

It Is Not Good to Be Alone, part 1 (Genesis 2:18)

The reason we are wanting everyone to sit in sections is so that you see the same people week after week again, outside of your office space or the GPR. You see their spouse, their children, and it gives you the sense of having a small congregation. It is not perfect, but it is a beginning because we want people to become familiar with each other. The purpose of this service—again we said it last week—is that we are going to emphasize what we believe the Holy Spirit is saying to the IHOPKC staff and how to walk out our intercessory missionary lifestyle, how we can walk it out together.

Of course, right now we are focusing on getting more connected to one another. It is not going to be connection to one another but not the Lord or connection to the Lord but not one another. We are going to do it all together. It is going to take a while to get this thing to move this whole community forward in all these things.

I want to say that this Friday night service is not the fullness. This is only a launching pad. My purpose here, besides the Holy Spirit touching people, is for us to become familiar with each other. If you become familiar in an organized setting, then, when you get out there, and you walk by each other, you do not look down. You say, “Oh, yeah,” and you start talking. Then when you start talking out there, then more starts happening. Then you have a meal together, and it just goes on and on and on. So the goal here is not deep community. The goal here is familiarity which is step one in growing in community. Because, once you pass each other and you recognize each other and smile, now it begins! That is when it goes to another level. So we are very specifically doing this to break down those walls of unfamiliarity. That is what is going on.

Again I want to say that I am asking everyone on the IHOPKC staff—I mean literally no exceptions unless there really is a dire exception—to make this 5:00pm service top priority, if you are full-time or part-time. If you are going on a trip, I am asking you to leave on Saturday morning; do not leave on Friday. If you are going on vacation, leave after it. Make it! A lot of folks think, “Well, I will just leave right before.” I am asking you, I am doing this, I am going out of my way to, whatever I do, make this service fit.

I mentioned last week that my sacred trust in the GPR is my number one concern personally in my ministry and as a leader. Second is this. CBETS would be number three to me. This is that important. If this thing—and I am not saying “if” because it is really going it, the Lord is on it, He is going to cause us to succeed—when this works, it affects the rest of the 4,000 people in our community. If this works, we go deeper in God, our families are stronger, and our children are healthier. It is essential that we all put quality time into this service, into being together, because getting familiar leads to the next step which leads to the next step which leads to the next one.

Sunday morning: again, I encourage you to spend time with your family on Sunday morning or go to the GPR if you want to have some time in the prayer room. Make that part of your sacred trust. By no means are we saying you cannot go to FC on Sunday morning. Some folks say, “I want to go Sunday.” I love it! Go! I plan on going every Sunday morning. We are saying that we are not putting that expectation on anybody. We are not adding to your requirements Friday night is not another thing to your schedule. It is **instead** of Sunday morning. Again, if you are one of those who want to go Sunday morning, feel free. We would love to have you there as well. Make this a priority, but consider making it family time as well.

Now last week we got a whole bunch of good ideas. Some of the ideas were, “Hmmm...” You know, I am wanting to see Isaac at a pajama party. I am picturing him as a little bunny hat, sticking up and coming, that sort

of thing. I am not really imagining that happening on Friday night, just so you know. Ny the way, we have got these ideas written down. We are going to make some of the ideas available, a bunch of them, so you can go down the list. You can do them in your friendship groups. You can do them in your departments. Some of them we will do here. I want you to know that we really appreciated those ideas.

Okay let's, the verse I want to look at right now is Genesis 2:18. Okay, good, we have it right there, great. We want the media team here, but they have to get some more help to make this work. So therefore we are going to need some more people helping on the media team. We are asking those on Sunday to do it as well, and anybody in our community to help on the media team on Friday nights. Again, two hours a month or four or two-hour sessions a month, we could really use you.

Well, here is what God said to Adam. This was the first declaration over them, here in Genesis 2. He said, "It is not good, it is not good for man to be alone." Now we understand the fact that this was declared by God before there was any sin at all, that God speaks over the human race this sentence. I mean the implications are very significant and vast. We know the context is marriage, but do not limit this to marriage. It is giving us insight into the human makeup. He is telling humanity that you cannot succeed, you cannot thrive, alone. It is also giving us insight into God's nature and God's personality.

