

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF MAN (1)

A Meditation on Genesis 2

Modern man is lost. He is adrift at sea; he doesn't know where he came from or where he's going. He doesn't even know where he is at present. Moreover, he has no idea who he is. My assumption that he is lost is based on his own words, because he is always talking about "finding" himself.

In an effort to "find" themselves people will divorce their spouse, abandon their family, quit their job, and then hop aboard a ship or an airplane and travel half way around the world hoping against all hope that they will eventually "find" themselves—discover who they are and experience happiness. But if modern man is going to find himself, and experience happiness and fulfillment, it will not happen by world travel, navel gazing, or star searching. It will happen by looking into God's Word, and ascertaining how his Creator made him.

In Genesis 2 the psychology of man is clearly spelled out. "In the beginning" God created man (male and female) with specific purposes in mind, and as we live according to these purposes we will find ourselves and the joy we long for. On the other hand, if we rebel against God's designed intentions for us, we can anticipate heartache, depression, loneliness and frustration. We'll feel like round pegs forever trying to cram into a square hole. So with this in mind, consider eight aspects of man's psychology.

First, man was created to be a mature, responsible person. It's worth noting that when God created Adam and Eve they were not created as children, but as adults. When Adam was five minutes old—regardless of what age that exactly corresponds with today—we know he was an adult. This indicates, at the very least, that one of God's purposes for man is that he grow up, mature and assume responsibility. R. J. Rushdoony writes, "since man was in his origin a mature creation, his psychology is best understood in terms of that fact. Man's sins and shortcomings represent...a deliberate *revolt against maturity* and the requirements of maturity...The fact of a *mature creation* is one of the basic and most important facts of a Biblical psychology. It is a fact of incalculable importance" (R. J. Rushdoony, *Revolt Against Maturity*, p. 6, 7). This psychology is also basic to parenting. One of our main goals as parents is to rear mature, responsible sons and daughters. This is essential to their future happiness. Immature, irresponsible adults are rarely happy. Usually they're trying to cover up and cope with the rotten fruit of their revolt.

Second, man was created to be a working person. "The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it" (Gen. 2:15). Man is designed for work—to be industrious. Contrary to what many think, work is a gift from God and not a result of the fall. Paradise is not a place to lounge around 24/7, but a place to work. Even in heaven we will serve God. We are to pity those who can't work, or, worse, won't work. Laziness is rebellion against God, another revolt against maturity and responsibility.

The Puritans held to four basic principles about work. First, they said that all lawful work is sacred—it is worship to God. Faithful labor should be done *corum deo*, before the face of God. And the Puritans didn't have jobs or careers, they had *vocations*, which comes from the Latin word for calling. Work is a calling from God. Second, they held that everybody has a personal calling from God, not just pastors and missionaries. Homemakers, doctors, auto mechanics, computer programmers all have a calling from God. The next principle is that service is to be the prime motivator of our work. We are to see our vocations as a life time of service to God and others. "For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mk. 10:45). We are to imitate Christ in our work. Last, we are to be devoted to our work, but not enslaved to it. The Puritans were not lazy or workaholics.

Sometimes we don't realize what a gift work is until it's taken away. Emerich Eggerrich tells about two of his friends who faced the threat of cancer. He said both men calmly faced death and accepted what they thought would be their end. Yet they both survived. The first friend was without work for a period of time and said, "I was never depressed when dealing with cancer and possibly dying, but when I left my work, which was my identity, I went into a depression that was like nothing I had ever experienced before." His other friend also lost his job later and said, "being out of work was harder than dying" (Emerick Eggerrich, *Love and Respect*). Hard-working people often find great joy in their work, even if they don't know it at the time.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF MAN (2)

A Meditation on Genesis 2

Third, man was created to be a resting person. We addressed this earlier, but it bears repeating, because some of you may have missed it due to your preoccupation with your busy work schedule. Genesis 2:1-3 tells us that God created the world with a built-in rhythm: six days of work and one day of rest, six...one, six...one. This is God's created order and it can't be violated without doing damage.

During the French Revolution the leaders tried to change the week from six days of work and one day of rest to nine days of work and one day of rest. This attempt was made to squeeze extra work out of the laborers. But the results were disastrous, and as a result of the breakdown of the workers, Napoleon was forced to revert back to a seven day week. Stalin tried the same experiment in Russia with the same consequences, so he too ended up returning to the seven day week.

