

MARCH

4

IN GOD'S IMAGE: THE PLAN

*Both men and women are created
in the image of God.*

THE WORD

**GENESIS
1:26-28**

Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

KEY VERSE

²⁷So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

²⁸God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

¹⁸The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

**GENESIS
2:18-25**

¹⁹Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. ²⁰So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals.

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. ²¹So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. ²²Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

²³The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man."

²⁴That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

²⁵Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

ENGAGE THE WORD

CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

The universe didn't just happen. Not according to the Bible. God had a plan. That is, He created with great intentionality, building each part of creation on what He had finished. Out of nothingness, He created the heavens and the earth. Then out of chaos He brought the order of light and dark, land and water. Next He placed fish in the water, birds in the air, and animals on the land. Each step of creation was more intricate and advanced.

Genesis 1:26-27

The climax of creation came on the final day. For the first time God made a creature in His own image, "God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness,'" (v. 26).

Chapter one of Genesis gives only the brief essential facts. Then in chapter two, the author fills in the details, including woman's creation. The fuller explanation is given at that time. These two chapters do not present a timeline. That is, the events of chapter two did not follow the events of chapter one. The simple words of 1:27 record the full creative process of both man and woman. Both were made "in the image of God."

Although God did not duplicate himself in man and woman, He placed His image within them. They enjoy similarities to God in a way none of the animals do. There is absolutely no indication that the likeness was physical. It included the distinctions and responsibilities that set man and woman apart from the rest of creation. Let's take a quick look at them:

Spiritual: We share God's immortality. God placed in man and woman a never-dying spirit. Our choices influence both ourselves and others for eternity.

Moral: God created man and woman in righteousness and true holiness. He gave our first parents a longing for the good and right. In a world where evil

Did You Know?

God created the 'ādām like God, or reflecting God, as a mirror reflects the image of one looking into it, as a fine sculpture is the likeness of the one it was made to represent or even better, perhaps, as a child is the likeness of the parent.

—Joseph Coleson

CREATED AS AN EQUAL PARTNER

constantly surrounds us, we have a responsibility to choose the good because of God's moral image within us.

Intellectual: God, the supreme intelligence, has given us a measure of His mind. We are capable of thought, meditation, decision-making, understanding, and study. We must always seek to have “the mind of Christ,” to conform as closely as possible to the perfect creation of our intellect in His image.

Because we are created in the image of God, we recognize that men and women, girls and boys are equally valuable. No standards of sex, age, race, nationality, or economic class can lessen the tremendous worth God built into every member of His human creation.

Genesis 2:18-22; 1:28

Isolation was not part of God's plan for man. As the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit had perfect communion, so man was completed by the addition of a suitable helper.

We must understand the word *helper* to get an idea of what God had in mind when He created woman (2:18). “Helper” did not carry the idea of assistant, inferior, or secondary. “A help meet for him” (vv. 18, 20, KJV) was literally “a helper corresponding to him” (NASB margin), equal, suitable, and adequate for him.

It is important to note that woman's submission to man was not a part of the plan of creation. Woman's status changed only as a result of the Fall. Until that time, woman fulfilled God's original plan of equal partnership with man. In addition, Jesus took away any license to exploit women. He shocked His society by treating all people the same. And that included women.

Man's helper, woman, had already been created when God gave the command to steward creation. Man and woman together share the awesome responsibilities of partnership over the earth. This is not the rule of self-motivated dictators. There is no license for

Think About It

Monogamy was God's intention for husband and wife. This union was to be inseparable—one flesh. Jesus said, "Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate" (Matthew 19:4-5).

CREATED FOR HUMAN BONDING

the exploitation of resources, or any waste of animals or vegetation. Both men and women are accountable to preserve His creation.

Fitness to rule over others implies the ability to make wise decisions, to act in a way that shows concern for the best of all involved. As men and women given this tremendous responsibility, we are called to pray for godly wisdom in managing our lives, raising our children, and administering all of earth's resources.

Genesis 2:23-25

When God presented Adam His newest creation, Adam knew she was more than a business partner. God created a special companion, made from a portion of Adam's body. By taking Adam's rib, God revealed the intimacy He wants man and woman to know.

Adam recognized her as bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh. For this reason they were to become "one flesh" (2:24). In the mystery of divine creation, they were biologically and to some extent spiritually one. Woman was not merely a physical helper in the dominion of the earth. She fulfilled the ultimate of human bonding. Thus the first couple exemplified God's institution of the marriage relationship.

As we re-examine the story of creation, all of us—both men and women—are reminded of God's plan for humanity. The standards He ordained for marriage, for the family, for human relationships of all sorts, are still attainable when we remember we are created in the image of God. He placed a portion of himself in each of us to make it possible.

REFLECT | In what ways can you show dignity to those you encounter every day? Consider the ways you can reflect God's image this week.

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