



## **Male and female he created them**

*A Bible study on God's loving gift of the interdependent and complementary partnership of male and female*

### **Lesson #1: Shared gifts belonging to male and female in creation**

#### **Introduction**

God's one great thought. That's what our spiritual forefather, August Pieper, called our triune God's plan of creating human beings to live in a loved and loving fellowship with him and with one another. In multiple ways the creation account of Genesis 1 and 2 breathes God's eager delight that led up to the pinnacle moment of creation as God uniquely fashioned Adam and Eve. Those events of the sixth day of creation were moments of the greatest fatherly delight for God. That was not true because of what he would gain, but because of what in love he was giving them.

It is this glorious giving of such awesome gifts to human beings in creation—and the gracious re-gifting of those gifts in Christ—that will be the focus of our first two lessons. In this first lesson we will see gifts male and female share (marking them as equal in loved status as his children). Then, in our second lesson we will see gifts that are unique to male and female (marking them as anything but duplicates of each other but glorious and wonderful interdependent complements to each other).

May that which filled God with delight in his creating fill us with wonder and delight as we study it!

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#### **Part 1: Creation in God's image**

Quickly scan Genesis 1:1-25 as Moses' inspired words record God's creation of the universe as it moves from being "formless and void" to beautiful and well-ordered perfection.

➤ ***Read Genesis 1:26-28***

Here we reach the pinnacle of God's creating activity as he creates the human beings for whose benefit all had been created.

**Where in Moses' inspired account do you see testimony to God's delighting in creating human beings as the crown and focus of his entire creating activity?**

Notable in that list is the first thing God mentions as Moses pictures God taking counsel with himself as he is about to create human beings. It is the creation of both male and female in his image.

Clearly, since God is spirit (John 4:24) and not flesh and bones as we are (other than the second person of the Trinity who became and remains our true brother as well as our God!), the image of God isn't found in something physical. Since Scripture paints the image as lost in the fall and restored in Christ, some of the most helpful passages for grasping the image of God are those that describe the difference between the sinful nature we were born with and the new self the Spirit planted in us when he brought us to faith. In passages such as Ephesians 4:17-24 and Colossians 3:5-14, the apostle Paul portrays for us how the new self "is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator" (Colossians 3:10).

Here's how a father of our church, Carl Lawrenz, defined that gift of the image:

"True knowledge of God as the source of every blessing was a part of the divine image in which man was created. . . . [A]ll thoughts he entertained and the conclusions he reached agreed with God's thoughts. . . . The divine image consisted also in this: man's feelings and emotions, his organs of evaluation, were in complete harmony with God's evaluation of things. Man found joy and delight in that which pleased God. Man's will—all his impulses, desires, and actions—was likewise in complete harmony with God's holy will. . . . Expressed negatively we can say that they were without sin." (*A Commentary on Genesis 1-11*, pp. 75,76)

➤ ***Read Genesis 2:18-25***

**In these verses, where can you see the beauty of the gift of God's image in Adam's thoughts and actions? Look for where you see Adam functioning as a beautiful mirror of his Creator in his understanding (thinking God's thoughts after him), emotion (loving the good God loves and hating the evil God hates), and will (acting in conformity with God's will).**

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## **Part 2: Perfect peace (fellowship) with God as his perfectly loved and cared for children**

This gift of the image carried with it a double glorious purpose and therefore two additional gifts. God's fashioning of male and female in his image enabled them to enjoy perfect peace

(fellowship) with God. God and his perfect creatures existed in perfect harmony. Adam and Eve knew they were God's wonderfully crafted and perfectly loved, image-bearing children. That enabled them to live in confident trust in their Creator's ongoing loving provision. They knew perfectly the reality of the often-repeated refrain: "Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever" (Psalm 118:1).

➤ ***Read Genesis 3:8***

Here there seems to be a glimpse of a concrete way perfect human beings had enjoyed the gift of peace and harmony with their Creator. The glimpse comes in a strange place. After Adam and Eve have fallen, they hear the sound of God walking in the garden in the cool of the day. They hide—giving evidence of having lost the image and its accompanying gift of trusting peace and harmony with their God!

