

Adam *and* Eve: The Intended Ideal



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Gen. 1:26, 2:18–3:16.*

Memory Text: “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh” (*Genesis 2:24, NIV*).

The story of Adam and Eve has a beautiful beginning but a sad ending. God had provided for them everything good. They were a handsome groom and a pretty bride, untainted with any blemish in their characters or body. They lived in a beautiful garden home with no need to worry about anything. To top it all, God even gave them the prospect of everlasting life. The beginning of their marriage was better than that of any fairy tale.

However, the ending was as far as possible from the fairy-tale ending of “living happily ever after.” The story ends with Adam and Eve losing it all—for themselves and for all other couples and individuals to follow. It’s a powerful example of the cost of sin. We should learn well from this story about what deviation from the will of God brings.

The Week at a Glance: Adam and Eve, as originally created, bore the express image of their Maker. What does that mean? Even more so, what happened when that image was defiled by sin? What can we learn from the sad story of their fall?

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, July 7.*

The Image of God

“So God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (*Gen. 1:27, NKJV*).

The meaning of what constitutes the “image of God” can be understood partly through the clarifying statement that follows in the text—“*male and female He created them.*” Male and female together reflect the image of God. One gender complements the other and is incomplete by itself. Male and female human beings were not meant to live separately but to seek the other naturally. This combination of male and female is necessary for the preservation of society and the continuity of human history.

Many have associated God with solely the masculine gender. Though the Hebrew word for God has a masculine plural ending and takes masculine forms of the verb, the Bible also includes feminine imagery and qualities for God.

What feminine images for the attributes of God are used here? *Deut. 32:11; Isa. 49:15, 16; 66:12, 13; Hos. 13:8; Matt. 23:37.*

In support of this complementary nature of the genders is the idea of the plurality in God. The pronoun used for God is in the plural: “‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness’” (*Gen. 1:26, NIV*).

How might the plurality of the Godhead reflect the idea of man and woman together reflecting the image of God?

Plurality in the Godhead is necessary because God is love. In order for love to exist, there must be someone to love and someone to be loved. Male and female in their partnership reflect this plurality. Like God, it is natural for man and woman to be united in love. Love marks a basic human relationship. Humans live to love and are not complete unless they do so, whether or not that love is expressed in a marriage relationship. Single people can express love in other ways. After all, Jesus was single.

How does the love expressed to us through the death of Jesus (*John 15:13*) help us better understand what love is really about?

A Suitable Helper

Why did the Lord make a wife for Adam? *Gen. 2:18.*

Why was it not good for Adam to be “alone”? After all, didn’t he have the companionship of the animals, and even God Himself?

Genesis 2:18–22 suggests that even though God observed the need to create a companion for the man, He delayed creating the woman till after all the animals were named. As we read the narrative, we feel with Adam his increasing awareness of being alone. He could not help noticing that as God brought animals and birds before him to be named, they came in pairs. He gave the same name to the pair, but he had to observe that one was male and one female. They provided companionship for each other in a way that no other animal or bird could. In contrast, for him “no suitable helper was found” (*Gen. 2:20, NIV*). His aloneness was glaring.

As God had created day by day, He was able to remark at the end of the day, when He reviewed His work, that it was “good.” He also uses the same word in the context of Adam, only in a different way. He says that it is not “good” that the man was alone.

How did God describe the wife He was about to make for Adam? *Gen. 2:18.*

God did not comment that He would make merely a helper to or for Adam but one to complement him. The Hebrew literally means “like his opposite.” His partner was not there just to be a helper—to prepare the food, to bear children, or even to tend the garden. Eve was to be his complement—his opposite, a partner in the true sense of the term. Her value is for the person she is. Also, the idea of a helper hardly denotes a person of lesser quality, not when the Bible often refers to God as One who helps humankind (*see Pss. 30:10, 54:4, 121:2, Heb. 13:6*).

Think about someone you know now who might be suffering from loneliness. How much of yourself are you willing to give up in order to help?

Husband and Wife

In Genesis 2:23 Adam's initial feeling upon seeing Eve was not romance but relief. In Hebrew his first word can be translated variously as "now," or "this time," but the translation that fits best is "At last!" Now, at last, here was a living being with whom he could truly identify. She was not just his counterpart; being made from his rib, she was a literal part of him. Matthew Henry said that the woman was "not made out of his head to top him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved."

Read 1 Corinthians 11:11, 12. What important point about unity and togetherness that should exist between husband and wife is Paul making here?

Read Genesis 2:24. What change in allegiance and priorities is demanded by this text?

The text is not requiring one to leave the parents' home and join the spouse's family home, as is done in some societies. The spirit of the text here requires both husband and wife to change their priorities. No longer do parents have first claim. This is serious in cultures such as in the Old Testament, where children were to honor their parents throughout their lives. This, of course, should continue today, but after marriage, loyalty is to the spouse over the parents.

Commenting on Genesis 2:24, Jesus declared that husband and wife "are no longer two, but one" (*Matt. 19:6, NIV*). Husband and wife are to be united, socially, emotionally, and spiritually, even as the Trinity, though Three, is One. This is one way in which husband and wife reflect the "image of God."

If you are married, what things can you do, what attitudes do you need to change, in order to be more closely united with your spouse? If you're not married, what changes do you need to make in order to have better and closer relationships with the people around you?

Two Are Better Than One

Read Genesis 3:1–6. Several elements in the narrative suggest that Eve was alone when she succumbed to the temptation. (1) The serpent addresses only the woman. (2) Adam seems absent and is not mentioned till Eve gives him the fruit. (3) Adam is cursed only for listening to his wife and not for listening to the serpent.

