

FTBC

GROWTH TRACKS


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Welcome to Growth Tracks which is FBC's program designed to set the disciple on the firm foundation spiritual maturity.


In 2 Corinthians 4:6 (ESV) Paul writes "For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ".

The key to growth in our spiritual lives is encountering the glory of God through the person of His Son who is His perfect image. The more our hearts are filled with the knowledge of Him the more our characters are moulded, the more our hearts are filled with His love and more our lives will be directed towards the purpose for which we were created....to glorify Him. Each chapter is designed to provide a progressive track to show the face of Christ through selected but key passages in the Bible laying down the bed rock foundations of faith that will form the basis for a life -long learning and growing in to the likeness of Christ. Prayerfully follow these chapters and His Spirit will propel you into a trajectory of robust growth and spiritual transformation. Learn how to read the bible by tackling whole passages of Scripture rather than piece meal verses. See how principles from the passages will be translated to everyday life. For those disciples going into the Gamma program these presentations will help bridge the gap between the Alpha Beta programs and the more in- depth Gamma discipleship program.

For those who prefer to listen and see the contents of this book you can go to our website at [www.fbc.com .my](http://www.fbc.com.my) and each chapter will be presented in a series of slides at the resources section of our site under the title "Growth Tracks"



MODULE 2



**THE NATURE AND PURPOSE
OF MAN**

GENESIS 2

A. The Sabbath Created For Man

For this section we will be taking a more in depth look at the nature of mankind, God's purposes for him and his relationships. The passage is taken from Genesis chapter 2.

Genesis 2:1 (ESV) Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. 2 And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done,

So this is the 7th day and the 7th day is the completion of the climax of God's creation. Then it says "and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done."

So this 7th day is the day God rested. In other words, God ceased from his creative work that he was doing for the last six days.

3 So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

So this 7th day was special, it is set aside, it is holy. The meaning of holy is 'set aside' or "specially devoted". This particular day of the week was made special because God has ceased from all his work.

So here we have the scheme of creation described in Genesis chapter 1 and chapter 2. Creation is divided into four periods.

- Day 1 – light is created.
- Day 2 – sky is separated from the waters
- Day 3 – vegetation is provided
- Day 4 – the sun, moon and star are out
- Day 5 – flying creatures and sea creatures are provided
- Day 6 – man, mammals, reptiles and insects
- Day 7 – that's the special day, that's the climax of creation because this is the day that God ceased from his work and started to enjoy this day. It is called the Sabbath Day

The question that we would naturally ask is what does it mean that God rested and why was the day special?

The Sabbath Day is holy. Holy in a sense that it belongs to God. It is set apart for Him, to celebrate what God had done. It is the climax of God's creation. The day is set apart as a memorial in time and for men as the Mosaic law will later explain it will be a time where mankind will rest. They stop working and enjoy the fruits of their labour. It is a time of great joy and celebrations.

So here we can see the first purpose of man. Man is designed to celebrate and enjoy the Sabbath with God, his Creator. The Sabbath completes God's "work week". God enjoys his creation as his creatures enjoy God and all the beauty and splendor He has given them. So this is the ultimate celebration and joy which is the purpose of the whole creation and the purpose of man to enjoy creation and his Creator together on this Sabbath Day, the once a week celebration.

B. The Nature and Dignity of Man

The next purpose of man is that man is designed with dignity and worth. Let's look at the next verse which is basically verses 4 to 13.

Genesis chapter 1 is the macro view where it lays out the whole scheme of creation. Genesis chapter 2 instead is the zoomed in view and focuses in depth around the events of the sixth day, telling us specifically how God created man, about man's nature and man's purpose. This was only briefly mentioned in Genesis 1:27 how it was God who had made man in his image.

Genesis 2: 4 - 6 set the stage for the creation of man

Genesis 2:4-6 (ESV) These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens. 5 When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, 6 and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground—

Here the emphasis was that, creation was empty and missing the vital ingredient which was man. Let's now look at how man was created

Genesis 2:7 (ESV) then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.

The nature of man is that he comes from dust, so basically he is worthless because dust is worthless, that comes just from the ground. He becomes of great value simply because God is personally involved. God Himself breathes into his nostrils. In Genesis 1 we learn that man was made from the image of God and it is in this line that got God's personal touch, his intimate breath that animates man.

Hence the implication is, if we take God out of the equation, we as human beings are nothing but dust. What gives us dignity and value above every other creature on the face of the earth is the fact that it is God who gives us his image and God who breathes into our lives.

