.'" This act of separating is repeated throughout the creation account. God brings water out of water (Gen. 1:7), land out of water (vs. 9), vegetation from earth (vs. 11), even mankind from himself.<sup>3</sup>

Separation is the first of two phases that define God's creation. The second phase is combination. Combination completes God's creative act and brings a sense of fulfillment. The phrase "after their kind" appears in the creation account after the third day. Just as land was grouped together with other land, so also was the giraffe separated from elephants and then combined with other giraffes—thus completing the process that separation started.

Much as the baby giraffe would take "after its

kind" and resemble its parents, we were intended to resemble God. But there is a difference. When other creatures take after their kind, the Hebrew phrase comes from *min*, which means "species" or "kind." By contrast, the two phrases used to describe man come from the words for "image" and "similitude." Whereas the rest of creation takes after its own kind, we are patterned after God,

or resemble him. But what is the resemblance?

Nothing I have read makes as much sense as an explanation by Robert Davidson: "The meaning of 'in our image' may be defined by what follows in verse 26: 'and let them have dominion.'... Just as God is lord over all creation, so man reflects this lordship in his relationship to the rest of creation."<sup>4</sup>

Notice that man in God's image here refers to male and female collectively. Together, the imagery was complete. "And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Gen. 1:27). Contrary to the claims of many, the Bible is clear that male and female together would rule over the earth ("let them rule over," Gen. 1:26). It would likewise make little sense if only females lost their right to rule after the Fall because it would tear down our collective identity in the image of God.

Still, some questions surround male and female equality in Genesis 1. For instance, verse 27 uses the singular form to describe man created in God's image (Adam). Later, Adam is given authority over creation prior to Eve's existence. Furthermore, God allows Adam as lord of the garden to name all the creatures—including Eve. This has given some plausibility to the claim that Adam was in some way superior in authority to Eve even before the Fall. However, the text does distinguish between the earth, which man and woman would rule, and the garden, which was charged to Adam.

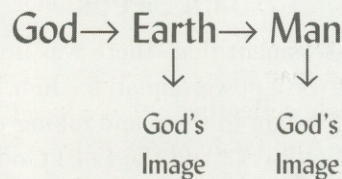
Someday Amy and I will stop teasing our parents that they will never have grandchildren and we will follow nature's path of rebuilding ourselves in a child. If I have a son, I want him to learn what my father taught me—how to be a man. I will want my daughter to learn what Amy's mother taught her—how to be a woman. It is not an insult to either

sex that we will raise a son differently than a daughter. When God gave Adam the garden to rule, he was not giving him more authority than Eve, only authority in a different realm.

Genesis 2:7 reads: "Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being." The word *Adam* means "ground." God formed man from (out of) the ground. Adam was named after that from which he came—the earth.

## God → Earth → Man

God then placed Adam in the garden so he could "cultivate it and keep it." Just as God takes care of the universe, so also it was Adam's role to take care of the garden.<sup>5</sup> Adam in the garden symbolized God in the universe. God's lordship over the earth opens up to a new dimension when we see Adam's lordship over Eden.



God gave Adam instructions regarding the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Since Adam was caretaker of the garden, it seems safe to assume that he relayed the information about the tree to Eve, especially since she later quoted this command to the serpent. We may also infer that it was Adam's duty to keep the garden and its creatures well managed—a task he would soon neglect.

## Something Missing

Genesis 2:4b-24 repeats and enlarges on the creation account in Genesis 1:1-2:4. Jacques Doukhan has demonstrated a parallel of themes between the two Genesis accounts.<sup>6</sup> Whereas Genesis 1:1-2:4 climaxes with the creation of man and woman and concludes with the separation of the Sabbath from other days, Genesis 2:4b-24 climaxes with the creation of woman and concludes with the separation of the couple for marriage.

For the first time, God utters the phrase, "It isn't good." Everything so far has been good. Now, in a moment of reflection, God declares, "It is not good for the man to be alone." Most Christians agree that God knows everything—seeing the end from the beginning. Nevertheless, on a practical level, one wonders how

God knew that it wasn't good for man to be alone. Was he noticing something in Adam's behavior that demonstrated aloneness? Perhaps. More likely though, God was sharing a hint of his own emotions prior to creation of mankind.

