

THE MAN'S DECISION

We've discussed the woman's choice, but what of the man's? What is he doing this whole time and what's his role in all of this?

“she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.” (Genesis 3:6)

He was with her! What was he doing there *with her*!?

NOTHING!!!

Apparently God had also created cats in the garden and one of them had gotten a hold of Adam's tongue. Adam's first choice was not deciding to take the fruit from his wife and eat it. That comes later. His first choice was choosing to remain silent and not speak truth as this whole ordeal is unfolding. This was an incredible abdication of responsibility of his place in creation and his place in his marriage.

Here's what I mean:

When reading Hebrew narratives, often the authors do not explicitly *tell* us things, rather they *show* us what they want us to know. It is our job as good readers of the text to pick up on and see, as best we can, those things which the original audience would have seen. In the Genesis account, there are arguably several features in the Hebrew narrative which *show* that God has designed both male and female equal in dignity, value and worth, and yet within the relationship, the man exercises a role of responsibility for the spiritual vivacity of the couple that the woman does not. Some of these features include:

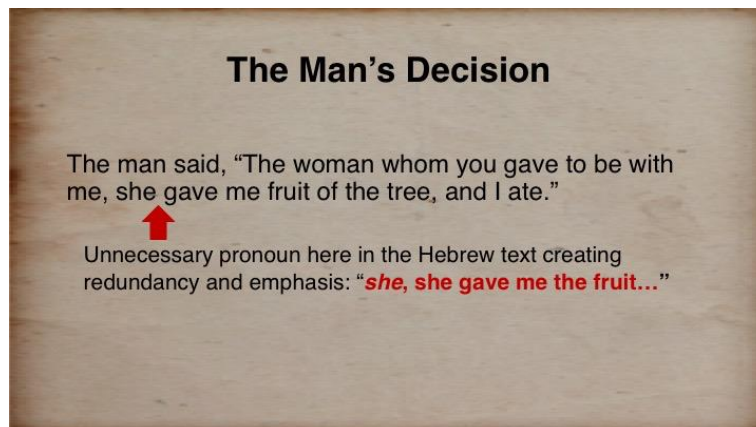
- The man being created first
- God giving the command not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil to Adam before the creation of Eve, and Eve's subsequent appropriation of the directive
- The man naming the woman
- The grammatical construction in Genesis 3:8 (compound subject with singular verb inflection-see appendix for more on this) presents the man as the lead actor in the drama. Further, the result clause in Genesis 3:17, where God says to Adam, “*Because you* [masc. sing.]...” signals the man's headship or role as covenant representative. God issues a formal indictment to Adam before his sentencing but does not address Eve in this way. Genesis 3:8 and 17 both present the man as the chief actor in the events and ultimately culpable in a way

the woman is not. This assessment is shared both by the inspired New Testament authors (Rom. 5:14; 1 Cor. 15:22) and extra-biblical authors (2 Bar. 17:2-4; 18:2; 23:4; 48:42; 56:5-6; 4 Ezra 3:21-22; 4:30; 7:11-12, 118-119).

From this I think we are right in concluding that man has a special role in his relationship to the woman. We may state it this way: While both the man and woman are given dominion and priestly roles to rule as God's vice-regents in creation, the man has been given a special task of loving and serving the woman in such a way as to put her beauty on display to the world, celebrating her, and leading and serving in such a way that he champions her in her journey in being transformed from one degree of glory to the next.

Did you catch all that? Good. So our next question then is, if the man is presented as the lead actor – and God designed him for this – in what ways and into what does he lead?

We've already mentioned his silence and failure to speak. But then things just keep going from bad to worse. After eating, he leads the woman into hiding and isolation away from the presence of God (Gen. 3:8). And then when he does finally open his mouth, only anger and blame roll out. He blames the woman and then blames God for giving him the woman. Ouch! It was all their fault – not his. The text makes it even more explicit where Adam uses a redundant pronoun to speak of his wife:



It's as if Adam is saying to God, "Just in case there is any doubt who messed up here – it is *she, she* (I imagine some finger pointing here) gave me the fruit. And let's be clear God – You gave me the woman, so who is really to blame here?). The woman who Adam had just sang praise over one chapter earlier, he is now throwing under the bus. And towards the God who had given him every good and perfect gift he is now

lashing out at. Something has gone radically wrong in Adam's heart. There is a storm brewing.

