

## **Big Ideas:**

**Part A** - Before sin destroyed our connection with God, there was already a critical problem. And God's perfect answer for this problem was woman. When one gender is oppressed or dishonoured, neither gender gets to fully enjoy their humanity.

**Part B** - Knowing the story of God's original plan for us, informs us of our part today. Knowing the story of God pursuing us throughout history, anchors us today. Hearing the stories of others also walking through life with Jesus and how they have experienced his power, gives us hope to keep walking our race. How will anyone know what is forgivable if we never talk about who we have been able to forgive? How will anyone know how to overcome if we never talk about what we've overcome? Our stories are so powerful.

## **Key Scriptures:**

"The LORD God said, "It isn't good for the man to live alone. I need to make a suitable partner for him, an ezer kenegdo." (Gen 2:18)

Genesis 1:27 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Revelation 12:11, They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony;

## **Key Thoughts for Discussion:**

There are two Hebrew words for alone, - one implies companionship or the lack of, the other is about autonomy. In this verse, it's not good for man to be alone, God is talking to us about **why it's important to live in relationship with others**. It is not good for man to be an isolated island. It is not good for man to be a hermit. It is not good for man to be accountable to no one but himself. It is not good for man to be focused only on himself.

**Ezer Kenegdo**. When God created woman, he called her ezer kenegdo. Of the 19 other times the word ezer is used in the Old Testament, three times, it's used when Israel asks a neighbouring nation for military support, to go into battle against a foe. The other 16 times, it describes the rescuing strength of God to Israel. He is their ezer. Think about that. Before sin entered the world and destroyed the relationship between men & women, the design God had for us, together, was powerful! He knew there was an enemy planning to attack his wonderful creation and he put man and woman together strategically. Allies not enemies. Complementary not contrary. What would a world where both we honoured the image of God in the others look like to you?

**The power of story is critical to our sense of belonging**. As Christians, our faith is built on an event that happened two thousand years ago – the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And that was not a stand alone, out of the blue occurrence – it was the climax of six thousand years of the story of God pursuing humanity through the story of the people of Israel, what we call the Old Testament. The more we understand that story, the better we can understand the magnitude of Jesus' teaching and sacrifice. The more we can grow in understanding the significance of Jesus, the better we know how to live out our place in the story of God's Kingdom today.

On the flipside, what we keep hidden will keep us from knowing the full abundance of life that Jesus is offering. What we keep secret will destroy us. Being vulnerable and open, as scary as it is, actually frees us. We need to be seen and still to be loved and valued. The power of our shared stories is one of the keys to belonging. It's time to put the jug on and pull up a chair beside someone.

**If you're a man**, you need to know that God never meant you to be a lone wolf. He didn't plan masculinity to be defined by isolation or one upmanship. His design for you was to flourish in a family, in a community. Side by side with others.

**If you're a woman**, you need to know that God planned you to be a key part in that community structure, a powerful ally of men in the great battle that was ahead for his perfect creation. The perfect finishing touch to his awesome creation.

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