

# A Suitable Helper

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*The LORD God said, "It is not good for the human to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." . . . but for the human no suitable helper was found. [Genesis 2:18](#) & [20](#)*

In the past, people have had a very narrow view of the meaning of the word "helper" which is used in reference to the first woman. So much so, that many people have thought that the word basically implied that the first woman – and all women in general – was designed by God to be nothing more than a domestic servant whose role it was to take care of the family and the house, and, in particular, to cater for the needs and demands of the husband.[1]

Why this narrow and lowly view of the word "helper" in reference to Eve?

In English, the word "help" has a broad range of connotations. "Help" can refer to a simple, modest act or it can refer to something much more significant. An example of significant help is the assistance and counsel provided by professionals such as doctors or lawyers, etc. In Hebrew, the word for "helper" used in [Genesis 2:18](#) and [20](#), is *ezer*, and it is always and only used in the Old Testament in the context of vitally important and powerful assistance. According to R. David Freedman, the word *ezer* is a combination of two roots, meaning "to rescue, to save", and "strength".[2]

*Ezer* is used only twenty-one times in the Old Testament. Three times the word is used in a military context.[3] Twice it is used to refer to Eve, and sixteen times it is used in reference to God as a helper.[4] All of these verses are talking about a vital, powerful kind of help; yet when *ezer* is applied to the first woman, Eve, its meaning has been diminished to fit with traditional and cultural views of women's roles.

In [Exodus 18:4](#) it says that Moses named one of his sons *Eliezer*, which in Hebrew means: "God is my helper". This verse goes on to explain why Moses named his son *Eliezer*: not because God had done Moses' laundry (no disrespect intended), but because God had delivered Moses from Pharaoh's sword!

*Ezer* describes aspects of God's character – he is our strength, our rescuer, our protector and our help! And *ezer* was the Holy Spirit's choice of word to describe the first woman. Eve was someone who would provide valuable and vital strength and assistance to Adam. (Please see endnote 5!)

The Hebrew word *kenegdo*, usually translated as "suitable" in Genesis 2, gives the meaning that Eve was designed to be a corresponding companion and partner for Adam. There is no sense of subordination stated or implied, or even hinted at, in this passage in Genesis 2, whatsoever. (See endnote 6.)

*Ezer kenegdo* – "a suitable helper" is used in reference to Eve without any prescribed limits, narrow qualifications, or carefully crafted cultural restrictions. In other words, it does not state anywhere in Genesis 2 *how* the first woman was to express and apply her strength and help towards her husband. Unfortunately too many people have just assumed that the woman's role was to be subservient. These people have read Genesis chapter 2 with narrow, preconceived notions and have not seen the wonderful expressions of equality, affinity and unity in this passage.

Women: In what ways can you be an *ezer* - a valuable strength - in your family, in your church, at your work place, in your community?

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## Endnotes

[1] At the time that Eve was taken out of Adam ([Genesis 2:21-23](#)), Eve did not have children and may not even have had a household to run.

[2] The Hebrew word *ezer* is a combination of two roots: `z-r, meaning “to rescue, to save,” and g-z-r, meaning “to be strong.” R. David Freedman, “Woman, a Power Equal to a Man”, in *Biblical Archaeology Review* 9, 1983, pp56-58. Quoted in *Hard Sayings of the Bible* by Walter Kaiser, et al. Downer’s Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996, p93. I recommend reading the relevant passage [here](#).

[3] [Isaiah 30:5](#) is talking about Egyptian forces that are useless and are unable to *help*. In [Ezekiel 12:14](#) God promises to scatter to the wind the Prince of Judah, his *help* and his troops. [Daniel 11:34](#) is talking about the lethal power of Antiochus Epiphanes IV who wreaks havoc on God-fearing Jews. It is unclear who is offering the little *help* to the fallen.

[4] Some Christians have been taught that the word “helper” (*ezer*) somehow refers to the Holy Spirit. If you look at the verses below, you will see that none of the “helper” references about God single out the Holy Spirit.

[5] It has been said by some that Eve was provided to help her husband, but not vice versa. Surely to suggest this one-sided goes against everything we know from New Testament teaching on human relationships (e.g. [Eph 5:28-29](#)).

[6] The whole purpose of the Creation of Eve narrative in [Genesis 2:21-24](#) is to emphasise the unity and mutuality of husband and wife. To read it any other way is to miss the point and distort its meaning and purpose! Eve was quite literally “taken out” of the first human being (23b). Before her creation, Eve was already a part of Adam, in some way. When Adam looked at his new partner he exclaimed that she was “flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone”! A profound expression of equality. There is no hierarchy here! But to further emphasise the point, verse 24 says that when a husband and wife join in marriage, they become one flesh – a point which Jesus also highlighted ([Matthew 19:4-5](#); [Mark 10:6-7](#)). Men and women *together* are made in God’s image. God’s ideal at creation was that the husband and wife be completely equal and rule over nature together ([Genesis 1:26-28](#)). Complete gender equality is the Godly ideal we should aim for.

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*I have included the following verses so that you can see the context of every Bible verse where “ezer” is used. Be encouraged!*

The LORD God said, “It is not good for the human to be alone. I will make a *helper* suitable for him.” ...but for the human no suitable *helper* was found. [Genesis 2:18 & 20](#)

For [Moses] said, “My father’s God was my *helper*.” [Exodus 18:4b](#)

“Hear, O LORD, the cry of Judah; bring him to his people. With his own hands he defends his cause. Oh be his *help* against his foes.” [Deuteronomy 33:7](#)

“There is no God like the God of Jeshurun, who rides on the heavens to *help* you, and on the clouds of His majesty.” [Deuteronomy 33:26](#)

Blessed are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD? He is your shield and *helper* and your glorious sword. [Deuteronomy 33:29a](#)

May He send *help* from the sanctuary and grant you support from Zion. [Psalm 20:2](#)

We wait in hope for the LORD; He is our *help* and shield. [Psalm 33:20](#)

Yet I am poor and needy; come quickly to me, O God. You are my *help* and my deliverer... [Psalm 70:5](#)

“I have bestowed *strength (ezer)* on a warrior; I have exalted a young man among the people.” [Psalm 89:17](#)

O house of Israel trust in the LORD – He is their *help* and shield. O house of Aaron trust in the LORD – He is their *help* and shield. You who fear Him, trust in the LORD – He is their *help* and shield. [Psalm 115:9-11](#)

I lift up my eyes to the hills – where does my *help* come from? My *help* comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. [Psalm 121:1-2](#)

Our *help* is in the Name of the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. [Psalm 124:8](#)

Blessed is he whose *help* is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God. [Psalm 146:5](#)

Though they have officials in Zoan and their envoys have arrived in Hanes, everyone will be put to shame because of a people useless to them, who bring neither *help* nor advantage... [Isaiah 30:5](#)

I will scatter to the winds all those around him – his *staff (ezer)* and all his troops – and I will pursue them with a drawn sword. [Ezekiel 12:14](#)

When they fall they will receive a little *help*... [Daniel 11:34](#)

You are destroyed, O Israel, because you are against Me, against your *helper*. [Hosea 13:9](#)