

# “Oneness”

## Spring Series 1

### Lesson 2

#### “Genesis 2-3”

**Objective:** To examine the Scriptures in order to seek understanding and guidance on how we are to work together as the people of God using all the gifts and resources that God has bestowed upon the Church. Through the centuries the relationship of men and women and their service to God has been hotly debated and continually examined. We consider what we are undertaking here to be a continuation of that debate and dialogue as we carefully and prayerfully seek the guidance of God through His Word and His Spirit. We are people of the Book and it is to the book that we look for answers to our questions, not to traditions, to science, or to society.

**Materials:** The Bible, Ancient translations, Commentaries, both ancient and modern, Books, journal articles, dictionaries, the internet, inscriptions, Ancient letters, Ancient Documents, lectures and other resources as may be appropriate.

#### Procedures

1. To explore the message of God in the hope of understanding more fully its meaning first as it was understood by the original audiences of Scripture and what they will have understood as God’s will for their lives in community.
2. To understand how Scripture has inspired, challenged, and educated people down through the centuries guiding them not only in their personal lives, but in their vocation as image-bearers of God.
3. We will seek to find out how beliefs have played a role in the history of Christianity and how they continue to impact our existence and service to Jesus Christ in the world today.
4. We will provide a sheet to take home as a reminder of what has been examined and to provide additional opportunities for consideration of these matters and their application in order to live out daily our eternal destiny. This sheet can be used as a discussion guide for small group discussion.

As reminder of what we studied in our last lesson: human beings, male and female are said to have been made in the “image” (תְּצַלְמֵנוּ - *tselem* in Hebrew - εἰκόν - *ikon* in Greek.) of God. Their role was to express the sovereignty and dominion of God into the world as His representative. The issue of hierarchy between the male and the female was not addressed at all in Genesis chapter 1. The issue of ruling as a community was highlighted in that chapter, especially in verse 28, and they both are commanded to **“Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”**<sup>1</sup> They (all plural verbs here) are given these commands as a community, by God Himself, as both male and female acting in concert with one another. They are called to be God’s sovereign representative, as one community, that bears His image.

Beginning at Genesis 2:7 we have an additional account of the forming of the man, this time with the added details that he was formed from the dust of the ground and then God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and he (the earthling) became a

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<sup>1</sup> CEB.

living being. All the verbs and nouns used here are singular in form and make it clear that the text is referring only to one human being created initially. This issue is made even more apparent as we come to 2:15. At 2:15 we come back to the issue of *Adam* (the human), singular being placed in the Garden to till (עָבַד - *avar* - to labor, or do work) and keep (שָׁמַר - *shamar* - to keep, to watch, to preserve, to keep property in trust, to act as a watchman) it.

Commands are clearly given to *Adam*, (singular) that he may eat freely of every tree in the garden (2:16), with the exception of “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (2:17). There is no overt indication of *Adam’s* gender given here as was given so distinctly in chapter 1; where we were told distinctly that the human beings were male and female. There are, however, male prepositions used throughout in reference to *Adam*. It is to be noted that the command regarding the “keeping,” “tilling,” and what may be eaten are given only directly to *Adam*.

At 2:18 the text indicates that it was not good for *Adam* to be “alone,” and God indicates that He will make “for him” a “helper (עֲזָרָה - *avar*) as his partner (נֶגֶד - *neged*).” God then brings all the animals before *Adam* and he named them (2:19-20). At the end of

verse 20 it is stated that a “helper” (עֲזָרָה - *avar*) “corresponding to him” (כְּנֶגְדּוֹ - *kenegedo*) was not found. The word translated here as “helper” (עֲזָרָה - *ezer*) has generated considerable debate as to its meaning at 2:18, 20. In sixteen out of the twenty-one usages in the Old Testament this word refers to God as a superior “helper” to mankind. Three other references refer to men “helping” other men (*BDB*, 740). While the final two instances refer to the relationship of the woman to the man.<sup>2</sup> This meaning is highlighted in the account where God said He would make a “helper” (עֲזָרָה - *ezer*) for *Adam*, one “corresponding to him” (כְּנֶגְדּוֹ - *kenegedo*). The word used in this context has often been considered to reflect a diminutive aspect with regard to the “woman,” and her relationship to the man. It is perhaps useful to also note that the verbal root of this noun (עָזַר - *ezer*) is used approximately eighty times in the Old Testament and is generally used with reference to military assistance with no clear indication of superiority, or inferiority.<sup>3</sup> Here we are alerted to the importance of companionship for *Adam*. He needs a “helper” that

