

Introduction to Chapter 5

After creating men and women in his own image, God rested from his work of creating the cosmos as his temple. Therefore, he provided us with an example to follow by ceasing from his labor on the Sabbath. Even better, we can trust that Jesus’s sacrifice on our behalf is sufficient for us to enter God’s eternal place of rest.

What Became of the Heavens and the Earth

1) Gen 2:4–6: Here the focus shifts from a cosmic view of creation in which God formed the world for his glory alone, with humanity as his final creative act of self-glorification, to an account of creation in which the Lord is near, living together with Adam in paradise.¹ In each of the ten instances in Genesis where the phrase “These are the generations of” occurs, Moses switched to a new topic describing what or who came forth (eg. Gen 4:25–5:3; Gen 6:7–10; Gen 9:28–10:1). Consequently, this section does not describe the process of creating the heavens and the earth, but rather what they propagated.² Therefore, a good translation of v. 4a is, “Here is what became of the heavens and the earth.”³

Much as in v. 6, the Sumerian myth Enki and Ninhursag says of the patron goddess of paradise’s father, “From the mouth whence issues the water of the earth, [he] brought her sweet water from the earth...makes her city drink from it the waters of abundance.”⁴ People were not yet working the ground to create irrigation canals,⁵ which were like the ones used in Egypt even today.⁶

a) Read Gen 2:4–6. What clue do we have that Gen 2 depicts what the heavens and the earth propagated, rather than how God created them? Why wasn’t agriculture taking place?

The Lord Breathes Life

b) Gen 2:7: Moses wrote, “And the Lord God formed the human (*adam*) from the dust of the ground (*adamah*). Then he breathed into his nostril the breath (*nephesh*) of life, and the human became a living person (*nephesh*).”⁷ The name *adam* means “man” in a generic sense, without

¹ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 71–2.

² Hamilton, *Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 152.

³ Dr. Sarah Hall, personal communication (18 March 2015).

⁴ S. N. Kramer, trans., “Enki and Ninhursag: A Paradise Myth,” in *ANET*, lines 55–7, 38.

⁵ E. A. Zaghoul, et al., “Detection of Ancient Irrigation Canals of Deir El-Hagar Playa, Dakhla Oasis, Egypt, Using Egyptsat-1 Data,” *The Egyptian Journal of Remote Sensing and Space Science* 16, no. 2 (December 2013): 153–61, <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1110982313000227>.

⁶ Tour Egypt, “Egypt Picture - Water Buffalo Assists with Irrigation,” <http://www.touregypt.net/featurestories/picture03312005.htm>.

⁷ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “נֶפֶשׁ (*nephesh*), *BDB*, 659, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/658/mode/2up>.

reference to gender. Given current language usage, the best translations are “human” or “humanity.” Note the close linguistic relationship with *adamah*, the word for “ground,”⁸ the material from which God created him. In Hebrew, *nephesh* means “breath,” “life,” “soul,” and “person.” Therefore, this word appears twice in one sentence.⁹

Similar to the account of the animation of Adam, an Egyptian text says, “Well directed are men, the cattle of the god. He made heaven and earth according to their desire, and he repelled the water-monster. He made the breath of life (for) their nostrils. They who have issued from his body are his images.”¹⁰

Read Gen 2:7. How did Moses use word play to describe how God formed Adam and then imparted life to him? What similarities and differences occur between the view of humanity in Genesis and in the Instruction for King Meri-Ka-Re? How does the Lord’s perspective on the value of people affect the way you see yourself and others?

A Well-Watered Garden

c) Gen 2:8–14: The word “Eden” signifies a well-watered, luxuriant park. Meanwhile “garden” (*gan*) typically refers an orchard or park containing trees, rather than plots of vegetables.¹¹ Therefore, Eden likely resembled a botanic garden, much like those in the palace complexes of the Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) kings.¹²

For example, Tiglath-Pileser I, who ruled the Assyrian Empire from 1114–1046 BC,¹³ wrote in his annals, “I brought cedars, boxwood, and allakanish-trees from the countries which I have subdued, trees the like of which none of the kings, my ancient fathers, had ever planted, and I planted them in the gardens of my land. I took rare garden plants, which were not found in my own land, and caused them to flourish in the gardens of Assyria.”¹⁴

⁸Leland Ryken, James Douglas Wilhoit, Tremper Longman III, Colin Duriez, Douglas Penney, and Daniel G. Reid, eds., “Adam,” *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL; Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 9–14, 9.

⁹D. C. Frederichs, “נֶפֶשׁ” (*nephesh*), *NIDOTTE*, 3:133–4, 133.

¹⁰John A. Wilson, trans., “The Instruction for King Meri-Ka-Re,” in *ANET*, line 131, 417, https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n441/mode/2up.

¹¹Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 2:14.

¹²Walton, *Genesis*, 166.

¹³Parks and Gardens UK: Knowledge, Inspiration, Conservation, “Tiglath-Pileser I and the Passion He Shared with William Robinson,” <https://parksandgardensuk.wordpress.com/2014/10/11/tiglath-pileser-i-the-passion-he-shared-with-william-robinson/>. This site has some good photos of Assyrian reliefs.

¹⁴Tiglath-Pileser I, “Prism Inscription (History of First Five Years of Reign)” in *ARAB*, 1:72–91, section 254, 87, https://archive.org/stream/LuckenbillAncientRecordsAssyria01/Luckenbill_Ancient_Records_Assyria01#page/n101/mode/2up.

