



"Community in the Creation of Humanity"
Genesis 1-2

Idea: Man, in the image of God, was created to be in community with both God and with other human beings.

Intro: Community is a beautiful thing, and we see it all around us. We see it among the animal kingdom. Nearly, every species of animals lives together in community. The deer graze in herds. Ducks and geese travel in flocks. Lions dwell together as a pride and wolves as a pack. Fish swim together in schools. We also see community among animals at a more fundamental level, as doves, cardinals, hawks, and eagles mate for life. Community can also be found among insects. Ants live in colonies. Bees swarm together in hives. And locusts form a plague.

Community is clearly evident among animals and insects. Have you ever wondered why they group together? Why don't they live in isolation? Jens Krause and Graeme Ruxton in their book *Living in Groups* tackle this question. They examine it from an evolutionary perspective and conclude that grouping

behaviors are present in animals across all taxa, ranging from the microscopic bacteria to the gargantuan humpback whales. Some scientists even believe that part of the reason humans evolved such a high level of intelligence is because they lived and interacted in groups for hundreds of thousands of years.

Community is pervasive throughout all of God's wonderful creation. Obviously, as believers and disciples of Jesus Christ, our perspective of community is framed much differently than evolutionists such as Krause and Ruxton. We approach life from with a biblical worldview, which believes that the universe was created and beautifully filled by God. Every aspect of it bears His mark as the master artist.

Inquiry: We have defined community as “a unified body of individuals.” Another way of describing it is *one together*. In our study of community, we have discovered that it is deeply grounded in the nature of God, and it flows from who He is, dwelling in perfect community as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit. Therefore, God, existing in community, created a community-oriented world. Biblically, this is the reason we find animals, fish, and insects grouping together, and this is the reason why humans dwell together and relate to one another.

I love how G. W. Icenogle in his book *Biblical Foundations for Small Group Ministry* summarizes community in creation:

“...community should be understood as the movement between persons to experience ‘common’ life. Bonhoeffer called this ‘life together.’ God said, ‘The two shall be one flesh.’ Community is about the interpersonal connections between two or more beings. God exists in community. Community implies that persons with differences come together for a common life. God also exists as different persons with a common, intimate, and interconnected life. God created human beings to be unique, separate, and different, but also to have a common life. Community is the process of individual persons coming together into unity (*com + unity*). God is separate and very different from

humanity, but Scripture teaches us God's great creation desire is to be in community with humanity. The search for community is a very important reason for the existence of the Bible. Community is the reason for creation.

Community is the purpose for Jesus Christ, the Son of God, being born, living among us, dying and being raised from the dead. Community, then, is the common life between God and humanity..."

We have mentioned already that every aspect of God's creation bears His mark of community as the land animals, birds, fish, and even insects group together. Humanity, however, is the apex of God's creation. It is man who was made in God's image and according to His likeness. There is something divine in man, which is not present within the rest of creation. Thus, by looking at the forming of the first man and woman we will gain a better understanding of biblical community.

Read Genesis 1:26.

God created mankind as a person. Personhood is only known in relation to others. Humanity's identity as relational beings is carved out of interpersonal relating. God knows and experiences community; therefore, he has made the apex of his creation capable of the same.

God professed in Genesis 1:26, "*Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness.*" The root meaning of the Hebrew word *צלם*, translated *image*, means "to carve" or "to cut off." It is a concrete term that is coupled with the Hebrew term *דמות*, translated *likeness*. It refers more to similarity in the abstract or in the ideal. It is evident from the use of *צלם* that man was created in the image of God, but in order to ensure that man does not view himself as an exact representation of God, the word *likeness* is attached. Nonetheless, man does to some extent bear the image of God. This verse reveals that to be human is to image the Creator. As a person then, man is created for relationship with God and with others since God is a relational being. Gilbert Bilezikian said it well in his book

Community 101: “Community as God ordained it was not an incidental concern of his. . . . Community is deeply grounded in the nature of God. It flows from who God is. Because he is community, he creates community. It is his gift of himself to humans.”

As we observe community in the creation of humanity, there are three aspects I want to point out. The first is that community is the gracious gift of God.

1. The Gracious Gift of God

Community is an eternal reality that exists within the Godhead, and when God created man in His image and likeness, He created him as a communal being. No other aspect of creation shares our ability as humans to relate to God on a personal level. It is His gracious gift to humanity.

Have you ever wondered why the world was created? God didn't have to do anything. He didn't have to create the universe. He wasn't compelled to do so out of eternal boredom. God the Son didn't bore God the Father, and God the Spirit didn't weary God the Son. The Godhead lived in perfect love, harmony, unity, and fellowship with one another. The reason God created the universe was because He graciously wanted to share His greatness with someone. God is so glorious, so majestic, so holy, so loving, and so awesome He wanted to share Himself with others. Therefore, He created Adam and Eve in order for them and their descendants to bask in His glory and grace.

Grace is getting that which you do not deserve. Adam and Eve received God's grace in their creation. God could just have easily existed in perfect community without ever creating the universe and man. And He could have just as easily existed in perfect community had He created the universe and then stepped out,

leaving it to itself. But that is not what God did. He stepped in His creation and on day six graciously created a man in His image and likeness, one who could relate to Him. Community is the gracious gift of God. The second aspect of community in the creation of humanity is that it is the deep desire of man.

2. The Deep Desire of Man

Read Genesis 2:15-25.

The creation account of Genesis 2 reveals Adam's need for community with God, as well as his need for community with someone who could be his counterpart. In Genesis 2:18, God looks over his creation and utters a phrase that it is not found in the creation account of Genesis 1. For the first time he declares that there is something missing. There is an incompleteness to an aspect of God's creation. Gordon Wenham in his commentary points out, this statement is a startling analysis when laid against the backdrop of the first chapter's sevenfold refrain of "and God saw that it was (very) good." It alerts the reader to the importance of companionship, because as H. C. Leupold asserts, "God did not create man an unsocial being."

