

When it comes to family, it's not uncommon to have a whole mix of emotions. There's so much goodness in God's intention for families and yet, we find broken people who make messy, complicated families and marriage is no exception! Marriage is one of God's models for how we can reflect God in relationships and community. Consider the devotional this week as an opportunity to explore how your relationships (marriage, friendships, family or community) reflect God and show His work in people.

*New to daily devotionals? Here are a few tips for this week:*

- A word of warning: When we uncover things about our families and relationships, we can often feel tempted to reveal them to others. Remember that not everyone in your family may be ready to hear your realizations. So, go slow and perhaps start by sharing your insights with trusted people outside of your family and always move forward in prayer and communicate with grace.

### **Monday, January 21st**

Read Genesis 1:26-27

*<sup>26</sup> Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."*

*<sup>27</sup> So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.*

Why do you think God is referred to as "us" and "our"? What might be significant about God referring to himself as a community as He creates people in community? If God Himself is a community in the Trinity (Father, Son, Spirit), how might that declare our need and design for connection and relationship?

How have you seen yourself made to reflect God? What things do you find in yourself that are God's image reflected in you? How has that image shifted and grown over time and as your faith has matured? What things do you find lacking in yourself but reflected in the relationships around you? How might relationships and community give you a bigger picture of God's image?

### **Tuesday, January 22nd**

Read Ephesians 4:1-7

*As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. <sup>2</sup> Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. <sup>3</sup> Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup> There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; <sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. <sup>7</sup> But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.*

How does your life and your relationships reflect a life worthy of the calling you have received? What areas listed in verses 2-3 do you find yourself lacking in? Are there people in your life who have helped demonstrate these things to you?

What is the significance the repetition of unity and oneness in this passage? How does it intersect with the emphasis of plurality in the passage from Monday? How do your relationships reflect the oneness and unity of God? How do they look divided?

### **Wednesday, January 23rd**

Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

*Two are better than one,  
because they have a good return for their labor:*

*<sup>10</sup> If either of them falls down,  
one can help the other up.*

*But pity anyone who falls  
and has no one to help them up.*

*<sup>11</sup> Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm.  
But how can one keep warm alone?*

*<sup>12</sup> Though one may be overpowered,  
two can defend themselves.*

*A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.*

How does this passage affirm that you have been created for relationship and community? Who in your life has helped you up? How are you intentionally making yourself available to help others up? How have you encountered the "strength in numbers" depicted in verse 12?

What is the significance of a three-stranded cord? How has Jesus been intertwined in your relationships and community? What next steps might you need to take to make sure you have Christian community and relationships around you?

## Thursday, January 24th

Read Ruth 1:16-17

*<sup>16</sup>But Ruth replied, “Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. <sup>17</sup>Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me.”*

Naomi was a grieving widow without any resources and Ruth stepped into her life to support her in her grief and hardship. Ruth and Naomi’s friendship was radical and crossed huge divides—cultural differences, geographical differences and social norms. Who in your life has gone to great lengths to be in relationship with you? Who have you gone to great lengths to be in relationship with? How have those relationships and experiences shown you a bigger picture of Jesus?

How have you experienced Jesus in this way—going to great lengths to be with you and for you?

## Friday, January 25th

Read Revelation 7:9-10

*<sup>9</sup>After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. <sup>10</sup>And they cried out in a loud voice:*

*“Salvation belongs to our God,  
who sits on the throne,  
and to the Lamb.”*

How does this picture of community when Jesus returns differ from your experience of community and relationships now? How is it similar to your current relationships? What relationships might you need to form to begin making Revelation 7 a reality? What steps, groups or tools might you need to introduce into your life?

How can your current relationships and community begin to sing the song of salvation? Who in your life do you want to make sure is with you in this picture—who in your life still needs to know about the song of salvation?

# FAMILY

it's complicated

DEVO | January 19/20