God “caused to grow...the tree of life in the very heart (*tawek*) of the garden.”¹⁵ This made Eden a sacred space,¹⁶ indicating that God stands at the center of human existence in all its fullness.¹⁷ Pharaoh Ramses III (1187–1151 BC) also situated beautiful gardens around Egyptian centers of worship,¹⁸ another sign that Eden itself comprised a temple.¹⁹

As in Ezek 47:1–12, a great river symbolized the Lord’s life-giving presence (cf. Ps 36:7–9). Its branching into four streams suggests completeness and universality, for the text mentions not only the Tigris and Euphrates Mesopotamia,²⁰ but also the Nile of North Africa and the Indus of Asia.²¹ Furthermore, that these rivers flow in different directions from one spot suggests that Eden was set upon a mountain top.²² Scholars debate the exact location of these headwaters, with some favoring the mountains of Armenia and others the Persian Gulf.²³ Since the portrayal in Genesis conforms to the ANE view of land sitting upon subterranean waters (Ps 24:1–2),²⁴

Moses applied a cosmic motif—with the rivers flowing from Eden bringing life-giving water to the world—rather than a scientific description.²⁵ In ANE literature, creator gods such as Enki and El dwelt at the source of rivers.²⁶ One of the Poems about Baal and Anath describes a god as “El of the Sources of the Two Floods in the midst of the headwaters of the Two Oceans.”²⁷ Furthermore, the 18th century BC palace of Zimri-Lim in modern day Syria depicts the concept of four streams flowing from a temple to water the four corners of the earth.²⁸ A fresco shows two goddesses holding jars with four streams of water flowing from each of them in different directions.²⁹

Read Gen 2:8-14. What did God provide for Adam? How did Eden resemble a temple? What effect should living with God as the center of our existence have upon us?

¹⁵ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “*tāwek*,” *BDB*, 1063, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/1062/mode/2up>.

¹⁶ Walton, *Genesis*, 193.

¹⁷ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 83–4.

¹⁸ James H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt (ARE)*, 5 Vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1906), Sections 215–20, 4:121–3, <https://archive.org/details/BreastedJ.H.AncientRecordsEgyptAll5Vols1906>.

¹⁹ Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, 76.

²⁰ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 64–5.

²¹ Hamilton, *Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 168.

²² Lifsa Schachter, “The Garden of Eden as God’s First Sanctuary,” *JBQ* 41, no. 2 (2013): 73–7, 74. <https://www.thefreelibrary.com/The+garden+of+Eden+as+god's+first+sanctuary.-a0323259066>.

²³ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 66.

²⁴ Walton, *Genesis*, 126.

²⁵ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 66.

²⁶ Walton, *Genesis*, 167–8.

²⁷ “Poems About Baal and Anath,” in *ANET*, 4:20–2, 133.

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n157/mode/2up.

²⁸ Walton, *Genesis*, 169.

²⁹ Wikimedia Commons, “File: Investiture Zimri Lim Louvre Diagram TT.JPG”

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Investiture_Zimri_Lim_Louvre_diagram_TT.JPG You can view the photo from which this diagram was created at

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mari_fresco_Investiture_Zimri_Lim_0209.jpg.

The Holy Mountain of God

2) Read Rev 21:18–22:3: Ezekiel 28:14 also describes Eden as “the holy mountain of God.”

The following sections contain information pertinent to answering these questions:

Chapter 2: Greater and Lesser Lights (Gen 1:14–19)

Chapter 3: Made in the Image of God (Gen 1:26)

Chapter 4: God Completes the Heavens and the Earth (Gen 2:1–2)

Chapter 5: A Well-Watered Garden (Gen 2:8–14)

Chapter 10: A Return to Paradise (Rev 22:1–5, 20)

In addition to what we have read in Genesis 1–2, what hints do you see from the description of the new Jerusalem that the garden of Eden was designed as the first temple, a place where God would dwell with his people? How does this passage in Revelation encourage you?

Serving and Keeping

3) Gen 2:15: The first word (*avadh*) describing why God placed Adam in Eden means to “work,” “serve,” and “cultivate.”³⁰ Meanwhile, the second term (*shamar*) has the nuances of “keep,” “watch,” “preserve,”³¹ and “guard.”³² Whenever these verbs appear together elsewhere in the Old Testament, they pertain to people serving the Lord and keeping God’s word (Deut 13:14; Josh 22:5), or they refer to priests who provide for the service of the tabernacle (Num 3:7–8; Num 8:25–26; 1 Chron 23:32; Ezek 44:14).³³

Once again, Moses alluded to Eden as a sacred space akin to the tabernacle.³⁴ Consequently, Adam engaged in a far greater task than mere landscaping.³⁵ According to Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) thinking, those who maintained order in sacred places participated with God in maintaining the stability of the cosmos.³⁶

³⁰ Holladay, *CHALOT*, “עָבַד” (*avadh*), 261.

³¹ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “שָׁמַר” (*shamar*), *BDB*, 1036, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/1036/mode/2up>.

³² F. García-López, “שָׁמַר” (*shamar*), *TDOT*, 15:279–305, 286.

³³ Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, 66–7.

³⁴ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 67.

³⁵ Walton, *Genesis*, 174.

³⁶ Frank H. Gorman Jr., *The Ideology of Ritual: Space, Time, and Status in the Priestly Theology* (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2009), 39–40.

In some respects, the Mesopotamian accounts of people being created to serve the gods align with the reality of Genesis 2. However, in those ANE traditions the gods had deficiencies that had to be met.³⁷ For example, one of the gods in Enuma Elish stated this concerning the god Marduk:

“Most exalted be the Son, our avenger; Let his sovereignty be surpassing, having no rival. May he shepherd the black-headed ones (humanity), his creatures. To the end of days, without forgetting, let them acclaim his ways. May he establish for his fathers the great food offerings; their support they shall furnish, shall tend their sanctuaries. May he cause incense to be smelled ...A likeness on earth of what he has wrought in heaven. May he order the black-headed to re[vere him]. May the subjects ever bear in mind their god. And may they at his word pay heed to the goddess. May food-offerings be borne for their gods and goddesses. Without fail, let them support their gods! Their lands let them improve, build their shrines, let the black-headed wait on their gods.”³⁸

In contrast to other ANE gods, the Lord has no needs (Ps 50:7–15; Amos 5:21–24; Acts 17:22–26). Therefore, Moses agreed with the Babylonians that a deity created people to serve him, but not because God tired of laboring to provide for himself (Ps 69:30–31).³⁹ Paradise with absolutely no demands placed upon humanity never existed. Therefore, we cannot consider work itself a consequence of sin.⁴⁰

a) Read Gen 2:15. How did the Lord intend for Adam to fulfill his purposes in Eden? What hints do you see indicating that this was priestly service? How does this knowledge affect the way you view your labor?

Forbidden Fruit

b) Gen 2:16–17: The Book of Proverbs states that one of the highest goals of godly people consists of acquiring wisdom (Prov 4:5–9). However, some types of wisdom belong solely to God, which people should not seek to attain. Ultimately, a full understanding of the Lord, the universe, and humanity’s role remains beyond our comprehension (Job 38:1–7). To pursue such wisdom without dependence upon God asserts human autonomy, neglecting the fear of the Lord which is the beginning of knowledge (Prov 1:7).

In effect, sin consists of seeking to determine morality apart from the Lord. Therefore, God forbade humanity from eating of “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”⁴¹ We see the consequences of this type of arrogance in Ezek 28:1–2, 11–19, a passage which describes the king of Tyre’s expulsion from Eden for claiming to be “wise as a god.”

The Lord warned, “On the day you eat from it, you shall surely die” (*moth tamuth*). He underscored the inevitability of death,⁴² not an immediate loss of life. Spiritual separation from

³⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 67.

³⁸E. A. Speiser, trans., “Enuma Elish (The Creation Epic),” in *ANET*, lines 106–21, 69.

³⁹Walton, *Genesis*, 186.

⁴⁰Hamilton, *Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 171.

⁴¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 63–64.

⁴²Gesenius, *GKC*, 342.

the Lord, estrangement in our relationships with other people, and eventually physical death result from our disobedience (Gen 20:7; Exod 31:14; Deut 24:16).⁴³

According to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “Death means standing before God as an outlaw, as one who is lost and damned, but not as one who no longer exists.”⁴⁴ Since Moses did not mention the tree of life here, it appears that Adam was permitted to eat from it but for some reason chose to abstain.⁴⁵

Read Gen 2:16–17. Why do you think God placed the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the middle of Eden and declared it off limits? What made it necessary for God to give Adam the warning not to eat from that tree immediately after placing him in the garden? How does arrogance affect our relationship with God and with other people?

Not Good!

c) Gen 2:18: Coming after a pattern of God declaring his work “good” (*tov*) and “very (*meod*) good,” (Gen 1:4; Gen 1:10; Gen 1:12; Gen 1:16–18; Gen 1:21; Gen 1:25; and Gen 1:31) the phrase “not (*lo*)” is emphatic, abruptly halting the flow of the narrative. What made Adam’s isolation unacceptable? The Lord in whose image he was created exists in a trinity in the middle of a heavenly court.⁴⁶ Even God—who has no needs—exists in community, not alone.

Since Adam’s strength remained inadequate,⁴⁷ the Lord created Eve. She was neither superior nor inferior to him. Instead, she performed an essential contribution for him.⁴⁸ Corresponding to the Hebrew verb, the noun translated as helper” (*ezer*) describes someone who works to “provide support,” “save from danger,” or “deliver from death” (Ps 54:4; Job 29:12).⁴⁹ Eve rescued or saved Adam from his isolation,⁵⁰ providing him with emotional and physical support.

Contrary to English usage of the word “helper,” *ezer* tells us nothing about the relative status of the helper to the one being helped.⁵¹ It implies that one being helped does not possess enough strength for the task at hand (Josh 1:14; 1 Chron 12:21–22; Ecc 4:9–12).⁵² Indeed, the

⁴³ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 87–88.

⁴⁴ Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 90.

⁴⁵ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 67.

⁴⁶ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 88.

⁴⁷ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 68.

⁴⁸ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 88.

⁴⁹ E. Lipiński and H.-J. Fabry, “אָזַר” (*azar*), *TDOT*, 11:13–18, 13, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/740/mode/2up>.

⁵⁰ Hamilton, *Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 176.

⁵¹ Walton, *Genesis*, 176.

⁵² Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 68.

term “ezer” applies to God in sixteen of the nineteen times it appears in the Old Testament (e.g. Gen 49:25; Ps 27:9).⁵³ In the Hebrew context, a “helper” serves above or beside another person, not under a leader.⁵⁴

Likewise, “suitable” (*kenegdo*) means “equal and adequate.”⁵⁵ The combination of “helper” with “equal and adequate” suggests reciprocal assistance between two people who correspond to each other.⁵⁶ Perhaps the best translation to capture these nuances would describe Eve as Adam’s “partner” or “counterpart.”⁵⁷ She shared Adam’s mandate (Gen 1:27–28), assisted him in his vocation (Gen 2:15), participated in his delight (Gen 2:8–10), and was to respect the prohibition placed upon him (Gen 2:16–17).⁵⁸

God’s concern for mutual support and marital companionship has no parallel in Ancient Near Eastern literature.⁵⁹ For example, in the Epic of Gilgamesh, Enkidu was born and lived in the wild, content to commune with only animals. Finally, Gilgamesh sent a prostitute to seduce him. Only then did Enkidu seek human companionship.⁶⁰

Read Gen 2:18. Why did God recognize that Adam should not be alone? What kind of person was best for him? How can you live as an adequate and equal helper?

A Parade of Animals

d) Gen 2:19–20: God first formed the animals from the same ground which he later used to create Adam (Gen 1:20–26; Gen 2:7). Then, Adam began to fulfill God’s directive to exercise authority over the creatures which preceded him (Gen 1:28). He did so by naming them, an activity previously reserved for the Lord (Gen 1:26).⁶¹ In the ancient world, to confer a name indicated that a person spoke from a position of authority and sovereignty.⁶² Emperors frequently employed this tactic over their under-lords (2 Chron 36:4; 2 Ki 24:15–17).

In the process of identifying each of the animals, Adam recognized that none could serve as his equal and adequate partner (*ezer kenegdo*). He would have to look elsewhere for assistance with his God-given functions of subduing and ruling to extend the garden-temple (Gen 1:26–28; Gen 2:8–10), serving and keeping it (Gen 2:15), and being fruitful and multiplying (Gen 1:28).⁶³

⁵³ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 88.

