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Introduction

When you are looking for answers you need to make sure you are asking the right questions. Now you have probably heard the story about the 8 year old boy who went to his father and asked, "Dad, where did I come from?" Well the Father took a deep breathe and even though he didn't think he would have to do the birds and the bees talk this early in his young son's life, he started to explain what happens when a mummy and a daddy really love each other.

And the Dad thought he had done a pretty reasonable job of the explanation but he looked at this son and there was a rather puzzled look. So the father said, "Why the interest in this?" The son replied, "Dad there's a new kid at school and he came from Melbourne and I was just wondering where I came from."

And likewise some people when they come to Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 want these passages to explain all the ins and outs concerning the origin of human life. They want to know about the big bang, about evolution, about where we have come from. And here before them is just 50 or 60 sentences. My DVD instruction manual has about 1000 sentences on how I can set it up to see movies. So surely Genesis 1 and 2 will not answer all my questions about the origin of human life.

And yet God has placed it there to explain who is behind human life and why he made us and how he wants us to live. God has different questions that he wants to answer than what we would like him to answer. So for a moment let us put aside our concerns and hear what God wants to tell us. And if I was to summarise Genesis 2 in just a few words, I'd say its talking about God's people in God's place under God's rule. God's people in God's place under God's rule.

1. God's people.

So lets look firstly how God's people came about. Now we saw last week how God made mankind on the 6th day. How he made them male and female in his own image, in his own likeness. But its now like we get out the magnifying glass or the binoculars so to speak and we zoom in on what actually God did.

We read in verse 7, that "*the Lord God formed the man out of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breathe of life and the man became a living being.*"

We see that God formed mankind out of the dust of the earth. He got his hand's dirty, so to speak. He was intimately involved in our beginnings. It wasn't just survival of the fittest. It wasn't just that we came from other animals. Whatever we believe about our origins we must believe that God made us. It is a picture of a potter or an artist moulding his subject in infinite detail.

Psalm 139 puts it this way. *“I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.”*

There is something about handmade gifts, isn't there? The time, the quality, the beauty of them grabs you and you treasure them like nothing else. A handmade gift is a gift from the heart. Mankind was handmade by God. We are His special creation.

And yet our origins are both physical and spiritual. Its not just dust, not just atoms and molecules, flesh and bone, its spirit as well. God breathes into the first man and whooska, there is life! So we are dependent upon God for life. We have a spiritual side to us. And so if all we do is feed our face and satisfy our thirst and neglect our soul, we cripple ourselves and we choke the real life out of our lives.

What this passage also teaches about mankind is that we are not the boss. We are God's people and so we need to report back to Him. We need to reach out for Him. We need to respond to His authority. It is His world. We are part of His creation. And just as it would be ludicrous for the clay pot to talk back to the potter, it is silly for us to try and assert our authority over God, our creator.

But when God made man, when he made Adam, there was something that was not good. The earth, the sun, the sky, the animals might have been good, but it isn't good that man lives a life alone. God knew that we need company, that we were not made to be hermits. And so even before Adam recognises his need for a suitable companion, God sees the need.

Amazing isn't it. God makes the world and yet he can still zero in on the needs of his creation. But the animals don't fill the void and so God makes a woman. He finds a helper that is suitable for him. He creates out of a rib of Adam one that fills what is lacking.

In March 1997, Dolly of Scotland made headline news. Who was Dolly? Dolly was a sheep. Apparently scientists from the Roslin Institute in Scotland tried for more than 10 years to clone a sheep from a single adult cell, it took 277 attempts before they produced Dolly. Times magazine said Dolly "is a carbon copy, a laboratory counterfeit so exact that she is in essence her mother's identical twin."

But woman is not a carbon copy, but a complement. Not the same but different. Not better, not worse but companions. Here is the Bible critiquing the claim to male supremacy as well as that of the radical feminist. One is not to rule over the other, one is not to despise the other. There should be no gender wars. Both have been created by God to share in his garden of delight.

