

# Created for Relationship

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, good morning, everyone. My name's Steve, Senior Pastor here. So if I'd like you to open your Bibles in those passages, beginning, it's pretty easy. It's right at the beginning of the Bible.

Past the introduction and the table of contents, you'll find Genesis there. The 17th century mathematician and philosopher, Sir Isaac Newton, had a miniature replica, was a model of the solar system in his study and had a large ball in the middle of it which represented the sun and other planets in their place.

They were all attached to rods. There was all these gears and belts and all that sort of stuff in there, make sure everything was in its correct place and circulating around and everything.

And one day, he was visited by a friend and his friend just marvelled at this thing sitting in the study and he said, my, Newton, what an exquisite thing.

Who made it? Newton said, nobody. Nobody? His friend asked, that's right.

[ 1 : 13 ] All of these balls and clogs and belts and gears just happened to come together and wonder of wonders, by chance they began revolving in the set orbits at the perfect time.

Now, Newton was obviously making a point there with his unbelieving friend. The existence of this machine, a perfectly ordered machine, presupposed a maker and even more so, the Earth and its perfectly ordered solar system.

If you have just joined us for the first time here, just checked in online for the first time, we are working our way through the early books of Genesis. And what it does is it lays out for us the beginning of creation.

And what we see here is the beginning of creation and the Bible's teaching of creation is very, very different from every other religion or philosophical system.

More significantly, what the book of Genesis does for us is it gives us the beginning of the doctrine of God. We know who God is from his creation.

[ 2 : 32 ] We come to understand who God is, what he's like, and therefore, who we are and what we are like and what our purpose might be.

And one of the key differences that we will see today between the biblical idea of the creator God and all other views is in this realm of relationships.

And there are three things that I want us to see this morning. It's up there on the screen. This is the trajectory. So if you've got the Sir Paul's app as well, you can see an outline there that will help you track through today's message.

One of the things we notice in point number one, we need relationships. At every step of the creation from Genesis chapter one, what we read is he created, he created, he created, he created. However, when it comes to humanity, there is a shift in the language in Genesis two, Genesis one and then into two.

[ 3 : 39 ] It says, let us make man in our image and likeness. This is the very earliest glimpse in the Bible of what become throughout the Bible the Christian teaching on the trinity of God or the doctrine of the Trinity, the trinity of God.

The one God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It's profound that in the creation of humanity, his plurality comes out in a way that his plurality doesn't come out in the rest of creation.

Saint Augustine said that the Trinity is the only version of God in the history of humanity, in the history of humanity that has personal relationship at its very core.

Only the God of Christianity is a community. God in himself is self-sufficient. He is self-sustaining. Three persons delighting in and loving each other. What is significant about that and compared to all other creation accounts is that if God was a singular being, then love and relationship is

secondary to that being.

[ 5 : 16 ] It's derivative from that being, not core to the being. Only in the Trinity do we see personal relationship as primary, the very essence of who God is.

relationships. That is, relationships is not a means to an end. It is the centre of life and reality itself. And that, frankly, is the only way we can come to terms with chapter 2, verse 18. The Lord God said it is not good for the man to be alone.

Here's the interesting thing. Up to this point in creation, up to this point in Genesis, everything that God has made has been declared good.

Good, good, good, good, good, good, good. This is the very first time in the creation account where we read the words not good.

[ 6 : 24 ] Not good. There is something not good about Adam. And it's not a design flaw.

God has, he hasn't made a mistake with Adam. I mean, Adam is in paradise. He is in paradise. There's no sin. He's walking and talking with God and yet still something is missing. There is a missing piece. And the missing piece is humanity is made in the image of God who is an us, not a me.

He's an us, not a me. Adam was made in the image of an eternal community, a pre-existing community. He was created for community.

personality. Personal relationships are the essence of our humanity. We are made, the very essence of humanity is that we are made for relationships because we are made in the image of an us, not a me.

[ 7 : 44 ] So, there are three needed relationships. being made in the image of an us God, a God of community. What kind of relationships do we need?

The first is a deep relationship with God. Genesis 1.26 needs to be read in conjunction with two other creation accounts in the Bible.

One of those creation accounts is in Proverbs chapter 8. And in Proverbs chapter 8, so, for instance, in Genesis 1, we've already looked at this already, Genesis 1, it is God's word that creates, God speaks and it happens, God's word create.

But in Proverbs 8, God's wisdom, or his word, is actually personified. This is what God's word, his wisdom says in Proverbs 8.

I was there when he set the heavens in place, when he marked out the horizon of the face of the deep, when he established the clouds above and fixed securely the fountains of the deep, when he gave the sea its boundary so the waters would not overstep his command, and when he marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was constantly at his side.