**What does this strongly suggest as we note that Adam and Eve knew immediately that the sound they heard was the LORD taking some tangible form to meet with them?**

In our fallen state, it is hard for us even to imagine what it was like to possess the image and its accompanying gift of a perfectly trusting and loving relationship with God. Yet, in Christ, this two-fold gift is restored to us. Jesus Christ, as true eternal God, is the essential and eternal "image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15). As such he took on flesh to live perfectly in our place (the image of God lived out by our true brother) and die in our place (the judgment taken for humanity's throwing away the gift of the image). In Christ, God has declared the world righteous in his sight (the image restored). As the Spirit brings us to faith in Christ, we taste again the gift of peace with God that Adam and Eve once knew (the gift of fellowship with God restored as well). "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith in this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:1,2). While it will be heaven before we grasp perfectly the restoration of the image of God and the fellowship with God that comes with it, yet it is no less perfectly our possession already now than it was Adam and Eve's in the garden.

**As we ponder the wonder of these first two gifts (the image of God and with it fellowship with him) given to male and female, how do we see the utter foolishness of any thought of earning our way into favor with God?**

### **Part 3: The privilege of being God's visible representatives on earth**

The gift of the image not only brought along with it a vertical gift of fellowship with God, but that gift also equipped Adam and Eve for the gift of serving as God's visible representatives on earth. While God could have done everything that was needed to care for his world and his creatures—and indeed God alone enables the entire universe to keep functioning—God was delighted to entrust much of that care to the crown of his creation.

While the vertical gift (fellowship with God) that comes along with the image of God is more implied than stated in the creation account, it is this horizontal gift (serving as God's visible representatives in their love and care for his world and each other) that is most fully expressed. We saw it already in what God said as he took counsel with himself about the creation of human beings (Genesis 1:26) and in the blessing God then spoke over Adam and Eve when he had created them (Genesis 1:28,29).

**Why was the gift of the image to human beings so important for the living out of this gift of being God's visible representatives on earth?**

**How does Adam and Eve's perfect trust in their Creator's love and care for them (that gift of a perfect relationship with God that came with the image) powerfully impact their living out being God's representatives as they cared for his world and one another?**

**When male and female lost the image in the fall, and with the loss of that image also lost trust in God's goodness to them, how did that also utterly distort any proper understanding of this gift as well?**

➤ *Read 2 Corinthians 5:14,15*

**How does the restoration of fellowship with God in Christ as the perfectly loved and cared for children of our heavenly Father also strengthen us once again to live out the gift of being God's representatives on earth?**

There is one key difference, however, between the restored gift of fellowship with God and the restored gift of serving as God's loved representatives on earth. The gift of fellowship with God

comes to us full and complete as a declaration of God in Christ that the Spirit teaches us to believe. That is the truth of our justification. It is ours as a complete and perfect gift (though it will be heaven before we fully grasp its wonder)!

But Scripture speaks about the restoration of the gift of being glimpses of God's love and compassion and protection in this life as something that is an ongoing part of our growth in sanctification.

➤ *Read Colossians 3:10*

**How does Paul signal in this verse that our lives of living as glimpses of God's love and compassion in this life is a "work in progress" in us?**

This gift of being God's visible representatives on earth—given first in creation and so gloriously restored day by day in us in Christ by the Spirit's power—is called the doctrine of vocation. God calls human beings to be glimpses of his love and kindness in all the various callings that he gives them in life. While even unbelievers without realizing it are channels of God's love and kindness when they live in their vocations, only those who have been called to faith find the joy of grasping this reality that Adam and Eve once knew perfectly and, until the fall, lived perfectly!

So, we have seen that God gave three astounding gifts to both male and female in creation. They were both created in his image. That gift of the image also brought with it two closely related gifts. Male and female lived in perfect fellowship and peace with their Creator, and they also both served as his visible representatives who would care for the world with God's own love and compassion. Though lost in the fall, those same three gifts are given back to us in Christ! Therefore, both in our creation and in our re-creation in Christ, male and female share these three gifts in equal measure.

**Why is it so critical to how we interact with one another to ponder our sharing of these three gifts as male and female?**