



# conneXions

...growing God's family...

Issue 46

## Celebrating our Music Ministry



Some of the choir from the Music Ministry training day.

### Why do we sing?...

The question is an important one. If we sing without really understanding God's purpose for it, we won't derive the full benefit God intends for us. Even worse, God won't be glorified by our singing.

Ask any of the attendees at the Music Ministry Training Afternoon (16th August) for the Biblical answers to this question!



Verna Whitehead (organist and pianist)



Paul Frost (music ministry administrator; Francis Touzel (drummer) and Anita Fox (pianist).

### Our Mission Statement

– why do we exist? –

Glorifying God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit by growing His family through Biblical teaching, prayer and loving relationships locally, nationally, and internationally.

### Our Vision Statement

– where are we heading? –

As a Gospel driven church we aspire to establish 15 self-replicating growth groups across the church by 2012.

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

From the Pastor's Desk	2
Board Report for August	3
Before the Throne of God Above	3
Welcome New Members	3
Church Calendar for September	4
Book of the Month: The Prodigal God - Tim Keller	5
Mission News	6
The New Shape of World Christianity - Tim Challies	7
What Makes our Prayers Acceptable to God? - Hugh Latimer	7
Looking for Friendship - Shepherd Press Newsletter	8

### THIS MONTH'S HIGHLIGHTS

- Monday 7th 7:30pm Board of Management
- Sunday 13th 10.00am Lord's Supper 12.00pm - From Vision to action orientation for IDEA Groups and Board.
- Sunday 27th 12.00pm From Vision to action presentation for everyone.
- Monday 28th 7.30pm Elders' Meeting (Session)



## Hermeneutics and Homer Simpson

# From the Pastor's Desk

her·me·neu·tics [hur-muh-noo-tiks, -nyoo-] – noun (used with a singular verb)

1. the science of interpretation, esp. of the Scriptures.
2. the branch of theology that deals with the principles of Biblical exegesis.

I recently got to thinking about the way the Bible is interpreted and taught. There is a stream of Bible interpretation and teaching that I'm calling 'Homer Hermeneutics' or 'Homerneutics' for short.

The television cartoon character Homer Simpson has a habit of listening to others but hearing only what he wants to hear. When this happens Homer says: "Mmm...", then either repeats or misrepeats a word or phrase that has just been spoken. This is off-times followed by Homer drooling. These jokes emphasise Homer's obsession with food.

An example: Multi-millionaire Montgomery Burns is playing golf with Homer. Homer's ball ends up in a sand trap. Burns tells Homer to "use an open-faced club. The sand wedge!" At this point Homer's gaze glazes over and he says: "Mmm... open-faced club sandwich."

Hermeneutics occurs when someone reads a section of the Bible, a sentence, a phrase or even a word, and, instead of trying to work out its meaning, simply responds in terms of what that phrase or word means to them, ignoring its original context or intent.

Biblical hermeneutics involves trying to identify what the passage, verse or word in question was intended to mean to its initial audience. The question of the author's intent needs to be addressed.

It is also necessary to determine whether the text occurs in anticipation of the Lord Jesus Christ or in response to His life, death and resurrection.

Having arrived at an understanding of these factors, then an attempt at understanding the relevance of the passage for us today can be determined. This is exegesis. Reading 'out' of the text.

Homerneutics dispenses with all of these steps and simply runs with the first thought that enters the mind. It's sort of post-modern I guess. We derive our own meaning from the text instead of allowing the text to impose its meaning upon us. This is eisegesis. Reading 'into' the text.

Some examples: Jesus says "I am the bread of life." Homerneutics might focus on fluffy white bread, filled with pockets of air and imagine that is an image of Christians. The sturdy crust can then be Jesus Himself surrounding and protecting the church. Consideration is not given to what Jesus actually meant, that life can be sustained by Him alone. Consideration is not given to the fact that no original reader of the text ever saw anything like a loaf of Baker's Delight White Bread.

God is often described as a "rock" in scriptural metaphor. No-one had rock and roll music or rocking chairs in mind. Nor did they ponder that the shifting perspectives created by light passing over rocky mountains during the day portrayed a flexibility in God that encourages us to think about how God can fill the God shaped hole in each of our lives. The idea that God can be understood as an enduring, unchanging place of secure shelter (think caves and clefts) doesn't need to get a look in. These are the images that the writer and his audience would have called to mind.

Perhaps you can read Jesus' words to 'consider the lilies of the field' and

find a justification in them for the display of flowers in church. Was that really what Jesus wanted His hearers to think about?

Homerneutics is rife in the church. This is not the same as two different individuals struggling to understand a text and arriving at different conclusions.

This self-centered and sentimental mode of interpretation fails to encourage Christians to engage with Scripture. It also means the unique message of each passage will go unheeded. Ultimately the text won't be needed at all. You'd be able to construct your own messages from a children's picture book, or a newspaper.

Here at MGPC when you hear the Bible taught you should never be able to say "Where did that idea come from?" Rather you should clearly see that what is being taught is the actual meaning of the text. You should also be growing in your own ability to understand the Bible for yourself.

Gary.

(Abridged and edited from an article first published at <http://mgpcpastor.wordpress.com>)



The Samaritan's Purse  
Children's Christmas boxes  
are due

Sunday 13th September



Please contact any Care &  
Concern member with any  
queries.

## Board of Management News

At its August meeting the Board:

1. noted Mona Kelly's sad passing – The Board will suggest to Care & Concern to plant a rose in the rose garden in Mona Kelly's memory. Care & Concern has also suggested giving a donation to CBMI in memory of Mona Kelly. The Board will support this by publicizing this item to the congregation and offering the congregation the opportunity to raise more funds for this purpose.
2. is looking more intensely at the contents and format of its financial management, including reporting and funds management. This aims to provide the church and Board of Management with a better vision for the future financially, enabling it to structurally support the overall church's vision and mission through its management.

No financial report for July due to the Treasurer being away in the lead up to the meeting.



## For Your Diary

### Sunday 13th September

A lunch and introduction to our Vision and Mission Statements, Growth Groups and the plan to move vision to action. Open to all IDEA Group and Board of Management members.

### Sunday 27th September

A lunch and presentation of our Vision and Mission Statements, followed by the opportunity to present your ideas on how we can realise our Vision. Open to ministry and congregational groups and the church as a whole.

### WRECK OF THE ADMELLA

a documentary DVD  
produced by Brenton Manser

Available for \$20 from Brenton  
M: 0418 814065

E: [brenton@brentonmanser.com.au](mailto:brenton@brentonmanser.com.au)



## Before the Throne of God Above

Please pray for:  
James Davidson;  
Noel Cusack; Jim  
Stafford; Pearl Hel-

lyer, Frank Mitchell, Fred Nash, Margaret Ware, Ken Wright; Ina Earl; Mary Jeffrey; Brian & Betty Clayfield; Albert & Perle Harvey, Gladys Jones, Elaine Harfull, Jayne Pritchard, Vi Fraser, Blake Vause, Emmie Thompson, Jean Bowman, Ned & Joan Morrison.

Continue to uphold our church mission partners:

- Matthew, serving in west Asia.
- Cameron & Carmel Mackenzie, Flynn Patrol (SA), Presbyterian Inland Mission.
- School Christian Pastoral Support

Workers: especially Matt Eudy (Yahl Primary School).

- Mission Partners/APWM national office: Bill & Jenny Lutton.

Also intercede for:

- Federal Government: Prime Minister Kevin Rudd; Leader of the Opposition Malcolm Turnbull.
- City of Mount Gambier (Mayor Steve Perryman; District Council of Grant (Mayor Don Pegler).
- Converge International chaplains: Heather Baker, John Deer and Ian Touzel.
- Jubilee Christian Centre (AOG): Pastor Errol & Gwen Carson, Pastor Mark & Tara Hann.



