



The Social Body

Genesis 2:7-18

Part 7 • 6.17.18

Summary: Whether we're introverts or extroverts, people with many friends or few, we are all social creatures by nature. The drive for relationship is hard-wired into our bodies and brains. Not only does science bear this out, but Scripture does too. During the wondrous creation of the world in which God pronounces everything good, he suddenly says, "It is not good for the man to be alone." Not only did Adam need a marriage partner for the propagation of the race, but he needed a human relationship for other reasons too, reasons that apply to all of us, married or single.

1. Our wellness depends on relationships.

God created humans in such a way that we crave and need relational connection. Babies, within ten minutes of birth, discern and prefer human faces to other objects. Mirror neurons cause them to mimic others, further enhancing connection. Touch—not merely food and water—causes babies to thrive. And we never stop needing this; we never stop being profoundly social. No less than 50 factors of human health, wellness, and life-satisfaction are enhanced by loving relationships. Even where we're not directly connected, we're still connected. The "Three Degree Rule" states, demonstrably, that your friend's friend's friend influences you. If someone three degrees removed from you gains weight, quits smoking, or discovers newfound happiness, it increases your chances of doing the same. We believe, of course, that this is by design. God made us to be *social bodies*. He designed us in such a way that even God isn't enough for us—we need other people whom God provides.

2. Our worship-work depends on relationships.

Genesis 2:15 says that God *put* the man in the garden to *work* and *take care* of it. At least that's one way to translate the words. Another more literal way is: God *rested* the man in the garden to *serve* and *keep* it. Many scholars prefer this rendering because it accords with the rest of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. The words "serve" and "keep" used in Genesis 2 are frequently repeated for the "worship work" of God's people—they are to serve God and keep his commandments. Israel, God's kingdom of priests, will be freed from slavery, *rested* in the Promised Land, and called to *serve* God and *keep* his commandments. This is always the work of God's people, no matter what their day job, and it's always assigned to us as a community, never individually. We the people rest in God, serve him, and keep faith. Like Ecclesiastes 4:9 says, "Two are better than one because they have a good return on their work."

3. Our world depends on our relationships.

The description of the rivers and riches coming from Eden in Genesis 2:10-14 bear this out. From the garden—where God's *prime ministers* rest, rule, serve, and keep—the whole world is watered and blessed. The flourishing of the world depends on God's people fulfilling their calling together. And what is true of Creation is also true of Redemption: the living water of the gospel, the blessing of God's grace, flows to the world from God's people. The flourishing of the world depends on God's people fulfilling their calling together.

Jesus recapitulated the Creation blessing when he sent out the 12 and then the 72, two-by-two. (See Mark 6:6-7 and Luke 10:1-3.) His Great Commission further calls his people to go and "flow" the blessing of redemption to the world. And at the very end of the story, in Revelation 21 and 22, we see the City of God made of gold and precious gems descending to earth, the restored Eden, where the river of life flows to the nations for their perpetual healing and wholeness. The only way anyone will ever get to enjoy that blessing is if little bands of disciple-makers—3, 4, 8, or 12-stranded cords—serve God, keep his commandments, and flow the gospel to the world.

Discussion:

1. Read Genesis 2:7-18.
2. How do you feel about the social, relational environment of our world today? The sermon mentioned how social media, politics, and even money have a way of isolating us. Do you agree? What other observations might you make that would reinforce the idea that we're socially and relationally poorer than our ancestors?
3. Do you agree or disagree with David Brooks' observation below. Why?

“One of the things that’s noticeable about affluent people — and this has happened to me — is, as soon as people make money, they seem to purchase loneliness. I grew up in the city, super crowded. When I had a book sitting over there, I had a best seller, which allowed me to buy a house. And I bought it out in Bethesda with a big yard because I thought that was cool. I remember the moment I put the garage door thing on the visor of my car. That was one of the biggest moments of my life. I had made it to suburbia. But then you realize, ‘I got a big acre yard, and I’m lonely.’ And I think that’s a common phenomenon, that people take money and translate it into loneliness.”

4. Genesis 2:15 says that God *rested* the man in the garden to *serve* it and *keep* it—and then he added a partner for Adam because the call is always for the community of believers to do this worship-work together, never alone. Applying this to our lives we could say that God rests us in his kingdom to serve him and keep his commandments. In what ways could you personally, or our church corporately, improve our practice in this area?
5. The sermon also said that the world depends on our relationships: The only way it will experience blessing is if we, the people of God, let it flow. Have you seen evidence of this in your own life? What examples could you cite to prove this is true?
6. Our leaders are proclaiming next year, “The Year of Disciple-Making.” The goal is for everyone to be in a community where they are growing as disciples, and doing so in such a way that they are making more disciples.
 - How does this initiative strike you? Does it sound right to you?
 - What questions do you have about it?
 - If you were to take the closing challenge to “Get ready: the movement is coming” what would that look like for you? What can you do to get ready and join the movement this fall?
7. Pray for a movement of “making disciples who make disciples” at our church.