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<sup>2</sup> Michael F. Stitzinger, “Genesis 1-3 and the Male/Female Role Relationship,” *Grace Theological Journal*, 2.1 (1981), pp. 23-44.

<sup>3</sup> Carl Schultz, “עָזַר” in R. Laird Harris, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Vol. 2 (Chicago IL: Moody Press, 1980), pp. 660-661.

corresponds to him. To “help” someone does not necessarily imply that the helper is stronger than the one being helped; merely that the latter’s strength is inadequate in itself (eg. Joshua 1:14<sup>4</sup>; 10:4<sup>5</sup>, 6<sup>6</sup>; 1 Chronicles 12:17<sup>7</sup>, 19<sup>8</sup>, 21<sup>9</sup>, 22<sup>10</sup>).<sup>11</sup>

Some have come to the conclusion that the designation of someone as a “helper” (עֲזֵר - *ezer*) means that the one designated as a “helper” is then a superior, just as God is superior to man as his “helper.”<sup>12</sup> Certainly many disagree with this assessment, and at the very least one can say that there is nothing inherent in this

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<sup>4</sup> **Your wives, children, and cattle may remain in the land that Moses has given you on the east side of the Jordan. But all you brave fighters, organized for war, must cross over in front of your fellow Israelites. You must help them ....** CEB.

<sup>5</sup> **“Come up and help me. We will strike at Gibeon, because it has made peace with Joshua and with the Israelites.”** CEB.

<sup>6</sup> **The people of Gibeon sent word to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal: “Don’t desert your servants! Come to us quickly. Rescue us! Help us! All the Amorite kings from the highlands have assembled together against us.”** CEB.

<sup>7</sup> **David went out to meet them and said to them, “If you’ve come to me with good intentions in order to help me, then we will join forces. But if you’ve come to betray me to my enemies, though I’ve done no wrong, then may our ancestors’ God see it and punish you.”** CEB.

<sup>8</sup> **Some of the Manassites also joined David when he came with the Philistines for the battle against Saul. But he didn’t help them, because after considering the matter, the Philistine rulers sent him away. “He’ll rejoin his master Saul,” they said, “and it will cost us our heads.”** CEB.

<sup>9</sup> **They helped David against the raiding bands because they were all warriors and officers in the army.** CEB.

<sup>10</sup> **Each day men came to help David until his army became very large.** NET.

<sup>11</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, in the Word Biblical Commentary series, Vol. 1 (Waco TX: Word Books, Publishers, 1987), p. 68.

<sup>12</sup> Letha Dawson Scanzoni, and Nancy A. Hardesty, *All We’re Meant to Be*, Third ed. (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992) p. 26

word (עֲזֵר - *ezer*) that would indicate the lessor status of the woman as *Adam's* “helper” in Genesis 2. It is the context that would give meaning to the word and not something in the word itself. Some have seen in the fact that the “helper” is a human that there is the implication of inferior rank for the “helper.”<sup>13</sup> This is not good logic nor does the evidence bear the weight of such an assumption. This is certainly stretching the inherent meaning of the word (עֲזֵר - *ezer*).<sup>14</sup>

At verse 20, after all of the animals have been named there was not a “helper” “found” “who corresponded to him” (כְּנֶגְדּוֹ - *kenegedo*). Leupold indicates that the meaning here is that a “helper” could not be found that was “worthy of a man.” “He alone finds none of his kind.”<sup>15</sup> Von Rad also indicates the idea that a “worthy helper” is in view here.<sup>16</sup> Waltke indicates that the Hebrew term translated as “corresponding to” (כְּנֶגְדּוֹ - *kenegedo*) means “equal and adequate.” He goes on to say, “Men and women

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<sup>13</sup> George W. Knight III, *The New Testament Teaching On the Role Relationship of Men and Women* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Book House, 1977), p. 43.