⁵⁴ Walton, *Genesis*, 176.

⁵⁵ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “נֶגְדוֹ” (*negdo*), *BDB*, 617, <https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/616/mode/2up>.

⁵⁶ Allan M. Harman, “עֶזֶר” (*ezer*), *NIDOTTE*, 3:379.

⁵⁷ Walton, *Genesis*, 177.

⁵⁸ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 88.

⁵⁹ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 88.

⁶⁰ “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” *ANET*, 2:1–26, 77, https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n101/mode/2up.

⁶¹ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 75.

⁶² Hamilton, *Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 176.

⁶³ Walton, *Genesis*, 187.

Read Gen 2:19–20. How did the parade of the animals increase Adam’s longing? Why do you think God chose to do that to him? How can you encourage someone who lives in isolation?

An Equal and Adequate Partner

e) Gen 2:21–23: In the process of naming the animals, Adam recognized that he lacked his own perfect counterpart (Gen 2:19–20). Moses wrote, “Then the Lord God caused a supernatural stupor (*tardema*) to fall upon the man.”⁶⁴ God put Adam into a coma, unable to perceive the Lord’s creative work.⁶⁵ The raw material for Eve came from Adam’s side. However, just as the ground did not spontaneously form a man, so a woman did not materialize until Yahweh performed a creative divine act.⁶⁶ He took her from Adam’s side to stand at his side.⁶⁷

Upon awakening, Adam responded with a rapturous poetic outburst, turning all focus to her:

This, this time,
[is] bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh.
This shall be called woman,
for from man was taken this!⁶⁸

In Hebrew, the word translated as “flesh” (*basar*) also means “weakness” (Isa 31:3), while we can render the term for “bone” (*etsem*) as “strength” (Gen 26:16).⁶⁹ By combining these antithetical terms into a word-pair, Adam employed merism, a literary device which employs a pair of opposites to denote them both and everything in between. Thus, Adam conveyed that he and the woman were alike across the range of human experience.

The phrase “my/your bone and flesh” also reflects a covenant formula of reciprocal unalterable loyalty (Gen 29:13–14; Judg 9:1–2; 1 Chron 11:1–3).⁷⁰ This forms the biblical counterpart to many modern marriage vows, “in weakness (flesh) and in strength (bone).”⁷¹ Adam recognized that he and the woman shared equal footing yet differed from the animals.⁷²

A 25th century BC Pyramid Text used a similar rhetorical device to insist upon the immortality of a deceased pharaoh by identifying him with the resurrected god Osiris. It says:⁷³ “O Atum, the one here is that son of thine, Osiris, whom thou hast caused to survive and to live

⁶⁴ Holladay, “תַּרְדֵּמָה” (*tardemah*), *CHALOT*, 395.

⁶⁵ M. Oeming, “תַּרְדֵּמָה” (*tardemah*), *TDOT* 13: 338–9.

⁶⁶ Hamilton, *Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 177, 179.

⁶⁷ Walton, *Genesis*, 188.

⁶⁸ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 69–70.

⁶⁹ Victor P. Hamilton, “Marriage (Old Testament and Ancient Near East),” in *ABD* 4:559–69, 568.

⁷⁰ Walter Brueggemann, “Of the Same Flesh and Bone, Gen 2:23a,” *CBQ* 32, no. 4 (1 October 1970): 532–42, 534–5.

⁷¹ Hamilton, *Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 179–80.

⁷² Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 70.

⁷³ Pritchard, *ANET*, 32.

on. He lives—(so also) this King Unis lives. He does not die—(so also) this King Unis does not die. Thy body is the body of this King Unis. Thy flesh is the flesh of this King Unis. Thy bones are the bones of this King Unis. When thou departest, this King Unis departs. When this King Unis departs, thou departest.⁷⁴

Not until after the fall of humanity did Adam name Eve (Gen 3:20). In Gen 2:23, Adam identified her as his true counterpart.⁷⁵ The term “woman” (*ishah*) is simply the feminine form of the word “man” (*ish*)^{76, 77} Moses emphasized the shared identity and equality of this first couple.⁷⁸ This poem portrays the ideal marriage in ancient Israel, characterized by harmony and intimacy.⁷⁹ While difficult to express in English, God’s pronouncement of “very good” after Eve’s creation forms a superlative: everything was the very best it could be (Gen 1:31).⁸⁰ Within the Ancient Near East, only Israel reported a separate creation account for the first woman.⁸¹

Read Gen 2:21–23. Why did Adam react as he did when he saw Eve? What did he communicate about her?

A Transfer of Loyalty

f) Gen 2:24: Here Moses inserted an editorial comment regarding the covenant commitment of marriage.⁸² He wrote, “For this reason a man shall forsake (*azav*) his father and his mother and shall cling to his wife.” To forsake someone strongly implies abandonment, as in Ps 22:1.⁸³ When a man marries, he must sever one set of loyalties to begin another.⁸⁴ In traditional societies like Israel’s, honoring one’s parents rose to just below the obligation to revere God (Exod 20:1–12), making this remark about forsaking them quite shocking.

The word “cling” (*davaq*) often occurs in the context of maintaining a covenant relationship, as it does here (Deut 4:4; Deut 10:20; Deut 11:22–3).⁸⁵ Thus, the one-flesh union goes beyond sexuality or even the spiritual and emotional bond which develops as newlyweds form a new household. Just as we consider a person’s blood relatives the same “flesh and blood,” so is one’s spouse.⁸⁶

⁷⁴John A. Wilson, trans., “The Conquest of Death,” in *ANET*, lines 167–93, 32–3.

⁷⁵Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 97.

⁷⁶Botterweck and Ringgren, eds., “*ישָׁה*” (*ishah*), *TDOT*, 1:429.

⁷⁷Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “*יש*” (*ish*), 35,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/34/mode/2up>.

⁷⁸Hamilton, *Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 180.

