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INTRODUCTION

Eve is the perfect woman who makes the perfectly wrong choice. Eve's greatest claim to fame—she changes her world through sin. Eve, the first leading lady of leadership, fails miserably. Does the fruit look amazingly delicious or is it the fact that God says it is forbidden to her touch that causes Eve to become curious and adventurous as she rationalizes her unwise choice? Regardless, her decision begins the domino effect of the debasing consequences still felt by all her daughters after her. The hard fact that women must grapple with is that they are Eve's daughters; Eve is their supragreat-grandmother. It is important for women to recognize traces of Eve within their own lives. They must recognize their connectedness to Eve and how she predisposes them to certain tendencies, traits, and temptations.

This paper seeks to describe the biblical and historical trajectory of Eve's life story and explore the vicissitudes of everyday living all women encounter since Eve's initiation of women into sin. To accomplish this task, Genesis 1-3 will be the biblical basis for identifying various root causes for the fluctuations in women's status, roles, and identity. In so doing, Eve's story, her unique culture, and the lineage of the first family will be illuminated. The work here helps build a case that women are to no longer believe the lies presented to Eve. Rather, they are to depend on the praxis of the Holy Spirit to redeem a fallen world and put an end to the consequences of Eve's disobedience.

GOD'S ORIGINAL INTENT FOR WOMEN

God gives Eve a purpose and destiny for her life before He even creates her.[1] She is an icon God uses to show other women His intentions for them. In Genesis, God gives universal core callings for every woman. Robert Lewis identifies these callings as gender-specific purposes God has in His mind for every woman. These are objectives around which everything else a woman does and chooses in life finds its rightful place and order of priority.[2]

The first two of these purposes are found in Genesis 1:28. John and Stasi Eldredge refer to these verses as the Human Mission. Humans, they say, are,

> to be all and do all God sent [them] here to do. And notice—the mission to be fruitful and conquer and hold sway is given *both* to Adam *and* to Eve. 'And God said to them…' Eve is standing right there when God gives the world over to us. She has a vital role to play and a mission all her own as a partner in this great adventure. All that human beings were intended to do here on earth—all the creativity and exploration, all the battle and rescue and nurture—we were intended to do *together*.[3]

According to Genesis 1:28, "God blessed [Adam and Eve]; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'"[4] First, God commands Adam and Eve to multiply and fill the earth. God intends for women to birth babies after "their kind" (Gen. 1:24-25). God's purpose is for them to multiply His very image, to birth children who will glorify Him and thus continue His plan to multiply and reproduce bearers of His image.

Second, Adam and Eve are exhorted to work as a team and to share rule and responsibility. Women are universally called to a leadership position along with men to set in

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[1]See Psalms 139. Eve's spirit is created and in the mind of God before her body is created in the Garden.

[2]Robert Lewis, *A New Eve: Choosing God's Best for Your Life* (Nashville: B & H Publishing, 2008), 44.

[3]John Eldredge and Stasi Eldredge, *Captivating: Unveiling the Mystery of a Woman's Soul* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 31.

[4]All Scripture references are taken from the New American Standard Version.

order a healthy, balanced, and orderly living environment. As John Stott states, "God makes us [both men and women], in the most literal sense, 'caretakers' of His property."[5] For women, this assignment of leadership includes cultivating nature as well as their personal home environment. Women are to use their God-given leadership gifts for nurturing and leading to make life better for their families and surroundings.

The third core calling is companionship. This is a deep, lasting intimacy with someone of the opposite sex. In Genesis 2:24, God states, "For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh." In the act of becoming one flesh, God preordains the first consummation of a covenant relationship between man and woman. The union of man and woman in a sexual relationship is intended to be an act of worship before God.[6] David Lim explains how sex within the context of a marriage relationship functions as "re-creation-al":

> Adam's love brought healing to Eve's spirit—she knew she was loved and forgiven. To this day, sex in marriage renews the human spirit. It lifts a couple up from the pain and hurts the world may inflict upon them because they know they have each other and seek to build up each other. Within marriage, sex is re-**creation**-al. It gives the couple energy, healing, and hope to move ahead in life.[7]

There are different ways to fulfill the core callings. For example, some women are unable to have children. Yet, they can still fulfill the calling to have children by adopting. Although 95% of women marry over their lifetime, some will remain single by choice or circumstance.[8] Paul speaks of this as a spiritual gift—the gift of celibacy. Thus, for the most part women are

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[5]John Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1990), 120.