To my brothers, here's the problem men: we haven't gotten to far away from the sin in the garden. We recapitulate Adam's choices and actions – his silence, leading into shame and hiding, lashing out in blame and anger even towards those closest to us. Sound familiar? I'll just say a quick word about each:

The Silence of Adam. This is an epidemic. We do not use our voices. And when we do use our voices, it is too often in anger, blaming, or tearing down rather than building up of others. What does it look like to use your voice to encourage and bless others? Especially your wife and children if you have a family. How do we use our voices to curb evil? In the west, we have created institutions that do our sinning for us (and often even actively participate in them). In the face of evil we are called to be voices that point back towards justice and truth in ways that are attractive, invitational, loving, and envision.

The leading of Adam. You will lead, especially in your family. Into what and to where are you leading? How would you know? Are you leading towards the loving presence of God or away from Him? In what ways do those around you see you depend on God?

Reactive nature of anger and loss of self-awareness. Adam does not stop to evaluate the stirrings of his own heart. We do not learn from our experiences; we learn from reflecting on our experiences. Few of us regularly (if ever) slow down to reflect on our interior lives and how God is moving. Richard Foster comments that, "our Adversary the devil majors in three things: noise, hurry, and crowds. If he can keep us engaged in 'muchness' and 'manyness,' he will rest satisfied." What would it look like to be intentional in carving out time for solitude and silence with God and invite Him to shed light into your life? In times of anger, what would be like to reflect on the underlying emotions causing the secondary emotion of anger: shame, fear, loneliness – and then instead of lashing out and making excuses, humbly and vulnerably share with those with whom we are in relationship?

Appendix: Notes on verb agreement in Genesis 3:8 and the man's role:

Genesis 3:8-9 is translated by the NIV and ESV as follows:

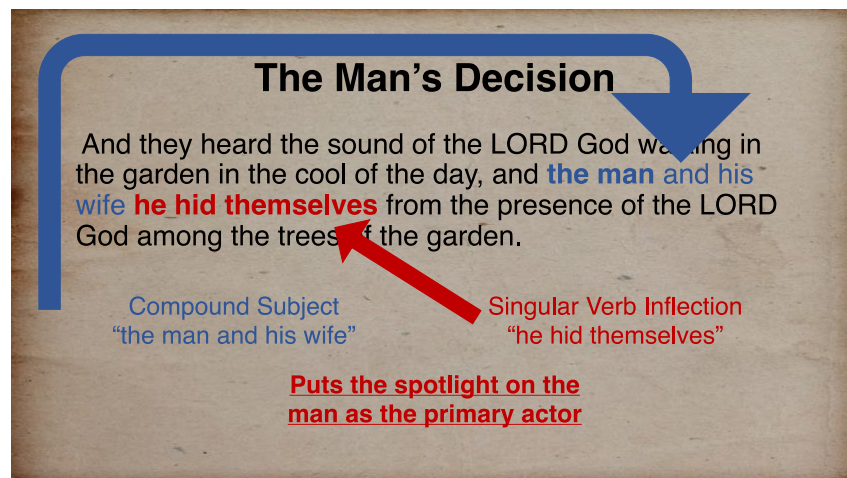
"Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in

the garden in the cool of the day, *and they hid from* the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?” (NIV, italics added)

“And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, *and the man and his wife hid themselves* from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” (ESV, italics added)

There is a variation between the two translations in v.8 where the NIV reads “the man and his wife heard...and they hid” and the ESV reads “they heard...and the man and his wife hid themselves.” The reason for this variation is that the translators are dealing with an issue of verb agreement. The subject in verse 8 is compound, namely, “the man and his wife.” However, the verb “to hide” is singular, and not plural. If we were to translate more literally into the English, we get something similar to “the man and his wife he hid himself.” In other words, the verb does not agree with the subject. The verb should be plural, not singular, since we have compound subject.

E. J. Revell has shown that when this construction occurs in a narrative, it is a choice made by the narrator for the purpose of highlighting one of the participants as the principal actor. Had the author wanted to present all actors as equally involved in the action, then we would expect the preceding verb (“to hide”) to match the compound subject (“the man and his wife”) and be plural (i.e. “and they hid”). But instead, we have a singular verb followed by a compound subject where the man is the first component. This serves to draw attention to the man as the principal actor.



Verses 9 and 11 would then serve to further support the narrator's presentation of Adam as the primary actor and representative since the Hebrew "you" in those verses is masculine singular. It is true, however, after questioning Adam (and Adam shifting

of blame to God and the woman), God questions the woman in v.13. But rather than see this as nullifying Adam's position as representative, it may be better (based on the line of questioning) to understand this as showing that Eve is still culpable for her actions and cannot use her husband's position of headship as an excuse. In other words, the man is held responsible for the relationship and the keeping of God's commands in a way the woman is not. Certainly the woman is accountable for her own actions and the man for his, but *the man is also held responsible for the actions of the couple together*. He must answer for himself and the two of them. This may also be another indicator that the man is presented as the covenantal representative of both his family and of the human race.