## Welcome New Members!

**Matthew and Lyndal Johns** were received into membership by profession of faith- and Lyndal baptised - on Sunday 23rd August. Their son Thomas was also baptised on the same day. Matthew grew up in the then Glenburnie Presbyterian church and Sunday School, while Lyndal was raised in Balmoral (Vic.).

## Presbyterian Womens' Association



Just over 20 women from Naracoorte, Penola and Mount Gambier branches of the Presbyterian Women's Association (PWA) met at Mount Gambier last Thursday (27th) for the annual Thanksgiving Service and Penola Presbytery rally day. Unfortunately due to ill health the Millicent ladies could not be with us and some of the other branches were down in numbers due to ill-health. The day began with morning tea and then moved to the Chapel for a service by Pastor Gary Ware. Gary preached on Mark 14:1-11 on the Extravagance of the Kingdom and posed a challenge to consider what legacy we leave behind for the kingdom work, that is generous like the woman who poured the perfume over

Jesus or critical and stingy like Judas Iscariot. The service concluded with the Lord's Supper. After joining in fellowship over a shared lunch, a rally and meeting were held, during which a DVD presentation was given on the Addis Addaba, Ethiopia, mission hospital started by Doctors Reg (late) and Catherine Hamlin to treat women with obstructed labour fistula injuries. Mrs Carolyn Lambert accepted a further 12 months as the Penola Presbytery PWA representative. Thank you's were extended to Pastor Gary, and Mary Thornley and Anita Fox who provided the musical accompaniment for the morning service and afternoon rally respectively.

— Heather Touzel

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		<b>1</b> 9am Woman's Growth Group	<b>2</b> 10am Coffee & Coffee	<b>3</b> 1pm PWA	<b>4</b> 10.30 Bible Study	<b>5</b> 7pm Youth Group
<b>6</b> 10am Ian Touzel Gary Ware at Narra-coote NE,AL - Alan Fox	<b>7</b> 7pm 'Young Adults' Growth Group 7.30pm Board of Management	<b>8</b> 9am Woman's Growth Group 1.30pm Care & Concern	<b>9</b> 10am Coffee & Coffee	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b> 10.30 Bible Study	<b>12</b> 7pm Youth Group
<b>13</b> 10am Lord's Supper 12pm IDEFA Group/ Board MAP orientation	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b> 9am Woman's Growth Group	<b>16</b> 10am Coffee & Coffee 7.30pm Ladies Fellowship	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b> 10.30 Bible Study	<b>19</b> 7pm Youth Group
<b>20</b> NE,AL - Gary Ware	<b>21</b> 7pm 'Young Adults' Growth Group	<b>22</b> 9am Woman's Growth Group	<b>23</b> 10am Coffee & Coffee	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b> 10.30 Bible Study	<b>26</b>
<b>27</b> 12pm MAP vision to action presentation KRA in recess, resumes 17 October	<b>28</b> 7.30pm Session	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>			

Book of the Month

# The Prodigal Father | Tim Keller



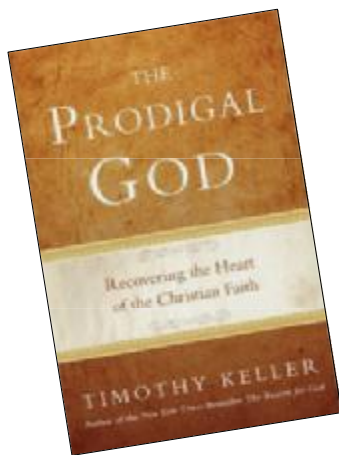
**Tim Keller**, pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church, Manhattan, NY, USA, talks about his latest book...

What's the book about? It's about

being 'prodigal.' The word 'prodigal' is an English word that means recklessly extravagant, spending to the point of poverty. The dictionaries tell us that the word can be understood in a more negative or a more positive sense. The more positive meaning is to be lavishly and sacrificially abundant in giving. The more negative sense is to be wasteful and irresponsible in one's spending. (Some people think prodigal means 'wayward,' but there is no dictionary that indicates that the word means 'immoral'.)