<sup>14</sup> Genesis 2:18, 20; Exodus 18:4; Deuteronomy 33:7, 26, 29; Psalm 20:3; 33:20; 70:6; 89:20; 115: 9, 10, 11; 121:1, 2; 124:8; 146:4; Isaiah 30:5; Ezekiel 12:14; Hosea 13:9; Daniel 11:34.

<sup>15</sup> H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Book House, 1942), p. 134.

<sup>16</sup> Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis A Commentary*, Revised Edition (Philadelphia PA: The Westminster Press, 1972), p. 83.

differ in sexuality, but are equals as bearers of God’s image and in their standing before God.”<sup>17</sup> This equality before God can be seen throughout the Scriptures as women: pray directly to God (1 Samuel 1:9-13; 2:1-10); participate in sacrifice and ministry (Leviticus 12:6; Luke 8:1-3); are Nazirites (Numbers 6:2-4); parent with equal standing before the children (Leviticus 19:3; Proverbs 1:8-9); and receive and communicate divine revelation (Genesis 25:22-23; Judges 4:4-7; 2 Kings 22:13-20).<sup>18</sup>

This compound prepositional phrase, literally, “matching him” (כְּנֶגְדּוֹ - *kenegedo*) is found only here in Scripture. It expresses the idea of complementarity rather than the idea of identity. The help needed is not just with daily work, and procreation of children, though these aspects may be included, but with the mutual support that is provided by companionship.<sup>19</sup> “God empathizes with man’s loneliness.”<sup>20</sup> At verse 21, God causes “the man” (אָדָם - *the adam*) to fall into a deep sleep and then God “took” (יָקַח - *yikach*) one rib and then closes up his flesh. From

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<sup>17</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 2001), p. 86.

<sup>18</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 2001), p. 86.

<sup>19</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, p. 68.

<sup>20</sup> Nahum Sarna, *Genesis*, In the JPS Torah Commentary series (Philadelphia PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), p. 22.

this “rib” (צֶלַע - *tsela*) YHWH “built” it (בָּנָה - *banah*) into a woman (אִשָּׁה - *ishah*) and “brought” (יָבִיחָהּ - *yebieha*) her to the man. This divine act will alter radically the nature of the man and bring about new creatures so that female and male together become the one flesh that is wholeness rather than separate beings in isolation.<sup>21</sup> There is no indication of hierarchy here. We see that a lone man is not capable of reflecting the image of God into creation, because He is lonely. God is not lonely, but lives in community Himself, and is never described as being lonely. His image-bearer is created to live in community as a reflection of His image that is not lonely.

At verse 23 we are told that the man called the woman *Isshah* (אִשָּׁה - *woman*) and by indicating her origin the man also calls himself *Ish* (אִישׁ - *man*). In this section, it is purported, by some quarters, that there are numerous indications of a hierarchical relationship between the man and the woman. This is seen by some as the crucial section of Scripture indicating that woman was created from the beginning to serve the man in a subordinate role to the man. The evidence for such a perspective

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<sup>21</sup> Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, in the Overtures to Biblical Theology series (Philadelphia PA: Fortress Press, 1978), p. 94.

is weak and relies upon preconceived notions of hierarchy and thus is not inherent in the text itself. If you go looking for hints of hierarchy you are likely to find them lurking in lots of places.

