



"And He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over the unclean spirits". - Mark 6:7

*"Haven't caught up with my friends in weeks and now we're outta touch
I've been driving in L.A. and the world it feels too big
Like a floating ball that's bound to break
Snap my psyche like a twig
And I just wanna see if you feel the same as me...
Like you have empathy inside but you don't really care
Like you're fresh outta love but it's been in the air
Am I past repair? A little bit tired of tryin' to care when I don't
A little bit tired of quick repairs to cope"
(from "Numb Little Bug" by Em Beihold, Republic Records, 2022)*

The song-writer has friends but hasn't kept in touch with them. The world feels too big to her. She's lonely and isolated. She needs community. To receive from community, she has to invest in community, but it feels too difficult to force herself to do it. Other solutions she seeks alone leave her unhappy and unfulfilled.

God made us to be in community, not on our own. Without others, we miss out on something critical. Today it has become difficult for us to find true community. We all know people who struggle with isolation, loneliness and social comparison. Yet, throughout Scripture we see how God's gives us the gift of relationship between believers.

In the Old Testament, God put His people into twelve tribes: not tribes they *chose* based on common interests, but tribes they were born into, lived among, and surrounded by all the time. These tribes provided belonging, and grounded God's people in a communal identity.

In the book of Job, when Job is suffering, his wife isn't much help. But three friends show up and sit with him for three days: they just...be...with him. (Now once they open their mouths and try to "help," we realize they should have kept their mouths closed!) Job needed his friends. We need friends too.

When Jesus sent out His disciples in Mark 6, He sent them in pairs and gave them a partner for their work. Jesus knew that His disciples' work would benefit from partnership but suffer from isolation. In fact, He tells them upon their commissioning what they would not need to take with them on their missionary travels: they didn't need to take the basic daily needs of food, clothing, money or protection, but instead He sent them with companionship.

Jesus provides us, too, with friends, and community through the Holy Spirit. He knows we need others and sends us into the world together. The Holy Spirit works through us to share the Gospel and to support one another. Jesus provides us with our community.

Questions/Journal Prompt

- Am I ever lonely when I'm not alone? Am I connecting with other faithful believers?
- How can I connect with the community in my congregation when I am sharing God's love with others?

Prayer

Holy Spirit, bind me together in your eternal love with the people you have placed in my life. Help me to walk alongside others in my congregation as we share the Gospel. In Jesus' name, Amen.