



Part 6: God’s Design for Community and Marriage Genesis 2:8-25

God’s design and purpose for human community is to be dependent on Him for life, wisdom and love as well as representing Him to one another.

I. Clarifying the Debate: Is faith in the God of the Bible reasonable in our scientific age?

The popular narrative in our western, secular culture is that science has disproved God and made faith in God obsolete and foolish. The conflict is usually framed as a conflict between science and the Bible (especially the creation stories).

This popular narrative is mistaken for at least two reasons:

1. It is not science that is opposed to the Bible, but philosophical naturalism or scientism.

Philosophical naturalism or scientism is the philosophy or worldview that alleges science can explain everything about our existence – that everything has a natural cause and life is simply the product of random forces guided by no one.

“Man is the result of a purposeless and natural process that did not have him in mind.” – George Gaylord Simpson

“Natural selection, the blind, unconscious automatic process which Darwin discovered, and which we now know is the explanation for the existence and apparently purposeful form of all life, has no purpose in mind. It has no mind and no mind’s eye.” – Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker*

2. The Bible is most likely not offering us a scientific explanation of our material origins, but an explanation of purpose (Previous sermons: series part 2 and 3).

II. The Bible's creation stories are about design and purpose.

"The principal factor that differentiates a biblical view of origins from a modern view is characterized by a pervasive teleology [purpose]: God is the One responsible for creation in every aspect. He has a purpose and a goal as He creates with intentionality." – John Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*

John Walton's analogy of a layer cake:



Note: Science, by definition, concerns itself with that which is physical and material. It cannot explore the top layer of God's work. Simply because a material or natural cause is determined does not automatically lead to the conclusion that God has not used that material or natural mechanism in some manner. Neither ultimate cause or purpose can be proven or falsified by science (contra philosophical naturalism/scientism).

"For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountain of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries." – NASA scientist Robert Jastrow, *God and the Astronomers* (commenting on scientists' reaction to the evidence for the "Big Bang")

III. God's pattern for community and marriage

"As the first book of the canon, Genesis begins to lay down a worldview for its readers. It provides foundational teaching that provides a lens through which we interpret our experience of the world. Genesis also teaches us how to behave." – Tremper Longman, *How to Read Genesis*

- A. God's paradigm for community (Kingdom of God).

God's covenant people (Adam and Eve)
In God's place (garden)

With God's presence and purpose
Under God's rule (Word and Spirit)

Note: Righteousness = right-relatedness.

1. Both men and women are made in God's image, and God's image is revealed in the complimentary nature of male and female (Genesis 1:26-27).
2. Men and women are equal in value and dignity (Genesis 1:26-27; 2:18).

The phrase "helper suitable" (*ezer negdo*) of the woman = a complimentary partner. *Ezer* (helper) is used to describe one who assists and encourages another by providing what is lacking or cannot be done alone. *Ezer* is used of God so it is not demeaning or inferior (Exodus 18:4; Deuteronomy 33:7; 1 Samuel 7:12; Psalm 20:2; 46:1). *Negdo* (suitable) means equal and opposite or counterpart. Men and women differ in their sexuality, but are equal in God's image, value, and dignity.

The man (*ish*) calls her woman (*ishshah*) to celebrate their bond and equality as counterparts of one another.

Note: The Bible was radically pro-woman in its culture.

3. God, as King, has created a space for humanity to enjoy relationship with Himself and one another.

Note: The garden represents a park-like setting that was a common feature in palace complexes in the ancient world, i.e. Nebuchadnezzar's famous hanging gardens.

4. Humanity is provided the ability to live life with God in this protected space (tree of life).
5. Humanity is forbidden the right to determine ultimate good and evil instead depending on God's revelation (tree of knowledge of good and evil).

B. God's design for marriage

1. Marriage is God's idea rather than a social or cultural institution (Genesis 1:27; 2:23-25; Matthew 19:4-6).
2. Marriage is intended to be a life-long covenant of unconditional love between a man and a woman expressed in a public act of leaving one's family of origin (Genesis 2:23-25; Matthew 19:4-6).

3. Sex is God’s good gift to be expressed righteously in the heterosexual marriage covenant (Genesis 2:23-25; Matthew 19:4-6; 1 Corinthians 6:12–7:9).

IV. Conclusion

“But one thing is clear: Genesis is not primarily concerned with science. . . . These opening chapters [Genesis] are the first course in the Bible’s feast of foundational answers to our deepest questions: Who are we? What does life mean? And how do we relate to God and to each other?” – Rebecca McLaughlin, *Confronting Christianity – 12 Hard Questions for the World’s Largest Religion*

The New Testament reveals to us the creator God as a perfect community of self-giving love expressed in the three persons of the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

This is the divine community that Jesus makes a way for us to live in (John 14:15-21; 17:20-26). The closest of human relationships, marriage, is ultimately given to reflect the gospel to the world (Hosea 2:14-23; Ephesians 5:22-32).

Recommended Resources:

1. Bibleproject.com (videos & podcasts).
2. American Scientific Affiliation (network.asa3.org).
3. *Origins: A Reformed Look at Creation, Design & Evolution* by Deborah & Loren Haarsma (Faith Alive, 2007).
4. *The Lost World of Adam and Eve* by John Walton (IVP Academic, 2015).
5. *Four Views on Creation, Evolution, and Intelligent Design*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Zondervan, 2017).
6. *Reading Genesis 1-2 An Evangelical Conversation*, ed. J. Daryl Charles (2013).
7. *The Reason for God* by Tim Keller (Dutton, 2008).

Discussion Questions:

1. What has been your experience with the alleged conflict between science and the Genesis creation stories? What have you been taught about the purpose of the creation stories in Genesis 1-2?
2. Consider how the following quotes might help you understand the purpose of the creation stories and equip you to have a conversation with a skeptic:

“The principal factor that differentiates a biblical view of origins from a modern view is characterized by a pervasive teleology [purpose]: God is the One responsible for creation in every aspect. He has a purpose and a goal as He creates with intentionality.” John Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*

“But one thing is clear: Genesis is not primarily concerned with science. ... These opening chapters [Genesis] are the first course in the Bible’s feast of foundational answers to our deepest questions: Who are we? What does life mean? And how do we relate to God and to each other?” Rebecca McLaughlin, *Confronting Christianity – 12 Hard Questions for the World’s Largest Religion*, 121.

3. What do you think is more important for a person to know: the mechanisms God used to create us, or the purpose for which He created us? Why?
4. What did you learn about God’s design for community that is new, challenging, or helpful?
5. What did you learn about God’s design for marriage that is new, challenging, or helpful? How do you think this revelation is received in our cultural moment?