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GENESIS 1–3

Biblical womanhood is part of the story of redemption. It can only be understood in the context of this amazing gospel story that begins . . .

BEFORE THE BEGINNING

Read Ephesians 1:1–14

In this marvelous doxology to the triune God, we learn that before creation the Father chose us in Christ (v. 4), that the Son redeemed us through His blood (v. 7), and that the Spirit seals and guarantees our inheritance (v. 13–14). In this covenant of redemption each person of the Trinity assumed a different function in the accomplishment of our redemption, but the common purpose is the praise of His glorious

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grace (vv. 6, 12, 14). The Bible is the unfolding story of this glorious plan and purpose.

Consider this question: Which Trinitarian function is most important for our salvation?

The answer: The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are “the same in substance, equal in power and glory,”¹ but each has a distinct, *equally important*, function in our redemption. These functions are so perfectly complementary that they harmonize to accomplish the grand work of redemption that praises God’s glorious grace.

THE BEGINNING

Read Genesis 1:1–3

God commanded light to appear. Light did not dare disobey. The authority of God’s Word brought creation into existence.

Foundational reality: Our authority
is God’s Word.

Read Genesis 1:26

Being created in God’s image means that we were created to live in relationship with Him and to reflect certain aspects of His glorious character.

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Foundational reality: Our purpose is God's glory.

Read Genesis 1:27

“Male and female”—fascinating—God did not create a genderless being!

By creating the man first, God assigned him the function of headship. The man and woman were created equally in God's image but each was designed for a different, equally valuable function in God's kingdom.

Foundational reality: Gender distinctiveness is God's plan; thus it is very good.

Wayne Grudem explains:

The equality and differences between men and women reflect the equality and differences in the Trinity. . . . In 1 Corinthians 11 Paul writes, “But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God (v. 3).” . . .

When did the idea of headship and submission begin? *The idea of headship and submission never began!* It has *always existed* in the eternal nature of God himself. . . .

We can say then that a relationship of authority and submission between equals, with mutual giving of honor, is the most fundamental and most glorious interpersonal relationship in the universe. . . . And when we begin to dislike the very idea

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of authority and submission—not the distortions and abuses, but *the very idea*—we are tampering with something very deep. We are beginning to dislike God himself.²

Read Genesis 1:28

The male and female distinctiveness was so wondrously complementary that together they could glorify God by fulfilling the cultural mandate to be fruitful and multiply and have dominion over God's kingdom.

Read Genesis 2:15–17

God made a covenant of works with the man. Adam was our representative in this covenant. If he and the woman obeyed God perfectly they (and we) would live with God forever. They (and we) would know His nearness. Obedience meant life. Disobedience meant death. It still does.

GOD'S FEMALE DESIGN

Read Genesis 2:18

It was not good for the man to be alone because God created him with the need for a helper. Their interdependence was

not weakness; it was the strength and beauty of the relationship. Their interdependence reflected the unity and diversity of the Trinity.

In this verse we are given more insight into God's female design.

Helper is not an inferior function. The Hebrew word translated *helper* in Genesis 2:18 is *ezer*. In the Old Testament it often refers to God as our Helper. Understanding how God is our Helper shows the strong, relational, nurturing, compassionate character of this word. The following are some examples.

- He defends: "The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh" (Ex. 18:4).
- He sees and cares for suffering: "But you do see, for you note mischief and vexation, that you may take it into your hands; to you the helpless commits himself; you have been the helper of the fatherless" (Ps. 10:14).
- He supports: "May he send you help from the sanctuary and give you support from Zion!" (Ps. 20:2).
- He protects: "Our soul waits for the LORD; he is our help and our shield" (Ps. 33:20).
- He delivers from distress: "But I am poor and needy; hasten to me, O God! You are my help and my deliverer; O LORD, do not delay!" (Ps. 70:5).
- He pities: "For he delivers the needy when he calls, the poor and him who has no helper. He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy" (Ps. 72:12–13).
- He comforts: ". . . you, LORD, have helped me and comforted me" (Ps. 86:17).

