

## Small Groups Sermon Series

### Message 1: Designed to Connect

What do Legos and human beings have in common? Both are designed to connect. A Lego by itself does not have a whole lot of purpose. A Lego is designed to be part of a greater purpose. It is designed to be a part of a greater whole. A Lego by itself is not a whole lot, but the bottom line is that a Lego is designed to connect.

Human beings are like Legos. We are designed to connect. We are designed to have meaningful relationships. Back in the day the pastor would say at the end of the service are all hearts and minds clear. I don't want your mind clear to day. I want you to think about what we are talking about today. Are you connected in a meaningful way?

Pollster George Gallup (known mainly for polls and statistics) recently commented, "Americans are among the loneliest people in the world." As I surveyed Americans I realized that they are lonely people. In the midst of busy lives, over-committed schedules, and congested cities, we feel alone. We drive on overcrowded freeways, sit in jam-packed airplanes, and eat in noisy restaurants, but we are still lonely.

Having access to people is not the issue for most of us. We live and work in a sea of humanity, but we are lonely. We can come to a church with 150 other people on Sunday morning and we can still feel alone. Why? We are not connected. This is what we will explore in this new series on CONNECTING. I hope to answer some questions during this series? Are we living up to our destiny? Are we doing what God has called us to do?

In the beginning God.....By the fourth word in your bible we are required to have faith. It is almost like God is taking us on a journey. He is taking us back so that we can see how all of this began. Once upon a time.

#### Genesis 1: 1-2

1 in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was empty, a formless mass cloaked in darkness. And the Spirit of God was hovering over its surface.

#### John 1: 1-4

1 in the beginning the Word already existed. He was with God, and he was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 He created everything there is. Nothing exists that he didn't make. 4 Life itself was in him, and this life gives light to everyone.

In the beginning the word already existed. What is John talking about? He is using a metaphor to describe the 2<sup>nd</sup> person of the Holy Trinity. He described Jesus as the word, the logos or the revelation of God. In the beginning was the word. In the beginning the word already existed.

He was with God. The word was connected to God. In other words, Jesus was connected to God. He was so connected to God that He was God.

This is where the story of life begins. The point that we need to understand is that something preceded us. Before there was stuff, before there was matter, before there was time, space and energy there was something that preceded us. That something is God.

Moses and John wrote these two passages under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Moses and John are showing us that in the ancient past there was a fellowship that we have come to call the Trinity. Most people think of a mystery we they consider the trinity. Most people just like to debate the trinity. A lot of people like to argue about the trinity. Some people just want to keep the trinity a mystery. It is a mystery because no one can fathom one God eternally connected in three persons. Before anything else the trinity existed.

The trinity is not a cold doctrine to be debated in the stoic halls of academia. The trinity shows us that when there was only God he was not alone. God has never been alone. Not three Gods, but one God. He is one God connected in such a way that you cannot separate it, but you can still see distinction.

When we sit around and discuss the trinity theologically we are missing the point. When we relegate the trinity to something that needs to be discussed by theologians we are missing the point. It is not something that needs to be explained or figured out. The trinity is a picture of life, of community, of relationship, of joy and love....of personhood. God has always existed in a connected community. God is community.

I think most people agree that there is a great mind behind the universe. A popular term today is intelligent design. I like this because the world is filled with such intricate design that we know there is a great mind behind everything. When you look at creation and how awesome it is we immediately understand that there is a great mind behind everything, but there is something more. There is a great heart behind it. God is a personal God. He is not just a brain, but He is personal. Our God has lived in a dynamic flow of fellowship within His own being. Relationship and community is rooted in God. Relationship and community existed before people were created.

The universe is relational to its core. God's desire is that we live in community. Who do you think is behind the family? Who do you think is behind the church? Who do you think is behind cities, states, and nations? All of these reflect the relational character of God. He even established Israel as a nation. God has always desired that people live in community and in authentic relationships.

Every Jew knew what family and tribe that they came from. They knew that they were from the house of Jesse, from the tribe of Judah and a son of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They all knew

that they were connected. There was no such thing as a free flowing entity. They were connected. They were so connected that whatever happened in the nation happened to them. Isaiah said I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of people with unclean lips.