There is however, no clear indication that this chapter actually has as its primary, or even secondary, concern the issue of hierarchy between the man and the woman. Rather, it is trying to convey the connectedness and the mutuality of this couple with each other and with God as the creator. The primary function is to highlight the sovereignty of God, especially over His image-bearing creatures. Secondly, this text is concerned with the community that God creates to represent Himself in the world as His image-bearer. God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is community and His image-bearer represents His communal nature. In God's nature is a community of service, each part serving the others, seeking the elevation of the other parts.<sup>22</sup>

Jesus indicated that His kingdom would be different from that of

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<sup>22</sup> Ephesians 5:21-27 <sup>21</sup> **and submit to each other out of respect for Christ.** <sup>22</sup> **For example, wives should submit to their husbands as if to the Lord.** <sup>23</sup> **A husband is the head of his wife like Christ is head of the church, that is, the savior of the body.** <sup>24</sup> **So wives submit to their husbands in everything like the church submits to Christ.** <sup>25</sup> **As for husbands, love your wives just like Christ loved the church and gave himself for her.** <sup>26</sup> **He did this to make her holy by washing her in a bath of water with the word.** <sup>27</sup> **He did this to present himself with a splendid church, one without any sort of stain or wrinkle on her clothes, but rather one that is holy and blameless.** CEB.

the Gentiles and it seems this was what God intended for human beings from the beginning, a mutual service and a mutual honoring.<sup>23</sup> In light of this, all the supposed markers of hierarchy are only seen by those who at the outset have the agenda of finding hierarchy as an issue in chapter 2.

Jesus makes it clear that His kingdom will not be a kingdom like the old hierarchal kingdoms of the Gentiles, but would be marked out by the fact that greatness and authority are redefined in terms of service and self-sacrifice.<sup>24</sup> There is no reason to expect that the understanding of hierarchy and authority that we see displayed by Jesus is not what God intended from the very beginning and should stand as the background for our discussions of hierarchy as understood in the creation accounts of Genesis, rather than a Gentile, or Greek, understanding. We must take care not to let Aristotle and others taint how we see this text. Keeping

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<sup>23</sup> Luke 22:25 **But Jesus said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles rule over their subjects, and those in authority over them are called ‘friends of the people.’** <sup>26</sup> **But that’s not the way it will be with you. Instead, the greatest among you must become like a person of lower status and the leader like a servant.** <sup>27</sup> **So which one is greater, the one who is seated at the table or the one who serves at the table? Isn’t it the one who is seated at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.** CEB.

<sup>24</sup> Matthew 20:25 **But Jesus called them to him and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them.** <sup>26</sup> **It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant,** <sup>27</sup> **and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave;** <sup>28</sup> **just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”** NRSV.

this in perspective will enable us to see that God intended a complementary relationship to exist between the man and the woman rather than a confrontational struggle for dominance of one over the other.

At 2:23 the man proclaims that, **“This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken.”**<sup>25</sup> The man and the woman are made of the same flesh, and bone, they are in reality “one flesh.” This verse expresses mutuality and oneness, not differentiation and hierarchy. “The woman is also God’s free creation.”<sup>26</sup> The two creatures belong together. The garden is the setting for this covenanted human community of solidarity, to share trust, and well-being. They are one! That is, they stand in covenant with one another. The garden exists as a context for a human community of covenant.<sup>27</sup> The fashioning of the woman from the body of the man provides an explanation of why the bond to his wife takes precedence over ties to parents for the man.

“It accounts for the mystery of physical love and the intense

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<sup>25</sup> CEB.

<sup>26</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis*, In the Interpretation A Bible Commentary for Preaching and Teaching series (Louisville KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), p. 47.

