

Understanding Godly Hierarchy (If Only Adam Had Protected Eve)

Naming Signals Hierarchy

In the first 2 chapters of Genesis, both God *and* Adam name things. During the first four days of creation, God creates the inanimate parts of our world and names each of them: “day,” “night,” “heaven,” “earth,” and “seas.” God has a clear hierarchy over what He names. Creation’s initial chaos yields without exception to God’s decision to bring order; it flourishes under His care.

However, after God fills His ordered but lifeless universe with life, He names none of it. Instead, God brings the beasts of the field and the birds of the sky to the *man* to see what the man would call them. Adam is the one who names the animals and birds and then, after her entrance, Adam names his wife.

Hierarchy, Authority, and Responsibility

The word “hierarchy” refers to an orderly arrangement. Hierarchies bring order out of what would otherwise be chaotic. They are a natural part of God’s creation and are God’s gift to us.

While hierarchies imply authority, note carefully that hierarchical authority does *not* imply dictatorship, despotism, or one-sidedly imposing our will upon another. Think of authority in broader, kinder terms. Think of authority in terms of *responsibility*. The hierarchy indicated by Adam’s naming of Eve lets us know that Adam had responsibility for her well being. While both Adam and Eve were tasked with subduing and ruling every living thing on the earth ([Genesis 1:28](#)), Adam was specifically tasked with serving and guarding the garden ([Genesis 2:15](#)). When Adam names the living inhabitants of the garden, he accepts his responsibility to care for them. When Adam names his wife, he accepts his responsibility to care for her. Including in the text the detail that Adam named Eve signals the importance of his serving and guarding this woman God has given into his care.

Modern Misunderstandings Of Hierarchy

In our modern culture, many people assume that the presence of an interpersonal hierarchy suggests that one party has more value or ability than the other. Biblical hierarchies, such as that between husband and wife, have nothing to do with inequality of ability or inequality of value. When the Bible talks about an interpersonal hierarchy (whoever is involved), it refers to differences in *responsibility*, not differences in *worth*.

Different roles do not imply differences in value. Hierarchies do not demean or define us. Authority conveys responsibility, not worth.

Identifying Adam’s Sin

Adam’s Sin goes beyond his failure to obey God. Additionally, Adam sins when he abandons his hierarchical responsibility to care for his wife. Instead of intervening, Adam silently stands there, watching the serpent lie to Eve and watching her succumb to those lies. Adam should have intervened. He should have protected her with the truth.

A passive husband, like Adam, distorts God’s will as much as a husband who acts like a self-serving dictator. Rather than either of these choices, God tasks every husband with the responsibility to proactively care for his wife. If only Adam had protected Eve.