[6]David Lim, *The Drama of Redemption* (Singapore: OneStoneBooks, 2008), 46. Lim quotes from Dr. Richard Dobbins' lecture at Western Pentecostal Bible College in 1981 during which Dobbins said, "The same biophysical mechanisms used in worship are used in the sexual act in marriage."

[7]Lim, 34.

[8]Lewis, 45.

created to fulfill these core callings in their lives. They find their sense of being in fulfilling all God intends of them to be and do.

Eve is created as Adam's equal. As Matthew Henry notes, Eve is made not "out of [Adam's] head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved."[9] When God creates Eve, He calls her an *ezer kenedgo* (Gen. 2:18). Robert Alter, a Hebrew scholar dedicated to Genesis, contends this phrase is difficult to translate. The various attempts to translate this phrase into English include "helper," "companion," or "help meet."[10] Still these renderings leave the phrase hollow. Eldredge and Eldredge put it rather bluntly:

> Why are these translations so incredibly wimpy, boring, flat… disappointing? What is a help meet, anyway, What little girl dances through the house singing "One day I shall be a help meet?" Companion? A dog can be a companion. Helper? Sounds like Hamburger Helper.[11]

Perhaps a better translation that delivers the full Hebrew meaning of Eve's relationship to Adam would be to render the phrase *ezer kenedgo* as a "sustainer beside him."[12] While Eve is created to have and be in relationship with Adam, to reproduce God-glorifiers in the form of children, she is also an equal partner in ruling and having dominion over the earth. Eve is a creature carved by the hand of God. She is created equal to her husband. The only difference between Adam and Eve is their gender.[13]

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[9]Matthew Henry, *A Commentary on the Whole Bible, Vol. 1* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1991), 7.

[10]Robert Alter, *The Five Books of Moses: A Translation with Commentary* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), 22.

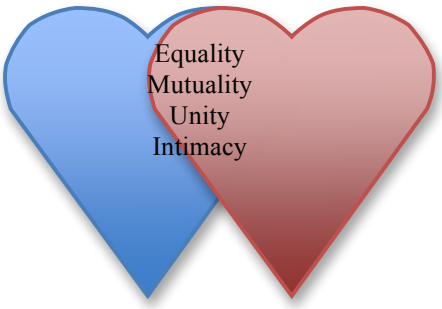
[11]Eldredge and Eldredge, 31. Personally, this definition and understanding has been life-changing as I am a life-sustainer to my husband.

[12]Alter, 22.

[13]Gien Karssen, *Her Name is Woman* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1975), 24.