<sup>27</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis*, p. 47.

emotional involvement of male and female, as well as for their commonality of interests, goals and ideals.”<sup>28</sup> At 2:25 we are told that the man and woman were both naked and they felt no shame. The Hebrew here expresses mutuality. This was the case as long as their harmony with God remained undisturbed.<sup>29</sup>

As we come to chapter 3 we are introduced to a new character, the serpent. We are told that the serpent is “more crafty” (עָרוּם - *arum*) than any other wild animal made by God. The serpent begins a conversation with the woman. When the woman responds to a question from the serpent (3:2) she responds using a plural verb (נֹאכַל - *nocal* “we may eat”) speaking for herself and the man. All the verbs in her answers are in fact plural (3:2-3). The serpent then responds using a plural verb (לֹא־מֹתִים תִּמָּתוּן - *lo moth temthun* “you will not die”) when it responds to her (3:4) indicating that it is responding to the woman and the man. In 3:5 plural verbs, with plural pronouns, are used throughout in both the Hebrew text and the Old Greek text, the Septuagint (אָכַלְתֶּם - *acalcem* - *φάγητε fagete* “you eat” -

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<sup>28</sup> Nahum Sarna, *Genesis*, p. 23.

<sup>29</sup> Nahum Sarna, *Genesis*, p. 23.

וּפְקָחוּ *nifkechu* - διανοιχθήσονται ὑμῶν *dianoichthesontai humon*  
“your [eyes] will be opened” - וַיִּהְיֶיהֶם *vihiythem* - καὶ ἔσεσθε *kai*  
*esesthe* “and you will be”). At 3:6 we have the account of the  
woman taking of the fruit and then giving some to her husband  
who was “**with her**” (עִמָּהּ). Nahum Sarna, who is one of the  
foremost experts in the world on Genesis argues that, “In fact, the  
Hebrew text here literally means, ‘She also gave to her husband  
*with her* (*‘immah*),’ suggesting that he was a full participant in the  
sin, thereby refuting in advance his later excuse.”<sup>30</sup> *Adam* was  
with Eve while the conversation was unfolding between her and  
the serpent. *Adam* was then not tempted by Eve into sinning in  
the manner we so traditionally have perceived.

Jean Higgins lists five reasons that have been suggested for  
thinking that *Adam* was present at the time that Eve is having the  
conversation with the serpent: 1. From the very moment that  
God presents Eve to *Adam* (Genesis 2:22ff.) there is no mention of  
her leaving *Adam*’s side. 2. The serpent uses “you” plural and Eve  
answers using “we.” 3. In some of the ancient versions Genesis  
3:6b ends with “she gave some to her husband and *they* ate.” 4.

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<sup>30</sup> Nahum Sarna, *Genesis*, p. 25.

Genesis 3:7 reads, “And the eyes of them both were opened.” It would seem more natural that the woman’s eyes would have been opened first, and then later her husband’s would have been opened; if there were a significant gap in time before *Adam* ate of the fruit. 5. The most weighty evidence for the presence of *Adam* during the conversation is found in the Hebrew of 3:6b where it literally reads, “and she gave also to her husband with her” (עִמָּהּ - *‘immah*).<sup>31</sup> *Adam* was with his wife, doing nothing, as the serpent persuades his wife to eat of the fruit, thus distrusting and disobeying God. The man sides with the woman rather than obeying God and expressing loyalty to Him.

At 3:7 we are then told that **“the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked;...”**<sup>32</sup> The innocence of their relationship is broken. At 3:8 we find them hiding from God. At 3:9-11 we have the account of God speaking with *Adam* about what has happened here. God addresses *Adam* first in this account. Some have seen this as an indication that *Adam* is meant to be leading here and that Eve has a subordinate

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<sup>31</sup> Jean M. Higgins, “The Myth of Eve: The Temptress,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 44:4 (1976), pp. 639-647.

<sup>32</sup> CEB.

role. Certainly that is one possible interpretation, but it is not the only one available nor is it the best possibility. Certainly one would have expected that in a document that was composed in a patriarchal society it would have been made very clear that the woman occupied a subordinate role leaving no opportunity to suggest any measure of equality.<sup>33</sup>

Anyone who claims to know with certainty why God addresses *Adam* first is going beyond the actual evidence. In the story, someone had to be addressed first to move the story along; the question is why not *Adam*? Sarna indicates that the reason that God called out to the man first was, "...because only he had heard the prohibition directly from God."<sup>34</sup> As God challenges *Adam*, he first deflects blame from himself to the woman, but completely blames God for giving him the woman. He fails to take any responsibility for what he has done. He betrays not only the woman, but also God. It is of note that despite *Adam's* betrayal of the woman he does not indicate that she "tempted" him into eating the fruit. The implication for blame passes to God who is to

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<sup>33</sup> Katharine D. Satenfeld, "The Bible and Women: Bane or Blessing," *Theology Today* 32:3 (1975), pp. 222-233.