[ 9 : 05 ] I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in his presence, rejoicing in his whole world and delighting in mankind.

So God's word in Proverbs 8 is personified. It's a poetic personification of the word of God in the creation account. Now the other creation account where we see this personification of the word of God is John 1 in the New Testament.

But in John 1, the word is a divine person, Jesus Christ. This is how John puts it. I'll stick together the key verses if you like.

In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. He was with God in the beginning, and through him all things were made. Without him nothing was made that has been made.

The word became flesh, made his dwelling amongst us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

[ 10 : 16 ] No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God, and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

So the picture of Proverbs 8, and of John 1, and in fact we see it at the beginning in Genesis, is one of closeness, intimacy, delight, delight, love.

In creation, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit were wrapped up in love and delight and enjoyment in each other and in the creation, and particularly the creation of humanity in their image.

In fact, the word delight, which is there in Proverbs 8, means to dance, it means to frolic, it means to play. The creation of humanity is a community event in Genesis 2.

Creation flows out of delight and love, loving and being loved, knowing and being known, enjoying and being enjoyed. God says, let's make man in our image that they might give what we are able to give each other.

[ 11 : 41 ] Let's make them capable of entering into our play, into our delight and frolicking. This is what we were created for.

And it is frankly nothing what the average person thinks religion is or the Christian faith is, at all. it is delight, not duty.

Now the second relationship we need is deep unity with another human being. Back to chapter 2 verse 18 again, the Lord said, it is not good for the man to be alone.

God created us in such a deep need for human relationships, deep need for human relationships, that not even paradise itself will satisfy.

God has ordained it that many of the things that he wants to give us now in life and show us now in life can only come through other people.

[ 12 : 53 ] And the implications for this is massive. First of all, the implication is that what is being said here is the total opposite of the society of which we live in today and the way we operate day by day.

The message of our culture, you'll see it everywhere on Facebook, every retirement magazine, every travel magazine, is the great life, the garden of Eden life, a life of pleasure and beauty and plenty, only will come to you if you put relationships on the back burner for a whole heap of years. If you want to be successful, then you have to move around to take up every opportunity that's there to see that you rise and rise and rise.

And the cost of that is no real stable friendships. on top of that, you have to put so much time in establishing yourself that you won't actually see much of your family at all.

I actually heard those lips come directly from someone who was doing a presentation on how to build personal wealth. wealth. He said, what you need to do is you need, and your family will understand this, you need to put them on hold in order to build personal wealth and then enjoy it together.

[ 14 : 39 ] And it will take 10 to 15 years. I would have loved to have an insight into the relationships of that individual. Paradise was only paradise because of who was there, not because of what was there.

That's what made paradise paradise. Satisfaction in life will never come without putting personal relationship as the highest priority in your life.

The second huge implication is that we cannot know God or grow to be like him in any way without community. You cannot grow in wisdom, you cannot become more loving, courageous, joyful, or stable in life without the community of God and his people.

It is an impossibility. It is against your divine nature. We cannot know who we are supposed to be or grow into it without a community.

In our modern individualistic society, we don't like accountability. We love to guard our privacy. We love to hold commitment to groups at an arm's length.

[ 16 : 10 ] And we have bought into an American theology that's dominated the Western world of having a personal relationship with Jesus.

That's true. It is a personal relationship with Jesus. What comes with him is the thing called the church. church. And you can't have one without the other.

We always want to control our journey. We prefer friends that don't challenge us, who don't stretch us, or cost too much. What we all need is a community in our lives who have the freedom to tell us exactly who we are.

Hebrews 3.13, encourage one other daily as long as it's called today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. The first premise in that verse is we need to have people who see us often enough and in different contexts enough to see who we really are.

Who we really are. Not just people in our lives who check in occasionally, or someone that we're communicating with over the internet. The second premise is that we must be sharing who we really are and that they have permission to speak into our lives about the stuff that they see.

[ 17 : 46 ] Without that kind of community, we don't actually know who we really are. We cannot truly see ourselves.

ever had the experience, I had this experience because I'm recorded often, but ever had the experience where you're listening to a recording of yourself and you think, that doesn't sound like me at all.

And someone says, of course it's you. You know, I mean, it's hard to ignore the fact when it's got my name attached to it, my recording, and I know I said those words, it doesn't sound like me.

Or you see a photo of yourself and you go, oh my goodness, that's a terrible photo of me, I look terrible, and your friends go quiet. That's because that's exactly how you look.

That's exactly how you look. It's interesting that I find for myself in that, I always find myself look better in the mirror than I do in a photo.

[ 18 : 57 ] I can't work it out. It's the same eyes looking at both things. I can't work it out. Anyway, it's because I cannot truly know myself. We need a community who know us.

