

September 23

Lesson 4 (NIV)

## GOD CREATES THE FAMILY

DEVOTIONAL READING: [Leviticus 19:11–18](#)

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: [Genesis 2:18–24](#); [4:1, 2](#)

### [GENESIS 2:18–24](#)

[18](#) The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”

[19](#) Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. [20](#) So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals.

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. [21](#) So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. [22](#) Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

[23](#) The man said,

“This is now bone of my bones

and flesh of my flesh;

she shall be called ‘woman,’

for she was taken out of man.”

[24](#) That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

### [GENESIS 4:1, 2](#)

[1](#) Adam made love to his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, “With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man.” [2](#) Later she gave birth to his brother Abel.

Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil.



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## KEY VERSE

*That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.—*  
[Genesis 2:24](#)

# GOD'S WORLD AND GOD'S PEOPLE

## Unit 1: God Creates the World

LESSONS [1–5](#)

### LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Describe the situation that led to the creation of woman.
2. Explain God's larger purposes in creating a woman for the man.
3. Express appreciation to a member of his or her family in light of today's text.

### LESSON OUTLINE

#### [Introduction](#)

- [A. From Matrimony to Multiplication](#)
- [B. Lesson Context](#)
- [I. Family Not Possible \(GENESIS 2:18–20\)](#)
  - [A. Problem Stated \(v. 18\)](#)
  - [B. Solution Pending \(vv. 19, 20\)](#)
- [II. Family Now Possible \(GENESIS 2:21–24\)](#)
  - [A. Flesh Divided \(vv. 21, 22\)](#)
  - [B. Flesh United \(vv. 23, 24\)](#)

[The Feasibility of Functional Families](#)

[Secure Marriage Boundaries](#)

[III. Family Expanded \(GENESIS 4:1, 2\)](#)

[A. Son Number One \(v. 1\)](#)

[B. Son Number Two \(v. 2\)](#)

[Conclusion](#)

[A. Spouse Comes First](#)

[B. Prayer](#)

[C. Thought to Remember](#)

## HOW TO SAY IT

anatomical *an-uh-**tom**-i-kuhl*.

Deuteronomy *Due-ter-**ahn**-uh-me*.

Mesopotamia *Mes-uh-puh-**tay**-me-uh*.

paradigm *pair-uh-**dime***.

## Introduction

### A. From Matrimony to Multiplication

Few occasions in life bring as much joy and hope as a wedding. Though unmarried myself, I have had the privilege of officiating five weddings. Especially with a close-up view, the sense of wonder, love, and anticipation is palpable. In these extraordinary moments, bride and groom become a new family; and in most weddings the potential for children to expand the family only enhances the excitement.

God commanded humankind to “be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth” ([Genesis 1:28](#)), and by all indications people have accepted the challenge. After topping 1 billion sometime in the early 1800s, the human population has risen seven times that amount in the ensuing 200 years. According to the 2015 United Nations’ official projections, the world population will grow to 8.5 billion in 2030 and 9.7 billion in 2050.

If he had so chosen, God could have created billions of people to fill the earth from the start. But his mode of operation is to use human beings to partner in his plans. So in remote antiquity, God created a man and a woman. The result was a family to get those plans going. Today's lesson continues our study of God's creative work in the early chapters of Genesis.

## B. Lesson Context

In one mythical account from ancient Mesopotamia, humans were created largely to do work that the gods themselves did not want to do. In this scenario, human population growth was desirable for a time. Eventually, though, the multitudes of people became a noisy nuisance to the gods, who grew frustrated and found ways to reduce human population growth.

The Genesis account contrasts sharply with this picture. In [Genesis 1](#), God gave function, order, and meaning to his creation. He consistently saw that his work was good. The pinnacle of his creative efforts was human beings, male and female, in his own image. The "image of God" entails a number of aspects, and among them is being granted dominion over the fish, birds, and all other animals, wild and domesticated ([1:26](#)). Though all life on earth is valuable, human life alone is sacred because of God's image.

Also in contrast to the mythical account, God desires people to multiply to the ends of the earth. He created humans out of his goodness, not out of whim or necessity. Human population growth was never a problem; it was a command! God desired humans to flourish, thrive, and give him glory in abundance.

