Made For Relationship

Genesis 2:4-9; Genesis 2:15-17; Genesis 2:18-25

AT A GLANCE

Continuing his fall walk through Genesis 1–11, after last week's rhythm of work and rest and looking ahead to Genesis 3, David Jones argues that Genesis 2 is covenantal: the Creator is Yahweh, and we are made for relationship with God, flourishing under his loving authority, and with one another. Marriage is one instance of that belonging, not its whole; Jesus, the covenant keeper, restores what we broke.

- The God who made heaven and earth is Yahweh, the intimate, promise-keeping God; we are covenant creatures, made for relationship with him and each other.
- God's one boundary sits inside lavish generosity; he is rule maker and we are rule keepers, and that is the condition of our flourishing.
- The first 'not good' is aloneness, not singleness; no marriage can bear the whole weight of the soul, so we need covenant community.

> *"Freedom actually isn't the absence of all restrictions. It's the presence of the right ones."*

EXPOSITION

Scripture engaged

Genesis 2:4-9 — 4This is the story about the creation of the sky and the earth. This is what happened when the Lord God made the earth and the sky. 5This was before there were plants on the earth. Nothing was growing in the fields because the Lord God had not yet made it rain on the earth, and there was no one to care for the plants. 6So water came up from the earth and spread over the ground. 7Then the Lord God took dust from the ground and made a man. He breathed the breath of life into the man's nose, and the man became a living thing. 8Then the Lord God planted a garden in the East, in a place named Eden. He put the man he made in that garden. 9Then the Lord God caused all the beautiful trees that were good for food to grow in the garden. In the middle of the garden, he put the tree of life and the tree that gives knowledge about good and evil. (ERV)

Genesis 2:15-17 — 15The Lord God put the man in the Garden of Eden to work the soil and take care of the garden. 16The Lord God gave him this command: "You may eat from any tree in the garden. 17But you must not eat from the tree that gives knowledge about good and evil. If you eat fruit from

that tree, on that day you will certainly die!" (ERV)

Genesis 2:18-25 — [18]Then the Lord God said, "I see that it is not good for the man to be alone. I will make the companion he needs, one just right for him." [19]The Lord God used dust from the ground and made every animal in the fields and every bird in the air. He brought all these animals to the man, and the man gave them all a name. [20]The man gave names to all the tame animals, to all the birds in the air, and to all the wild animals. He saw many animals and birds, but he could not find a companion that was right for him. [21]So the Lord God caused the man to sleep very deeply. While he was asleep, God took one of the ribs from the man's body. Then he closed the man's skin where the rib had been. [22]The Lord God used the rib from the man to make a woman. Then he brought the woman to the man. [23]"Finally! One like me, with bones from my bones and a body from my body. She was taken out of a man, so I will call her 'woman.'" [24]That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife. In this way two people become one. [25]The man and his wife were naked, but they were not ashamed. (ERV)

The argument

The Creator of the Cosmos Is the Covenant-Keeping Yahweh — Why Genesis 2 zooms in on relationship, and what dust and breath say about us

Jones frames the chapter with two clues. Genesis 2 is a recapitulation, not a rival account: Genesis 1 is the wide-angle lens, and Genesis 2 zooms in on humanity in the garden sanctuary. And it is covenantal though the word never appears. 'Work it and keep it' later describes Levitical priests in Numbers 3, the tree of life is like a sacramental sign, and the prohibition carries a preamble of grace, a stipulation, and a sanction. The weightiest clue is the name. Verse 4 gives the first of hundreds of 'Yahweh Elohim': 'The infinite, transcendent creator of the universe is also the intimate, covenant-making, promise-keeping God.' That intimacy shows in verse 7, where yatsar is a potter's word, God getting 'dust under his fingernails' and breathing into the clay. We are dust, not divine, yet we carry his breath.

> **Insight —** *Because the God who made everything is the God who makes promises, every human relationship begins inside a covenant, not a contract of convenience.*

Freedom Is Living Within the Boundaries of Our Designer — One no inside an overwhelming yes

God begins with generosity. 'You may surely eat' is, Jones notes, an emphatic doubling in Hebrew, 'eating you shall eat,' an all-you-can-eat buffet from a God of hospitality. Then comes one boundary, a daily reminder that 'creation has a creator and you are not him.' Rejecting the cynical reading in which God keeps humans immature, Jones takes the tree as a test, noting that 'knowing good and evil' elsewhere describes kings issuing decrees. Taking the fruit is the grasp at being a rule maker: 'When it comes to you and me, I'm the rule maker and you're the rule keeper.' The matching doubling, 'dying you shall die,' sounds like a sentence passed. Nothing about the tree looked different; 'it was God's word that marked it out.' So 'true freedom

is not the ability to do whatever you want. It's living according to the design of your creator.'