If we're trying to find God and grow in him as an individual, if that is your goal, to truly know who you are and your God, then you can't just simply attend church and attend classes.

You need to be known. We need to be known by people who love us, who affirm us, who confront us, who challenge us, who care for us. And if you do not have those people, don't sit back waiting for it, create them.

Create those people for yourself. If you're not in a group, let me just say this, if you're not in a group and you are not pursuing those kinds of relationships in your life, you are in a church.

You cannot know God individualistically. In his book, *The Four Loves*, C.S. Lewis has this great chapter. You should get the book, *The Four Loves* by C.S.

[ 20 : 13 ] Lewis, has this great chapter on friendship. and Lewis himself was one of three friends who was, the three of them were BFFs.

There was Lewis, a guy named Ronald, and a guy named Charles. Tragically, Charles died. As Lewis was grieving, he sort of consoled himself with the thought that at least I've got Ronald still. And he assumed that now that Charles is not there, somehow that he would be able to lean into Ronald and that he would get more of Ronald now.

But as the weeks and the months passed, Lewis came to understand that in actual fact, he got less of Ronald than more of Ronald.

He discovered there was something about Charles that drew more of Ronald out that he was able to discover that he himself could not draw out of Ronald.

[ 21 : 25 ] And his point is, it takes a community to really know an individual. It takes a community. No individual is enough to draw the whole person out because people made in the image of God are way too complex, way too deep.

It's the same with Jesus. You want to know Jesus better? Then we've got to do it together. The deeper we get into the spiritual life of friends, the deeper we get into Jesus together, and the deeper of unity and our love as a church family will grow.

together. The third relationship we need is with people who are different to us. Now, when we read Genesis chapter 2, and particularly the bits that Aidan read out for us this morning, we automatically think this is going to be a sermon about marriage and sex, and it's not.

Now, it does say a lot. This passage does say a lot about marriage and sex and gender, but let's just step back for a minute and let's not miss the forest for the trees.

When Adam had a deep relational need, all the animals came past and he's like looking at them and going, I like you, but, you know, and they kept going.

[ 22 : 55 ] And then God brings him Eve. Now, does that mean, therefore, application that we must be married to have all of our deep relational needs met?

Well, of course not. 1 Corinthians 7 and Ephesians 5 are very clear in their affirmation of singleness as a viable lifestyle.

Absolutely viable. You are not less a person if you are single in any way whatsoever. And in fact, I would declare that the Christian faith is unique in its affirmation of the single lifestyle.

according to Ephesians 5, the ultimate brother you need is Jesus.

The Bible does not say that unless you are married, you cannot have your deepest relational needs met. God brings Adam, the animals, they weren't enough.

[ 23 : 58 ] But notice God does not bring Adam another bloke either. So, therefore, is the Bible against pets and against blokes having friends?

Well, no, not at all. What does God does here is he brings someone to him who is mysterious to him. he doesn't bring to Adam someone just like him.

Step back and look at the general issue here that's going on. We all need people on the other side of the wall to us. We all need people on the other side of the racial, the gender, the temperament, the class barriers in our life.

Adam gets a woman. God brings him someone who we read there very clearly, God brings someone who is equal to him.

Equal, not lesser, equal to him. But different to him. Someone mysterious. Someone who's hard to get to know.

[ 25 : 21 ] Someone who's going to stretch him like he's never been stretched before and get him to see things differently. The key word here is the word helper.

The word helper in this verse does not mean someone to take care of the washing, the cooking, the cleaning, the shopping, the child raising.

that is not what the word helper means. The word help, and blokes, this is a humbling moment for you, the word help in the Bible is nearly in every instance is used of God.

And it's used where God helps those who are different to him and are in need because they are powerless. It's the exact same Hebrew word.

Helper here means Eve has stuff that Adam does not have and he needs help. Not an assistant, not a support, an addition to.

[ 26 : 37 ] Adam and Eve are complementary to each other. That's what the word helper means.

The implication here is we all need to have a deep community with people on the other side of the barrier.

Now, I'm not going to go into the whole gender thing with this passage, but it's very helpful in that sense of understanding what the word helper actually means.

Just as a side point, which is not in your notes, I'm looking forward to kicking off 2025 looking at five steadfast women of faith, historical women of faith, preached by five steadfast women of faith.

I'm looking forward to kicking off 2025 with that. last point. What is the key to relationships?

Because there is a key here.

There is a key to these relationships flourishing that Adam and Eve had here in the garden that we do not currently have, which is why our relationships today are far from ideal.

[ 27 : 48 ] So the key to relationships flourishing, and if you want to take notes, get your pens out, here it is. we need to get naked. Let's close in prayer.