The negative sense obviously applies to the actions of the younger brother in the Luke 15 parable. But is there any sense in which God can be called 'prodigal'? I think so.

First, the elder brother is offended by the father's extravagant and (to him) irresponsible welcome of his younger brother. The father, of course, represents God, and legalists are always offended by the gospel of free grace. They see it as wasteful and unfair. After all, they worked for their acceptance. These are the people to whom Jesus was telling the parable in the first place—the Pharisees who objected to Jesus' lavish grace to tax collectors and sinners. They certainly thought Jesus was being far too free and irresponsible with the love and



favor he was promising them from God. Jesus depicts them in the parable as the elder brother upset with his father's prodigality.

Second, the positive meaning of the term 'prodigal' is definitely true of God. He spent himself to the uttermost on the Cross. He did so 'recklessly' in the sense that he did not reckon the cost to himself. Jesus was someone who spent himself into helpless poverty (2 Corinthians 8:9) and was 'in want' in the most extreme way.

So the title 'Prodigal God' calls attention not only to the mistaken way that legalists regard God's gospel of grace, but also to how Jesus, though he was rich, spent everything without thought for himself, that we might be saved. Charles Spurgeon's sermon on this text was entitled 'Prodigal Love for the Prodigal Son,'

which sums up well all the senses of the word in one sentence.

During the years I was working on these two books, my provisional titles were "The Gospel for Non-believers" (The Reason for God) and "The Gospel for Believers" (The Prodigal God.) This second book is my way of doing what Martin Luther directed us Christian ministers to do. "This...truth of the gospel...is also the principal article of all Christian doctrine, wherein the knowledge of all godliness consists. Most necessary it is, therefore, that we should know this article well, teach it unto others, and beat it into their heads continually."

Available from Koorong Books for \$19.95 plus postage.

## Church Directory

**Pastor:**

Rev. Gary Ware,  
4 Rosemary Ave.  
Mount Gambier SA 5290.  
Ph. 8725 0228  
Mob. 0417716865

Email: [giware@internode.on.net](mailto:giware@internode.on.net)

**Assistant Pastor**

Ian Touzel,  
53 Vivienne Ave  
Mount Gambier SA 5290.  
Tel: 8723 9317

Email: [ihtouzel@bigpond.com](mailto:ihtouzel@bigpond.com)

**Session Clerk:**

Alan Fox,  
52 Cardinia St.  
Mount Gambier SA 5290.  
Tel: 8724 9629

Fax: 8723 2416

Email: [fafox@hotmail.net.au](mailto:fafox@hotmail.net.au)

**Secretary, Board of Management:**

Jeroen Zwijnenburg  
CPA Moorak  
Moorak SA 5290.  
Tel: 8724 9230

Email: [jzwijnenburg@bigpond.com](mailto:jzwijnenburg@bigpond.com)

**Church Office**

Hours:

Monday: 1:30pm - 4:30pm  
Thursday: 9.30 am - 12.30 pm;  
Friday 11.00 am - 12.30 pm &  
1.30 pm - 3.00 pm.

PO Box 270

Mount Gambier SA 5290.

Tel/Fax. 8723 9028

Mob 0427 239 028

Email: [office@mgpc.org.au](mailto:office@mgpc.org.au)

Website: [www.mgpc.org.au](http://www.mgpc.org.au)

**ConneXions Editor:**

Ian Touzel

**Editorial deadline:** 3rd Sunday of the preceding month.

**This Church seeks to comply with the Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Act 2000 at all times. A copy of the Church's Privacy Policy is available on request. If you do not wish to consent to being identified in this or any other Church publication please advise the church office accordingly.**

**Sunday Services**

Mount Gambier, Allison St.  
10am—including Sunday School and crèche during school term.  
5:30pm—Evening worship

