

Relationships

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I. Introduction

God's first words after His commissioning of Adam are found in Genesis 2:18.

And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him." Genesis 2:18

God indicated two things in this familiar passage:

A. God indicated that it was not good for man to be alone.

How did God know this? He knew this by His own experience (In the beginning God...).

This statement applied to:

- God, the Father...He desired offspring
- The Only Begotten Son...He desired a bride
- Adam...He desired a female version of himself.

Man was created for relationship. He was created to be a social being.

Wait a minute! Man had a relationship with God. He had a relationship with nature. He had a relationship with the animals.

B. God indicated that the only way for man not to be alone was to have companionship that was comparable to him.

Man was created as a social being who needed to not only have a relationship to God his superior in heaven, but he needed to have a relationship to someone who was his equal.

Comparable means "compatible, similar, alike, analogous, related, akin, corresponding, agreeing, allied, harmonizing, on par with, in a class with, commensurate with, roughly the same as."

II. Man was created as a social being.

A. As such man was created with a need for others.

1. We were not meant to exist in isolation on this planet (Gen. 2:18).

And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him."

2. We cannot fulfill our God-given destiny without others (Gen.1:26-28).

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

3. We all live in relationship to others.
 - a. The word "relationship" refers to state of being connected to others. When we ask, "What is your relationship to someone?" we are in essence asking, "What is your connection to that person?"
 - b. The word "relationship" means "the fact or condition of being related or connected, or that by which things are connected either objectively or in the mind." Relationship speaks of interdependence.
- B. As such every man is in some way connected to and interdependent on other people.

1. People are connected.

To be connected is to be joined together, associated with or united with (Eph. 4:16). Christians are connected in an even more significant way through their common relationship to Jesus Christ.

- a. There are many things that can cause us to be connected (That man has connections).
 - Humankind
 - Nationality
 - Race
 - Language
 - Geography (Province, State, City, Neighborhood, Complex, House)
 - Trade, Job, Career, Business Connections, Profession, Partnerships
 - Hobbies, Interests, Activities
 - Heritage—Parents, Grandparents, Brothers, Sisters, Cousins, Etc.
 - Religious Faith (Christianity)—Brother, Sister, Pastor, Ministry, Etc.
- b. It is customary to introduce people or to describe ourselves by our relationships or connections.

For example:

- This is Fred; he works with me.
- This is Ann; she lives in the same apartment complex.

- This is Peter; he goes to the same church.

2. People are interdependent.

To be interdependent is rely on others for maintenance and support. It is said that no man is an island to himself. Christianity is not just “me and Jesus.” We depend greatly on others in all aspects of our life.

- C. As such every man’s success depends on maintaining healthy relationships with others (Eccl. 4:7-12). We cannot take others for granted in our lives.

I observed yet another example of meaninglessness in our world. 8 This is the case of a man who is all alone, without a child or a brother, yet who works hard to gain as much wealth as he can. But then he asks himself, “Who am I working for? Why am I giving up so much pleasure now?” It is all so meaningless and depressing. 9 Two people can accomplish more than twice as much as one; they get a better return for their labor. 10 If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But people who are alone when they fall are in real trouble. 11 And on a cold night, two under the same blanket can gain warmth from each other. But how can one be warm alone? 12 A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken. –NLT

Illustration of a piece of coal or an ember taken out of the cluster and placed on its own...it soon goes out.

This passage begins by letting us know that a life that is lived only for oneself and to satisfy one’s personal pleasures ends up being a meaningless existence.

When we fully realize this we will be more careful about how we handle the relationships in our life.

1. Sometimes we handle our relationships carelessly as if we they were disposable. Perhaps you have been treated this way by others.
2. We can do things that weaken our connections to people or we can do things that strengthen them. So much depends on how we are personally inputting into these relationships.
3. It is good for us to evaluate just how much we need others.

Ask Class: What are some of the things for which we are dependent upon others?

4. We must guard against an independent spirit that does not appreciate the value that others add to our lives.

II. Jesus had a lot to say about our relationships.

- A. He is concerned that we have a love relationship with Him (Mt. 22:34-40).

But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees with his reply, they thought up a fresh question of their own to ask him. 35 One of them, an expert in religious law, tried to trap him with this question: 36 “Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?” 37 Jesus replied, “‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 All the other commandments and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.” –NLT

- B. He is concerned that we have a love relationship with our fellow-believers (John 13:34-35).

So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples. –NLT

- C. He put a high priority on our keeping our relationships pure (Mt. 5:23-24).

Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

III. Satan resists the development of healthy relationships.

- A. He knows that our relationship to others is a key to our success. It is a key to our success in politics, in business, in society, in our families and in almost every area of life.
- B. He does everything that he can to hinder the development and the maintenance of healthy relationships.
1. He promotes attitudes in us that push people away.
 2. He minimizes how much we really need other people.
 3. He fosters misunderstandings and communication breakdown to keep us offended.
 4. He leads us to believe that the work involved in cultivating healthy relationships is not worth the effort.
 5. He plants seeds of criticism in our heart toward others.
 6. He causes us to be suspicious of others and their motives.

IV. Modern society hinders the development of healthy relationships.

A. People are on the move.

Gone are the days when people lived in the same place all of their life. They say that in the modern world 25% of the population moves every year. Even in churches it is rare for people to stay in one place for very long.

B. People are less community orientated.

Gone are the days of the small rural village where everyone knew everyone else. Many people today do not even know the names of those who live on either side of them. The tendency is for people to be migrating to large cities where they have no long term relationships. In most big cities, there is no sense of community where neighbor watches out for neighbor.

C. People are affected by crime.

Gone are the days when crime was only something that you read about in the newspaper. People have become fearful, suspicious and cautious about interacting with strangers for fear that they will become another crime statistic. In many cases they live behind walls and security fences. They occasionally come out for some of their necessities only to retreat back into their secluded haven.

D. People have been isolated by technology.

Gone are the days when you had to team up with others to get things done. Technology has made it possible for you to do things yourself that used to require a participation with others.

E. People are more financially independent.

Say what you will, people have more money today than ever before. You can now hire things to be done that used to be done through a mutual exchange or bartering. You can even have things delivered to your door without ever having to launch out.

F. People have become spectators rather than participants.

Gone are the days when you had to leave your home to engage in some form of entertainment. Television, video games, DVD's, The Internet and other modern inventions have made it possible for us to watch anything we want whenever we want without ever leaving our home. Our relationship is with our TV pastor, our favorite celebrity, the football captain, but mostly with our lap full of remote controls.

V. Relationships are vitally important if the Church is to fulfill God's eternal purpose.

The Church's success is based on the right relationship of its membership and a commitment to community. This is seen in the various pictures of the Church that are found in the Bible.

A. A Body

In this Body there are many members who are interrelated and interdependent each having its own significant contribution to the success of the whole.

B. A Family

In this Family there are many brothers and sisters who are interconnected as one family unit.

C. A Temple

In this Temple there are many living stones that are to be fitly framed together for a common purpose, each stone covering and supporting the other stones in the building.

D. An Army

In this Army there are many soldiers fighting shoulder to shoulder against a common enemy.

E. A Vine

In this Vine there are many branches each one linked together for the purpose of bringing forth God-ordained fruit.

F. A Flock

In this Flock there are many sheep under the one true shepherd. As the sheep flock together they find safety and protection.

The thing that all of these pictures have in common is that one's individual purpose can only be fulfilled in the context of relationship to other. God is interested in strengthening us and our relationships for His purpose.

Hebrews 10:24-25

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.