

When you are looking for answers you need to make sure you are asking the right questions. Now you might have heard the story about the 8 year old boy who went to his father and asked, "Dad, where did I come from?" Well the Father took a deep breathe and even though he didn't think he would have to do the birds and the bees talk this early in his young son's life, he started to explain what happens when a mummy and a daddy really love each other.

And the Dad thought he had done a pretty reasonable job of the explanation but he looked at this son and there was a rather puzzled look. So the father said, "Why the interest in this?" The son replied, "Dad there's a new kid at school and he came from Melbourne and I was just wondering where I came from."

And likewise some people when they come to Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 want these passages to explain all the ins and outs concerning the origin of human life. They want to know about the big bang, about evolution, about where we have come from. And here before them is just 50 or 60 sentences. My DVD instruction manual has about 1000 sentences on how I can set it up to see movies. So surely Genesis 1 and 2 will not answer all my questions about the origin of human life.

And yet God has placed it there to explain who is behind human life and why he made us and how he wants us to live. God has different questions that he wants to answer than we do. So for a moment let us put aside our concerns and hear what God wants to tell us this evening. And if I was summarise Genesis 2 in just a few words. Its talking about God's people in God's place under God's rule. God's people in God's place under God's rule.

**1. God's people.** So lets look firstly how God's people came about. Now we saw last week how God made mankind on the 6<sup>th</sup> day. How he made male and female in his own image, in his own likeness. But its now like we get out the magnifying glass or the binoculars so to speak and we zoom in on what actually God did.

We read in verse 7, that "*the Lord God formed the man out of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breathe of life and the man became a living being.*"

We see that God formed mankind out of the dust of the earth. He got his hand's dirty, so to speak. He was intimately involved in our beginnings. It wasn't just survival of the fittest. It wasn't just that we came from other animals. Whatever we believe about our origins we must believe that God made us. It is a picture of a potter or an artist moulding his subject in infinite detail.

Psalm 139 puts it this way. "*I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body.*"

There is something about handmade gifts, isn't there? The time, the quality, the beauty of them grabs you and you treasure them like nothing else. A handmade gift is a gift from the heart. Mankind was handmade by God. We are His special creation made from the dust.

And yet our origins are both physical and spiritual. Its not just dust, not just atoms and molecules and flesh and bone, its spirit as well. God breathes into the first man and life comes when the breathe of God enters into us. We are dependent upon God for life. We have a spiritual side to us.

And so if all we do is just feed our face and satisfy our thirst and neglect our soul, we cripple ourselves and we choke the real life out of our lives.

What this passage also teaches about mankind is that we are not the boss. We are God's people and so we need to report back to Him. We need to reach out for Him. We need to respond to His authority. It is His world. We are part of His creation. And just as it was be ludicrous for the clay pot to talk back to the potter, it is silly for us to try and assert our authority over God, our creator.

But when God made man, when he made Adam, there was something that was not good. The earth, the sun, the sky, the animals might have been good, but it isn't good that man lives a life alone. God knew that we need company, that we were not made to be hermits. And so even before Adam recognises his need for a suitable companion, God sees the need.

Amazing isn't it. God makes the world and yet he can still zero in on the needs of his creation. He tries the animals, but they don't fill the void and so God makes a woman. He finds a helper that is suitable for him. He creates out of a rib of Adam one that fills what is lacking.

In March 1997, Dolly of Scotland made headline news. Who was Dolly? Dolly was a sheep. Scientists from the Roslin Institute in Scotland tried for more than 10 years to clone a sheep from a single adult cell, it took 277 attempts before they produced Dolly. Times magazine said Dolly *"is a carbon copy, a laboratory counterfeit so exact that she is in essence her mother's identical twin."*

But woman is not a carbon copy, but a complement. Not the same but different. Not better, not worse but companions. Here is the Bible critiquing the claim to male supremacy as well as that of the radical feminist. One is not the rule over the other, one is not to despise the other. There should be no gender wars. Both have been created by God to share in his garden of delight.

Matthew Henry put it this way, *"She (woman) was not taken from his head, that she may rule over him, nor was she taken from his foot, that he might rule over her, but rather, she was taken from his side that she may be equal to him, from under his arm, that she may be protected by him and from the part nearest to his heart that she may be his beloved partner for life."*

We are to walk side by side with each other. Our bodies are related, we both reflect the image of God. Our souls are intertwined. We need each other. John Donne famously said "No man is an island." For we are never complete on our own.

For you and I were made for relationships. Something about truly being human is that we are made for fellowship with God yes and with each other. Our society has concentrated on the individuals so much so that the youngsters we are raising are called the Me generation. But that is just producing a sense of isolation, an alienation, a struggle with our lives as we push others away and concentrate on my needs and aspirations.

But God says is not good to be alone. And God's solution is community, deep relationships with each other. John Calvin, in his commentary on Genesis, wrote, *"Man was formed to be a social animal."* Not alone in front of a computer screen. Not camped in front of a TV, not for us the de-humanising that comes from pornography. But the deep personal communion with one another.

