

Everything is Sacred
“Relationships”
April 10, 2011

1. God is intrinsically relational and as creatures made in his image so are we

The Bible does not try to explain the three-in-oneness of God. It simply tells us God is one and that each member is fully God, and then provides an incredibly relational picture of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Father, Son, and the Spirit are said to...

- ‘see’, ‘hear’, ‘speak’, and ‘act’ in relationship to one another (Matt 3:17; Luke 23:46; John 1:19; 5:19, 30; 11:41; 16:13-15)
- ‘be with’ one another (John 1:2; Matt 3:16; Rev 4:2-5; 5:6).
- know and testify of the other (John 5:36-37; 7:29, 1 Cor 2:11; Gal 4:6)
- depend upon the others (John 5:19, 22; 6:37, 44, 8:28; 1 Cor 2:12; 1 Pet 1:2)
- love one another (John 3:35; 14:31; 17:23-26)
- glorify one another (John 8:49-50; 13:32; 14:12; 17:1; 16:14)

...and to do so freely, without coercion (John 3:7-8; 10:17-18; 1 Cor 12:11)

It was humanity that was created in the image of God and the first thing that is said about humanity is that it is male and female (Gen 1:27). From this, we can infer that to be a human in the image of God is to be in relationship. As if to emphasize the importance of relationship to humanity, we are told that God made Adam first and then declared, “It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable to him” (Gen 2:18). By this action, God was not admitting to a faulty design plan, but was creating a record for humanity regarding the importance of relationship to the human condition.

So what does this mean?

- It means that we cannot be who we are wholly intended to be apart from relationships. This does not mean we all need x number of friend-- the introvert may only need a couple friends, the extrovert may need hundreds--but we cannot find ourselves saying heck with people and fulfill God’s holistic calling on our lives as human beings
- It means that when we desire relationship, there is not something wrong with us. It is something that God has wired us to be as those made in his image.
- It also means that when somehow a relationship is broken (through death, distance, animosity, break-up, or whatever the case), the hurt is real.

2. God enters into relationship with people based on grace not merit or status...

How much do you size up people?

Not merit, but grace

- a. Titus 3:3-7...At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. (4) But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, (5) he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, (6) whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, (7) so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.
- b. Luke 15:11ff...Story of the prodigal son
- c. Romans 5:8...while we were yet sinner Christ died for us

- d. Ephesians 2:1-5...As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, (2) in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. (3) All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. (4) But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, (5) made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

Not status, but grace

- a. 1 Corinthians 1:26-29... Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. (27) But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. (28) He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, (29) so that no one may boast before him.
- b. Matthew 19:13-15... **For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it.** (13) Then little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them. (14) Jesus said, **"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."** (15) When he had placed his hands on them, he went on from there.

...and he calls us to do the same

1. Matthew 9:9-13 (calling of Matthew) As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. **"Follow me,"** he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. (10) While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples. (11) When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, **"Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?"** (12) On hearing this, Jesus said, **"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. (13) But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."**
2. James 2:1-7...My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism. (2) Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. (3) If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," (4) have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? (5) Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? (6) But you have insulted the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? (7) Are they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong?

3. Relationships are often ordered

The Trinity is ordered...all are equally God...but they do not have the same roles...and these roles are often in subordination to one another. The Father sent Jesus (John 3:16) and commits to him "all things" (Luke 10:22); the Spirit will take what is Jesus' to bring glory to Christ (John 14:14); Jesus asks the Father for the Spirit to come (John 14:16), Jesus acknowledges that the Father is greater than he (John 14:28); Jesus obeys the Father (John 14:31); the glory that Jesus enjoys, and will enjoy, is given to him by the Father (John 17:24); and Jesus does not know when the end will come, but the Father does (Mat 24:36). The illustrated order and subordination does not demean nor devalue any member of the Trinity, but only highlights the collaboration of ever loving leadership and service within the Godhead.

1 Cor 11:3...Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ and the head of the woman is man and the head of Christ is God.

Eph 5:22-6:9...Husband-wife, parent-child, slave-master

Romans 12:4-8...mutual submission to the gifting of others

Romans 13:1...submission to governing authority

1 Tim 5:17, 1 Thes 5:12-13...the church has elders which are to oversee the affairs of the church and are to be honored

We live in a culture that is suspicious of any kind of ordering or differentiation among people. The cry is to be egalitarian in all respects. This is not God's view of all relationships or even most relationships. While we may have friends with whom we enjoy a peer relationship, but we must recognize that many of the relationships that God calls us to be in are ordered relationships and we must act appropriately within that ordering.

4. God's intention for relationships may call for exclusivity; that is, we may have to say "no" to some people to say "yes" to those whom God calls us to invest in

- a. Genesis 2:2...husband and wife must separate from their families
- b. Luke 6:12-13...Jesus selected apostles from among his disciples, later he focused on three of his apostles
- c. 2 Corinthians 2:12-13...Paul left fruitful relational ministry with many in pursuit of one man, Titus, whom he was building into

So what does this mean? In order to properly say "yes" to those to whom God has called us to minister and love, we are going to have to say "no" to others. This is not being mean; it is walking in the manner in which God made relationships.

5. Relationships have as much potential for harm as they do for good

Potential for harm

- a. Deuteronomy 7:1-4... When the LORD your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations—the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, seven nations larger and stronger than you— (2) and when the LORD your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy. (3) Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, (4) for they will turn your sons away from following me to serve other gods, and the LORD's anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you.
- b. Proverbs 1:8-19
- c. Luke 9:59-62... He said to another man, "Follow me." But the man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." (60) Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God." (61) Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family." (62) Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."
- d. Revelation 2:20-21... Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. (21) I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling.

Potential for good

- a. Ruth-Naomi
- b. David-Jonathan
- c. Elijah-Elisha
- d. Romans 16:1-16
- e. Heb 11:24-25

So what does this mean? It means that while we are relational beings, we must be careful of the relationships we enter into. This warning is particularly important at those times that we are yearning for relationship. Notice also the tension between this and #2. The tension essentially calls us to enter into relationship with people who don't have it together, but not if they pull us away from God.

6. In our relationships with others, we should seek to serve, edify, love and exhort others even at cost to one's self

The supreme example of this, of course, comes from God himself. Not only do the members of the Trinity give up themselves in order to glorify the others (John 17:1,4-5), but the Trinity put into action a plan that called for the giving up of the Son in order that we might be restored, reconciled, and built up in Him. So, it is no surprise that the calling of the believer is to act in a self-giving way in order to serve, love, and edify others:

Serve

- a. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them." (Joh 13:13-17)
- b. Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves." (Luk 22:25-27)

Edify

- a. Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to his edification. (Rom 15:2)
- b. What is *the outcome* then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. (1Co 14:26)
- c. Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such *a word* as is good for edification according to the need *of the moment*, so that it will give grace to those who hear. (Eph 4:29)
- d. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, (Php 2:3-5)

Love

- a. Matthew 22:39...second commandment...love thy neighbor as thyself
- b. 1 John 4:20-21...if you say you love God and hate your brother you are a liar
- c. John 15:12....My command is this" Love each other as I have loved you.
- d. 1 Peter 1:22... Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.
- e. 1 Thes 4:9-10... Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. And in fact, you do love all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more.

Exhort

- a. 2 Sam 12 (Nathan rebukes David. Nathan was not a hit and run prophet...Nathan and David had relations prior and after)
- b. Gal 2:11-14 (Paul rebukes Peter for mixing works with grace)
- c. 2Ti 4:1-2 I solemnly charge *you* in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.