⁷⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 69.

⁸⁰Gesenius, *GKC*, 426, <https://archive.org/stream/geseniushebrewgr00geseuoft#page/426/mode/2up>.

⁸¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 177.

⁸²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis, A Commentary*, 90.

⁸³Robert L. Alden, “*azav*,” *NIDOTTE*, 3:364–5.

⁸⁴Hamilton, *Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 181.

⁸⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 181.

⁸⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 71.

Israel exempted a newly married man from military service and other duties which would take him away from home for one year in order that he would “bring joy to his wife” (Deut 24:5). The biblical pattern for establishing a couple’s own home contrasts with what occurs in many cultures even today. In some places, a man brings his new wife into his parents’ house, where she becomes the lowest-ranking member of the family. Jesus quoted this verse to emphasize the permanence of the marriage bond, which a spouse can choose to dissolve only in the aftermath of adultery, desertion, or abuse (Matt 19:4–6).⁸⁷

Read Gen 2:24. In what ways are men to leave their parents and become one with their wives when they marry? Why would Moses’s original audience have found this shocking?

Marital Separation

4) 1 Cor 7:10–11: This chapter contains many enigmas for the modern reader despite Paul’s excellent communication skills. Therefore, we must conclude that his original audience interpreted his words through cultural understandings which we no longer share. Thankfully, Jewish and Greco-Roman marriage and divorce papyri from the fourth century BC through the fourth century AD clear up much of the confusion.⁸⁸

By speaking “to the ones who have married” in v. 10, Paul first addressed situations in which both partners were believers. Here he gave the only command in all of 1 Cor 7:10–16.⁸⁹ He wrote, “A wife from her husband must not be separated. But if she does separate, she must remain unmarried, unless to reconcile with her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.” The apostle emphasized the moral nature of choosing to end one’s marriage. In this chapter, Paul typically addressed men first when he gave instructions to both genders (1 Cor 7:1–4; 1 Cor 7:25–28; 1 Cor 7:32–34). Therefore, it appears that, in Corinth, women initiated most divorces.⁹⁰

The instruction from the Lord almost certainly refers to Mark 10:2–12,⁹¹ where the context involved a Jewish audience (note the teaching on Deut 24:1–4).⁹² Jewish marriages were based on the concept of obligation, with both partners required to obey the stipulations of Exod 21:10–11. Should the husband violate them, the Mosaic law required a certificate of freedom for his wife. Yet, by the time of Christ, a man could obtain a divorce for any reason he chose.⁹³ Since a Jewish woman could legally end a marriage for very few reasons, Jesus’s opposition to

⁸⁷20th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of America, 1992, “Report of the Ad-Interim Committee on Divorce and Remarriage,” <http://www.pcahistory.org/pca/divorce-remarriage.pdf>, 292.

⁸⁸David Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 190, [Http://www.divorce-remarriage.com/](http://www.divorce-remarriage.com/).

⁸⁹Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Rev. Ed., 323.

⁹⁰Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 291.

⁹¹Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Rev. Ed., 323.

⁹²Craig Blomberg, *1 Corinthians* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 138.

⁹³Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context*, 191.

divorce defended the rights of married women.⁹⁴ The desperate financial plight of a divorced woman forced her to remarry, which explains the phrase “makes her commit adultery” (Rom 7:1–3).⁹⁵

Divorce among both Jews and gentiles existed to enable marriage to someone else.⁹⁶ According to Christ, if one divorces one’s spouse without valid grounds, such as sexual immorality, the marriage does not truly dissolve. A subsequent marriage equates to adultery.⁹⁷ However, Jesus released the innocent party in marriages where sexual immorality had occurred, and he seems to have permitted remarriage (Matt 5:31–32). Paul may have omitted this exception since it both Jews and Greeks recognized it.⁹⁸

A Jewish woman could leave her marriage but not initiate a legal divorce. Meanwhile, in Greco-Roman societies, such as in Corinth, either party could dissolve the marriage bond.⁹⁹ Paul argued that Christians should not instigate divorce. Instead, both men and women should fulfill the Mosaic obligations to provide emotional support, to care for physical needs, and to fully give themselves to each other sexually to prevent any rationale for a marital split (Deut 21:10–14; 1 Cor 7:3–6).¹⁰⁰

Jewish marriage certificates included a list of these requirements based upon the rights of a woman sold into marriage, with the implication that such marital neglect permitted divorce. Rabbis taught that if even a slave woman received such legal protection, so should all women and men.¹⁰¹ However, in cases where a spouse failed to meet those stipulations, the court sought to persuade the guilty party to change by increasing or decreasing the wife’s dowry until the person relented or the money was spent (*m. Ketubot* 5.7).¹⁰²

Some couples in Greco-Roman society formalized their divorce with legal documents. Usually, a man sent his wife away with the declaration “take your things [and go].” That effected a divorce.¹⁰³ If the woman wanted to end the marriage, she could gain a separation by simply leaving.¹⁰⁴ Typically, the man owned their house.¹⁰⁵

The terms “divorce” (*aphiēmi*) and “separate” (*chōrizō*) in these verses were equivalent: a disavowal of the marriage.¹⁰⁶ No warning was necessary, nor could either party legally prevent it.¹⁰⁷ Paul addressed this type of illegitimate divorce.¹⁰⁸ Marriage and divorce contracts employed more than fifty words for “divorce,” pointing to the frequency of marital splits. Often, several of the terms appeared in a single document.¹⁰⁹ During this time, most Greco-Roman marriages

⁹⁴ Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Matt 19:9.

⁹⁵ W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *Matthew 1–7* (ICC; Edinburgh; London; New York: T & T Clark, 1988), 528.

⁹⁶ Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew* (ZECNT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 200.

⁹⁷ Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Matt 19:9.

⁹⁸ Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 138.

⁹⁹ Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, 1 Cor 7:10–11.

¹⁰⁰ Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context*, 196.

¹⁰¹ Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context*, 191.