> **Insight —** *God's restrictions are the framework of freedom, because a creature thrives only by receiving life on its Creator's terms.*

Aloneness, Not Singleness, Is the First Thing Called Not Good — Companionship is structural to being human, and marriage is one instance of it

The first 'not good' arrives before sin: 'It is not good that the man should be alone.' Adam has God, a garden, and work, and still lacks. Jones reads 'helper' (ezer) against its use for God himself, 'a very present help' in Psalm 46 and 'my help comes from the Lord' in Psalm 121. So it means not intern or assistant but one who supplies strength, a face-to-face partner (kenegdo) that no animal could be. Yet the text says alone, not unmarried. 'Bone and flesh' became an idiom for covenant family loyalty, as when the tribes tell David, 'we are your bone and your flesh.' So marriage, though glorious, 'is not designed to bear the entire weight of our souls,' as a toothpick bridge cannot carry a car. Singles are not half-humans; Jesus was single.

> **Insight —** *Every person, married or not, needs deep covenant belonging where they are fully known and fully loved, because no single relationship can carry the whole soul.*

Jesus Keeps the Covenant We Broke and the Church Practices It Now — From the shame of Genesis 3 to a marriage feast

Genesis 3 shatters both relationships: hiding from God, covering before each other, afraid that if people really knew us they would reject us. Jones answers with covenant fulfilled. In Gethsemane, Jesus, the better Adam, prays 'not my will, but yours be done,' absorbing the covenant's curse so that we receive its life. The sign of this covenant 'is not a ring, it's a cross.' Scripture closes in a garden-city with the tree of life, living water, and a feast, 'eating you shall eat,' where we are fully known and fully loved. Citing Lewis Smedes, he sets the choice as covenant keeper or self-maximizer. The church practices this now, imperfectly: singles, good marriages, and hard marriages each bring something and each receive something.

> **Insight —** *Because Christ has kept the covenant on our behalf, we can stop hiding and learn, among his people, to keep covenant with one another.*

Cross-references

- Numbers 3:7-8 — 'work it and keep it' later describes Levitical priests, portraying Adam as a priest in the garden sanctuary
- Hosea 6:7 — 'Like Adam, they transgressed the covenant' shows later Scripture naming Eden a covenant
- Psalm 46:1 — God as 'a very present help' shows that ezer is the word used for God himself
- Psalm 121:1-2 — 'My help comes from the Lord' as a second case of God being the helper

- 2 Samuel 5:1 — the tribes tell David 'we are your bone and your flesh,' showing the idiom of covenant family loyalty
- Matthew 26:39 — Jesus in Gethsemane prays 'not my will, but yours,' the better Adam reversing Eden
- Revelation 22:1-5 — the restored garden temple with tree of life and living water, where the marriage supper of the Lamb is enjoyed
- 2 Corinthians 1:20 — all God's promises are 'yes and amen' in Jesus the covenant keeper

DEVOTIONAL

Picture the potter leaning over the clay, close enough to breathe on it. Dust on his hands, dirt under his nails, and then breath, his own, going into something that could not have asked for it. Everything afterward in the garden is a variation on that nearness. Trees on every side, rivers running out of Eden, a feast of a world, and one tree marked by nothing but a word. We tend to read that word as a fence. It may be closer to a trellis, the shape that lets a living thing climb. Then the first 'not good,' spoken in paradise over a man who had everything but a face looking back at him. A parade of creatures, and none of them could answer. Then the sleep, the wound, the waking, and the cry: at last. We know how quickly that cry curdles. Voices hiding in the trees, coverings sewn together, the old fear that to be seen is to be refused. We learn to hide behind accomplishments, behind a spouse we ask to be our savior, behind a distance we call independence. But another garden holds a man in the dark, praying the sentence Adam would not pray. He goes the whole way to the cross so that covenant breakers might be brought home. And the story does not end in dust. It ends in a feast, with a river and a tree, and a people known all the way down and unashamed. Until then we are given one another: imperfect, covenantal, near.

Reflection

- Where do you experience God's word as a fence rather than as the framework of your freedom, and what would trusting him as rule maker look like there?
- Which relationship are you asking to carry a weight only God can bear, and who else might you let share the load?
- What do you keep covered from the people closest to you for fear of rejection, and what in Jesus' faithfulness makes being known feel safer?

Closing prayer

Father, we thank you for your word and for this story of your pursuing and relentless love, which we need so desperately because our lives are so disordered. There is brokenness in our relationship with you

and with one another, but in the gospel of Jesus Christ there is restoration for us, and joy, and a whole new life to live as those endeavoring to be faithful to the covenant with you and with each other. Help us, Lord, and bring joy and hope and delight into our hearts today. In Jesus' name. Amen.

FORMATION

One thing to remember

In Christ, the fear that being truly known means being rejected has been answered; he is bringing us home to be fully known and fully loved.

This week

This week, read Genesis 2:18-25 slowly once, then pray Jesus' 'not my will, but yours' over one relationship you have been managing by hiding. Then tell one trusted person in your church one true thing you have kept covered, and ask them to pray.

Return to Genesis 2:25