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SIN

Read Genesis 3:1–13

When the man and woman rejected God's authority they lost their relationship with Him; thus they lost their ability to glorify Him. Sin separates us from God. Without His nearness they could not reflect Him. We reflect that which we face, and they turned away from God. They lost their ability to be and do what they were created to be and do.

The woman lost her ability to be a helper.

The true woman became a new woman.

Our first parents were covenant breakers but God is a covenant keeper. Because of the covenant of redemption He did not forsake them. They hid but He came near, not with a sword but with a promise. Neither Satan's deception nor man's disobedience could stop the triune God's covenant loyalty to those on whom He set His affection before creation.

REDEMPTION

Read Genesis 3:14–15

Embedded in the curse on Satan is the first revelation of the gospel. Obedience was still required, so God promised to

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send One who would obey in our place. This covenant promise thunders through Scripture and through history as God declares, “I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people” (Lev. 26:12; also see Gen. 17:7; John 1:14; Rev. 21:1–3). This is a covenant of grace. It is not deserved and cannot be earned. It can only be accomplished by the Redeemer who would be the seed of the woman.

Surely Adam was stunned as he listened. The seed of the woman. . . . He and the woman would have children. . . . They deserved death but received life. What was his response to this gospel promise? In celebration and affirmation of his belief in the promise, “The man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living” (Gen. 3:20).

Adam named his wife. In Scripture, naming indicates headship. Because of the gospel, Adam was restored to headship.

Eve means “giver of life.” This is not just biological. Because of the gospel, she was restored to her ability to be a life-giving helper in every relationship, situation, and season of life. This is our redemptive calling, but our own sin and the influence of culture tempt us to be life-takers—to live for self. Is it really possible for us to fulfill our high and holy calling? Yes, because Jesus said, “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth. . . . He dwells with you and will be in you” (John 14:16–17). We can be helpers because, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Ps. 46:1).

The true woman knows that her privilege of nearness to God and her ability to call on Him in truth are gifts of His grace. She is awash with gratitude.

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How Do We Call on God in Truth?

- With gratitude for our redemption.

Throughout this study we will identify principles that answer this question. This is not an exhaustive answer, and the order is unimportant. I am not suggesting a formula to be followed. These are simply principles based on the Scriptures we will study. The principles are not gender-specific, but we will make application to women by sharing the life-giving prayer stories of some true women.

LIFE-GIVING PRAYER

In his church newsletter, Pastor Glen Knecht wrote about attending a church service in Ukraine after the fall of communism.

How mistaken the Communists were when they allowed the older women to continue worshipping together! It was they who were considered no threat to the new order, but it was they whose prayers and faithfulness over all those barren years held the church together and raised up a generation of men and young people to serve the Lord. Yes, the church we attended was crowded with these older women at the very front, for they had been the stalwart defenders and maintainers of Christ's Gospel, but behind them and alongside them and in the balcony and outside the windows were the fruit of their faithfulness, men, women, young people, and children. We must never underestimate the place and power of our godly women. To them go the laurels in the Church in Ukraine.³

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Several years after I heard this I was in a church in Ukraine, speaking for a women's conference. I told the story, and my translator looked at me in amazement. "My grandmother was like that," she said. "I was a communist so she never spoke to me about Jesus but somehow I knew. Her home and her marriage were different. Now I am a Christian. I know I am an answer to her prayers." We celebrated. We knew we had heard a life-giving story.

Reflect and Pray

1. Read Ephesians 1:1–14 and write a prayer thanking the triune God for who He is and what He has done for you.
2. Think about the three foundational realities mentioned under the section "The Beginning."
 - How do these foundational realities differ from the cultural perspective of authority?
 - How do they differ from the cultural perspective of our life purpose?
 - What is your reaction to the quote from Wayne Grudem?
3. What is your response to the concept of redeemed womanhood?
 - Reflect on the "helper" verses. What are some ways you have seen women exemplify these characteristics? What are some results when women fail to exemplify these graces?
 - What difference would it make in your relationships if you are a giver of life? A taker of life?
 - Think about your most difficult relationship. Pray about what it would mean to be a giver of life in

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that relationship, and ask the Holy Spirit to be your Helper to empower you in fulfilling your calling in that relationship.

- What difference would it make in your prayer life if God's Word was your authority and God's glory was your purpose?