## I. Family Not Possible

### ([GENESIS 2:18–20](#))

#### A. Problem Stated (v. [18](#))

**[18a](#). The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone."**

After seven evaluations of creation's elements being "good," we come to something that is *not good*: the solitary existence of *the man*. We glean from this passage that God creates us to interact within a context of companionship and community of our own kind. This aspect of the human makeup also relates to the above-stated purposes to increase in number and fill the earth. We do so as we relate to mutual benefit in a wider circle of family, friends, and humanity as a whole. Our quality of life is found in relationships.

The divine assessment *It is not good for the man to be alone* therefore doesn't count the fact that the man is technically not alone given that he already has the companionship of God and the creatures of the garden. The assessment we see here must involve an additional purpose of God that the man is unable to fulfill by himself. Increasing in number and filling the earth ([Genesis 1:27, 28](#)) won't happen if there is only one human.

#### ***What Do You Think?***

What factors will you consider when determining whether a context of life indicates that being alone for a time is a good thing or not?

### *Digging Deeper*

Use [Matthew 6:6; 14:23; Luke 22:41; John 6:15; 1 Corinthians 7:5](#); etc., to inform your conclusions.

#### **18b. “I will make a helper suitable for him.”**

This description establishes both the woman’s similarity to the man and her equality with him. The woman to be created will possess all the qualities of humanity and personhood that the man does and will likewise be distinct from every other animal or vegetable.

The description of her as *a helper* to the man in no way diminishes her dignity or standing, for “help(er)” is a term also used to describe God in relation to people (see [Exodus 18:4; Deuteronomy 33:29; Psalm 121:1, 2](#)). The woman will be equal in personhood though complementarily opposite in her procreative role.

### **B. Solution Pending (vv. [19, 20](#))**

**19. Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name.**

The sequence of events here appears to differ from the account of creation in [Genesis 1](#), in which the animals are created before humans. Questions have therefore arisen about the relationship between the two versions of the story.

A reasonable solution is that one chapter or the other presents a thematic account that is not intended to be taken as chronological. Yet another possibility is that [Genesis 2](#) narrates an additional, special act of creation undertaken for the purpose of presenting the animals for naming. The latter view has a very long history.

Though the animals are *formed out of the ground* just as the man is, none of them is created in God’s image. By naming the animals, the man assigns a function and place to each one, thereby exercising the ruling authority that bearers of the divine image possess ([Genesis 1:26](#)). In the process of observing the animal world, Adam certainly recognizes that he is not like them; he undoubtedly realizes his superior nature.

**20. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals.**

**But for Adam no suitable helper was found.**



Visual for Lesson [4](#). Point to this visual as you ask, “What difference does it make that marriage and family is God’s idea and plan, not ours?”

The text reveals that the parade of animals involves not only naming them but also searching among them for a *suitable* companion. Even though all the animals are formed from the same material as the man and by the same good Creator, no animal is adequate as a proper *helper*.

We reasonably speculate that the man eventually becomes aware of what God already knows: none of the animals can stand beside the man as his equal, to partner with him in his assigned roles. As Adam gives *names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals*, he presumably observes the complementary nature of male and female among them. For him, something is missing!

## II. Family Now Possible

### ([GENESIS 2:21–24](#))

#### A. Flesh Divided (vv. [21](#), [22](#))

**[21](#). So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and then closed up the place with flesh.**

In the Old Testament, God sometimes works while people are in a divinely induced sleep (see [Genesis 15:12](#); [1 Samuel 26:12](#)). Here, Adam needs to be under heavy anesthesia while God removes a certain part of him. The Hebrew term that is behind the word *ribs* occurs over two dozen times in the Old Testament, but it is translated “rib(s)” only in the verse before us and the next. Nowhere else in the Old Testament does it have anatomical significance.

Instead, the term’s other usages frequently describe the side or sides of objects (example: [Exodus 25:14](#)). With those instances as a guide, we are confident in concluding that God uses the man’s side and/or something from it in what happens next.

**[22](#). Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.**

In keeping with the pattern in [Genesis 1](#), the high point of which is [1:26](#), [27](#), God saves the best of his creation for last. From the records of Israel’s neighbors later on, we sometimes find alternative accounts of human origins, but none of them includes special mention of the creation of women in particular. In

[Genesis 1](#) and [2](#), women bear the image of God as men do, serve as co-creators of God's creation, and play equally important roles in advancing God's purposes.

It is intriguing that the original word behind the translation *made* is used elsewhere as an architectural term to describe the construction of cities and altars (examples: [Genesis 4:17](#); [12:7](#)). What the author describes with a bare minimum of detail is in fact more profound than any construction project that humans themselves can undertake—ever.