Adam was created in the image and likeness of God, but as God observed man at this point in the story, a single deficiency existed. In verse 18, Adam was not capable of reflecting the community that is found within the Godhead because he was lacking a companion. While the rest of chapter 2 describes how God created a woman from man as a perfect communal match for Adam, that is not the case in verse 18. Here Adam is without a suitable mate, as he would soon realize (Gen 2:20). He learned that he was alone. Kenneth Matthew points out this was God's intent in order to reveal to man that he was made for more than what he currently experienced:

‘God has made the man and provided a beautiful environment with honorable work, a setting men may sometimes consider idyllic, but God announces that more is to be done to achieve the ideal for the man. God’s concern is that man is “alone.” Whether the man felt his aloneness at first is not stated; only the divine viewpoint is given. God has created human life to have fellowship with him but also to be a social entity, building relationships with other human beings. “[Man] will not live until he loves, giving himself away to another on his own level.” Isolation is not the divine norm for human beings; community is the creation of God.’

It should be noted that it was not Adam who pointed out to God his aloneness and need of a companion. Instead, it was God who stated Adam’s condition (Gen 2:18), and it was God who used the naming of the animals to reveal to the man his lack of a suitable mate (Gen 2:20). Commenting on this, Victor Hamilton says, “Man is not consulted for this thoughts on the matter. At no point does the man offer to God any grievance about his current circumstances.” The man was simply made aware that he by himself was incomplete.

Every facet of God’s creation with the exception of Adam has its corresponding companion at this point in the story. The heavens possess the luminaries and birds. The seas teem with fish. The land is filled with animals, and each animal has its mate. There is a sense of community within this companionship, for without it those aspects would be incomplete. Genesis 1-2 reveals that every part of creation is in need of something else to complete it and to enable it to function as God intended.

Adam’s incompleteness led to God rectifying his situation. He says, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him” (Gen 2:18). According to Victor Hamilton, the last part of verse 18

literally reads, “I will make him for him a helper as in front of him (or according to what is in front of him).” Thus, the helper that God is going to create for Adam will perfectly correspond to him and complete him. Hamilton states further, “The new creation will be neither a superior nor an inferior, but an equal. The creation of this helper will form one-half of a polarity, and will be to man as the south pole is to the north pole.”

Adam’s desire for community could be met by nothing in all of creation except God and Eve. He didn’t find it in his work. He didn’t find it in his title. He didn’t find it in his possessions. As Icenogle states, “In order to reflect this full community of God rightly, both men and women must be together in human community.” We see that at the very beginning, three persons were together in the Garden *in the cool of the day* (Gen 3:8), so the foundational theological community is man, woman, and God together. This is the deep desire of every person.

3. The Beautiful Picture of Spiritual Unity

The term *helper* (עֲזָרָה), which God uses to describe Adam’s future companion, is not a demeaning term. Rather it is used in a positive manner. עֲזָרָה is often used in the Old Testament to describe God as the helper of Israel. As stated above, the one to be created would be an equal to Adam. Allen Ross says, “The word essentially describes one who provides what is lacking in the man, who can do what the man alone cannot do.” God created Adam in such a way that he needed the help of a partner. He was created to be in community with one who was like him, which is the reason for the use of the term *suitable/fit* (כְּנֶגְדוֹ) in the latter part of verse 18. It means, “like what is in front of him.” God was to create a woman who would share the man’s nature, meaning that everything the man received at creation, she too would receive. The two humans perfectly corresponded physically, socially, and spiritually. What he lacked she

supplied, and what she lacked he supplied. They helped each another.

God sedated Adam and performed the first surgical procedure in history (Gen 2:21). He took one of Adam's ribs and used it to fashion the woman (Gen 2:22). When he woke up, God brought the woman to Adam. Upon seeing the woman, Adam made a profound declaration regarding the community the two of them shared. He said, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man" (Gen 2:23).

Adam's response centers on the sameness the two humans shared that was not shared with the creatures in verse 20. The parallel elements of bones and flesh possess the preposition *min* (מִן), indicating source. He states that she is "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." Matthews explains that it is possible Adam is expressing covenant loyalty to the woman. This idea is heightened further by the title the man gives to the woman. He calls her אִשָּׁה (woman), a sound play on אָדָם (man). In naming the woman, the man names himself. The man embeds his own name in the woman's. The language Adam uses "expresses the complete personal community of one man and one woman as a spiritual unity." The author of Genesis solidifies this unity by stating, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh" (Gen 2:24). They are to be in community with one another.

Conclusion: God is a communal being, expressing community within the Godhead of Father, Son, and Spirit. He has created communal beings in his image and likeness, as seen in the first chapter of Genesis. Man in the image of God was created to be in community with both God and with other human beings. Adam needed Eve; he was incomplete without her. Together they became one flesh. The Bible declares that the two "were

both naked and were not ashamed” (Gen 2:25). At this point in the biblical story, man was sinless. He was innocent and experienced the blissfulness of life as God intended it. Unfortunately, man’s innocence quickly changed as Adam and Eve rebelled against God by eating from the tree that was off limits to them (Gen 3:6-7). Following their rebellious act, sin entered the story of humankind. Humanity was cursed with spiritual and physical death, but God did not abandon them. Despite their sinful condition and spiritual death, God still desired to be in relationship with humankind. He spoke of one day redeeming them. This concept of community continues to be further revealed in salvation history as God calls out Abram and creates a people for himself through which his redemption will eventually arise.