I think it is remarkable that God is a relational being as three persons in one. One God in three persons. God has never been alone. He does everything in the enjoyment of working in fellowship together with one another. We are made in God's image. This is one of the first declarations ever made over the human race right here, and the enemy wants to exploit this. He wants to twist this and turn this. The enemy's goal is that you would be alone and that, even if you are in a crowd, you feel alone. In a marriage he wants you to be alone. He wants you to be driven back by rejection, shame, accusation. If you are in a group of friends, he still wants you drawing back in shame and rejection, hiding. He wants you alone. His strategy is to isolate you internally, as it were, from other people even though your body might show up to the family meeting, your body might show up to the service, to the team, the worship team, the department, to the fellowship group. He wants you isolated because, if he gets you isolated, he can destroy you.

You know the old analogy. I have heard it many times over the years. You put a bunch of logs in a burning fire, and it is a big bonfire. You can take the biggest log with the hottest fire, and if you pull it out, it will go out. It will lose its fire in time. The flame will go out. The biggest log, hottest flame, you pull it out of the fire, it will go out. The enemy knows that better than we know it.

The reason I am saying this with so much energy is the enemy has a plan for every one of us to make sure we are alone. Again, even if we are in a marriage, if we have friends, if we are in a ministry, if we are on a team, he wants us isolated, in fear, rejection, shame, a hidden heart, drawing back, smiling, fake smiles, "Yes, yes," but never engaging, because then he can get you. As a leadership team and as a community we are really staring at this. We say, "Not on our watch! This is not going to happen." We are going to take proactive steps. We are doing it now in new ways. We have got some other ways as well where we are wanting to bring the Lord's answer to this reality.

Anyway, God is a relational being. He has never been alone. There is nothing deeper about God's character in my opinion than this reality. He is relational, and He enjoys sharing love with one another. God is relational,

and He enjoys being relational. We were made in His image. There is not a deeper truth about you than you are relational.

One guy might say, “Well, I am not really into that.” Your heart was made that way by God, by divine design. There is no way out of it. You cannot fast and pray yourself out of it. You cannot bitter yourself out of it. I mean you can draw back, but it will kill you on the inside. We were made by a relational God to be together. The enemy does not want us together.

The Lord spoke it before there was any sin. Adam, you will not function right alone. Not just with a wife, it is bigger than that. It is bigger than that. Because we are made in His image, because we are made this way, loneliness is a trauma; it is a trauma. The enemy wants to destroy and attack the Body of Christ. We know he is doing it through pornography. He is doing it through this, that, all these different things. He is trying to destroy the Body of Christ through the trauma of loneliness. The reason I am saying it is a trauma—I mean it is obvious it is, but I am making a theological point—it violates our permanent design. That design cannot change. There is nothing you can do to shift your internal design where you do not need to be with other people. It is a trauma to be alone.

Now loneliness is not the same thing as solitude. Solitude can be a place of rest, a place of refreshment, a place of reflection, of enlightenment, renewal. Solitude is good. Loneliness is traumatic. It is a horrible thing. Now in one sentence: of course we need to talk about this a bit, but the reason I am saying the obvious—it is so obvious—it is that I am bringing it out in the family dialogue that it is not okay for anyone to be alone. It is a trauma. God sent them to this family, and it is not just ten or twenty leaders’ responsibility. As a family, it is our responsibility that nobody is in our midst in the trauma of loneliness. My point by putting it in the family conversation like this: you are thinking like, “Well, that is pretty obvious. But you know. now that you say it, it is not enough just to have our little worship team or our little department or our little friendship group. I am in a family, and there are traumatized people. I cannot answer all of them, but I care about this. I am troubled by it. I do not have the answer to everybody, but I am going to do what I can do to solve it and not just be happy ‘us four and no more.’”

A lot of folks go into a ministry or to a local church family, they get a few friends, and they are happy. I am saying that is good but it is not enough. We are our brother’s keeper. When Cain killed his brother Abel, the Lord said, “Cain.” The question was, am I my brother’s keeper? Do I have responsibility for him? was the question. Do I really have real responsibility for someone else? God would say, “Yes.” We certainly do in our family units, but in our spiritual family it really is a declaration of the Lord’s leadership. He would say, “Body of Christ, you have responsibility for the people who enter into your family.”

Not everyone is responsible for everyone. That is not what I am saying. But it is not enough to have a few friends, and, “I am happy. We go to the ballgame. We have fun. Who cares about the rest?”