Matthew Henry put it this way, *“She (woman) was not taken from his head, that she may rule over him, nor was she taken from his foot, that he might rule over her, but rather, she was taken from his side that she may be equal to him, from under his arm, that she may be protected by him and from the part nearest to his heart that she may be his beloved partner for life.”*

We are to walk side by side with each other. Our bodies are related, we both reflect the image of God. Our souls are intertwined. We need each other. John Donne famously said "No man is an island." For we are never complete on our own.

For you and I were made for relationships. Something about truly being human is that we are made for fellowship with God yes and with each other. Our society has concentrated on the individual so much so that the youngsters we are raising are called the Me generation. But that is just producing a sense of isolation, an alienation, a struggle within our lives as we push others away and concentrate on my needs and my aspirations.

But God says is not good to be alone. And God's solution is community, deep relationships with each other. John Calvin, in his commentary on Genesis, wrote, "*Man was formed to be a social animal.*" Not alone in front of a computer screen. Not camped in front of a TV, not for us the de-humanising that comes from pornography. But the deep personal communion with one another.

And so at the heart of this communion is marriage, man and woman, leaving their parents and cleaving to each other. Enjoying the gift of intimacy that God has created especially for married couples. Now that doesn't mean that marriage is the only example of these sorts of deep relationships. I heard recently on the radio that now we have as many single women over 18 in Australia as married ones.

But what it does say is that we need to recover in the Christian community the beauty and value of friendships, deep friendships between member of our sex and with the opposite sex. Our Churches need to be communities of friendship, to stand against all the ways that our modern patterns of life and thinking push us toward individualism and loneliness. In our marriages others should see how we complement each other and how we are committed to each other. It is not good for us to be alone. So our marriages, our friendships, our community should reflect that we have been made for each other. And so if we remove ourselves from one another, we will miss out.

But that might cost us something. I like the made up story about a fuller conversation between God and Adam.... "I'm lonely," Adam told God in the Garden of Eden. "I need to have someone around for company." "Okay," replied God. "I'm going to give you the perfect woman. Beautiful, intelligent and gracious -- she'll cook and clean for you and never say a cross word."

"Sounds good," Adam said. "But what's it going to cost me?" "An arm and a leg" God replied. "That's pretty steep," countered Adam. "What can I get for just a rib?"

In Genesis 2 we see before us a picture of God's people. Made by God. Dependent upon God. Made for one another. Dependent upon each other. It's a wonderful picture

(2. God's people place in God's place.)

But not only does God make us, but he custom builds a place for us to live in. A Garden, the garden of Eden, his garden of delight. He makes for us a paradise. And God put Adam in the garden. He didn't put Adam inside a tent or a caravan and give

him a computer and television set. He put him outside. Is it possible that we were created to spend more time outdoors than indoors? In our modern society we spend so much time inside, I wonder how that affects us both physically and mentally?

But in the beginning we saw God Himself plants for Adam and Eve a garden. Yet again God's fatherly care for his creation is obvious. This is no small backyard with a few plants stuck here and there. No its more like a parkland, a reserve even. Large, spacious with an abundance of food and drink.

There are all types of trees there. Trees that a pleasing to the eye and good for food. There is plenty of water there. Now in dry and arid countries like Israel and Australia, water means life. We know the devastating affects of what drought can do to both the land and to the cities. But there is no shortage of water here in Eden. No there is so much that it feeds four streams, four rivers, with two of them, the Tigris and Euphrates being just huge!

There was food, water and even precious stones in the region. Gold, gems, perfumes were all found in the region. God was providing not just the essentials, the basics, but the good things in life. He was not skimping and saving what he was giving to his creatures, no he was showering his goodness upon them in all abundance.

There was beauty there. There were things that were pleasing to the eye. And in the middle of the garden was the tree of life. So while man remained in this garden he would live for ever and ever. Death was not part of the original plan for mankind.

(3. God's people in God's place under God's rule.)

Yet there was another tree at the very centre of the Garden, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. So in order for the tree to be at the centre, man himself couldn't be at the centre. For God gives man one rule, one prohibition.

Last chapter we saw that mankind's task was to cultivate and protect God's good creation. We saw that just as God works for 6 days and so rests, so mankind is to have that same pattern of work and rest too. Work is not a bad thing in God's world, something to be avoided at all costs. Work is not something we are forced to do to pay off our mortgages and to buy the things we want out of life. Like the old car sticker which says "I owe, I owe, its off to work we go."