## B. Flesh United (vv. [23](#), [24](#))

**23. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man."**

Perhaps the seeming delay in creating the woman was intended by God to allow Adam time to sense the depth of his need for a companion of his own kind. After considering the animals first and finding himself yet wanting, *the man* is now positioned (as are we) to experience the greatest possible appreciation of the creation of woman. We can almost hear the jubilant outburst "At last!"

We should not overlook the fact that the verse before us is the first record of a human's words. It is also humanity's first recorded play on words, as the terms for man and woman sound even more alike in Hebrew than they do in English. The sound-alike quality of the two words reflects Adam's awareness of the source of the woman: *she was taken out of man*.

Adam's mention of both *flesh* and *bone* confirms the nature of the man's bodily material used to form the woman. Whereas we today use the phrase "flesh and blood" as a reference to family members, the Old Testament likes to use "flesh" and "bone(s)" together to indicate the same (examples: [Genesis 29:14](#); [Judges 9:2](#); [2 Samuel 5:1](#)—though the *NIV* translates the Hebrew word for "bone(s)" as "blood" in these passages).

Adam's declaration also serves as a foil for what God declares in the next verse.

### ***THE FEASIBILITY OF FUNCTIONAL FAMILIES***

My preacher just finished a sermon series called "The Functional Family." We have a minister who practices what he preaches. While clearly the leader in his home, his wife has every confidence that what's important to her will never be ignored. Their three children have very different personalities, so each one is being reared according to his or her bent. On a day off, this minister is completely focused on the interests of his family—those he serves in the church can usually wait a day for his attention. His success in ministry begins with his success at home.

The very first marriage happened in a sinless environment. When the first man was introduced to the first woman, there was immediate acceptance. The Genesis text does not tell us how long after this first meeting that the fall (actually, the jump) into sin occurred. But for that interval of time, it's easy to imagine husband and wife working together in a harmony not experienced since.

Thriving, functional marriages and families are still possible today, any popular opinion to the contrary aside. Of course, we must wrestle with the presence of sin in our hearts, which can have a profound effect

on how well we get along with family members. Even so, families can flourish in peaceful homes by the power of the Holy Spirit. In such, God takes great delight.

—D. C. S.

**24. That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.**

Whereas the creation of the woman involved a surrender of part of the man's physical person, the joining of the two in marital union serves as a reunification. In that light, the account of the first meeting between a man and a woman ends with an affirmation (by the narrator rather than by the man) that the first marriage is to be viewed as a paradigm for all subsequent marriages in at least two ways.

First, marriage is to demonstrate the enduring reality that marital love surpasses even the love between parent and child. Family commitments remain important, but the commitment inherent in marital vows supersedes them.

*What Do You Think?*

What lessons will you pass on to others regarding lessons learned from observing marriages where one person did not honor that relationship above other family relationships?

*Digging Deeper*

How do you decide which of those lessons apply to yourself and which do not?

Second, marriages are to reenact, in a sense, the joining that took place between the first man and woman. Every married man is to embrace *his wife* not only sexually but also in the sharing of property, plans, and purpose. Marriage is intended from the outset to be lifelong and monogamous ([Matthew 19:4–6](#)).

On a further note, the text also implies that the first marriage is consummated soon after God presents the woman to the man. God is the author of the institution of marriage, and he grants to the first couple the gift of sexuality. In effect, God creates the original family. The male-female basis for marriage as instituted by God is apparent in this passage and is taught and assumed thereafter in Scripture.

So important is [Genesis 2:24](#) that it is quoted four times in the New Testament. Jesus cites it in his teaching on marriage and divorce, thus, among other things, reaffirming the male-female basis for marriage ([Matthew 19:3–9](#); [Mark 10:2–12](#)). Paul, quoting [Genesis 2:24](#) twice, also implies that a male-female union is necessary for becoming one flesh ([1 Corinthians 6:16](#); [Ephesians 5:31](#)).

*What Do You Think?*

Which of the four New Testament passages that quote [Genesis 2:24](#) speaks most forcefully of a change you need to make? Why?

*Digging Deeper*

How will you allow that most forceful usage to make a difference in what you model?



