

MONDAY MANNA

10 June 2019

BREAKING THE SHACKLES OF ISOLATION

By Ken Korkow

Years ago, horse racing was very important in Nebraska at a track called AK-SAR-BEN ("Nebraska" spelled backwards). Prominent individuals emphasized the importance of these sporting events, creating "social elites" and a mythical "kingdom of royalty." Today the track – and its mystique – are gone. Similarly, years ago service clubs and military veterans' organisations were a big deal. In years past, church attendance was popular, almost mandatory for people that wanted to succeed in business. That is no longer the case.

Today we have what we might term a "new normal," a social environment that places diminishing value of genuine relationships. Instead, we have superficial relationships that have created a society of isolated and lonely people. We might know each other by name, and interact when necessary, but we spend little meaningful time with other people – to our mutual detriment.

Recently I was reading a vivid description of the Bible of how relationships are intended to work, refusing to accept merely superficial contact. Here is that picture presented in Acts 2:42-47, describing how the early Church functioned:

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."

We might be tempted to respond, "Well, that only applies to religious gatherings." But in reality, it talks about everyday living, the establishing of a community in which people share their lives and, whenever necessary, even material possessions. I do not see any reason these principles could not be applied in the business and professional world where many of us spend many hours each week.

If you look around and observe this tendency toward isolation and superficiality, don't wait for others to break this cycle. BREAK IT YOURSELF! Invite people into your home to share a meal. And be ready to ask questions; seek ways to understand their backgrounds, the influences that have moulded them, how they think (and why), and what hopes and aspirations they have. Here are some questions I have found helpful in getting to know people, trying to go beneath the surface to build real friendships and relationships:

Where were you born?

What kind of work did your parents or family members do while you were growing up?

Did you move often from one city to another?

What high school did you graduate from? What was it like?

After high school, then what did you do?

How close (first geographically – then relationally) are you to your family?

What do you enjoy about your job? What don't you like about it?

What are your future plans?

Relationships are simple. To have friends – you have to be one. The apostle Paul wrote, "We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well" (1 Thessalonians 2:8)

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

What do you think about the state of relationships in our world today? Do you have many genuine, deep relationships, or are most of them superficial, as described in this "Monday Manna"? What are some of the factors that have contributed to this?

Do you find yourself sometimes feeling isolated and lonely? If so, describe how you feel?

How can we strive to overcome this trend toward isolation and loneliness? Do you think there are any helpful ideas presented in the passage cited, Acts 2:42-47? Explain your answer.

Think of at least one person who has willingly and generously given from their life and invested in yours? Have you found that beneficial? If so, in what ways? How can we try to be a person like that for someone else?

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more about this subject, consider the following passages:

Proverbs 27:17

Ecclesiastes 4:8-12

2 Timothy 2:2

Hebrews 10:23-25