No, no! When we gather—there is probably some ten, twenty, thirty percent of this room that is in a department, they are in a team, but they do not feel at all connected—the Lord says, “IHOPKC, this is not okay. Are you agreeing with Me, IHOPKC? It is not okay.”

I am saying as a shepherd and a father, “Yes, Lord, I am agreeing with you.” We have got to change this. This is a trauma.

Now loneliness in one sentence—and of course you can give a lot of one-liners on loneliness—is when you think, when you have the sense, that nobody knows or cares about you. That is the most horrible feeling, that nobody knows you, nobody sees you, and nobody cares, because the natural conclusion is that, “My life does not matter.” When you conclude your life does not matter, you are just absolutely in this place of vulnerability to suicide, addictions, all kinds of harmful ways to escape the pain, thinking, “My life does not matter. There is no one who testifies that my life matters.” Trying to escape the pain of that through all the different ways that people escape, you go through the list of that. Suicide is really about, “My life does not matter. Nobody sees me.” It is a lie that their life does not matter, but, because we are built, designed this way, it is not good if we are alone. We need each other. If we do not have God with skin on, meaning a human being standing in the place of the Lord, speaking what the Lord thinks about us, we are alone.

That is why I love this love-bomb/love-balm thing. We had a bunch of people speak a little bit of what the Lord thinks about them. I call it God with skin. I mean, you have heard that over the years. It is people speaking what God thinks. It destroys and shuts down the enemy’s lies in their minds.

Addictions and all these things just explode in isolation. So it does not surprise us that healing comes in community. Healing comes in community. Now the problem is, so many of our hurts come because of relationships. The paradox is so much of our healing comes in relationships. We can feel like the enemy is going to try to keep this thing confusing all the time. We think, “If I get in relationship, well, people are going to treat me wrongly, and I am going to respond wrongly. I am going to get hurt.” Then we want to retreat. Like, “I am tired of this. I did that relationship thing. That does not work.” That is exactly what the enemy wants people to conclude. Healing comes in the relationship. Now in our fallenness and in our fear, just our human fear, we do not like the idea that we need other people to get healed. It is like, “Ugh. No other people! That is what is bugging me!”

The Lord might say, “No, that situation bugged you and hurt you. I have many facets of My grace and My personality, and there are many different people. Do not write off people. Do not write off the Church because you ran into five or ten folks and the collision was painful. My answer is My Word and My Spirit touching you, and My Body being a representative of My heart and My Spirit talking to you, putting their arms around you, speaking words to you.” So that is the Lord’s plan for us.

Now, everyone has a story, and it is remarkable because the human heart was designed to love stories. We absolutely love stories. That is why Jesus taught with so many stories. Not only do we **have** a story, you **are** a story. And the challenge is you don’t know even half of your story! I tell this to people a lot, and it throws them off a bit. I say, “You do not know your testimony.”

They reply, “Well, yeah, I do. I remember. I was raised here, dah-dah-dah.”

I say, “No, you know little facets of it. You know some key points.” I learned things about my story when I was twenty and thirty. I learned more about them when I was forty and fifty. The dots connected. Our story is so much more multifaceted and complex and multilayered than we know about ourselves. The people next to you, their story is as fascinating and as complex as yours.

Stories, they intrigue us. Stories, we love stories. We are a story. We are part of God’s story. God has entrusted part of His story in your life and your flesh and blood. He wants your story to be told, the trauma as well as the breakthroughs and the glory. He wants your story told. He wants other people to hear your story. He wants their

story to enter into your story, and then it is God's story. That is the family life of God. That is why we want to take time to tell stories. We will never ever get to the bottom of the storytelling.

I believe that one of the things that is going to shock us in the millennial kingdom when we have resurrected bodies and a resurrected mind—I mean your mind will be so sharp—we will meet people in the age to come and hear their story. Some guy from the twelfth century over in the other part of the world, and you will bond with that guy, and then you will bring that guy to your other friend who has been hearing the story from the fifth century from another person. The stories will go on and on forever and forever.

There are several billion people from all 6,000 years since Adam, all stories. Again, most people do not know their story; they know facets of it. In that day they will know their full story. We will be forever sharing stories. It is not just hearing; we are entering into the story. Their story impacts me, and my hearing their story impacts them. Then it inspires me to tell my story to them. It just keeps building out more and more and more.

Well, there is a verse—we all know it—Psalm 68:5-6. In context, it is about orphans and widows. I want you to see the nature of God in this. A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows is the Lord, that is His nature.

Let's go to the next verse. God says, "I set lonely people in families," not only orphans and widows, though I do not want to minimize that; that is the subject. My point is, God's nature and commitment is to set His people in families. There are a lot of folks in this room who are in our larger congregation on Sundays. They are here, but they are not set in yet. Some are traumatized by loneliness because of the years before. Others are on the verge of not knowing how to interpret their life and what is going on in all of this. The Lord would say, "I have set them in here." One of the great miracles at the end of the age is that we will be one.

You know, we hear so much about the social media. By the way, social media is not just for eighteen-year olds and twenty-year olds. The whole earth is getting caught up, I mean really engaged, in the social media phenomena. It is going to increase more in the decades to come. There are many articles about this, that they are calling this the loneliest generation in human history. Wait for another twenty years! It is the most connected electronically, but the most disconnected relationally. There are lots of articles about that. I don't know the fulness of or all the details of that. I know in ten and twenty years it is going to get worse and worse. Here is the great miracle: that in the loneliest generation in human history God is going to do something so dramatic. He is going to bring forth His family out of the loneliest generation of history. He is going to bring forth a family as the trophy of the grace of God when the culture is filled with hatred, and betrayal, and deception, and all kinds of evil and dark emotions. He could say, "I have kept My commitment; I am setting My people in families. I am blessing families. I am going to make the Body of Christ a trophy of grace in a dark time of human history." He is doing this all over the world.

We know the verse in Genesis 12, the master plan. The Lord is talking to Abraham. He is talking about the Messiah ultimately. He says, "Abraham, it is through you that I am going to bless those who bless you, because in you—which means 'in your offspring'—in your Son—which is Jesus—2,000 years later all the families of the earth will be blessed. This is remarkable that this was God's master plan in sending Jesus, He had many reasons. The primary one was to bring forth blessed families across the earth. This is on His mind, and this will not fail at all.

In the darkest hour of human history, in the very darkest hour of human history, He is going to raise up a trophy of the grace of God, community. Betrayal, darkness, evil, all kinds of bitterness will be going on, but God's

people—all different ethnic groups, different ages, different interest groups, different styles of music, different styles of entertainment—are going to see how God sees one another. They are going to bond based on how God sees people. They are going to transcend the “just me and mine... I like this, so people who like this I will like.”

The Lord would say, “Well, that is okay to begin with, but I am going to let you see what I see in that guy who is from a very different culture, different age, different economic status. You are going to see what I see in that guy.”

I am going to talk about my sister Lisa again. I just have to mention her just one more time. She was the black sheep of the family. She was in prison. Her husband was in prison. Her son is in prison. I mean, all these crimes were happening. Nobody but God knew thirty years ago that they were going to be one of the most on-fire, humble, diligent, godly families around. Nobody could see that. It was like, “Oh, no! The Striblings are coming around; lock your doors.” That is literally what people said.

The Lord might have said, “Just wait! I want you to see what I see. You do not know anything I see about who they are. They are just at the beginning.”

I mean, I can't wait for a billion years from now to see where this thing is going. Well, here is the question I want to ask: what does belonging look like? We are going to have a panel in a few moments, and we are going to talk about this. I want us all thinking about this. What does belonging look like? Because, the enemy does not want us to belong. “Belonging” is a cool phrase. The enemy is going to do everything in his power to make sure belonging does not happen, but the Spirit is going to work in the opposite way.

The fact of this—I do not mean just us here last September with the Chinese and the Homecoming, the Convergence, far bigger than that. All over Asia this Homecoming movement is touching hundreds of thousands in the last ten years. Nobody dreamed it up. Ten or twelve years ago almost nobody was thinking about it—the Lord just broke in by storm among hundreds of thousands of Chinese believers. We received a little down payment when they visited. I really like that. We could take a long time about that, but that is not my point now.

My point is: the God of heavens says, “Watch this,” and He blew on Asia. He would say, “That is just the beginning breath. I am going to blow all over the earth and turn My Church towards one another as they see My heart in a new way.” So I am really, really encouraged.