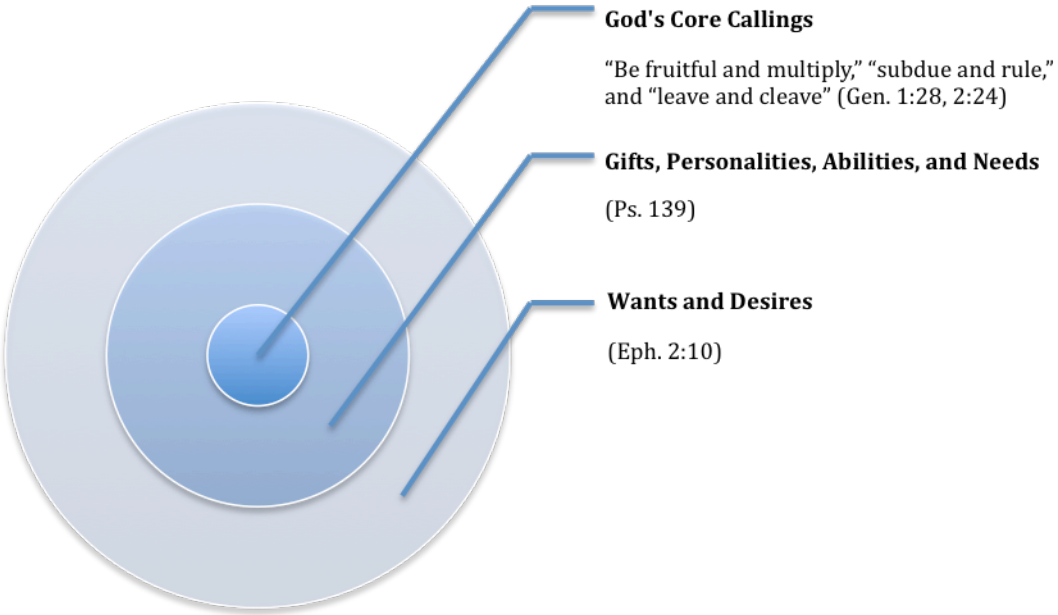
The Garden of Eden is God's way of providing every opportunity to meet each of Eve's needs. According to Abraham Maslow an individual's basic life needs are air, food, drink, shelter, warmth, sleep, and sex. God meets these needs, but He does not stop there. According to Deborah Gill and Barbara Cavanass in *God's Women, Then and Now*, Adam and Eve experience equality, mutuality, unity, and intimacy.[14]

God's Ideal Seen in Creation	
Equality	Sameness celebrated
Mutuality	Ruling together, working as a team
Unity	Joined as one flesh
Intimacy	Naked without shame



[14]The following chart is from Deborah Gill and Barbara Cavaness, *God's Women Then and Now* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing, 2004), 38.

The following diagram illustrates how the core callings, needs, and desires fit within a woman's personhood.[15] There are three rings, which could be likened to rings on a tree. At the very center core of a woman is her core callings. Enclosed around these are her gifts, personalities, abilities, and needs. The outmost ring includes her behavior, that is, what others see.



THE SNAKE IN EVE'S GARDEN

God does not create Eve to be a puppet or inanimate object unable to voice her own choice in matters. He creates her in His image and gives her the ability to think, reason, and choose. And despite Eve's ideal living environment, she makes a devastating choice.

God gives Eve leadership gifting and abilities and the intelligence and reason to fulfill her core callings. But she grows discontent. She wants it all (Gen. 3:6). Satan capitalizes on this and

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[15]"Core Callings," adapted from Lewis, 40.

puts ideas and questions into Eve's mind. As Gil Bilezikian says in his book, *Beyond Sex Roles*, "Eve did not sin willfully, but was fooled into making a fateful error of judgment."[16] Eve hears the snake say there are better things beyond God's will for her—things she thinks will be more satisfying. Satan alleges that God has been holding back on her and lying about these possibilities. "You shall surely not die!" the snake teases while holding up the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3:4). Satan is claiming that the only things that will die are Eve's limitations. To eat is to become like God—to live life without restraint and to make her own rules to decide for herself what is right and what is wrong.[17]

Eve doubts that God always has her best interest in mind, and so she decides to take matters into her own hands. In disobeying God's command by choosing to eat of the forbidden fruit, she violates her very life mission. Eve is supposed to be Adam's *ezer kenegdo,* like one who comes to save. She is to bring life and invite him to life. Instead, she invites him to his death.[18] Her mission is sabotaged. Eve is deceived into believing she can become an independent image. The shadow does not need the substance, or so the snake assures her. Her mistake lays in believing she can be good, enjoy pleasure, and be wise, all independent of God who is the sum totality of all these things. Satan deceives her into thinking she can be like God in the sense of being totally independent like He is.

Satan is on a covert mission to destroy Eve because he hates the very image of God that she bears. Satan hates Eve because she has the ability to birth babies and continue the image of God in the world. And thus, Eve is his greatest human threat, for she brings life. She is a

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[16]Gil Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1985), 57, quoted in Jill Briscoe, *Women Who Changed Their World: How God Uses Women to Make a Difference* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1991), 15.

[17]Lewis, 77.