**1st and 3rd Sundays:**

9:30am (EST)—Nelson

11am —Allendale

**5th Sunday**

10am—Family Service at Mount

Gambier

**CREATIONWISE**





# Mission News local | national | international

**Just when Christians in Pakistan thought it couldn't get any worse...**

**Seven Christians have been burnt alive, including three women and two children, when their houses were set on fire during attacks by Muslim demonstrators.**

Following a violent attack on residents of the Christian village of Korian on 30 July, we have received news of further incidents of anti-Christian violence in the nearby town of Gojra, District Faisalabad, Punjab province, on Saturday 1 August. Homes were looted and at least 50 houses were burned down, as a Muslim mob threw petrol bombs and fired indiscriminately.

The attack in Korian, where homes of local Christians were torched, churches vandalised and Bibles desecrated, were allegedly sparked by rumours that a copy of the Qur'an had been burned

during a Christian wedding. No one was injured in the attacks in Korian, but tensions continued to rise and fresh violence erupted two days later. According to eye witnesses, more than 800 Muslims carrying a variety of weapons raided a Christian settlement. Incited by broadcasts from local mosques, they looted, vandalised and set fire to houses. Seven Christians died in the flames and at least 20 injured. There are indications that the attack on the two areas was planned; according to one local Christian, those in surrounding villages and towns began receiving threats as Muslim clerics began preaching hatred and revenge.

Security forces were patrolling the streets on Sunday 2 August and it was reported that there had been no further clashes. The Pakistani government has

spoken out in support of local Christians, with the President of Pakistan instructing the Minorities Affairs Minister Shahbaz Bhatti to visit the village of Korian, where the violence took place. Bhatti, himself a Christian, is to visit the bereaved families and offer condolences. According to reports, police have charged 816 people, including the district coordination officer and the district police officer, with murder, attempted murder and terrorism. The Chief Minister is expected to visit the affected area today (Monday 3 August), to address Christians and distribute 500,000 rupees (US\$6,000) as compensation to families of murdered Christians.



**A Christian couple sit in front of their home in Gojra, destroyed in the anti-Christian violence on 2 August, which left seven people dead, 20 injured and scores homeless.**

Dr Patrick Sookhdeo, International Director of Barnabas Fund, says, "In the midst of the spiralling anti-Christian violence in Pakistan, our appeal is to Christians around

the world to stand with our brothers and sisters at their time of need. Please pray and, if you are able, give a donation to meet the practical needs of the homeless, injured and bereaved."

### **Please join with us in prayer...**

1. Prayer for the bereaved and grieving families, and those who are suffering following the loss of their homes.
2. Pray for the extremists who instigated the violence in the name of Islam, that the Lord may convict them and change their hearts.
3. Praise the Lord that the Pakistani authorities have spoken out against the violence and have acted quickly to bring the perpetrators to justice. Pray that they will follow through on this.

*Copyright © Barnabas Fund - 3rd August 2009*

## **A Note from the Donker Family**

To: the congregation of Mt Gambier Presbyterian Church

We just want to acknowledge again before we leave Australia our thanks for your welcome, interest and encouragement especially on our very recent visit.

We are thankful for your 'global' interest and activity including support of us financially and prayerfully. To God be the glory!

*Gerald, Kath,  
Bethany, Jessica & Nathan Donker*

## **Australia - Grounded in the Word**



Motoring enthusiast, adventurer, foster-carer of 8 children and Christian, Glen Mulligan is part of the team 'Raging Rhinos'—including Sebastian La Rose, Glenn McFall and Dave Sherry—and is helping **Bible League** to get God's Word out. The team are taking part in the NSW Variety Bash with a bright orange car, life-sized rhino attached atop and displaying Bible League's logo on the front door panels.

A member of Penrith's Christ Church at the College, in New South Wales, Glen loves people.

"We're all pretty good mates and we like to have adventures together...to get out there and help people," Glen said.