Here is the problem about belonging. What are the necessary components? I want to break this down a little bit. We are not going to do it all in one session. We have time to do this.

You know, one person was a little concerned. He said, “Oh, man! We are getting into “just fun” church now, everybody just having fun.”

I said, “Do not worry about it. We are on the right track.”

It is like two legs. We have done the first commandment, vertical, with God. We have been working that leg for years, hard. We have a little bit of muscle in that leg, and that is glorious because in the larger Body of Christ that leg is really weak. The vertical leg is really weak, the vertical walk with God. We are not that strong, but we at least have twenty years of working on it.

Our other leg is not so strong. By the way, I always want to say this: there are several hundred people across our years who have gone really deep with one another. I hear people say, “Nobody.”

I say, “No, no, I know some hundreds who have done it well.” The percentage is not high enough, but I do not want to dismiss that. They have poured their life out and loved well. I have watched it with my eyes for many years. That leg is weaker than the vertical leg, which in many church situations is just opposite. The truth is, in many situations both legs are really weak, because you cannot really go deep with one another if you do not go deep in the Lord. You cannot do the first commandment well if you are not growing in the second commandment.

So, you know, after last week, we had some people really excited. Some people were like, “Well, we will wait and see.” I appreciate that. You get to do that. I do not mind that. Just stay engaged. You can have a “wait and see” attitude; that is fair.

Others are thinking, “Oh, we are just having fun church now. What about God?” Well, at five o’clock we are doing the second commandment for a little while. At 7:30, I am doing the first commandment. I have a whole group of people, and we talk about the first commandment. We are not dropping the ball on either one of them. I do not want people into the first commandment who are not energized by the second. I do not want people into the second who are not energized by first. It is going to take a while to bring the whole thing together. Then we have to figure out what is our assignment in the grace of God to reach our community. We want to go upward, we want to go inward in community with each other, but we have to go outward. It is going to take a while for all of this to come together.

At the end of the day, the Lord says, as it were, “IHOPKC, I want this whole thing to come together. I am going to help you. As surely as I intervened without your permission, against your will, and sent the Chinese here, kind of woke you up, it is only a beginning point. Now you are making steps forward, but then I am going to do the same thing an outreach in power and evangelism. All these things are going to come together in their time.”

Well, one of the great enemies of belonging to one another is idealism. Idealism will tremendously hurt growing in community, because in idealism—when we are expecting this level of thing to happen, but it does not happen just that way after a little bit of time—a certain kind of person says, “I have had enough, no more. I gave you a shot. That is it.”

We have and we are going to tease this out. I have a lot of thoughts about realistic kingdom community, what it is really like, and not idealism because idealism will actually injure us. Hope deferred makes the heart sick. It actually causes people to give up entirely on idealism. We will talk about that in the days to come.

I want to talk with our panel, and again over the next several weeks, exactly about what are some of the components of belonging together. What are some of the ways that friendships grow? What is a realistic approach to friendship? What is idealism? What is romantic and is not real? What is real and deep, but still has some challenges in it? We want to approach this in a sober way. We are going to talk about these things as we go.

I am going to end with this: the word initiative. Initiative, initiative, initiative. Initiative meaning as a leadership team with a lot of others as well—we are all in it together— taking initiative to do things different, that is why we are doing this and a number of other things as well. We are taking initiative organizationally. We can take initiative organizationally, but if the vast majority of the people—there can always be a few sleepers but a vast majority—do not take initiative individually, it does not work.

A structure does not solve it. People have to be motivated and energized individually to take initiative, and organizationally we have to take initiative, and the two have to meet each other. I have had folks say, “Well, this place—I cannot make friends”

I say, “An organization never makes people friends. An org chart does not have the ability to make friends. People make friends one by one.”

We can create settings where we can inspire the familiarity, inspire getting together, but the end of the day it will not work if people stand back and say, “I have been on row ten here for ten years. I have no friends. You owe me friends.” It does not work that way.

An org chart cannot make friends for you. We are going to draw people together more, but you have to take initiative together or it does not work. I have good news: The Lord says, “Zechariah 4 unto Ephesians 4.” He is going to give a grand view of the kingdom in Grandview.

I am absolutely confident that as sure as the winds blew in September and kind of did that to us, that was just a little wind, and that the Lord has a few more of those winds coming about community and outreach and intimacy and the Bride of Christ, ooh!