We were created in the image of God. God has always been connected. **He said in Genesis 1: 26 let us make human beings in our image and make them to reflect our nature.** This means that you are relational and you need to connect.

The whole human race is like Legos. The church is like Legos. I have seen Legos alone and I have seen Legos connected. There is a big difference. Some people are like a big box of Legos that are not connected. They say, "I have relationship." Do you? I have a casual, but distant relationship with a lot of people. They have a bunch of acquaintances and people that they rub shoulders with, but they do not have deep, meaningful, authentic relationships. A lot of us are like a box of Legos. We bounce around life with a bunch of other people that we really don't know. We are not connecting. Is that what God had in mind?

Many families are like a box of un-connected Legos. The most basic community is the family. They shake together when they get home from work. They shake together when they go to the ball field. They shake together when they come to church, but they are not connecting in a meaningful way. God designed us to connect. He wants us to do more than just bump into each other.

There was a woman who touched the hem of Jesus' garment. Jesus said, "Who touched me?" The disciples said of course somebody touched you. We are in a huge crowd. People are bumping into us all around. What do you mean somebody touched you? This was more than just someone bumping into Jesus, this was a connection. A lot of us bump into people, but we do not connect. We shake hands, we say hi, but we don't want a deep relationship. We want people to leave us alone. God designed all of us to connect.

God has always known and experienced community, and he made people capable of the same thing. Not only are we capable, but we desire the same thing. We desire to connect. Why? We desire to connect because we were created in his image. We are designed to connect.

Some people say that God created us because he was lonely. Poor God! He was sitting in heaven all alone. I have been up here by myself so long that I am bored. I will just have to create some people so that I won't be alone. The first thing you must realize about God is that He doesn't need anything. If God needed things then He would not be God. God is self-sufficient. In other words, He has everything He needs within Himself. Need is a word that you can never ascribe to God. God is not deficient. He has never been lonely. He has never been alone. When it was just God he was still not alone. Father, son, and Holy Spirit. God doesn't need you to be happy. God is a happy God all the time. Some people think that this diminishes our significance. This actually elevates your significance. He did not create us

because he was lonely, but rather because he wanted to share who he was with us. He wanted to increase the love. He wanted to increase the joy. He wanted to increase the fellowship. He wanted to increase the community so he created people so that the joy of the Lord would fill the earth.

We were not created out of the loneliness of God, but out of the fellowship of God. We were birthed out of the fellowship and the joy of God.

Meister Eckhart, of the 14<sup>th</sup> century said that we were born out of the laughter of the Trinity. Not out of the sigh of the trinity. Not out of the loneliness of the trinity. God laughed and said let us make man. From this fellowship (God) spring all of our longings for a friend, a family, a fellowship—for some place to belong. Our desire to connect springs from God. This is why we want a friend, family, and a community. We are in His image. Living life un-connected does not reflect God.

We live in a world that is designed to disconnect us. Have you noticed? Why is that? The world is under the influence of the evil one. The bible says that Satan is the god of this world. What does that mean? A lot of stuff that happens around us is not godly at all. Even the stuff that don't seem evil! How does the devil keep us divided? He speeds up everything to the point that we don't have time for anything. Most of us are busier than we have ever been. A lot of our business is not pleasing to God. We are rushing around.

The enemy will speed things up. He will also isolate us. Many people in our society don't even leave their house. They don't connect to real people because they can sit in their house and get everything that they need. They can order in. They can shop on line. They can get most of the stuff they need by sitting inside their homes without ever connecting to anyone.

You can get so caught up in your busy schedule and isolation that you will never fulfill your destiny that includes connecting to other people. I am talking to myself. Satan wants us all to miss the destiny. God has called you to connect. He has called you to be together.

God created us in his image and then he said it is not good for man to be alone. We usually use this for a spouse. I don't disagree because the original community was the family. God wasn't saying that it isn't good for a person to be married, but he was saying that it is not good for man to be alone.