People who are interested in Bible League's ministry will receive a free Bible reading guide, 'Grounded in the Word' to encourage them to read God's Word, grow deeper in their faith and help provide Bibles for Bible League's international ministry.



# The New Shape of World Christianity

| Tim Challies

Those of us who are Western Christians continue to hear reports that the church is migrating to the south and to the east—that as our nations increasingly turn their collective backs on God, God begins fresh work in other parts of the world. Says Mark Noll in his new book *The New Shape of World Christianity*, “It is as if the globe had been turned upside down and sideways. A few short decades ago, Christian believers were concentrated in the global north and west, but now a rapidly swelling majority lives in the global south and east. [If a Christian] Rip Van Winkle wiped a half-century of sleep from his eyes ... and tried to locate his fellow Christian believers, he would find them in surprising places, expressing their faith in surprising ways, under surprising conditions, with surprising relationships to culture and politics, and raising surprising theological questions that would not have seemed possible when he fell asleep.”

Here are a few remarkable facts Noll provides:

- This past Sunday it is possible that more Christian believers attended church in China than in all of so-called “Christian Europe.” Yet in 1970 there were no legally functioning churches in all of China; only in

1971 did the communist regime allow for one Protestant and one Roman Catholic Church to hold public worship services, and this was mostly a concession to visiting Europeans and African students from Tanzania and Zambia.

- This past Sunday more Anglicans attended church in each of Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda than did Anglicans in Britain and Canada and Episcopalians in the United States combined—and the

---

**This past Sunday it is possible that more Christian believers attended church in China than in all of so-called “Christian Europe.”**

---

number of Anglicans in church in Nigeria was several times the number in those other African countries.

- This past Sunday more Presbyterians were at church in Ghana than in Scotland, and more were in congregations of the Uniting Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa than in the United States.

- The past Sunday more people attended the Yoido Full Gospel Church pastored by Yongi Cho in Seoul, Korea, than attended all the churches in significant American denominations like the Christian Reformed Church, the Evangelical Covenant Church or the Presbyterian Church in America.
- This past Sunday the churches with the largest attendance in England and France had mostly black congregations. About half of the churchgoers in London were African or African-Caribbean. Today, the largest Christian congregation in Europe is in Kiev, and it is pastored by a Nigerian of Pentecostal background.
- This past week in Great Britain, at least fifteen thousand Christian foreign missionaries were hard at work evangelizing the locals. Most of these missionaries are from Africa and Asia.



**Tim Challies**, A self-employed web designer, runs the highly regarded blog [challies.com](http://challies.com), and is editor of

Discerning Reader ([www.discerningreader.com](http://www.discerningreader.com)).



## What Makes Our Prayers Acceptable to God?

| Hugh Latimer

What thing is that that makes our prayer acceptable to God? Is it our babbling? No, no; it is not our babbling, nor our long prayer; there is another thing than it. The dignity and worthiness of our

words is of no such virtue.

For whosoever resorts unto God, not in the confidence of his own merits, but in the sure trust of the deserving of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and in his passion; whosoever does invoke the Father of heaven in the trust of Christ’s merits, which offering is the most comfortable and acceptable offering to the Father; whosoever, I say, offers up Christ, which is a perfect offering, he cannot be denied the thing

he desires, so that it be expedient for him to have it.

It is not the babbling of our lips, nor dignity of our words, but the prayer of the heart is the offering that pleases, through the only means of his Son. For our prayer profits us, because we offer Christ to his Father. Whosoever resorts to God without Christ, he resorts in vain. Our prayer pleases because of Jesus Christ, whom we offer. So that it is faith, faith, faith is the matter. It is no prayer that is without faith, it is but a lip-labouring and mockery, without faith; it is but a little babbling.

---

**Hugh Latimer** (ca. 1492-1555) was an influential preacher of the first generation of English reformers. For a time bishop of Worcester, he was martyred as an arch-heretic during the reign of bloody Queen Mary I.

# Looking for Friendship

People are made for friendship. God designed us to be social creatures. The only thing that was said to be "not good" before the Fall was the fact that Adam was alone. In making this statement, the Holy Spirit tells us just how important human relationships are. The divinely ordained sequencing of events in Genesis speaks volumes about the importance of friendship and human interactions. God made Adam. God gave Adam the responsibility of caring for the garden. Then God had Adam name all of the animals. So we know that God communicated with Adam and gave him specific tasks to accomplish. Yet, God makes the observation that there was still no suitable helper for Adam. Remember that the Holy Spirit is recounting these events for our benefit. Don't think that God is sort of making things up as he goes, as he finishes the creation process. We do that—it is very human for us to evaluate the things we accomplish and make adjustments along the way, as we see what works and what doesn't. But God doesn't operate that way. This sequencing of events shows that God intentionally designed Adam to be in relationship with other people. Just as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit existed in perfect harmony and relationship before creation, so Adam was made to live in harmony and relationship with other people. God created Eve and then created the relational structure of the family to be a constant reminder that humanity is to be dependent, submissive, relational and purposeful in all of life. Let's break this down.

The structure of the family is a reminder of dependence because children are born totally dependent upon parents for survival. This is the picture of man's total dependence upon God for everything that he needs, even his next breath. By placing a structure of submission in the family, man is reminded that just as the wife and children are to submit to the leadership of the husband, all people

are to live in joyful submission to God.

The family structure is also relational. God created husband and wife to be sexually and relationally intimate with each other. Adam's response to Eve is one of exclamation and fulfillment. The English Standard Version and The New Living Translation bring out this nuance in their translation of Genesis 2:23: *Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."* (ESV) *"At last!" the man exclaimed. "This one is bone from my bone, and flesh from my flesh! She will be called 'woman,' because she was taken from 'man.'"* (NLT)



The relational aspect of family is also seen in the warm, intimate relationship between parents and children, and between siblings. The family is the structure God provided for us to learn about relationships.

Lastly, God created man to be a creature of purpose. God gave man tasks and a mission statement. Genesis 1:26-28 gives the broad overarching purpose of occupying and controlling the earth for the glory of God. We also get a brief glimpse into some specific tasks with the charge to care for the Garden and to name the animals. Because of the Fall, we can only imagine what other tasks of meaning and purpose would have been given to mankind. But now, in light of the cross of Christ, God has given us another purpose, another mission. We are to make disciples of all peoples, baptizing them and teaching them to obey all that Christ commanded (Matthew 28:19). This aspect of purpose is also embedded in the family structure, because the task of

making disciples begins in the family. Behind all of this is the idea of friendship. Man was designed for friendship—with God and with other people. These friendships would have been based on upon total trust and fidelity. Think of the wonder of a whole planet being united in dependence, submission, relationship and purpose. Because of the Fall, we will have to wait for heaven before we see that reality fully worked out. We see only glimpses now of what could have been in our human relationships, and we live with the overwhelming reality of just how tragic and destructive human relationships have become since the Fall. People are still looking for friendship, but without God, friendship is sought for selfish ends. The world seeks friendships that affirm independence, disdain submission, seek selfish gain, and crave personal fulfillment.

Is it any shock to read in James 4:4 that friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God? We are designed for friendship. But if the search for friends is pursued for selfish ends, then bitterness and brokenness result. A common theme that we hear today is disappointment with people. It seems as though someone is always letting someone else down. Bitterness characterizes relationships. We were made for friendship—but since the Fall, the only way to find true friendship is to know Jesus Christ. Jesus said as much in John 15:15: "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you."

Where are you looking for friendship? Do you look to the world or to God and his people? Friendship—it is a simple yet profound pursuit, one that is common to all of mankind. Help your children understand what true friendship is based upon. The stories of broken friendships dominate our music, our literature, our culture. The truth is that only in God can we know friendship as God intended.

Shepherd Press Newsletter 63,  
31 July 2009