[18]Eldridge and Eldridge, 48.

lifesaver and a life giver. "Adam names his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living" (Gen. 3:20). Eve means "life" or "life producer." Eve incarnates the beauty of God and gives life to the world. Satan's bitter heart cannot bear it. He assaults her with a special hatred.[19] The resulting cataclysmic moment changes women forever.

THE SNAKE IN EVERY WOMAN'S GARDEN

As a result of Eve's choices, all of God's original intentions and core callings for women become twisted, distorted, and—most of all—difficult to pursue.[20] Women and even their families are marked from the consequences of Eve's disobedience as described in Genesis 3. Shame, secrets, lies, betrayals, relationship breakdowns, disappointments, and unresolved longings for unconditional love lie beneath the veneer of even the most respectable families.[21] As William T. Kirwan notes, "The image of God in humankind [has been] shattered… shattered. That was the beginning of mental anguish and psychological struggle. Confusion and distortion now marked the human sense of personal identity."[22] Each woman now has an identity that is broken, shattered, and misunderstood.

Eve's choices damage relationships. It damages relationships between people and God, between people and nature, and between people and people—Adam and Eve.[23] Most women will admit that they have a deep need for relationships. They often find their identity in being mother,

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[19]Ibid., 85.

[20]Lewis, 62.

[21]Peter Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006), 13.

[22]William T. Kirwan, *Biblical Concepts for Christian Counseling: A Case for Integrating Psychology & Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1984), 78.

[23]Berkley Mickelsen and Alvera Mickelsen, *Studies on Biblical Equality* (Minneapolis: Christians for Biblically Equality, n.d.), 13.

wife, sister, and daughter. Loneliness and companionship are huge relational needs for most women. Mother Teresa expresses her desire for relationship this way, "I am told God loves me—and yet the reality of darkness and coldness and emptiness is so great that nothing touches my soul…what tortures of loneliness…I wonder how long my heart will suffer like this?"[24]

John Stott declares, "As a result of the fall, headship has degenerated into domination and subjugation, and mistreatment of woman throughout the ages."[25] Indeed, throughout history and around the world, women have continually struggled with their worth, identity, and roles. They are often in the center of theological reflection and debate and often the brunt of much criticism. Darrell Bock posits, "What do slaves, women and homosexuals have in common? Most would say their humanity—and not much else. But they all have tragically at one time or another been considered as less than human."[26] This is especially true of women.

In China, little girls are often left to die by the side of the road. Several Eastern proverbs reveal a view of women that still characterizes parts of the world today. One Chinese proverb says, "A woman should be like water; she should take no form and have no voice," and an Indian proverb warns, "Educating a woman is like watering your neighbor's garden," meaning, of course, that educating a woman is both foolish and a waste of time. In Hinduism, a woman has less value than a cow. In Islam, a woman requires three men to verify her story in court in order for her testimony to be valid. Her testimony illustrates her value to be one third of a man's worth.[27] Women and girls have been used as sex slaves and in human trafficking. The

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[24]Parker Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey toward an Undivided Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 80-84.

[25]John Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1990), 59.

[26]Quoted in William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 9.

[27]Eldridge and Eldridge, 81.

devastating rapes and abuse of women is horrific and grieves the heart of God. Sadly, there is nothing any woman (or man) can do to rectify the consequences of Eve's choice. However, God provides a way for redemption and restoration.

REDEEMING EVE

Although every woman after Eve struggles with finding her true self, a woman's identity can be fulfilled when she has a relationship with the God who gives her a distinctiveness like His (Gen. 1:26-27). Women are made in God's image and after His likeness, and though Eve contributed to the breaking of that image, it has been restored in Christ who is God's remedy for sin and its results. As Satan continues his assault on all women, especially on those with leadership gifting and capability, women are constantly bombarded with questions similar to those that Eve faced and opportunities, just as Eve, for choosing how to respond.

Women must remember that they should never take on the snake alone.[28] Humans are no match for the snake's schemes, lies, comparisons, and hatred. Satan has not changed his tactics or lost his cunningness. But through the victory that Christ has won and through the power of the Holy Spirit, women can make choices that will lead to overcoming.

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[28]Briscoe, 16.

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