Several versions of the Bible and certain commentaries suggest that Adam was with Eve at the time she was tempted (*Gen. 3:6*). The Hebrew has several words that may be translated “with.” Two important ones are *etzel* and *im*. The latter is used in this passage.

Etzel is the preposition that is used to denote location beside or next to something. (See *Gen. 39:15, 18*.) By contrast, *im* denotes relationship. “Immanuel” in Isaiah 7:14 and 8:8, 10 begins with the preposition *im* and means “God with us.” It is a relational position and not geographical. Genesis 3:6 therefore does not strictly demand that we see Adam positioned beside Eve when she is tempted. Adam used the same preposition in Genesis 3:12 to remind God about the woman He had put with him. It is a relational “with.” Had he been with her, she might not have succumbed. “The angels had cautioned Eve to beware of separating herself from her husband while occupied in their daily labor in the garden; with him she would be in less danger from temptation than if she were alone.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 53.

Keeping in mind the context of today’s lesson, what’s the message for us in the following texts:

Prov. 11:14

Eccles. 4:9–11

James 5:16

How have you experienced the help, protection, and good advice of others? How willing are you to get, or even to give, help when needed? Bring to class an example of when the presence and/or help of others made a big difference for you.

The Curse on the Relationship

“Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you” (*Gen. 3:16, NIV*).

In one stroke Adam and Eve lost everything—innocence, rulership, immortality, Edenic home, and security. What they got in exchange was guilt, competition with beasts, expulsion, fear, struggle for existence, death, etc. A couple in a perfectly harmonious love relationship can bear all kinds of hardship together, but in addition to all these other losses they suffered the disruption of their ideal relationship.

Adam would develop a tendency to dominate, and this attitude would mar their relationship. God foresaw that some men would extend their leadership role to subjugation by force. This was not decreed by God. He didn't address Adam telling him what to do; He addressed Eve, telling her what would be a consequence of her sin. This is contrary to the original intention of God for husband-wife relationships.

Read 1 Timothy 2:11–14. What point is Paul making, and how does he tie this point to the Fall?

The Bible considers it to be the correct attitude for a woman to submit herself to her husband (*1 Pet. 3:1*). The illustration of Sarah obeying Abraham and calling him “master” is provided as an example of true subordination. Yet, wives are told not to give way to fear (*vs. 6, NIV*). Similarly, husbands are instructed to treat their wives with love and respect. Peter indicates that neglecting to do this “will hinder your prayers” (*vs. 7, NIV*). These are instructions for a post-Fall relationship.

If you have caused pain to your spouse (or anyone) through a mistake, how can you help that aggrieved person recover? You can't change the past; what can you do, however, to improve the future in regard to your relationships?

Further Study: Read Ellen G. White, “The Eden Home a Pattern,” pp. 25–28, in *The Adventist Home*.

“In the creation God had made her [Eve] the equal of Adam. Had they remained obedient to God—in harmony with His great law of love—they would ever have been in harmony with each other; but sin had brought discord, and now their union could be maintained and harmony preserved only by submission on the part of the one or the other. . . . Had the principles enjoined in the law of God been cherished by the fallen race, this sentence, though growing out of the results of sin, would have proved a blessing to them; but man’s abuse of the supremacy thus given him has too often rendered the lot of woman very bitter and made her life a burden.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 58, 59.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ Why is it that in homes, societies, and organizations it seems best to have one who is first among equals—a leader, for better functioning? What are the advantages of such an arrangement? At the same time, what are the dangers?
- ❷ As a class, go over your responses to Wednesday’s lesson. What can you learn from each other? Also, how do you as a class help each other? Discuss how you could better use the advantages of a group to help individual members who are struggling with whatever issues they face.
- ❸ Though these lessons are in the context of marriage, what principles can we take from what we’ve learned and apply to other relationships?
- ❹ What does your church do to help women who are in abusive home situations? What more could, and should, you do?

Summary: The relationship of equality, mutual love, and respect between Adam and Eve was intended as the ideal for all couples. However, the ideal was marred by sin, and today conflicts plague marriages. We should strive to allow the Holy Spirit to re-create in us the original image of God.

Free!

by MARADONA MAGUBA

As a soldier in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I was sent to protect the local people in an area where heavy fighting had taken place. The people were holding evangelistic meetings, so I listened as I guarded them.

My unit was moved to another area before the evangelistic meetings ended. After a month of heavy fighting, I just wanted to die. I decided to go to church before I died, but I did not know of a church nearby. Then I heard someone broadcasting religious meetings. I followed the sound and found the Seventh-day Adventist church. Once more I heard the message of grace and the law.

When my unit was moved again, I found an Adventist church where I could worship. But my commander refused to let me attend church on Saturday. When I was caught sneaking to church, I was beaten.

I saw no way to worship in freedom, so I fled the military. I knew I could be sent to prison if they found me, so I hid among the Pygmy people, where I thought no one would look for me. But I was captured and taken back to camp. There soldiers put me into a deep hole I could not climb out of.

I am a mechanic, and one day they took me from the hole to repair their car. I fixed the car and ran away again. This time I went to the city where I had attended church. I found the pastor, who told me that soldiers were searching for me, but he wanted to help me.

I stayed with the pastor for two days. Then he took me to my former commander and arranged for my release from the military so I could work for the church. Praise God, the commander released me. I was a free man!

I drove the truck for the church and studied the Bible. A year later I was baptized into God's church. Today I am truly free—free from the military, free to serve the Lord.



MARADONA MAGUBA (left) shares his faith in Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo.