



of the love between the Father and the Son.

This relational love was and is and will always be outgoing from each toward the other for the benefit of the other. I propose Jesus was praying for the restoration of this unhindered relational glory with the Father.

It's from this relational dynamic within the Trinity that all of creation was brought forth. It's from this relational dynamic that God defined and initiated His mission. Therefore, the mission must be inherently relational!

CONNECTION BETWEEN GOD AND MISSION

John 8:28-29, 12:49, 14:31; 1 John 4:8; Genesis 1:26-27

As mentioned above, the goal of God's mission is to have the earth filled with His image bearers who are deeply loving one another through ongoing relational dependence on Him. Jesus modeled this in His earthly ministry. He was under the direct authority of the Father for all that He did and spoke. He would often go off and pray to the Father, demonstrating His relational dependence on the Father. It was from this intimate relational dynamic between Jesus and the Father through the Spirit that Jesus put the Father's love on display as He ministered to the deep needs of others.

When we consider the relational nature of God within the Trinity,

we gain a better understanding of the nature of His mission. The relational posture in the Trinity is always proceeding outward from one toward the others for the benefit of the others. When the Scripture says that *God is love*, we understand this in the context of this relational dynamic within the Trinity. Again, we see Jesus model this in His earthly ministry as a member of the Trinity. He was constantly choosing to engage with the Father through the Spirit to benefit the Father's will at a cost to Himself. Jesus' love toward the Father was always outward. Jesus' love toward the Spirit was always outward. Jesus submitted to the leading of the Spirit even when it was uncomfortable.

The mission of God, *to fill the earth with people who would be selflessly loving one another deeply*, is a picture of the love that is always transpiring within the Trinity. There is a continual giving and receiving of love going on between the Father, Son, and Spirit. People were designed with the *capacity* and *calling* to relate to each other in this same kind of way as image bearers of God. We see this giving and receiving of God's purposes (love) in the unique relational design of male and female. On a relational level, the male was designed to

- Remember the Larger Story of God
- Move into and lead others into the Larger Story of God

Relationally, the female was designed to

- Receive God's purposes
- Nourish God's purposes
- Be a relational helper for God's purpose²

The *giving* and *receiving* principles of God's love were uniquely designed into the relational and physical attributes of men and women as a means of putting Him on display in the ways they

² For more detail, see the section "Who Are We?" from the workshop *Relational Discipling*.

related to one another. The goal of God's mission for Adam and Eve was to fill the earth with image bears who were imaging God's love to one another as they depended on Him to lead and empower them.

In summary then, the mission of God *proceeds from God* (from his nature and character), *depends on God* (his leading and empowering), and *brings ultimate glory to God* (makes much of Him).

THE MISSION AND THE FALL

Genesis 3

Prior to the Fall, Adam and Eve were in deep intimate relationship with God and with each other. They had the *call* and the *capacity* to fulfill God's missional mandate of filling the earth with His image bearers who would reflect Him to one another. They had complete access to Him to be led by Him and to receive what was necessary from Him in order to carry out His mission for Him. And, for a time, they chose to believe God and His design to live in the Larger Story of God and His mission.

Considering that people were designed to experience relational oneness with God in the Trinity and to live with one another out of that relational dynamic in a way that reflected God's relational glory to others, we can now look at what happened at the *Fall* through a relational lens.

Satan's main objective was to bring disorder into Adam and Eve's relationship because their relationship reflected God. Notice that Satan chose to approach Eve over Adam. Since Eve's relational design was to be more open and invitational, this makes perfect sense. By a cunning arrangement of deception through offering a different "Larger Story" to Eve, Satan was able to convince her that