We are acting just as foolishly and sinfully when we ignore the Sabbath. When we rebel against God's immutable laws there will always be a price to pay. Besides, why do we want to work seven days a week? The love of money is often the bottom line. You probably know of businesses that used to be open six days a week that are now open seven. Why? So they can make just a little more money. Some of you might work seven days a week, because you want to be more productive, perhaps even in your service to God. This is the right motive, but working seven days a week is the wrong method. I want to be productive, but in God's world—which this is—six days of work will prove to be more productive than seven. When you and I remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy God will bless our six days of work. If we don't keep the Sabbath, God will withhold his blessing from our seven days of sweat—or he may even curse them.

God is using the Sabbath to test our faith, just as he used it to test Israel's faith. When the LORD talked to Israel about the land Sabbath, he said, "And if you say, 'What shall we eat in the seventh year, if we may not sow or gather in our crop?' I will command my blessing on you in the sixth year, so that it will produce a crop sufficient for three years" (Lev. 25:20-21). What a blessing God was promising the Israelites! Too bad they didn't believe him. Will we fare any better?

Fourth, man was created to be a worshiping person. We tend to think that there are worshipers and non-worshipers. But we are all, by nature, religious. This is why anthropologists, who have traversed the globe, have found worshipers among all the various people groups. A non-worshiping tribe has never been discovered.

Paul states unequivocally in Romans 1 that God has made his invisible attributes, namely his eternal power and divine nature known to everybody through his creation. So they are without excuse (Rom. 1:19-20). "For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him...Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among them-selves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen" (vv. 21, 24-25). When you reject the true God, you don't turn into a non-worshiper, you turn into a *false* worshiper—but you will worship, that is inescapable. This explains why we have extreme animal rights activists and environmentalist tree-huggers. They are doing just what Paul said they would do if they refuse to honor God and give him thanks; they worship the creature rather than the Creator.

Moreover, it's inevitable that you serve what you worship. These truth-exchangers "worshiped *and* served the creature rather than the Creator" (vs. 25). Devotion naturally flows out of worship. This is why unbelievers will commit large portions of their time and money to such weird causes. It's the consequence of false worship.

On the other hand, true worship will positively affect our devotion to the true God. While it's true that all of life is worship, it also seems that God is especially interested in being worshiped through corporate singing. The Psalms, Israel's liturgical handbook, repeatedly calls for the people of God to praise him with singing. "Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth! Serve the LORD with gladness! Come into his presence with singing!" (Ps. 100:1). The next verse says, "Know that the LORD, he is God!" I see a connection between these two verses that is significant. As we come into God's presence with singing, our faith is strengthened and we know—with certainty—that He is God, and that confidence manifests itself in all we do.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF MAN (3)

A Meditation on Genesis 2

Fifth, man was created to be a covenantal person. This relates to our covenantal relationship with God, as outlined by the commands of Scripture. The terms of the Adamic Covenant are found in Genesis 2:16-17: “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 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.’” Simply put, these are the conditions of the covenant to abide in the love of God. And contrary to what unbelievers think, God’s commands are not burdensome, they are a blessing and the pathway to overflowing joy.

Jesus said to his disciples, “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love” (Jn. 15:9). Before the disciples can ask how, Jesus tells them. “If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love” (vs. 10). Our supreme example is Jesus who never once complained about his Father’s commandments or deviated from them. In fact he delighted in them. After this, Jesus said, “These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete” (vs. 11). God’s commands are given to us that we may experience joy, and not just any joy, but Jesus’ very own joy that will be in us through the Holy Spirit making our joy complete.

Sixth, man was created to be an aesthetic person—one who appreciates beauty. “And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food” (Gen. 2:9a). It’s almost a passing thought, yet we are profoundly influenced and affected by things that are “pleasant to the sight.” Man is not strictly utilitarian. God created the world with grandeur and glory, tastes and textures, sounds and smells, colors and contours for our pleasure—to enthrall our senses and stimulate our minds. For those with the eyes of faith the whole world is full of the glory of God. Martin Luther said, “I see in every leaf on a tree that falls in the autumn and every bud that come out in spring a testimony of the resurrection of my Savior. I see the same testimony of the resurrection in every dingy caterpillar that is buried in a cocoon grave, and rises again as a soaring butterfly. It’s not uncommon for Christians to talk about being born again, and suddenly seeing and savoring for the first time the greenness of the grass, the fluffiness of the clouds, and the blue hues in the water and sky. The robins now do more than chirp; they sing praises to the Almighty. Indeed the whole earth seems to reflect the majesty of its Maker: his voice is heard in the thunder; his faithful promises shine in the rainbow; his forgiveness falls with the snow; his Spirit is felt when the wind blows; his wrath is feared in the hurricane; his love for the just and the unjust is seen when he sends rain and makes his sun rise.

