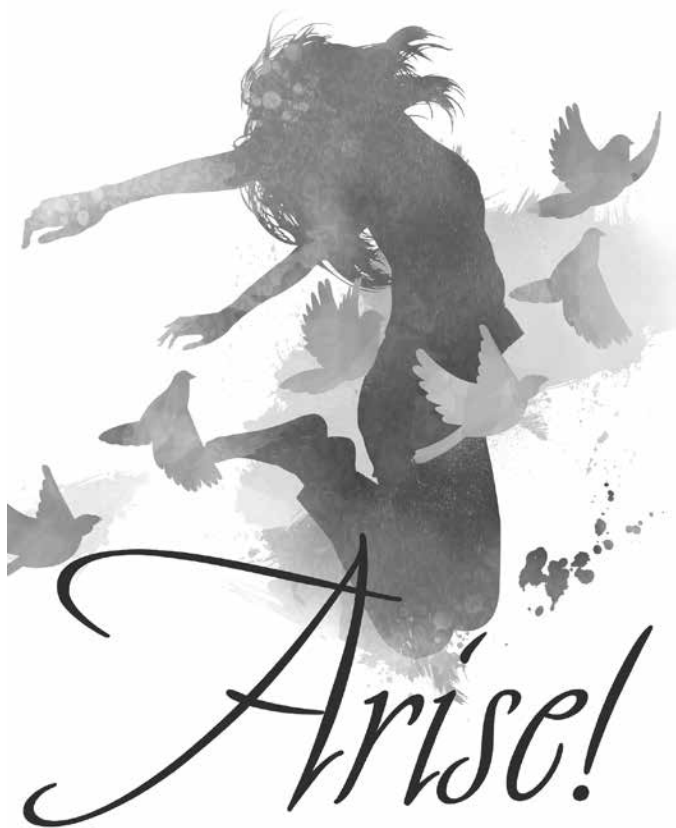


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Chapter 1

In His Image — Male and Female

Discovering God's Perfect Plan in the Beginning

On that first morning, sweeter than a tree-ripened peach, more fragrant than a flowering valley, God felt a void. In the midst of the verdure; the teeming animal life; the crystal, rushing water, something was missing. That something was us.*

“So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Genesis 1:27).

God wanted more than beauty and perfection and more than artistic satisfaction. He longed for face time with beings He could understand and who could understand Him.

He craved our presence before He made us.

Allow this single fact to sink down into your soul: You are meant to be. Let this truth refute any doubts of your

* This chapter originally appeared in Jennifer Jill Schwirzer, “Male and Female—in His Image,” *Sabbath School Net* (blog), May 11, 2015, <http://ssnet.org/blog/male-female-in-his-image/>.

Arise!

value. Step back from the pressures of your family, your society, and your church—pressures that sometimes reduce your value to your appearance, your performance, or your achievements—and let God whisper to you the message of Eden. “I made you in My image. I needed someone like Me. You are the outflowing of an exquisite plan that was put in place from the beginning of time. I have great dreams for you; but even before you fulfill them, I value you just for being a human, made to love like Me.”

With that awareness in place, let us walk through the crowning act of the Genesis story—the creation of man and woman—and witness God’s artistry.

“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being” (Genesis 2:7). God bent down to the loose dirt and sculpted a man; the Hebrew word *yatsar*, which is translated as “formed” in English, refers to squeezing something into shape, as a potter would. God shaped a noble head; a broad chest; powerful arms; washboard abs; firm, strong legs and feet; all squared off and angled in that way of men—he was gorgeous. Then performing something like CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation), God breathed into the man, and his inanimate form hummed into life.

The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden,

and from there it parted and became four riverheads (verses 8–10).

God made a Garden for Adam and placed him in its midst. The ground pumped out fruit-laden trees, which were watered by a coursing river that branched out into four heads, forming new rivers that swirled by lands enriched with clusters of gold and precious stones. The air pulsated with layers of contrapuntal birdsongs that weaved in and out of each other, while gentle winds swept through dancing, silvery grass.

“Dress and keep this garden,” God instructed His new man-child, who must have gasped with joy. All was beauty and delight. The cosmic King and His steward of earth walked, talked, and laughed together during those first hours in Eden.

But something was still missing. That something was again us, but this time I mean women.

God could have stopped the creation process with Adam. After all, Adam was amazing! But he wasn’t amazing enough. To fulfill His plan to reveal His love, God needed more. He needed the second half of the human race—woman. “It is not good that man should be alone,” God said. “I will make him a helper comparable to him” (verse 18).

Designed with unalterable bonding features, we humans suffer when in isolation and we thrive when we are in relationships. In particular, married men have better health, fewer addictions, and longer lives. God knew Eve would raise the quality of Adam’s life by leaps and bounds.