<sup>34</sup> Nahum Sarna, *Genesis*, p. 26.

blame for making them male and female. Only after blaming God does he accede to his guilt in eating the forbidden fruit.<sup>35</sup>

At 3:13 God turns to the woman and questions her; and her response is to blame the serpent, who “tricked” (הַשִּׂיאָנִי - *hishiyani*) her.<sup>36</sup> The woman, though seeking to blame the serpent at least does not blame God in her response. In his betrayal the man placed himself in opposition both to the woman and to God. By ignoring *Adam* in her confession to God the woman separates herself from the man.<sup>37</sup> At 3:14 God then addresses the serpent not with a question, but with a curse because of what it had done. Notice the reversal of order here in God’s dealing, first with the serpent, and then next the woman, and finally the man. Phyllis Tribble indicates that inverting the response order brings artistic and thematic balance to the story. In both arrangements the woman stands at the center, surrounded on one side by the serpent and on the other by *Adam*.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Phyllis Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, in the Overtures to Biblical Theology series (Philadelphia PA: Fortress Press, 1978), p. 119.

<sup>36</sup> We will deal with the passage in 1 Timothy 2:12-15 in the next lesson that makes reference to this incident.

<sup>37</sup> Phyllis Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, p. 120.

<sup>38</sup> Phyllis Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, pp. 121-122.

Once the pronouncements of God are completed, we find the man and woman united; this time in the brokenness of life.<sup>39</sup> At 3:16 the consequences of the woman's actions are that her pain in childbearing will greatly increase, as well as her "desire," or "longing" for her husband. Sarna says, "It is quite clear from the description of woman in 2:18, 23 that the ideal situation, which hereto existed, was the absolute equality of the sexes. The new state of male dominance is regarded as an aspect of the deterioration in the human condition that resulted from defiance of divine will."<sup>40</sup>

The indication of Genesis 2 and 3 is that in the beginning God intended a mutuality and unity that was marked by their working together in concert and community in a complementary manner. This intent was destroyed by the rebellious nature of both the man and the woman who demonstrated in their actions that they did not trust God. They doubted his veracity and His intentions as a good and benevolent creator and as a result the harmony and unity that they shared with one another and with God was broken. Genesis 3 then lays out the new order of things

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<sup>39</sup> Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, p. 122.

<sup>40</sup> Nahum Sarna, *Genesis*, p. 28.

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in that broken world. One of the consequences of that brokenness was the ruling of the man (אִישׁ - literally “your man”) over “the woman” (הָאִשָּׁה). This is a consequence that comes because of the betrayal of God, and one another, by the man and the woman, not as something that is part of the original intent and design of God.

# Synopsis

In Genesis chapter one we need to remember that the issue of hierarchy between the man and the woman was not addressed. They are called to have dominion over the earth and all the creatures together in a community acting in concert with one another as God's image-bearers to the world.

In chapter 2, we have an additional account of the creation of humanity, this time with more details. In this account, *Adam* is created first, given commands regarding what he may and what he may not eat as well as a charge as to his duties (to labor, and act as a watchman in the Garden). We are informed that God saw that he was alone and after making it clear that there was not on earth another "corresponding" to him, or "worthy" of him, God builds the woman from a rib taken from the man. God then brings the woman to *Adam* and presents her to him. He seems delighted and no longer lonely. She is to be his "helper." The word "helper" does not indicate any sense of inferiority, or subordination. They are to serve in equality, and to complement one another.