The Bible nowhere provides support for a supposed marriage between members of the same sex. Those who enter into such unions do so under solely human authority and at great risk of divine displeasure. The apostle Paul likens those who disregard nature's biological clues to those who overlook the obvious signs of a Creator ([Romans 1:18–32](#)). Marriage between one man and one woman is the only proper context for sexual relations. While it is right and Christian to show great love and grace to those tempted by same-sex attraction, the church must continue to uphold the biblical model of marriage.

Remaining single, a pathway chosen by a few but undesired by most, is the only biblically approved lifestyle alternative to marriage. Jesus and Paul both affirm exceptional situations in which an individual remains unmarried and celibate ([Matthew 19:10–12](#); [1 Corinthians 7:7, 8](#)). This lifestyle may be prompted by troubled times (compare [Jeremiah 16:1–4](#); [1 Corinthians 7:26–28](#)) and/or a desire to devote more time to serve God ([Matthew 19:12](#); [1 Corinthians 7:32–35](#)). Such a lifestyle prefigures the future situation in which there will be no marriage ([Matthew 22:30](#)).

#### *What Do You Think?*

Should churches develop programming and ministries specifically for those who are single? Why, or why not?

#### *Digging Deeper*

How will your answer change, if at all, when you consider the needs of single people in these demographics: young, middle-age, elderly, divorced, never married, widowed, with children, without children?

### **SECURE MARRIAGE BOUNDARIES**

My wife and I experienced the deaths of both mothers within days of each other. The memorial services brought together siblings who hadn't seen each other in years.

The reunions were unexpectedly delightful. With the passing of the families' matriarchs, everyone's guard was down. We simply enjoyed one another's company. The Lord brought opportunities for restoration and reconciliation through this otherwise sad experience.

Without going into details, let's just agree that the marriage covenant is sacred, and its boundaries must not be tested, even by (especially by?) well-meaning relatives. With those boundaries respected and secure, family members (including in-laws) can continue to build strong bonds with their adult children—and the siblings with one another. These are the God-honoring bonds upon which strong families are built.

—D. C. S.

### **III. Family Expanded**

**([GENESIS 4:1, 2](#))**

## A. Son Number One (v. 1)

**1. Adam made love to his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, “With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man.”**

Our lesson text now jumps past the account of the fall in [Genesis 3](#) to the conception and birth of Cain. The majority of interpreters see all the events of [Genesis 4](#) as occurring after Adam and Eve’s expulsion from the Garden of Eden ([3:23, 24](#)). Against this understanding, however, is a proposal that the construction in the original language has the author backtracking (at least briefly) to events that occur prior to the expulsion. This theory means that Eve’s future punishment noted in [Genesis 3:16](#) connects with childbearing already experienced.

Whether what is recorded in the verse before us happens before or after the fall into sin may affect interpretation. If the birth of Cain takes place before the fall, then Eve’s words *With the help of the Lord I have brought forth a man* are seen as giving the Lord credit. If the birth of Cain takes place after the fall, however, Eve’s words—although translated in a positive sense in the *NIV*—are understood by some to be boastful.

In either case, we see underway the God-ordained imperative to multiply. The sexual function between husband and wife is God-ordained. Sexual expression neither resulted *in* nor resulted *from* the fall into sin by Adam and Eve. The name *Cain* occurs 20 times in [16](#) verses in the *NIV*, and each one of these refers to the individual in the verse before us. Three of the occurrences are in the New Testament ([Hebrews 11:4](#); [1 John 3:12](#); [Jude 11](#)).

## B. Son Number Two (v. 2)

**2. Later she gave birth to his brother Abel.**

**Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil.**

The designation *Abel* occurs 25 times in 21 verses in the *NIV*, although some refer to a city (e.g., [2 Samuel 20:14, 15, 18](#)). Five of the references to Abel the man are in the New Testament ([Matthew 23:35](#); [Luke 11:51](#); [Hebrews 11:4](#); [12:24](#)). Both keeping *flocks* and working *the soil* are common occupations in antiquity.

## Conclusion

### A. Spouse Comes First

God bestows on us many blessings and gifts, the best of which (after salvation through Jesus) is the capacity to have relationships. Aloneness is not good for us. Life is about relationships—with God and with each other. Relatives, friends, and acquaintances can partner with us in God’s work. Animals can provide meaningful company, but the marriage relationship stands above all.

God desires that humanity flourish through the marriage relationship. Procreation is never stated as a requirement for each and every marriage, nor is it the only purpose of marriage. But it is the means by which God has established that people fill the earth. The family unit is not only a precious social gift but also a means for teaching children and spreading God’s Word throughout the world.

