

MAKING ROOM FOR Life

MAKING ROOM FOR LIFE: TRADING CHAOTIC LIFESTYLES FOR CONNECTED RELATIONSHIPS

“SQUEEZING LIVING OUT OF LIFE”

In the introduction to his book, *Making Room for Life*, Randy Frazee writes, “We are an advanced people with vast resources. We’ve invented speed and timesaving technology that couldn’t be fathomed a hundred years ago. We have more discretionary money than any people in history, though we usually spend it all before it even comes in. We have the freedom to choose like no other people in any other time. With all this going for us, why does it feel as though we’ve gone backward instead of forward in our quest for a quality life? And how can we do something about it? That’s the purpose of this book. It is for those who say, ‘That’s

enough!’ – ‘I’ve had it!’ – ‘Things are going to be different!’”

You don’t have to read the book to do the lessons in this series, but you’ll get a whole lot more out of your study and be better prepared to contribute to the discussion in your family or small group if you do. Here’s what to expect. Each of the study guides in the *Making Room for Life* series will contain a passage of Scripture to study, excerpts from *Making Room for Life* to consider, and an opportunity to apply the ideas and theology contained in both to your everyday life so that you can satisfy the connection requirement you were created with.

Your Initial Reaction

What would you like to get out of this series?



1

Look Closely – observe what you are reading.

Genesis 2:8-25

[8] Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. [9] And the Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground – trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. [10] A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. [11] The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. [12] (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin and onyx are also there.) [13] The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush. [14] The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Asshur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. [15] The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. [16] And the Lord God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; [17] but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.” [18] The Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” [19] Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He

brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. [20] So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. [21] So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and closed up the place with flesh. [22] Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. [23] The man said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman’, for she was taken out of man.” [24] For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. [25] The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

Genesis 1:27-28

[27] So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. [28] God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

• Reading to gain an impression – record your thoughts. (3rd Grade – Adult)

• Reading again to see the details (5th Grade – Adult)

- Underline 2:8 and 2:15.
- Highlight 2:18 and 2:20b.
- Put an asterisk in front of the important word “helper” in 2:18 and 2:20b.
- Put parentheses around the logical connecting word “so” indicating *result* in 2:21 and the temporal connecting word “then” in 2:22.
- Circle the verbs “be fruitful,” “increase,” and “fill” in 1:28.
- Box the verbs “subdue,” and “rule over” in 1:28.



2 Think Carefully – interpret what you have read.

• Recognizing the message of the passages (5th Grade – Adult)

“Blessed is the one who belongs” because belonging to community isn’t nice; it’s necessary. After the LORD God created Adam and placed him in the Garden of Eden, he said, “It is not good for the man to be alone” so he created a partner “suitable for him” (Gen. 2:18). The word translated by that phrase in the NIV literally means “according to his opposite.” Eve was a perfect match for Adam in that she, too, bore the image of God, but she was not identical to him. She was his helper, but God didn’t create her to be used as a convenience, just to help Adam around the Garden. She was his helper in that she provided what was missing in him. Put differently, Adam could not fulfill God’s purpose for humanity by himself. One author writes, “the man is not yet as God had planned [him] to be. Adam is alone, and that state is not good – the only thing in creation that is not good in God’s opinion. Since the idea of ‘good’ describes that which is appropriate and fitting within the purpose of creation, the man’s being alone was not good, because he could not do all that God had planned for humankind. *Being alone is a negative concept, for the full life is found in community*” (Allan P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 126, italics added). God has never been alone even though he is one being, for He exists eternally as three persons. The creation of woman was no afterthought on God’s part – no divine “by the way.” He never intended for Adam to remain alone in the Garden.

Neither did the LORD intend for the first couple to remain alone in the world. After creating them, “God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’” The domestic and dominion mandates contained in this verse imply the development of community. God did not create the earth to be the habitation of one man or one couple. God wanted to fill the earth with people connected to each other by relationships, and he wanted them to rule over his creation as his stewards, so he expanded the community of marriage. “Community as God ordained it was not an incidental concern of his nor did it happen haphazardly as the serendipitously creative result of a transcendental cosmic brainstorm. Community is deeply grounded in the nature of God. It flows from who God is. Because he is community, he creates community. It is his gift of himself to humans” (Gilbert Bilezikian, *Community 101*, 27).

Our need for community has been confirmed by recent research into the relationship of community to children with emotional and behavioral problems. *Hardwired to Connect: The Scientific Case for Authoritative Community* released September 9, 2003 by The Commission on Children at Risk concluded that children (and by inference adults, too) are biologically “hardwired” for enduring attachments to other people and for moral and spiritual meaning. According to the study, rising rates of depression, anxiety, attention deficit, conduct disorders, thoughts of suicide and other serious mental, emotional, and behavioral problems among children and adolescents is largely due to a lack of connectedness to other people and to moral and spiritual meaning. The solution is meaningful involvement in groups of people who are committed to one another over time that model and instill in them what it means to be a good person. Such groups or “authoritative communities” provide the connectedness our children need.