¹⁰² Sola and Raphall, trans., *Eighteen Treatises from the Mishna*, *Ketubot* 5.7, 254–5, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/etm/etm124.htm>.

¹⁰³ Ben Witherington III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 171.

¹⁰⁴ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Rev. Ed., 325.

¹⁰⁵ Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context*, 199.

¹⁰⁶ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 292.

¹⁰⁷ Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context*, 190.

¹⁰⁸ Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 140.

¹⁰⁹ Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context*, 199.

ended before the death of one's spouse.¹¹⁰ In fact, scribes wrote marriage certificates with this expectation.¹¹¹

Seneca (4 BC–65 AD) complained, "Is any woman ashamed of being divorced, now that some noble ladies reckon the years of their lives, not by the number of the consuls, but by that of their husbands, now that they leave their homes in order to marry others, and marry only in order to be divorced?"¹¹² One funeral inscription from this era noted, "Uncommon are marriages which last so long, brought to an end by death, not broken apart by divorce; for it was our happy lot that it should be prolonged to the forty-first year without estrangement."¹¹³ Paul's decree to stay married was truly counter-cultural.¹¹⁴

Furthermore, where divorce by separation had occurred, Paul called upon believers to do all they could to reverse it and to remain single while the other partner had not remarried.¹¹⁵ Thus, he did not enshrine "no divorce" as law, and the church did not remove the person who initiated the dissolution of a marriage. However, he permitted remarriage only to the original spouse,¹¹⁶ unless one partner refused to respect the commitments necessary to maintain the fundamental integrity of the marriage.¹¹⁷

a) Read 1 Cor 7:10–11. What exception did Jesus allow concerning divorce? Why did he oppose it? What was Paul's command to those who had divorced without just cause and whose former spouse remained unmarried?

Concerning Mixed Marriages

b) 1 Cor 7:12–13: In approximately 177 AD, the Greek philosopher Celsus noted that women constituted a large majority of new converts among the gentiles. He complained, "[Christians] desire and are able to gain over only the silly, and the mean, and the stupid, with women and children."¹¹⁸

For those whose husbands remained polytheists, these religiously mixed marriages constituted a serious problem. Greco-Roman society promoted household solidarity and male superiority.¹¹⁹ Plutarch (46–122 AD) gave this Advice to a Bride and Groom:

¹¹⁰ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 292.

¹¹¹ Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context*, 191.

¹¹² Lucius Annasus Seneca, *On Benefits* (trans. John W. Basore; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935), 3.16.2, 65, <https://archive.org/stream/lannaeusenecao00stewgoog#page/n83/mode/2up>.

¹¹³ G. H. R. Horsley, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity: A Review of the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri Published in 1978* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1983), 34.

¹¹⁴ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 292.

¹¹⁵ Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context*, 199–200.

¹¹⁶ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Rev. Ed., 327.

¹¹⁷ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 293.

¹¹⁸ Origen, *Against Celsus* (ed. A. Cleveland Coxe; vol. 4 of *Fathers of the Third Century: Tertullian, Part Fourth; Minucius Felix; Commodian; Origen, Part First and Second*; trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson; ANF; New York: Scribner's Sons, 1926), 44.3, <https://archive.org/stream/antenicenefathe00menzgoog#page/n458/mode/2up>.

¹¹⁹ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 294.

“A wife ought not to make friends of her own, but to enjoy her husband's friends in common with him. The gods are the first and most important friends. Wherefore it is becoming for a wife to worship and to know only the gods that her husband believes in, and to shut the front door tight upon all queer rituals and outlandish superstitions. For with no god do stealthy and secret rites performed by a woman find any favor.”¹²⁰

Compounding the problem, Jewish people and Christians viewed gentiles as sexually immoral people.¹²¹ Therefore, the recipients of this letter wondered if sex with an unbelieving spouse would defile a Christian (1 Cor 5:9–13; 1 Cor 6:15–20).¹²² Indeed, Paul later commanded the Corinthians not to marry non-Christians (2 Cor 6:14). With remarkable mutuality, Paul exhorted these Christian men and women to remain married.¹²³

However, if the unbeliever chose to leave, God no longer bound the Christian spouse to maintain the union.¹²⁴ Paul viewed matrimony as a genuine partnership. Consequently, he refrained from urging Christian men to force submission or conversion upon their wives, even within that patriarchal culture.¹²⁵

Read 1 Cor 7:12–13. What was Paul’s advice to those who converted to Christ while married? Why was that revolutionary in their society? How did that differ from his command for believers who contemplated union with a non-Christian?

Contagious Holiness

c) 1 Cor 7:14: Prior to Christ’s coming, the dominant Jewish view asserted that unclean things contaminated holy ones (Lev 11:24–25; Lev 13:45–46; Hag 2:11–14). However, Jesus exhibited contagious holiness. When he touched unclean people, they became clean without dying and without defiling him (Num 4:15; Luke 5:12–14).¹²⁶

Similarly, Paul contended that the Lord viewed the religiously mixed marriages he mentioned in 1 Cor 7:12–13 as Christian unions.¹²⁷ He wrote that these partners should remain together, for “sanctified is the unbelieving man in his wife and sanctified is the unbelieving wife in the [Christian] brother. Otherwise, your children are unclean, but now they are holy.”

Women converted to Christianity in far greater numbers than men in the early church.¹²⁸ In the event of a divorce in Greco-Roman society, the children typically remained with their father.¹²⁹

¹²⁰Plutarch, *Advice to a Bride and Groom (Conjugalia Praecepta)*, 19,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2008.01.0181%3Asection%3D19>.

¹²¹Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 290.

¹²²Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 135.

¹²³Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 295–6.

¹²⁴Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Rev. Ed., 329.

¹²⁵Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 296.

¹²⁶Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 297.

¹²⁷Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Rev. Ed., 329.

¹²⁸Origen, *Against Celsus*, 44.3, <https://archive.org/stream/antenicenefathe00menzgoog#page/n458/mode/2up>.

¹²⁹Keener, *IVPBBCT*, 1 Cor 7:14.