Genesis 2:8-9 (ESV) And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. 9 And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Here we have a garden planted in Eden. In ancient times it is only royalty that have the privilege of having gardens and the first humans were treated like royalty in this respect. That's the most beautiful setting, a garden is filled with every pleasurable delight that the man could wish for. The tree of life is something that sustains his life. Then there is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil which sets the moral boundaries in the garden where man demonstrates his commitment to worship God by obeying Him by not eating this fruit.

The next few verses describe the richness of man's environment, Adam becomes the only person on earth, inherits the earth, he was the richest man on earth.

Genesis 2:10-14 (ESV) 10 A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. 11 The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. 12 And the gold of that land

is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. 13 The name of the second river is the Gibon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Cush. 14 And the name of the third river is the Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

In Ancient East Civilization rivers are vital to life and we not only have one river, we have four rivers. We have an abundance of life and water which is the source of life, with abundance of value. Here there is gold that is a precious stone with bdellium and onyx.

C. The Place of Work in the Life of Man

As we continue onto verse 15,

Genesis 2:15 (ESV) The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. 16 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

So the purpose of man is to work. The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden to work and keep it. God puts man in the beautiful garden to work and keep it. The original Hebrew words for this phrase means to serve and exercise great care to guard over it. Hence work is good and it is in man’s nature to work and his work brings glory to God.

The rest of the passage tells us not only there is man till the garden then look after it, he also looks after and has dominion and authority over the other animals as exemplified by Adam naming the animals. Naming someone or something is a sign of authority over the thing.

19 Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. 20 The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field.

So this is Adam exercising his authority as God’s regent in the world. Let’s look at the other parts of the Bible and learn about the dignity of work. Ecclesiastes written by King Solomon, a very wise man, tells us about the value of work.

Ecclesiastes 3:22 So I saw that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his work, for that is his lot. Who can bring him to see what will be after him

So the purpose of man is to work. He should rejoice in his work, not just work but rejoice in the fact that he has worked.

Ecclesiastes 5:12 Sweet is the sleep of a laborer, whether he eats little or much, but the full stomach of the rich will not let him sleep

The laborer who works has a good sleep, a satisfied sleep. There is therefore dignity in work. Work is necessary for our fulfillment as a human being. It was put in the garden of Eden along with many other things to meet all our needs. Work is for the care and benefit of the world and others around us. The purpose of our work is to “care for” — to cultivate and protect — creation. Work is our duty.

There was an interesting study, a group of 2000 Americans were asked, if they would want to live many-many

more years after the age of 25. The majority of people wanted to live somewhere between 50 and about 100 years extra from the age of 25. More importantly, why? They gave their reasons why they wanted to live longer under a particular condition. 79% of them said that they would want to live longer if they could work to support themselves throughout the extent of lifespan. So long life isn't necessarily any good unless one gets to work. So this shows us that work is intricately woven into our fabric, our DNA.

There are common distortions of the concept of work in our culture today. First distortion is:

- Work can become our identity. We become what we do. That's common when we meet each other, first question we ask each other is, what do you do? You are a doctor, a carpenter, a lawyer so on. So that work defines you and the danger of that is that we can get involved and sucked up into workaholism, careerism, neglect of everything else. What happens when work stops? If a carpenter loses his sight and can no longer build his cub boards then he not only loses his livelihood, he loses himself because his identity is so closely bound up with his occupation. This is one of the reasons so many men die not many years from the day they retired from their work.
- There are others who feel that work is a way of just earning a living. So the bottom-line is the Almighty Dollar. So we choose jobs based on pay, not based on our gifting and or pride in our work. Cynicism sets in and money becomes the only value in the work.
- Lastly, for others work is a way of earning enough so as not work. So we work enough so that we don't have to work anymore. This too will not fit into the nature of man as we were created to work and have a purpose and function to work and glorify God with our work. Adam and Eve were already in Paradise, God gave them work and not a holiday.

D. The Relational Nature of Man

The next function of man as designed by God is that we were designed to relate. We need to look back at chapter 2 verses 16 onwards

Genesis 2:16-25 (ESV) And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.

God is generous. His generosity is clearly shown in that man can eat of every tree in this huge garden. There is nothing that He withholds from manexcept one. The one tree, the fruit of which man is not allowed to eat. This is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the penalty of that disobedience is death.

So here we can see that man is created to relate and the first person he relates to is God, to whom he owes his very breath of life, dignity and value. He is to worship and he is to obey. The fact that there is a tree of knowledge of good and evil from which he cannot eat, represents spiritual development. He can eat of the tree of life and live forever, but he cannot eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil hence his obedience, fidelity and love of God is reflected by obedience. This is how man is to relate to God. Man is to obey God.