Sorry, hang on a bit. Let me just unpack that a little bit for us before we start applying that. Hold the horses, people. Hold your horses. Adam and Eve, Adam sees Eve, and he says, some people look at this because they just think it's about sex and relationships and marriage and stuff.

So some people, translation is that Adam sees Eve and goes, whoa, fantastic. But that's not quite what's happening here. Verse 23, this is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.

She shall be called woman for she was taken out of man. The word now there is the Hebrew word for finally.

It's the word, Adam is effectively saying here, all the animals have gone by at last. At last.

[ 28 : 59 ] It's a word for finality and contentment. Is that how you would describe your relationships?

Finality and contentment? Because often in our world, our relationships are superficial.

Unfortunately, often in our world, our relationships are manipulative and abusive.

And even the best relationships in our world will break down. The reality is every single one of the best relationships in the world, every single one, I mean the greatest relationships in the world, I mean the very best marriages in the world, they will all end with tragedy and with deep, deep pain when someone is lost.

That's the reality. So can we ever say finality and contentment? Adam and Eve had something in the Garden of Eden that we have lost.

But it is something that we can get back through Jesus Christ. The key to all great relationships in verse 25, Adam and his wife were both naked and they felt no shame.

[ 30 : 25 ] The issue here is one of transparency. They are able to be in the presence of each other completely exposed and there is no shame.

There is nothing that they need to hide. There is no personal spin needed here. There is no control of an image that needs to be projected in order for me to be loved.

They weren't afraid of exposure. They weren't afraid of being explored or judged. They were unashamed. Entirely transparent.

They were, if you like, entirely comfortable in their own skin. And that is exactly what we all need.

We all need to be fully, totally known and at exactly the same time, fully, totally loved.

We need to be naked, totally known, and yet unashamed, totally loved. And we can't get it.

[ 31 : 35 ] We can't get it. Too many think that we can get love and acceptance and admiration if we try to be someone that we're not.

Because we're ashamed. We work so hard at hiding the flaws, things like the pride, the selfishness, the ignorance, the anxiety.

If we are truly known for who we are, we would be ashamed and therefore we will not be loved.

Why is it so?

We're going to find out in the coming weeks, but the short story is this. The moment that Adam and Eve rejected relationship with their creator God, shame filled their lives and they immediately had to cover up.

They immediately had to cover up. Deep down, all of us know that there is something deeply wrong with us and we spend our entire lives and spend a fortune on covering it up.

[ 32 : 45 ] That's why the fashion industry exists. We cover it up with our Instagram profiles and Facebook profiles only ever revealing the positive things in life, the enviable things about our life.

we are made in the image of a community God who for all eternity have known each other totally, completely and loved each other totally and completely.

We are made in their image and we are made to mirror it. We desperately need that more than anything else in life.

for instance, when someone who doesn't know you very well at all says to you, I have literally never met a finer human being in all of my life.

Do you go, oh, that is, no, you don't. You don't even know who I am. You've got no idea who I am.

[ 34 : 01 ] It doesn't move you. if on the other hand there is someone who really knows the true you through and through, who knows your flaws and says to you, frankly, you are the finest human being I've ever met.

Oh, that's going to cause you to sleep well that night. It makes all the difference. It's a totally different experience. And the reason it moves you so much is because it's what you were made for. It's part of your design. What we need to know is that on the cross Jesus Christ was crucified naked. They gambled for his clothes.

He was exposed to the world. It was the ultimate shame and humiliation and he did that for us.

He became naked. Our God looked deep into our hearts and he saw all the mess that we have created for ourselves because of our rejection of relationship with him.

[ 35 : 18 ] He saw all that we should be ashamed of nap and he entered our world.

Jesus Christ, the much-loved and perfect son of God, became naked. He experienced the shame so that we, the ones who should be on display, the shame-worthy ones, might experience ultimate, complete, full, true love.

He did it to pay for our sins against God, against himself. And so when we come to him and we trust him, what happens is his nakedness on our behalf becomes our covering in such a way that we can be naked and unashamed before our creator God, fully exposed and unashamed before our creator God.

He knows us fully and he loves us totally. Through Jesus Christ, we are totally known, completely known, and fully and unconditionally loved.

The creating word becomes naked for us. So if we take his sacrifice for us deep into the middle of our lives and continue to dwell over it and over it and over it and over it and see that his love and his approval and his acceptance, take that constantly into your life, then we actually have the power to be vulnerable and transparent in our relationships.

[ 37 : 18 ] relationships. Because what it means ultimately is I don't need to extract the deep approval that I need from other people, from my spouse, from my children, from my church, from my work colleagues, from society as a whole.

This is the key to having the relationships that we were created for and that we can only get back in Jesus Christ. Thank you.