No part of being in God's good creation is to look after it on behalf of our creator. To be responsible with our resources. To use wisely what has been given us. To pass on our world to our children, our grandchildren making it a better place.

But there is one condition for living in this world. We need to listen and obey the Word of God. For man is not God. Man must not try and be God. He must keep himself away from the centre. He must not try and grasp a knowledge of good and evil from anywhere other than from God's revelation. He must submit to God's good and gracious authority.

"You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil...." And the simple reason for this prohibition, as commentators have noted through the centuries, is that

humans who were loved by God needed a way to love him back. The choice to obey or not obey allowed for love to be expressed. We needed a way to choose God, some means by which we could deliberately turn toward him and acknowledge his importance to us.

Unlike creatures who have no choices to make, we had a choice from the beginning to love him back. That's what God longed for, just as every one of us longs for someone to love us back. God walked with Adam and Eve in the garden in the cool of the evening. That meant as much to him as it did to them. He looked forward to such intimate moments when they would ask him questions and learn from him. And one way of showing their love for their Creator was not to eat that fruit.

Man has been given a free will. He is not a robot. He will not be forced to obey God. It is not a harsh restriction that God makes, but rather a symbol of the fact that crossing the God given limits diminishes rather than enhances our well being. In fact my own feeling is that Adam and Eve knew good already, they are surrounded by it on every side. So eating the fruit only introduces them and their world to evil.

God has made a world devoid of evil. But man can bring evil into God's world if they choose to disobey God. God has not restricted Adam and Eve's freedom. All he has said is the kitchen in yours but don't play with the sharp knives. And don't turn the oven on. Because if you do these things, evil will happen and you will die.

Die physically? Yes because I will drive you away from the tree of life. And die spiritually because you have broken the relationship that it is the most fundamental in life, your relationship with me.

So there we are God's people in God's place under God's rule, happily under God's rule. That's how God made Adam and Eve. And that how God made us as well.

Do you know that when God made you, he made you special. He gave you your good looks and your sweaty palms. Your intelligence and your fuller figure. God helped put you together in your mother's womb. He made you in his image. He made you to be a child of God.

He places you in this suburb, in this area, in this country in this beautiful world. He breathes his life within you. He promises to give you his daily bread. He provides you with the water of life. He gives you access to beauty, and love and relationships and community. But he says to us, don't put yourself at the centre.

Listen to my word, hear my command. Obey my instructions. Evil has well and truly entered into our world. Temptation is everywhere - TV, Internet, school, work, home. So don't learn about evil from evil. Don't let the cancer of sin enter into your body. Walk with God. Enjoy his blessings. Reach out to others.

You see that's our choice every minute of every day isn't it? Do we want to be God's people in God's place under God's rule. Well do we?

I know our world is a very different place to Eden and next week we have a look at why that is the case. But the same basic choice that Adam and Eve had all those years

ago, is the choice we have. Let me end with a poem.

When I stand at the judgment seat of Christ,
And He shows me His plan for me,
The plan of my life as it might have been
Had He had His way, I see

How I blocked Him here, and I checked Him there,
And I would not yield my will.
Will there be grief in my Saviour's eyes--
Grief, though He loves me still?

He would have me rich, and I stand there poor,
Stripped of all but His grace,
While memory runs like a hunted thing
Down the paths I cannot retrace.

Then my desolate heart will well nigh break
With tears that I cannot shed;
I shall cover my face with my empty hands;
I shall bow my uncrowned head.

Lord of the years that are left to me,
I give them to Thy hand.
Take me and break me, mould me now
To the pattern Thou hast planned!

-Martha Snell Nicholson

Sermon central looked at 1 to 4 out of 13 also 8, 9,10,11

*****a

Reasons for Divorce

A man in Tarriville, Connecticut, filed for divorce because his wife left him a note on the refrigerator which read: "I have gone to the bridge club. There'll be a recipe for your dinner at 7 o'clock on Channel 2."

A man in Hazard, Kentucky, divorced his wife because she "beat him whenever he removed onions from his hamburger without asking for permission."