Tragically, this aesthetic dimension has often been our down-fall. It’s been this way from the very beginning. It started in the garden of Eden: “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate” (Gen. 3:6). Part of the lure of sin is the aesthetic element; sin often looks good—irresistible. Therefore, we need to beware of “beautiful” things which enflame the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and the pride in possessions, which come not from the Father but the world.

Some of God’s best warriors, like David, have been pierced by nearly fatal aesthetic sins. “In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab...David remained at Jerusalem” (2 Sam. 11:1). Now what will King David do with all his free time? “It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king’s house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful” (vs. 2). The rest, as they say, is history. If only she had been very ugly; if only temptation were ugly, but then it wouldn’t be tempting, would it?

Because we are so vulnerable to aesthetic sins, we need governing rules to guide us with regard to music, movies, magazines, video games, internet surfing, etc. Philippians 4:8 is an excellent starting point: “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, what-ever is just, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” God has ordained not only truth and goodness, but also beauty to sanctify us. As a result, God’s majestic mountains can take our breath away, and also strengthen our faith.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF MAN (4)

A Meditation on Genesis 2

Seventh, man was created to be a male or female person. We are not gender-neutral. “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:27). Moreover, God desires that the differences between the sexes be maintained. One clear example is that of dress. “A woman shall not wear a man’s garment, nor shall a man put on a woman’s cloak, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD your God” (Deut. 22:5). We are not to have an androgynous appearance.

The Bible doesn’t blur the different roles of a husband and wife, although there is overlap of course. We don’t want to be more rigid than God, yet isn’t the tendency of our culture to careen in the other direction and act as if men and women are the same, except for a couple of biological issues? Just try and maintain *any* distinction between the sexes without the radical feminists dog-piling you. Nancy Wilson writes in *The Fruit of Her Hands*, “A friend of mine was taking an English course at a government university and was told on one of the first days of class that no sexist language would be tolerated in student papers. What was the instructor’s definition of sexist language? *Mother*. The class was told that they could not use the term *mother* in their writing, but must use the politically correct term *parent*. In other words, they could not write, ‘The mother baked the cookies,’ but must write, ‘The parent baked the cookies’” (p. 14). If this is how modern feminists define sexist than the Bible is unapologetically sexist.

“Perhaps the most influential of the early feminists was Gloria Steinem, founder of the National Organization for Women and editor of *Ms. Magazine*. Here is a sampling of her perspective on...child rear-ing: ‘We’ve had a lot of people in this country who have had the courage to raise their daughters more like their sons. Which is great because it means they’re more equal...But there are many fewer people who have had the courage to raise their sons more like daughters. And that’s what needs to be done’” (quoted in James Dobson, *Bringing Up Boys*, p. 14). So, according to Ms. Steinem daughters are *more equal* when they are raised as boys. I think Ms. Steinem is the one with the inferiority complex, since she thinks that girls raised like boys are “more equal.” But it gets even more curious, because she believes that the great need of the hour is for courageous parents to raise their boys like girls. It’s great if boys are raised like girls, but terrible if girls are raised like girls? This doesn’t sound like gender-equality, but gender-reversal. It seems as if the two tenets of radical feminists are 1) Men are jerks, and 2) Women should strive to be more like them. I find it ironic that a movement in which women want to act like men, be raised like men, be treated like men, is called *feminism*. Only by embracing our God-given masculinity or femininity will we be happy. Let men be men, and women be women, is this too much to ask?

Eighth, man was created to be a relational person. “Then the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make a helper fit for him’” (Gen. 2:18). Of course the immediate context is marriage, but the principle is broader. We are relational beings, and are therefore happiest when we enjoy close friendships with people, not animals. I’m sorry but a dog shouldn’t be man’s best friend.

Gloria Steinem writes concerning marriage, “[It is] not an equal partnership. I mean, you lose your name, your credit rating, your legal residence, and socially, you’re treated as if his identity were yours. I can’t imagine being married. If everybody has to get married, then clearly it is a prison, not a choice” (Ibid.). She’s also denigrated women who get married by calling marriage “an arrangement for one and a half people.” But apparently liberation was too much for Ms. Steinem, because in 2000 she married David Bale, and chose prison life. I think it’s really quite hilarious (and hypocritical). It just goes to show that God’s psychology of man is hard to overcome. Even those who hate to admit that God’s ways are the best ways, as well as the happiest, find themselves following some of them.

“But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, ‘Why have you made me like this?’ Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honored use and another for dishonorable use?” (Rom. 9:20-21). Our job is not to question how God has made us, but to discover how God has made us, and to cooperate with his designed intentions. If we live according to any other psychology, we can expect misery. God has molded us and shaped us, and he has shown us the pathway to joy, if we will just walk in it without straying to the right or to the left.

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