By the first century AD, Jewish people abandoned the notion of marriage as a transfer of ownership from the bride's parents to her husband. Instead, they adhered to the concept of being set apart for one another. "Sanctify," "set apart," "consecrate," "treat as holy," and "dedicate" are all translations of one Greek word, *hagiazō*.¹³⁰ Therefore, a man avowed that his wife was sanctified to him and he would sanctify her, affirming the lawfulness of their marriage. In addition, by having set apart a spouse to oneself prior to coming to Christ, that unbeliever now lived within a godly sphere of influence.¹³¹

Unlike the rabbis (*m. Kiddushin* 2:1–3, 10), Paul denoted the believing spouse as the one who sanctifies the unbeliever, regardless of gender. This placed a female Christian in the more spiritually powerful role normally reserved for a Jewish male.¹³² Elsewhere, he wrote, "there is not Jew nor Greek, there is not slave nor free, there is not male nor female, for you all are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28).

Furthermore, Paul's thought differs from Jewish teaching that any children issuing from a religiously mixed marriage assume the status of the "genealogically blemished" spouse (Ezra 10:1–3, 16–17; *m. Kiddushin* 3:12). Instead, they are holy, with the full right of access to the community of believers.¹³³ The status of their children proves that God has set both spouses apart in his sight.¹³⁴ This family solidarity derives from the "two becoming one flesh" in the divinely ordained institution of marriage (Gen 2:24). Thus, their home becomes a sacred sphere for God's transforming power, with increased potential for their salvation.¹³⁵

Read 1 Cor 7:14. What effect does one believing spouse have upon a family? Why is that?

Dissolution of Marriage

d) 1 Cor 7:15–16: Paul continued, writing, "But if the unbeliever separates, let him separate; the brother or the sister is not enslaved in such cases, but in peace God has called us." In the Greco-Roman context, separation constituted a legal divorce. The apostle taught that a believer should work to continue the marital union (1 Cor 7:10–14).¹³⁶ However, if the non-Christian spouse refused to remain in the relationship due to the new believer's allegiance to Christ,¹³⁷ Paul advised the Christian to allow the dissolution of their marriage.¹³⁸ Likely, nothing could prevent the divorce anyway.¹³⁹ In these cases, God does not require his people to maintain the spousal affiliation.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁰ Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, "α*γιάζω" (*hagiazō*), *BDAG*, 9–10.

¹³¹ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 298–9.

¹³² Yonder Moynihan Gillihan, "Jewish Laws on Illicit Marriage, the Defilement of Offspring, and the Holiness of the Temple: A New Halakic Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:14," *JBL* 121, no. 4 (12 January 2002): 711–44, 718.

¹³³ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 301–302.

¹³⁴ Gillihan, "Jewish Laws on Illicit Marriage, the Defilement of Offspring, and the Holiness of the Temple: A New Halakic Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:14, 715.

¹³⁵ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 299–301.

¹³⁶ Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context*, 199–200.

¹³⁷ Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 135.

¹³⁸ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Rev. Ed., 333.

¹³⁹ Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 135.

¹⁴⁰ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Rev. Ed., 334.

On the other hand, new converts must avoid the temptation to start living in the Christian world so completely that they shut out their spouses, leaving their partners feeling so abandoned and estranged that divorce occurs. Instead, new believers should model self-sacrificing love, more committed to the health of their marriages than ever. In that way, only radical prejudice could cause their non-Christian mates to leave.¹⁴¹

Since the foundational definition of marriage in the Bible involves cleaving to one's spouse (Gen 2:23–24; Mark 10:2–12), adultery and desertion rend asunder the one-flesh relationship (Matt 5:31–32). In effect, they each dissolve a marriage even before a court grants a legal divorce. An official dissolution merely acknowledges what has already occurred.¹⁴²

Given the Greco-Roman context, being “not bound as a slave” implies both the freedom to divorce and the right to remarry another believer (1 Cor 7:39).¹⁴³ However, this applies only to the innocent party.¹⁴⁴ Paul compared having to live as if one were married after being abandoned akin to slavery.¹⁴⁵ All Jewish divorce certificates and most Greco-Roman divorce decrees included a phrase such as, “you are free to marry any man you wish,” wording that rabbis considered essential (*m. Gittin* 9.3).¹⁴⁶

Concerning other circumstances so damaging that a marriage was already destroyed,¹⁴⁷ the rabbis also recognized emotional neglect, cruelty, and humiliation as just grounds for a legal divorce (*m. Ketubot* 7:1–5).¹⁴⁸ The National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence produced an Equality Wheel and a Power and Control Wheel to help people differentiate between healthy and abusive relationships.

Categories of Power and Control include:

Intimidation – Causing fear with looks, acts, or physical gestures; breaking things; hurting pets; showing weapons

Emotional Abuse – Criticizing; insulting; calling bad names; causing a person to feel crazy; humiliating; making someone feel guilty

Isolating – Controlling what a person does, sees, or reads; controlling what a person sees; controlling who a person sees or talks to; using jealousy as an excuse

Minimizing, Denying, and Blaming – Does not take a person's concern about abuse seriously or says it did not happen; refuses to take responsibility for abuse or says the person caused it

Using Children – Makes a person feel guilty about their children; uses the children to send messages; makes visiting children an opportunity to harass someone; threatens to take children

Male Privilege – Treats a woman like a servant; makes all the major decisions; acts like “a king in a castle”; decides what men's roles and women's roles should be

¹⁴¹ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 303.

¹⁴² Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 139.

¹⁴³ Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context*, 201.

¹⁴⁴ Keener, *IVPBCNT*, 1 Cor 7:15.

¹⁴⁵ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 303.

¹⁴⁶ Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context*, 119, 202.

¹⁴⁷ Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 139.

¹⁴⁸ Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context*, 107–8.