A deaf man in Bennettsville, South Carolina, filed for divorce because his wife "was always nagging him in sign language."

A woman in Canon City, Colorado, divorced her husband because he forced her to "duck under the dashboard whenever they drove past his girlfriend's house."

A woman in Hardwick, Georgia, divorced her husband on the grounds that he "stayed home too much and was much too affectionate."

(<http://microsquish.com/funstuff/201/reasonfordivorce.html>)

*****c

Our father was Adam, our grandfather dust, our great-grandfather nothing.

-William Jenkyn

*****d

*****e

She was not taken from his head, that she may rule over him, nor was she taken from his foot, that he might rule over her, but rather, she was taken from his side that she may be equal to him, from under his arm, that she may be protected by him and from the part nearest to his heart that she may be his beloved partner for life

*****f

Title: "Sin is the wrong use of free will given by God."

*****g

God is a worker.

I worked through Genesis 1-3 this week preparing for our January 25 project, and noted one interesting truth about God: He is a working God. He is creator; a Potter; a Planter; A Commander; An Evaluator and Rectifier; a Builder.

*****h

There is something about handmade gifts, isn't there? The time, the quality, the beauty of them grabs you and you treasure them like nothing else. A handmade gift is a gift from the heart.

Humankind was handmade.

*****i

In the Focus on The Family magazine article where I learned about Al, it was reported that he really did not like his job. I quote, "It was a world so completely out of touch

with his Christian values. But he wouldn't quit. He was convinced that God wanted him to stay there, to be a light in the darkness." The article also indicated that his co-workers often mocked him for his beliefs. But, when there was a personal problem, those same co-workers came to Al for prayer and counsel.

Al's body was one of the many found in the rubble of Tower One. And after that discovery, reports began to trickle in from various sources that some people on the 105th floor made "a last call or sent a final e-mail to a loved one saying that "a man" was leading people in prayer. A few referred to Al by name." The article goes on to say, "When he realized that they were all trapped in the building and would not be able to escape, Al shared the gospel with a group of 50 co-workers and led them in prayer."

*****j

A young child came out of his Sunday school class and told his parents, "The teacher told us how God made the first man and the first woman." His father said, "Oh really, well can you remind your mother and me how He did it." The little girl replied, "He made man first, but the man was very lonely with no one to talk to, so God put the man to sleep, and while he was asleep, God took out his brains and made a woman out of them.

*****l

Leave, cleave and become (weave)

To be alliterative we might say we need to break, bond, and become.

*****m

According to another reading between the lines tradition. Adam was fudging a bit on his becoming one. He was not giving Eve all the time and attention she needed. So when Adam stayed out late for a few nights in a row, Eve became upset.

"You're running around with other women," she charged.

Adam responded, "You're being unreasonable, you're the only woman on earth."

The quarrel continued until Adam fell asleep. But he soon was awakened by someone poking him in the chest. It was Eve.

"What are you're doing?" Adam demanded.

"I'm counting your ribs," said Eve.

*****n

CHRIST'S PLAN FOR ME

When I stand at the judgment seat of Christ,
And He shows me His plan for me,
The plan of my life as it might have been
Had He had His way, I see

How I blocked Him here, and I checked Him there,
And I would not yield my will.
Will there be grief in my Saviour's eyes--

Grief, though He loves me still?

He would have me rich, and I stand there poor,
Stripped of all but His grace,
While memory runs like a hunted thing
Down the paths I cannot retrace.

Then my desolate heart will well nigh break
With tears that I cannot shed;
I shall cover my face with my empty hands;
I shall bow my uncrowned head.

Lord of the years that are left to me,
I give them to Thy hand.
Take me and break me, mould me now
To the pattern Thou hast planned!
-Martha Snell Nicholson (452) #14-35

*****p

Henry J. Tillman said, "Life is something that everyone should try at least once."

***r

A little boy, seemed especially interested when his Sunday school teacher told him how Eve was created out of one of Adam's ribs. Later in the week his mother noticed him lying down as though he were ill, and asked, "What's the matter?" The little boy responded, "I have a pain in my side. I think I'm going to have a wife."

*****s

CONNECTED TO THE EARTH