Genesis offers no reason for God choosing to make man in his own image. Now as God looks at a mini-representation of himself, he declares that it isn't good for Adam to be alone. Note that Adam's reaction to being alone is not mentioned until after Eve is created. Instead we see God's response to Adam's aloneness. God understands what Adam feels because he was longing for us before we were even made! A man's love for a woman is a God-given glimpse into the passionate longing with which he threw himself into creating and loving us!

Again, Adam's response to solitude is not described, only that no helper was found. Creation is incomplete. Separation has occurred, as God brought Adam out of the ground and formed him into a unique being. But where is the combination to complete and fulfill this creation? God has a remarkable plan for completing his creation; he will now uniquely rebuild man and fashion a woman as an analogy to his own joy in uniquely recreating the image of himself in the man first, and then in the woman.

## A Power Equal to Man

Genesis 2:18 is perhaps the most vital text in understanding woman in relation to man, yet it is a text that has in all probability been mistranslated for hundreds of years.

"Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him" (Gen. 2:18). Theologians have long suggested that woman was primarily intended to be Adam's helper—an assistant suitable (or corresponding) to him and his need. However, there is a better translation to this text, one that brings woman into existence not as a submissive servant, but as an equal power.

In 1983, R. David Freedman wrote a groundbreaking article for the *Biblical Archaeology Review* in which he suggested that the Hebrew words for "helper" and "suitable" have changed in meaning since they were originally written:



I believe the customary translation of these two words, despite its near universal adoption, is wrong. That is not what the words are intended to convey. They should be translated instead to mean approximately “a power equal to man.” That is, when God concluded that he would create another creature so that man would not be alone, he decided to make “a power equal to him,” someone whose strength was equal to man’s. Woman was not intended to be merely man’s helper. She was to be instead his partner. A careful study of the two Hebrew words involved will demonstrate this.<sup>7</sup>

Freedman points first to the word for helper, *‘ezer*, which is a combination of two roots, one of which is *‘z-r*, meaning “to rescue” or “to save,” the other of which is *g-z-r*, meaning “to be strong.” Freedman says that the difference is the first sign, the raised *‘*, which stands for the letter *‘ayin*. Today, that letter in Hebrew is usually silent, but in ancient times it was a guttural sound made in the back of the throat. The symbol *g* stands for the letter *ghayyin*, which is a guttural, much like the ancient *‘ayin*.

Sometime around 1500 B.C., in Phoenicia, these two different phonemes, or sounds, began to be written with the same sign. Freedman says that in Hebrew, the merger of the two took place later, probably around 1200 B.C. “Thus, when the Bible was written, what originally had been two roots of *‘ezer*, one with an *‘ayin* and one with *ghayyin*, had merged into one.”<sup>8</sup> Shortly after the merger in pronunciation came the merger in meaning. The word *‘ezer* could mean “to save” (*‘z-r*) or “to be strong,” (*g-z-r*). “But in time the root *‘z-r* was always interpreted as ‘to help,’ a mixture of both nuances.”<sup>9</sup>

The word *‘ezer* occurs twenty-one times in the Hebrew Bible. Eight of those times it means “savior.” These are easily identified because they are grouped with other expressions of saving or with associated ideas.<sup>10</sup> In other passages it means “strength”<sup>11</sup>

Thus, forms of *‘ezer* as used in the Bible can mean “to save” or “to be strong.” In Genesis 2:18b, when God speaks of the being He is to create to relieve the man’s loneliness, He is surely not creating this creature to be the man’s savior. This makes no sense. God creates this new creature to be, like the man, a power (or strength) superior to the animals. This is the true meaning of *‘ezer* as used in this passage.<sup>12</sup>

The second word in Genesis 2:18 is *kenegdo*, usually translated as “suitable,” or “appropriate.” This word is more problematic because it occurs only once. However, in later Mishnaic Hebrew the root means “equal,” as in a famous saying that calls the study of the Torah equal (*keneged*) to all the other commandments. Freedman suggests that there is no basis for translating *keneged* as “fit” or “appropriate,” preferring the translation that conveys equality. He states, “I think that there is no other way of understanding the phrase (*‘ezer kenegdo*) that can be defended philologically.”<sup>13</sup>

It seems that the passage, “I will make him a helper suitable for him,” could be better translated, “I will make him a power equal to him.” This translation gains some support in the Septuagint, where in Genesis 2:20, the word *o[moioj* is used to explain that there was no one who corresponded to Adam. In Greek, the word means “of the same nature” or “like” Adam.