What does being a “helper” mean? *Ezer*, the Hebrew word for “helper,” evokes images of someone surrounding

and protecting another. *Ezer* lies about as far linguistically from *doormat* as one can get. An *ezer* is really a kind of hero. God planned to make Adam a heroine counterpart. Together, they would be quite the power couple.

“And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman” (verses 21, 22). He took a rib; He made a woman. The rib provided the raw material, and God’s own hand powered and guided the process of making the woman. The original word for “made,” *banah*, contrasts with Adam’s *yatsar*. Did you get that? The Bible uses different verbs to describe the creation of Adam and of Eve! *Banah* alludes to building, as in constructing a house. (The English word *architecture* applies here.) *Yatsar* means something like “sculpted.” God *sculpted* Adam but *built* Eve. Different formation processes mean different outcomes. God made us differently, and we turned out differently—by design.

The reason for this distinction emerges when we sink our hearts into the fact that we were made, male and female, in God’s image, or *tselem*. *Tselem* means “represent.” Here is a paraphrase of Genesis 1:27, “God created people to represent Him; to represent Him, God created people; male and female were made.”

Let us break this down into a simple equation: Male + female = a representation of God. Our differences blend to form a picture of God.

If two things together create a representation, subtracting one results in a misrepresentation. Think of the color purple, which is a combination of blue and red. Pretend you

have just been healed of blindness, and you see purple for the first time in your life. If I showed you blue, would that be sufficient to represent purple? No. How about red? No. Neither red nor blue would give you an adequate idea of the character of purple.

In the same way, neither male nor female alone give an adequate idea of the character of God. The electricity, the synergy, and the mystical (and sometimes mystifying) blending of the genders in marriage and in the church reveals God's character of love. Richard Davidson points out that in the original language of Genesis the creation of man and the creation of woman have the same number of words. Through this, he says, "The narrator underscores their equal importance."¹

Woman and man have equal importance. I like the sound of that. How about you? Do most women want to be *more* important than men? I don't. But *less* important? I don't want that either.

Sinless and unselfish, Adam and Eve needed no hierarchy. Their relationship was an example of utter equality. Author Ellen White comments, "She was not to control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his side as an equal, to be loved and protected by him."² Peter Lombard echoes, "Eve was not taken from the feet of Adam to be his slave, nor from his head to be his lord, but from his side to be his beloved partner."³

It is true that Adam served as the head of the human race, even in that unfallen state. Being the firstborn of all creation, he stood as humanity's representative. Yet his headship didn't equate to being the "boss" of Eve. Because they had no taint of selfishness, Adam and Eve moved together

like a well-choreographed dance. There were no missteps, no tension, just fluid, flawless harmony. But even as equals, individuality needed protection.

“Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man” (verse 22). The Bible clearly says that God “brought” the woman to Adam. In this simple statement, we see a fact implied: Eve connected with God *before* connecting with Adam. This speaks loudly to the need to put God first in our love lives. Women so often get lost in their relationships, especially the romantic ones. We so often sacrifice that which should never be sacrificed—our integrity and God-given selfhood—to hang on to a man. This tendency, apart from the sacred boundary of a God-centered marriage, proves ruinous to women.

Yet individuality and intimacy form a tension that must be balanced, lest both be lost. When we lose individuality, we lose intimacy because a healthy adult bond requires two mature *individuals*. The secret of preserving individuality lies in staying connected to God, the Creator of our individuality. God knew this, so He set aside face time with Eve. Moreover, He wants that same face time with you, for He claims the first and best of your affections.

Imagine Eve. Beautiful beyond words, shapely, bathed in light, her shining hair framing a feminine face, Eve turns her newly created eyes to her Maker and adores Him. Eye to eye, face to face, they commune as deep waves of affection wash between them like an ebbing tide. Then after unmeasured moments, He whispers, “There is someone I want you to meet.”

So, for the first time, the two halves of a whole join

together. With their breaths catching in their throats and their hearts fluttering, they inspect each other's different-but-similar bodies. *Eyes, nose, mouth, arms, legs, but what is this? You are soft here, and I am firm. You are round where I am straight.* Awe and comfort mingle. They fit each other in ways they will discover throughout their lives.

And God rejoices. His plan bursts into life, like springtime.

Journaling

God spent time with Eve before bringing her to Adam. What does this tell you about God, yourself, and your relationships?

Arise!

Prayer

Dear kind Creator,

How sweet to know that my existence came forth from Your deep desire for creatures made in Your image. At times, I have failed to see my value, God, and the beauty of Your design and plan in creating male and female. Enrich my understanding of Your creation. Fill my heart with a sense of purpose such that I will live each day in view of eternity. Amen.

1. Richard Davidson, "Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture," in *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Nancy J. Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 261.

2. Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press®, 1958), 46.

3. Peter Lombard, *The Book of Sentences* (ca. 1150), quoted in Paul Jewett, *Man as Male and Female* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 120.