Economic Abuse – Stops someone from getting a job; makes a person ask for money or gives an allowance; takes a person’s money; does not let someone understand family income or finances

Coercion and Threats – Threatens to hurt someone, leave the relationship, commit suicide, or report a person to authorities; makes someone drop legal charges; makes someone break the law

Physical Violence –

Sexual Violence –

Categories of Equality include:

Non-Threatening Behavior – Talks and acts so a person feels safe and comfortable to say and do things

Respect – Listens without judging; affirms and understands someone’s emotions; values a person’s opinions

Trust and Support – approves of and helps someone reach personal goals; respects a person’s right to have feelings, make friendships, engage in activities, and express opinions

Honesty and Accountability – Accepts responsibility for own behavior; acknowledges any past violence; admits it when wrong; communicates freely and truthfully

Responsible Parenting – Shares responsibility for children; behaves as a positive role model

Shares Responsibility – Agrees to fairly divide work that needs to be done; makes family decisions together

Economic Partnership – Makes decisions about finances together; ensures both partners benefit from available money

Negotiation and Fairness – Seeks to resolve conflict to satisfy both partners; accepts change; is willing to compromise

Nonviolence –¹⁴⁹

Since one of the terms in 1 Cor 6:9–11 means “reviler, abusive person” (*loidoros*),¹⁵⁰ Paul taught that such behavior remains incompatible with the presence of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:19–24). In fact, he advised the church to remove abusive people from their fellowship (1 Cor 5:9–13).¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹<http://www.ncdsv.org/images/EqualitywheelNOSHADING.pdf>;
<http://www.ncdsv.org/images/PowerControlwheelNOSHADING.pdf>. Used with the permission of the National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence (http://www.ncdsv.org/ncd_about.html).

¹⁵⁰Danker et al., “λοιδωρος” (*loidoros*), *BDAG*, 602,
<https://archive.org/stream/greekenglishlex00liddrich#page/902/mode/2up>.

¹⁵¹ Danker, et al., “λοιδωρος” (*loidoros*), *BDAG*, 602.

Where abuse or neglect occur, we must consider each case on its own merits to avoid the twin errors of easy acceptance of divorce and a complete lack of forgiveness toward those who end their marriages.¹⁵² Otherwise, we afflict the innocent spouse with even greater physical and emotional damage.¹⁵³ With a desire for reconciliation at the core of our Christian identity, God calls us to adopt a peace-loving approach, for “as much as you are capable, with all people live in peace” (Rom 12:18).¹⁵⁴

Paul’s words, “For how do you know, wife, if your husband you shall save? Or how do you know, husband, if your wife you shall save?” are somewhat ambiguous. It remains unclear whether he offered hope that if they stay married, their influence would cause their spouses to embrace the faith, or whether he advised them not to fight a divorce because they have no assurance of conversion.¹⁵⁵ Although Paul previously observed that unbelieving spouses have been sanctified by being married to Christians (1 Cor 7:14), the Lord does not promise their salvation.¹⁵⁶

Read 1 Cor 7:15–16. How did Paul advise believers whose non-Christian spouses choose to end their marriages? What do adultery, desertion, and abuse do to the one-flesh relationship? How do pp. 291–292 of the PCA Position on Divorce and Remarriage reflect Paul’s teaching?¹⁵⁷ In what practical ways can you support people who are experiencing such trauma?

¹⁵² Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 142–3.

¹⁵³ Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 139–40.

¹⁵⁴ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 304.

¹⁵⁵ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Rev. Ed., 337–8.

¹⁵⁶ Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, 1 Cor 7:16.

¹⁵⁷ According to this theologically conservative denomination, “The Committee believes that when there are words and actions on the part of one spouse that threaten the life of the other spouse and/or children, that the one(s) threatened should be counseled by the Session, or representative thereof, to remove themselves from the threatening situation and the abuser should be urged to seek counsel. Such a procedure will protect those threatened. When the abuser does not cease these words and actions, the Session should investigate whether these words and actions are in effect breaking the one-flesh relationship by ‘hating’ the abused spouse and not ‘nourishing and cherishing’ this one (Eph. 5:28–29). In counseling the abuser, the reality of his Christian faith should be ascertained. When it is determined by the Session that the abuser does not appear to them to be Christian and the abuse continues, the Pauline teaching about an unbeliever leaving a believer should be applied [1 Cor 7:15].” 20th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of America, “Report of the Ad-Interim Committee on Divorce and Remarriage,” 291–2. <http://www.pcahistory.org/pca/divorce-remarriage.pdf>.

Naked and Not Ashamed

5) Gen 2:25: The final verse of this creation account announces, “And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and [they were] not ashamed (*bosh*) before one another.”¹⁵⁸ No barrier had yet driven a wedge between Adam and Eve.¹⁵⁹ Israel’s culture was shame-based, unlike our guilt-based Western society.¹⁶⁰

Apart from this verse, nudity in the Old Testament always connotes humiliation, whether due to poverty or oppression (Job 24:7–10), as a circumstance of birth (Ezek 16:4–5), or—most often—as a symbol of disgrace (Ezek 16:35–39).¹⁶¹ Prior to the fall, Adam and Eve gloried in their nakedness, unaware of any sense of impropriety (Gen 3:6–7).¹⁶²

Read Gen 2:25. Why did Adam and Eve feel this way?

An Overview of Creation

6) Close this chapter by prayerfully reading Ps 104. This psalm serves as an inspired commentary on the first two chapters of Genesis.¹⁶³ Note the correspondence between Day 1 and verses 1–2a; Day 2 and vv. 2b–3; Day 3 and vv. 5–18; Day 4 and vv. 19–23; Day 5 and vv. 24–26; Day 6 and vv. 27–30; and Day 7 with vv. 31–32.

What new insights have you gained by reading Gen 1–2 in its Ancient Near Eastern context?

¹⁵⁸ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “בֹּשׁ” (*bosh*), *BDB*, 101–2,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/100/mode/2up>.

¹⁵⁹ Hamilton, *Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 181.

¹⁶⁰ Timothy C. Tennant, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity: How the Global Church is Influencing the Way We Think About and Discuss Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 83.

¹⁶¹ Hamilton, *Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 181.

¹⁶² Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 71.

¹⁶³ John E. Goldingay, *Psalms 90–150* (BCOTWP; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 182.