



How Did We Get Here? Genesis 3 Combating Loneliness (Part 2)

THE BIG IDEA

We were created in the image of God for community with God and others, so where did this problem of loneliness come from? Genesis 3 tells us it came from “the fall” of humanity into sin. But where sin brings isolation, Jesus brings reconciliation.

OPENING


- According to the Surgeon General, half of Americans report feeling lonely. 49% of Americans say they have 3 or fewer friends. And this loneliness is impacting us not only in emotional ways, but physically as well. What are your initial thoughts or reactions to the concept of loneliness as a public health epidemic?
- How do you see loneliness playing out in your own life?

DIGGING DEEPER

- Read Genesis 3 as a group. How do the consequences of “the fall” contribute to human isolation from God, from each other, from the rest of creation, and from ourselves?
- Pastor Kate argues that one of the effects of “the fall” on human relationships is the introduction of hierarchy and competition (Genesis 3:16), and that one of the markers of the people of God in the New Testament is the absence of these things (Mark 10:35-45, Philippians 2:1-8). What do you think about this? In what ways do you think hierarchy contributes to loneliness and isolation?
- Theologian Gilbert Bilezikian writes, “The cross... not only provides for our reconciliation to God in its vertical dimension, but it also makes possible reconciliation among humans with its horizontal embrace”.¹ Pastor Kate argues that the horizontal dimension of the cross also allows for reconciliation with the rest of creation and within ourselves. Which aspect of reconciliation speaks most profoundly to you in this season of life (with God, with others, with the rest of creation, within ourselves)?

¹ Gilbert Bilezikian, *Community 101: Reclaiming the Local Church as Community of Oneness*, Zondervan Publishing House (Grand Rapids, 1997).



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- Sin isolates us within ourselves. We are at war within ourselves, struggling between the life of the flesh and the life of the Spirit (Romans 7:15-20). And because of this, we have difficulty living as image bearers of God, constantly trying to find our identity in other things - our jobs, our money, our status, our image, our children, our marriage, our political party, our country of origin, our achievements, etc. What are you most tempted to find your identity in, other than God? In what ways does this isolate you from God and others?
 - Romans 6:3-14 speaks of the power of baptism – that God works through baptism to restore the image of God within us! Even though we live in the “now and not yet” of God’s Kingdom, how does this bring you hope? How can the concept of baptism continue to shape your identity as an image bearer of God in your daily life?

PUTTING IT TO WORK

- How can understanding the origins of loneliness in the biblical narrative inform our approach to combating loneliness in our own lives and communities?
- How can we support each other to live into in the reconciliation that Jesus brings us, and to step more fully into the community we were created for?

PRAYER REQUESTS

Spend time praying for one another to experience Jesus’ reconciliation in your lives and to lean into healthy community.