He created the family. The family was first, but God also created the church. He also created cities, states, and nations. All of these are reflecting the community life of God. Adam didn't need to be alone. This comes after a series of "It is good," we come to an abrupt "It's not all good" in genesis 2.

God says aloneness is not good. It is not good for people to be alone. If God says something isn't good it means that it really isn't good. Isolation is not good. Whatever God says is not good the devil likes. He wants you to be isolated. He wants you to be alone. He wants you to implode. One bad relationship so I won't ever have another good relationship. The devil has been working in all of our lives to create isolation. We are around people, but we do not connect.

I am glad all of you are here, but this is not connecting to others. We speak to people, but that is nothing more than legos bouncing in a box. We don't connect because it takes time to connect. We don't have time to connect. It takes intentionality. We have to connect on purpose.

Community means nobody gets everything that they want. This is why we don't live in community. This is the whisper of our flesh. God says connect.

God said that it was not good for man to be alone before the fall. Sin did not exist when God said it is not good for man to be alone. This had nothing to do with sin, but everything to do with fact. Here is the revelation. There is a god shaped void in all of us that only God can fill. Ultimately you have to connect with God, but we are fooling ourselves if we think that this is all that we need. This is all we need to go to heaven and have our sins forgiven.

We were not only created for a relationship with God, but we were created for deep, meaningful relationships with other people. If you think that this whole Christian life is just you and Jesus you are missing a great point. God exists in community and we are called to exist in community with other people. There is a god shaped void in you, but there is also a people shaped void in you.

Jesus said that the greatest commandment was to love God and love your neighbor. The greatest commandment is to connect with God in a loving relationship and connect with people in a loving relationship. These are not two options. They are one in the same. They flow out of each other.

It is not just your family. You need a connection beyond that. You need friends. You need brothers and sisters in Christ. What does the bible really say about you living in relationships?

There are 2 things that you cannot do by yourself. You cannot be married by yourself and you cannot live a growing, living, Christian life yourself. It is not just you and Jesus. It is you and Jesus and others.

The soul cannot prosper without being meaningfully connected to others.

Lack of meaningful connection with others leads to:

1. **Spiritual Vulnerability.** Satan is like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. Many of you have watched on the discovery channel when a lion is about to get him some dinner. He does not attack the whole herd. He waits for one to separate from the herd. We are spiritually vulnerable when we get disconnected from the body. The banana that gets separated get peeled and eaten. I have seen so many Christians come to church and serve God for a while, but then a few months go by and they are no longer serving God. Why? They failed to make a connection. The bible says woe to the one who falls and there is no one there to pick them up.
2. **Fear of Intimacy.** People who have not had good friends have a hard time in a marriage. We you never take time to connect with others it causes a root of fear to spring up within you that keeps you from ever connecting.
3. **Selfishness.** Only think about themselves! They only stay to themselves. They only think about their own needs and concerns. This is why marriages fail. Two people live their lives their own ways and when they come together they don't know how to act because they have always been selfish. Some people in church want all the blessings that the church provides, but they never help with anything. They are selfish because they only see their own needs. They never connect with others and see their needs. What a waste!
4. **Poor health.** Studies have shown that people who live to themselves are more likely to die early. Studies have shown that even people who had poor health habits lived longer if they had deep meaningful relationships than people who had good health habits but no meaningful relationships.

In other words it is good to eat cinnamon rolls from the state fair with good friends than to eat broccoli alone. The worst punishment that could ever be handed out to you is to be alone. Even in prison the most extreme punishment that they can give you is solitary confinement. Hell is to be in solitary confinement for all of eternity. There are people who live their lives in solitary confinement. They are around people, but they are living in solitary confinement.

Why are you not connecting? What is standing in your way? You are designed to connect with others. I'm shy. I was hurt in my last relationship. This cannot be used as an excuse. Quit making excuses and start connecting. It is pleasing to God when His people connect.

Old Chinese Proverb! The beginning of wisdom is to call something by its proper name. I can say I have my family. I have my wife. I have my children. I don't have time to connect.

It's sin.

You are like a Lego designed to connect.