The issue of hierarchy is not a factor in Genesis chapter 2. The man and woman are to be in community to serve God in the

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garden and represent him before creation. Those that find the issue of hierarchy in chapter 2 set out to find it and so they bring it to the text. It appears that God intended a view of working together in a manner that is like that expressed by Jesus, one of service, mutual respect, and self-sacrifice.

As we come to chapter 3 the serpent addresses the woman, apparently with the man present and tempts her to eat of the forbidden tree. She eats, as does her husband and then their eyes are opened to “good and evil.” They are found hiding in the garden by God and each prescribed punishments for their rebellious actions. As a consequence of their distrust and disloyalty to God and to each other, we have for the first time introduced the issue hierarchy between the man and the woman as a consequence of their sin. Here it is indicated that the man would rule over the woman and thus the harmonious intent of God is broken due to their disobedience and distrust of God. Here for the first time the issue of hierarchy of man over woman is to be found.

# Questions

1. Why do you think there is such a focus upon the issue of hierarchy in the church?
2. When you think of Jesus as the head of the church what images come to your mind?
3. Is working together with others a better way to get tasks accomplished or working alone?
4. How would you define the word “dominion?”
5. When is a time in your life that you helped someone complete a task that they would not have been able to complete alone?
6. Why is companionship important?
7. How would you define community?
8. Does being a servant mean a person is subordinate to the one they serve?
9. What do you think it means for God to be sovereign?
10. Why do people betray others?
11. How does it feel to be betrayed?
12. How do you think the teachings of Jesus regarding His kingdom being different than the kingdoms of the world should challenge our thinking?
13. What are some ways that Jesus addressed the issue of hierarchy when teaching His disciples?
14. What are some ways that people express loyalty to each other and to God?

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15. Why do you think it is so important that we get matters of hierarchy clearly defined?
  16. How do you think the Greek worldview has affected our perceptions of hierarchy?
  17. What do you think a complementary relationship looks like in practice?
  18. What role should covenant play in human communities?
  19. Why do you think Adam failed to intercede in the conversation between the serpent and the woman?
  20. Why do you think *Adam* ate of the fruit?
  21. Why do you think *Adam* blamed God for his sin?
  22. Why is it important to take responsibility when we fail?
  23. What affect does betrayal have upon a relationship?
  24. What are some ways that your seek to find the will of God for your life?

# To Take Home

## **What is Important to know?**

It is important to know that we need to take great care as we read Scripture, because so often things we have heard in the past greatly color our present understanding. As we read these early chapters of Genesis it seems remarkable that in a patriarchal society there is so much in the text indicating mutuality and partnership between the sexes rather than indicating male dominance. What is one thing from Genesis 2 and 3 that surprised you the most?

## **Where is God in these words?**

God is in these words seeking to teach us about His nature and His call as we bear His image in the world. God desires to express His nature in the community that He creates which is male and female. The issue of one family, or community, is a powerful indication of the message that God seeks for not only humans to understand, but also all of creation. Why do you think God created human beings as male and female?

## **What does any of this mean for how I live my life?**

Scripture always challenges us not only to learn and understand its words, but to apply them in our daily lives. This section of Scripture teaches us the powerful and devastating affects of betrayal and of failure to take responsibility for our own actions. In this story, everyone betrays everyone else, but most of all we see expressions of mistrust and of judging the motives of God. These are not just things that happened once and then never occurred again, they are perhaps one of the greatest constants in relationships. What are some ways that we can all become people who truly trust God?

## **What is the word of God calling us to do?**

The word of God calls us to recognize the nature of God as a good and benevolent creator that is patient, kind and compassionate. We see this in God's care and concern for the man and the woman. This is also expressed in the punishments that God metes out for their betrayals. Trusting that God has our best interests in view is hard for us. We are suspicious and distrustful of Him and of anyone other than ourselves. In Jesus we see the nature of God displayed and we also see what we are called to be. We are to focus on others above ourselves, and serve others above ourselves. What are some ways that you are challenged by this story to change the way you live life today?