So the moral role of man is to make the right choice, always choosing the tree of life and always avoiding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Even from the beginning man is given a free choice.

Then man is made to relate to other human beings, particularly in this case a woman. In Genesis 1 every facet of creation was absolutely good until Genesis 2: 18 for the first time something is not ideal for man.

18 Then the Lord God said, *“It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”* 19 Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. 20 The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. 21 So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 22 And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 23 Then the man said, *“This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”* 24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

So here we can see that although Adam and God were in perfect relationship, yet something was missing, God is trying to tell us, it is a designed need.

Adam was the richest man on the planet, far richer than Bill Gates. He had paradise, a perfect prayer life, all the riches, all the beauty and yet even in paradise even God cannot completely meet his needs because he was designed for relationships with other human beings, in particular a woman. Hence man is created for relationships and the sad reality in our world today the ironic reality of sin causes men to because of sin in our lives sacrifice relationships for paradise. We work hard, we take many jobs, we take risk and we neglect our relationships our families.

So here is God's solution

“I will make him a helper fit for him.”

In original Hebrew, the word “fit for” him means “corresponding to” him. God brought up all the animals to him, but for Adam there was not found a helper, suitable or corresponding to him.

So this sets the stage for the creation of the woman, Eve, described as a helper, fit or suitable for him. The concept of “helper” is not inferior to him, it fits him as a counterpart, it is an opposite, she is complementary or corresponding to him.

The next few verses describes the process in which a woman is made out of the part of man's own ribs. So that the man can declare that this woman is his closest relative as it were. He declares this at last,

“This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”

Here we have because of the relationship between man and woman is the closest possible relationship, therefore Genesis describes what happens in typical family unit

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

This symbolizes their sexual union and in this course man and woman were naked and were not ashamed, they have nothing to hide. They were in perfect stable relationship, they had no flaws from which to hide from one another.

So there is a dual aspect in the family life in marriage. In Genesis chapter 1, the focus is on the procreative aspect where a man is supposed to rule the earth on behalf of God and he does it by multiplying, by procreating because man has the image of God. In Genesis chapter 2, it focuses on the relational aspect of man where together with his wife, they are able to work, the ground, dominate the creation and relate to one another.

So the nature of man is that we cannot grow into the image of God without community. We cannot grow into an image of God by just being me, you've got to be with people. We are designed to be with people.

In fact, it is interesting to note that science actually validates what scriptures says about the relational nature of man. The Grant Glueck Study from Harvard is the longest running study on the health of man. they looked at 268 Harvard sophomores from the year 1938 to this date it is still ongoing. The study is so long that it has outlived four primary investigators and what it actually looked at was the health and longevity of the study subjects, looking at what factors were responsible for living a long healthy life.

The study found the two foundational elements that were most important in longevity, for people living well into their 80s. This is a quote by George Vaillant, Professor of Psychiatry from Harvard University that was responsible for the study and the two elements were

"One is love. The other is finding a way of coping with life that does not push love away."

So love, a relational issue is the most important aspect. He also says, "When the study began, nobody cared about empathy or attachment. But the key to healthy aging is relationships, relationships, relationships."

Man is made to relate.

CONCLUSION:

So there are four aspects to the nature of man

- Value and significance because he is created in the image of God, God personally breathed into him. So this gives man dignity and glory and value, far above every other part of creation.
- Man has purpose. His purpose is to work and develop and represent God and dominate the earth.
- Man has a moral nature. So therefore he exercises that relating to God by obedience.
- Man has a relational nature where he loves God and he loves his fellow man.

QUESTIONS:

1. What was the purpose of the Sabbath day set aside on the 7th day of creation?
2. What is the purpose of work?
3. Why was there the existence of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden? What does it tell us about the nature of man?
4. The entire creation account was always described as good and yet there is a single instance in the Genesis account where God saw that there was something not good what was it and why? What does this tell us about the need for community?
5. What does the provision of Eve as a "help meet" to Adam signify? Is she an inferior human designed only to assist him?

6. What is the bible trying to tell us when it describes in detail the creation of Eve and the special bond she has with her husband when they are described as being “one flesh”

Application Questions:

1. What do you think about the concept of retirement?
2. Why is it that Christians do not accept divorce, same sex marriage nor marriage between multiple partners in polygamy or polyandry?
3. Why is it that Christians will protect the weak and minister to the poor and disabled in life even though they have little value to contribute to society and in fact may even constitute a burden?
4. What is the problem of us working very hard to gain wealth but at the expense of family or spiritual intimacy with God? What does the establishment of the Sabbath tells us about the balance between work and relationships in the design of mankind?