Can there be any doubt that community is necessary?

The Point of this Lesson

God created us for community, but our contemporary lifestyle precludes us from experiencing it fully.

• Digging deeper into its meaning (5th Grade – Adult)

2:18 *helper* The Hebrew word translated here is not a demeaning term; in most instances God is the one described as “helper.” So the woman was not a subordinate worker created to help the over-burdened man get his job done. “The word essentially describes one who provides what is lacking in the man, who can do what the man alone cannot do” (Ross, 126). With the creation of Eve mankind could fulfill the purpose for which we were created.

• Answering Interpretive Questions - For older learners (5th Grade – Adult)

1. Describe the only thing in creation that was “not good” in God’s opinion.

2. Why did God make a woman and bring her to the man?

3. Explain the relationship of the domestic mandate, “be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth,” to community.

4. To what extent do you agree that the necessity of community can be inferred from the creation of Adam and Eve, the parents of the human race? Explain.

5. In the introduction to Part One of *Making Room for Life* Randy claims that many of us have “squeezed living out of life.” We suffer from “crowded loneliness” caused by our busy lifestyles, which we fund through tireless work. He writes, “The initial thought is that the more financial resources you have, the more likely you are to have a stress-free, relaxing life. In reality, though, studies show that with increased resources comes increased complexity, not simplicity. If they aren’t especially careful, the ones who have more actually have more with which to destroy themselves” (17). What would you say to testify *for* or *against* this statement?

6. Think about the number of worlds you have to manage – relationships that draw on your reserve of “social capital.” Common examples include spouse, children, in-laws, friends, work, church, school, sports, etc. Then look at each and ask yourself, “Is this really just one world or are there worlds within it that I have to manage separately?” (For example, do you have more than one child? Do they go to more than one school? Are they involved in more than one sport?) So how many different worlds of relationships do you have to manage? To what extent would you say the people in one world are involved in your other worlds: very involved, somewhat involved, hardly involved, or not involved at all?

7. Is church part of the problem or its solution? Explain.

8. After lamenting in Chapter 2 that in America “success is defined by the next purchase,” Randy contends that we need to make a shift from a lifestyle of accumulation to a lifestyle of conversation. What do you think he means?

9. He goes on to argue that community is essential to life. What do you make of the studies that suggest meaningful connections to a social group, i.e. involvement in community is helpful, and conversely lack of involvement is harmful, to one’s physical health and emotional well-being?

3

Respond wisely – apply what you have read. (5th Grade – Adult)

• How might Christ followers respond to the message of this passage?

1. Acknowledge that you need community.
2. Consider whether your children belong to “authoritative communities.”
3. Get connected to a small group if you aren’t.
4. Reconsider your definition of “the good life”.
5. Relate the message of this passage to your life. How might you live differently tomorrow based on the point of this lesson?

4

Gather together – discuss what you have read.

• For older learners (5th Grade – Adult)

1. Read together this week’s passage from Step 1 or your Bible.
2. Read “Recognizing the message of the passage” along with the point of the lesson in Step 2.
3. Discuss your individual responses in Step 3.



• For families

In this series, you will find one family night activity each week. Depending on the age of your children, you will pick and choose from the ideas below.

Pray

Pray through the number of relationships, volume of noise, amount of activity and moments of community that your family engages in on a weekly basis. Ask God to help you assess your needs in these areas.

Act

With another family, complete the “Community-Building Exercise” below. This is also found at the end of chapter 1.

Go to your local mall as a group. Observe how many people are there but how little interaction is taking place. Count the number of people who are alone. Then treat yourself to a coffee, soda, or a dip of ice cream.

Discuss

While you are enjoying a soda or ice cream, discuss your observations. Describe the people that you saw. Then, discuss the reasons why you enjoy being together rather than alone.

• Suggestions for Small Groups

1. Read *Making Room for Life* and select topics you want to discuss from the list found at the end of each chapter.
2. If you successfully made room for life, what would your life look like?
3. Discuss what to do to reduce the number of worlds you have to manage.
4. Discuss the difference between having friends at church and experiencing biblical community.

About the Authors

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Karla Hagan (B.S. in Education from Baylor University, M.A. in Educational Administration, University of North Texas.) Karla has worked as a teacher, curriculum coordinator, writer and children’s pastor. She spent 6 years as a high school English teacher. During this time, she also developed and coordinated the Language Arts curriculum for Fairhill School and wrote curriculum for Student Life ministries and Group Publishing. She then spent 2 years as Associate Pastor to Children at Bent Tree Bible Fellowship in Carrollton before accepting her current position. Her husband, Ron, and children, Maya, Ada, and Carson make up her wonderful family.