

*Read also Mark 10:2-9*

The artist is at work – focused, creating something magnificent. He does this with intention, with a plan formed in His mind; His canvas powerfully transformed.

- Light overshadows darkness
- Brilliant constellations abound - Have you looked up at the Milky Way from a Colorado mountain?
- Things grow everywhere - have you felt the spray of the falls in Yosemite Park? Stood on a beach at sunset?
- Life fills the canvas – go to a zoo and imagine naming the animals yourself. Notice the variety of plants and animals – the sheer magnitude of God’s imagination.
- Finally human beings – God’s crowning creation

The Artist creates; the Artist stands in the midst of His work; the Artist, satisfied with His work, rests. Celebrates the things He has made. As you go about this world, notice it.

When you travel, you used to get a roadmap. Times have changed. Now you can go online and zoom right in via satellite to your destination, the street, even the vehicles on the street, and the place where you want to go.

Genesis 2 zooms in on creation. While Genesis 1 gave us the broad brushstroke, Genesis 2 gives the close-up; the inside scoop. Somehow the writer, who is most likely different from chapter one, gets to the inside thoughts of God, of the man, a close-up shot of the luxurious garden.

In Genesis 2 we see God at work. What does God have in mind for us? How close is God? What is God like?

We look below the surface, try to see the God behind the story.

But before we do that you might think, *how can we do that? That was at least 5,000 years ago – maybe more. Who can relate to that?*

That’s one reason we do skits. We imagine being there ourselves. We talk about how hard it would be to TRUST GOD, had we been there.

Are you familiar with postmodernity? Postmoderns have a distrust of history. Much of knowledge is reduced to what you yourself gain by personal experience.

But actually when we study history we do ourselves a great favor. The insights of other generations allow us to be lifted out of our own perspective. While we take cultural pride in our level of education and progress, 2011 does not mean society has been on a trajectory of increasingly cogent thought. Not every word that comes through today’s public microphone graces the world with wisdom; in fact, often it is quite the opposite. History helps us see that.

So today let us willingly open our minds to historical thought – even as far back as this OT text. It lifts our respect for humanity, and we might learn something.

When we read this text, let us realize our purpose.

How many of you have built a house? We can build a beautiful house. But that does not make a home. We can have a job, we can be successful, but that does not make it a call. God was doing more than building a structure.

So as we read this text, we want to do more than understand the surface. We look for the deeper MEANING here. What is God like? How do we relate it to our lives? For this is God's story.  
READ Genesis 2:7-10, 15

The garden was a perfect place; the most beautiful place imaginable; like Hawaii. Lush, watered, no weeds, full of flowers and fruit. My husband's dream. This is a garden of total pleasure. It had an automatic sprinkler system that bubbled up out of the ground, and no one sent a water bill.

This type of garden does not grow in 105 degrees. Therefore, we do not understand this garden in Texas in 2011.

The garden is made just for us. God's gift. So we learn that God freely gives pleasure. It is within God to give and provide. Do you look for the gifts God has given you? Are you impacted by His generosity, or do you miss it?

If you miss it, you might look at your own level of generosity. You begin to understand generosity as you experience the joy of being generous yourself.

But along with the great gift of this pleasant home came limits. Read Gen 2:16-17

God gave pleasure but set prohibitions.

Does that seem unfair to you? Do you wonder why would God make the perfect garden with lush trees full of beautiful delicious vegetation and then say, "But here's one you can't eat."

Isn't that like drawing a line in the sand and telling your child not to cross it? What can be more tempting? That fruit just became twice as delicious.

We know the struggle, don't we? Why did God do this?

Sometimes the most practical situations can help us understand.

We have a new grand-dog. Rosie is very cute, but I don't really want to babysit her. She's not what you would call civilized yet. So I turned to the Dog Whisperer for advice. Here's what he says:

When you adopt a dog, you basically play God in his life. In essence, you say, "I'm the person you are to love, obey and trust for the rest of your life. I hope that works for you!"

Fortunately, dogs have embraced the “love the one you’re with” philosophy 100 percent. Dogs tend to go with the flow . . .<sup>1</sup>

God knows this. God, the “People Whisperer,” or people expert, has known this from thousands of years of experience with humans. We need Someone outside ourselves to be in charge. So Paradise is defined by trust and obedience to God.

Maybe that tree was magical; maybe not. But there is something magical about obedience to God. God knows human beings need someone to be accountable to; Someone who is over all things. God knows this is a must.

Why? We are given free will. But for free will to “work” for our benefit, we must follow the One with bigger wisdom, to lift our sights, lest we compete with our neighbor. People are given great gifts, but they are not given autonomy from God.

Let’s read on. READ Gen 2:18-20a

What a beautiful picture: God brings the animals to Adam to “see what he would name them.” Whatever he decided was okay with God. God has great respect for your abilities. God did not place Adam in the garden just to control him, or for Adam to simply look handsome. No, God gives a call.

This is the second fact we learn about God.

You are not here just to hang out. With God, there is always a job for you. God wants you doing something in the world. God did not second-guess Adam’s name of the creatures. God is excited to see what you will do.

Do you see the heart and thoughts of your Creator? He trusts you and entrusts the world to you. God brings circumstances to “see what you will do.” Perhaps God watches us now to see what we do with the work of this church. Will we sit around looking pretty? Or will we spread His good message to the community?

Adam did his work, but God noticed something. READ Gen 2:20b-25

“WOW! That is what he said about God’s stunning gift.

But in order to understand it, we must see Genesis 2 outside of our own context. We must hear the language itself.

Adam was not complete by himself. God made a “helper.” The word does not mean “assistant.” It does not connote that she is an “auxiliary.” She is not his “accessory” or “backup.” In Hebrew the word means *she’s an irreplaceable part of the equation*. It means the man needs a woman. And, vice versa.

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<sup>1</sup> Cheri Lucas, “The Art of Learning to “Be”” at <http://www.cesarsway.com/>, accessed 9/15/11.

To understand a word from ancient times scholars examine other writings from the same period to see how the word was used, including other parts of the Bible. This word “helper” is used for God in relation to us. God is our Helper. God steps in beside us. The nuance is of *intimate care for the wellbeing of another*.

It implies *a bond that is undivided and at one in will for the good of the unit*.

That’s why together they become one and cannot be separated. Marriage is a picture of our relationship with God. Bonded; inseparable; in covenant. Perhaps we should say “WOW” over God’s willingness to walk with us.

This passage is not saying that every person needs to be married. The apostle Paul and Jesus himself said there are some people who are called to be single. What is important is to understand the level of intimacy implied in our relationship with God.

The story is not completed; it is to be continued; for the people God made and all God had done would change soon.

Do you look for and accept God’s pleasant gifts?

Do you place yourself under His wisdom and authority?

Are you seeking out God’s call and becoming involved in God’s work? That is God’s call to you, and if you do it, whether married or single, you will not be lonely.

AMEN