## Adam Sleeps

After God’s assessment that “there was not found a helper suitable (or a power equal) for him,” he goes to work—putting Adam to sleep and taking one of his ribs. Genesis 2:22 says, “And the Lord God *fashioned* into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and he brought her to the man.”

Throughout history many have attempted to make this passage also suggest woman was in some way inferior to man because she came out of him. At times, this assumption reached outrageous proportions, such as in 1560, when Edward Gosynhill went so far as to suggest that a dog actually ran away with Adam’s rib, forcing God to create Eve from the rib of a dog. According to Gosynhill, this incident explained why the woman “at her husband doth bark and bawl.”<sup>14</sup>

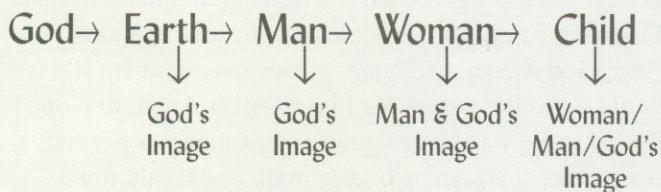
In reality, the story of woman’s creation from out of man offers profound insight into Adam, and by extension the rest of mankind. Adam’s first recorded words occur after God has brought the woman to man. “At last!” Adam exclaimed. “She is part of my own flesh and bone! She will be called ‘woman,’ because she was taken out of a man” (Gen. 2:23). Heretofore, only God’s response has been mentioned. Now Adam looks at what came out of himself and offers his own form of, “It is very good.”

Part of Adam’s excited response stems from his recognition of complete equality in Eve. You might say that he saw himself in her. The Hebrew strengthens this interpretation in verse 22, when God “fashioned” woman. Genesis 2:7 uses the word *yasar*, which means

“to form,” to describe Adam’s creation. A much different word is used to describe how God built Eve. In Genesis 2:22, the term is from *banah*, which means “to build.” But this word can also mean “to re-build.” In this light, Adam’s choice of words makes even more sense. To paraphrase, “She’s just like me!”

I imagine God watching all of these events, full of warmth because Adam was experiencing what God experienced when he first saw us. Eve was feeling the delight of Adam similar to God’s delight in us. And soon, she would experience the joy of creating something uniquely like her, from out of her own being—a child. Then, the circle would be complete and humans would have yet another spotlight of God’s passionate love for us.

Adam’s joy at having an equal companion is comparable, but not equal, to God’s sense of companionship in creating beings that could relate to him. Thus, Eve’s origin, just like Adam’s, reveals God’s heart of love and joy at his creation.



Freedman writes: “Eve is in Adam’s image to the degree that she is his equal—just as man is created in God’s image in that he fulfills an analogous role. Moreover, ‘male and female He created them’ does not lead us to conclude the superiority of either.”<sup>15</sup>

The effort God invested in woman is no mistake to the symbolism, for in a similar way to mankind being the crowning act of creation woman was similarly endowed with rich artistry and design. Paul says man is the “image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man” (1 Cor. 11:7). Far from downgrading women, this is actually a high compliment—God chose woman as his finest and last analogy, his lasting statement of the joy he had in making earth.

The second creation account finishes with a flourish, just like the first. “For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh” (Gen. 2:25). Creation closes with the union of man to woman, separation has found combination.

Man and woman are one flesh—a union of equals. There can be no doubt that woman was equal to man in power, strength, authority, and worth. Did that equality change after the Fall? If not, why did God say woman would be ruled by her husband?

## The Fall

The last verse of Genesis 2 reads as a chilling prologue, “And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed” (Gen. 2:25). There can be only one reason to make this statement: soon Adam and Eve will be both naked and ashamed.

Genesis 3:1 begins, “Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made.” The Hebrew word for “crafty” is *aruwim*, which sounds much like the word for naked, *arowm*. There seems to be some connection between the two words—and both draw their names from the same root, which means “to be bare” or “to be smooth.” Perhaps the serpent’s craftiness was his eventual success in laying Adam and Eve bare—or aware of their nakedness in the universe and before God. Thus, although they were always bare and vulnerable, they become aware and ashamed only when the serpent introduces mistrust into the formula, and “lays them bare.”<sup>16</sup>

The story of the temptation and Fall is a familiar one, though some distinctions should be drawn. The serpent deceived Eve; Adam was not deceived (1 Tim. 2:14). Though Eve was not guiltless, it would seem that the greatest responsibility lay on Adam’s shoulders. Adam had been the only one actually to hear God’s command to stay away from the tree; Adam had been placed in the garden specifically to take of it and its inhabitants. Why didn’t he interfere?

Scripture does not support the traditional view that Eve strayed from Adam’s side. Genesis 3:6 says, “When the woman saw that the tree was good for food . . . she took from its fruit and ate; and she also gave to her husband *with her*, and he ate.” The Bible does not explicitly state whether Adam was silently present for the conversation, but it is clear that he was present when Eve ate. John Eldredge writes about the Fall in his book, *Wild at Heart*:

Adam isn’t away in another part of the forest; he has no alibi. He is standing right there, watching the whole thing unravel. What does he do? Nothing. Absolutely nothing. He says not a word, doesn’t lift a finger. He won’t risk, he won’t fight, and he won’t rescue Eve. Our first father—the first real man—gave in to paralysis. He denied his very nature and



went passive. And every man after him, every son of Adam, carries in his heart now the same failure. Every man repeats the sin of Adam, every day. We won't risk, we won't fight, and we won't rescue Eve. We truly are a chip off the old block.<sup>17</sup>

Adam's failure hurts more than only himself. Eldredge quotes Jan Meyers:

"Eve was convinced that God was withholding something from her." Not even the extravagance of Eden could convince her that God's heart is good. "When Eve was [deceived], the artistry of being a woman took a fateful dive into the barren places of control and loneliness." Now every daughter of Eve wants to "control her surrounding, her relationships, her God." No longer is she vulnerable; now she will be grasping. No longer does she want simply to share in the adventure; now she wants to control it. And as for her beauty, she either hides it in fear and anger, or she uses it to secure her place in the world. "In our fear that no one will speak on our behalf or protect us or fight for us, we start to recreate both ourselves and our role in the story. We manipulate our surroundings so we don't feel so defenseless." Fallen Eve either becomes rigid or clingy. Put simply, Eve is no longer simply *inviting*. She is either hiding in busyness or demanding that Adam come through for her; usually, an odd combination of both.<sup>18</sup>

In that moment, rather than interfere, Adam deliberately chose to worship Eve's will over God's. Woman has been on a goddess pedestal ever since. Eldredge says, "If you think I exaggerate, simply look around. Look at all the art, poetry, music, drama devoted to the beautiful woman. Listen to the language men use to describe her. Watch the powerful obsession at work. What else can this be but *worship*?"<sup>19</sup> This dependence has left most men without their true source of strength (God) and caused women at the very least to feel suffocated, and at the worst, abused as objects.

## Redemptive Judgment

Contrary to what I long assumed, Adam and Eve were not cursed—only the serpent was. In the story, the serpent is the only one not allowed to speak for itself, and the only one to which God predicted complete demise. Adam and Eve, on the other hand, were given judgments that would ultimately prepare them to receive their own redemption, just prophesied by God himself.

Eve was told, "You will bear children with intense

pain and suffering" (Gen. 3:16). This must be understood in light of the analogy drawn in the creation story between God, man, and woman. Man's domain was in the garden—it was here that his actions most clearly reflected God's image. Woman's domain was in childbearing—where her actions most clearly reflected God's image. Together, they formed a balanced picture of God's image.

Eve's pain in childbirth would prepare her uniquely to understand God's pain in his own creation. The Hebrew word for "pain" in this passage is the same word used in Genesis 6:6, where the Lord was "grieved" in his heart over his own creation and sent the Flood. Understanding the damage done is vital in preparing us to receive grace. Allowing Eve a taste of God's grief, while causing great anguish, was redemptive at its core.

"And though your desire will be for your husband, he will be your master" (Gen. 3:16) has been interpreted a number of different ways. However one thing is sure: the passage does not give man the right to dominate woman. There are a number of problems with such thinking. First, God does not tell man to rule over woman. It would make little sense for him to enlist Adam to judge Eve when he was just as guilty, if not more so. Second, God makes this statement as a matter of result, not a matter of necessity—"he will be your master." Finally, even if it were established that this verse gave woman the responsibility of submission, it remains only in the context of the home. Otherwise, the preceding clause would be inconsistent because she must necessarily desire all men and not only her husband.

God next turns to Adam and curses the ground, for which Adam will feel the effects. As with Eve, Adam's punishment fits his crime. Failure to bring the ground into submission will afterward bring him great frustration, though his desire will still be to eat from it. The clause, "In *toil* you shall eat of it" (Gen. 3:17), comes from the same word as Eve's pain of childbirth and God's pain in his own creation at the Flood.

## Still Equals?

But did Adam and Eve remain equals after the Fall? It seems clear that they did not lose their place in relation to God's image, for God's judgments reiterate women and men's unique roles as mother of creation and gardener/provider. The image was marred, but not lost. Furthermore, the imagery is expanded in the New Testament when the church comes out of Jesus (perhaps even from his side in John 19:33-34) and is thereafter likened to the woman, or bride.

If Eve retained her power and equality with Adam, how should one understand the statement concerning her husband ruling over her? If this statement could be reconciled, most, if not all justification for man's assertive dominance over women would be removed.

Freedman suggests that perhaps God's judgments should be seen not only in terms of his prescription, but also in his description of what would naturally change in Adam and Eve's attitudes as a result of their actions. As Freedman's chart shows, both would experience great frustration in their respective realms as childbearer and provider.<sup>20</sup>

	Role	New Attitude	Partner	Punishment
Adam	Farmer	Toil [Pain]	Earth	Willful production of thorns and thistles instead of grain (frustration)
Eve	Childbearing	Pain	Adam	Adam's willful dominance over Eve despite her desire for him (frustration)

Freedman's model seems to be in harmony with the spirit of the entire creation story. Sin would have its consequences, yet ultimately God would spare Adam and Eve from the worst, implanting redemptive elements in the consequences.

## The Part of Me I Had Always Missed

Without picturing God as a lovestruck husband in Genesis, chances are we will find it difficult to see him as a passionate lover when he suffers on the cross for you and me. Without this passion, God's love is reduced to an impersonal benevolence. And of course the chain reaction continues, because if God simply felt sorry for us, then our own self-image is broken—leaving us incapable of believing that God really “loved us so much he gave His Son” (John 3:16).

According to Genesis, creation was completed and fulfilled when God made you and me. When I met Amy I felt that I had finally come home at the end of a long journey—she was the part of me I had always missed. As we begin our life together as one, I thank God for sharing his heart with us through the story of creation and the gift of marriage.

## Notes and References

1. Larry Crabb, *Shattered Dreams* (Colorado Springs, Colo.: Waterbrook, 2001), 127-28.
2. This is not to say that God never spoke the universe into existence out of nothing, only that Genesis is silent in regard to how the earth came to exist in its form prior to Creation week. Its existence in some way seems implied from the text.
3. Jacques Doukhan has noticed that in Genesis the separation theme is repeated in all of God's creative acts. Jacques B. Doukhan, *The Genesis Creation Story* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1978), 48.
4. Quoted in *ibid.*, 46. This thought is also developed in Ps. 8:3-8.
5. Richard M. Davidson sees Eden as a type or symbol of the Sanctuary that illustrates Christ's work on behalf of humans. The words used to describe Adam's work in the garden (literally, to serve and keep) are the same terms used to describe the work of the Levites in the Sanctuary (for example, Num. 3:7-8). Richard M. Davidson, “The Garden of Eden a Sanctuary?” Unpublished manuscript.
6. Duane A. Garrett, *Rethinking Genesis: The Sources and Authorship of the First Book of the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1991), 195.
7. R. David Freedman, “Woman, A Power Equal to a Man,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 9 (1983): 56.
8. *Ibid.*, 56.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Ps. 70:5 is an example: “O God, hurry to my rescue” (*ezri*).
11. Deut. 33:26: “The Rider of the Sky in your strength (*be ezreka*).”
12. Freedman. “Woman, A Power Equal to a Man,” 57.
13. *Ibid.*, 57-58.
14. Philip C. Almond, *Adam and Eve in Seventeenth-Century Thought* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 147.
15. Freedman. “Woman, A Power Equal to a Man,” 58.
16. I would be interested to see a study done on circumcision as a potential connection to being “laid bare” willingly before God—giving back that which was lost in Eden.
17. John Eldredge, *Wild At Heart: Discovering the Secret of a Man's Soul* (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 51.
18. *Ibid.*, 51-52.
19. *Ibid.*, 117.
20. Freedman, “Women, A Power Equal to a Man,” 58.

Adam Andreassen is a youth pastor in Burleson, Texas. (Below, with Amy).