God's ideals for marriage are always under attack, and recent attempts to redefine marriage comprise but the latest example. Sinful humans are up to their old tricks again. To be sure, God has left much about marriage up to us. Prenuptial customs, wedding ceremonies, legal recognitions and benefits, and many other specifics may be determined (for better or worse) by one's society, laws, and culture. But the male-female basis and the lifelong exclusive commitment are parameters set by God, not earthly powers.

The church must continue to uphold the biblical ideals for holy matrimony and to celebrate it as a gift from God. May those who enter into this most sacred of earthly unions remain faithful to their spouses and give glory to their Creator.

### ***What Do You Think?***

What are some things that husbands and wives can do to glorify God through their marriage?

### ***Digging Deeper***

Make your answer pointedly specific by (1) avoiding generalities such as "love each other" and (2) focusing on positive things to do, not sins to avoid doing.

## **B. Prayer**

Father, whether married or not, we thank you for the gift of marriage and resulting relationships. May we give you the glory as we honor marriage and family. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## **C. Thought to Remember**

Through marriage, family, and community, God advances his purposes.

# INVOLVEMENT LEARNING

*Enhance your lesson with NIV Bible Student*

## **Into the Lesson**

Place in each chair, for learners to work on as they arrive, a copy of the following handout (you create) of contemporary "marriage" practices: 1–Common law marriage; 2–Same sex unions; 3–Producing wedding spectacles; 4–Ignoring divorce status; 5–Living together as a "test"; 6–Parent arranged marriage; 7–Prenuptial agreements; 8–Eloping. Have out to the side of each item the following scale: 1 = Fully comfortable; 4 = Indifferent; 7 = Completely uncomfortable. Above the scale (which is repeated eight times, once for each entry), have this heading: *My Comfort Level*.

After allowing time for completion and discussion, make a transition by having learners cross out the word *My* on the heading and replace it with the word *God's*. Ask whether any of the results have changed. If an awkward silence ensues, let it continue for at least 15 seconds. (Just because your learners have stopped talking doesn't mean it's your turn to start talking.)

Offer this observation as a transition to Bible study: "Today we study the model for the closest of human relationships, which God established at the beginning. The question should always be, What is the holy God 'comfortable' with?"

### **Into the Word**

Have class members take turns reading [Genesis 2:18–24](#); [4:1, 2](#) aloud. Immediately announce a closed Bible test on what was just read. Then give each learner a copy of the following True/False quiz. Announce a time limit of one minute. Assure your learners that they will score their own quizzes and that you will not collect them.

- [1.](#) One result of God's creation was not good.
- [2.](#) Man was designed to be in relationship.
- [3.](#) God introduced Adam to the animals and birds and told Adam their names.
- [4.](#) As Adam slept at night, God showed him a dream of the ideal mate.
- [5.](#) God created Adam's wife from the dust of the ground, just as he had created Adam.
- [6.](#) Adam could not obey God's command to increase and fill the earth on his own.
- [7.](#) Man's first recorded words were his complaint about not having an acceptable mate.

Read and discuss each after having the text read aloud again. [*Answers: 1–True ([2:18](#)); 2–True ([2:18](#)); 3–False ([2:19](#)); 4–False ([2:21, 22](#)); 5–False ([2:22](#)); 6–True (by inference); 7–False ([2:23](#)).]*

Draw attention to statement 6. Read it aloud and ask, "How does this truth relate to God's need to provide an appropriate helper for the man?" The likely response of the need of a partner for procreation is obvious. Anticipate that your sharper students will infer something the text doesn't mention: the man had undoubtedly observed the two genders of the animal world.

*Option 1.* Distribute copies of the "Family" activity from the reproducible page, which you can download. Have learners complete it for an alternative way to look at the plan God has for the family in his creation of man and woman.

*Option 2.* For broader study, distribute copies of the "Two Sexes" activity from the reproducible page. Have your learners complete and discuss it in pairs or threes as indicated.

### **Into Life**

Say, "This will be a good week to honor God by honoring members of your family that God has given you as a relationship blessing. What is one thing you can do to demonstrate your appreciation of spouse,

parent, etc.?” Encourage several suggestions. Anticipate ideas such as an unexpected phone call, a small gift, or a “thank you” or “thinking of you” card. Ask learners to consider also their church family.

*Option.* Use the “Another Family” activity on the reproducible page for an additional look at the church family.