What we need to recover in the Christian community is the beauty and value of friendships, deep friendships between member of our sex and with the opposite sex. Our Churches need to be communities of friendship, to stand against all the ways that our modern patterns of life and thinking that push us toward individualism and loneliness. In our marriages others should see how

we complement each other and are committed to each other. It is not good for us to be alone. So our marriages, our friendship, our community should reflect that we have been made to complement each other. And so if we remove ourselves from one another, we will miss out.

But that might cost us something. I like the made up story about a fuller conversation between God and Adam.... "I'm lonely," Adam told God in the Garden of Eden. "I need to have someone around for company." "Okay," replied God. "I'm going to give you the perfect woman. Beautiful, intelligent and gracious -- she'll cook and clean for you and never say a cross word."

"Sounds good," Adam said. "But what's it going to cost me?" "An arm and a leg" God replied. "That's pretty steep," countered Adam. "What can I get for just a rib?"

**2. God's people. God's people place in God's place.** For not only does God make us, but he custom builds a place for us to live in. A Garden, the garden of Eden, the garden of delight. He makes for us a paradise. God didn't put them inside a tent or a mobile home and give them a computer and television set. He put them outside. Is it possible that we were created to spend more time outdoors than indoors?

But in the beginning we see God Himself plants for Adam and Eve a garden. Yet again God's fatherly care for his creation is obvious. This is no small backyard with a few plants stuck here and there. No its more like a parkland, a reserve even. Large, spacious with an abundance of food and drink.

There are all types of trees there. Trees that a pleasing to the eye and good for food. There is plenty of water there. Now in dry and arid countries like Israel and Australia, water means life. We know the devastating affects of what drought can do to both the land and to the cities. But there is no shortage of water here in Eden. No there is so much that it feeds four streams, four rivers, which two of them, the Tigris and Euphrates are just huge!

There was food, water and even precious stones in the region. Gold, gems, perfumes were all found in the region. God was providing not just the bare essentials, the basics, but the good things in life. He was not skimming on what he was giving to his creatures, no he was showering his good ness upon them in all abundance. And in the middle of the garden was the tree of life. So while man remained in this garden he would live for ever and ever. Death was not part of the original plan for mankind.

**3. God's people in God's place under God's rule.** Yet there was another tree at the very centre of the Garden, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. So in order for the tree to be at the centre, man himself couldn't be at the centre. For God gives man one rule, one prohibition. There is one condition for living in the world.

We need to listen and obey the Word of God. For man is not God. Man must not try and be God. He must keep himself away from the centre. He must not try and grasp a knowledge of good and evil from anywhere other than from God's revelation. He must submit to God's good and gracious authority.

"You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil...." And the simple reason for the prohibition, as commentators have noted through the centuries, is that humans who were loved by God needed a way to love him back. The choice to obey or not obey allowed for love to be expressed. We needed a way to choose God, some means by which we could deliberately turn toward him and acknowledge his importance to us.

Unlike creatures who have no choices to make, we had a choice from the beginning to love him

back. That's what God longed for, just as every one of us longs for someone to love us back. God walked with Adam and Eve in the garden in the cool of the evening. That meant as much to him as it did to them. He looked forward to such intimate moments when they would ask him questions and learn from him. And one way of showing their love for their Creator was not to eat that fruit.

Man has been given a free will. He is not a robot. He will not be forced to obey God. It is not a harsh restriction that God makes, but rather a symbol of the fact that crossing the God given limits diminishes rather than enhances our well being. In fact my own feeling is that Adam and Eve knew good already, they are surrounded by it on every side. So eating the fruit only introduces them and their world to evil.

God has made a world devoid of evil. But man can bring evil into God's world if they choose to disobey God. God has not restricted Adam and Eve's freedom. All he has said is the kitchen is yours but don't play with the sharp knives. And don't turn the oven on. Because if you do these things, evil will happen and you will die.

Die physically? Yes because I will drive you away from the tree of life. And die spiritually because you have broken the relationship that it is the most fundamental in life, your relationship with me. So there we are God's people in God's place under God's rule, happily under God's rule. That's how God made Adam and Eve. And that how God made us as well.

Do you know that when God made you, he made you special. He gave you your good looks and your sweaty palms. Your intelligence and your fuller figure. God helped put you together in your mother's womb. He made you in his image. He made you to be a child of God.

He places you in this suburb, in this area, in this country in this beautiful world. He breathes his life within you. He promises to give you his daily bread. He gives you the water of life. He gives you access to beauty, and love and relationships and community. But he says to us, don't put yourself at the centre.

Listen to my word, hear my command. Obey my instructions. Evil has well and truly entered into our world. Temptation is everywhere - TV, Internet, school, work, home. So don't learn about evil from evil. Don't let the cancer of sin enter into your body. Walk with God. Enjoy his blessings. Reach out to others.

You see that's our choice every minute of every day isn't it? Do we want to be God's people in God's place under God's rule. Well do we? We decide that by what we believe about God and how we live!