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We Need Each Other

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We Need Each Other

My kids hopped in the van after their first day of summer camp. “It was great, Mommy!” they shouted in unison. However, when only one lunchbox was propelled onto the front seat, I asked where the other one was.

Trust me. Forgotten lunchboxes do not smell great when you find them!

“Mommy, I forgot it in the car this morning [Dad had dropped them off in his car], but don’t worry, we shared this lunch!” My heart went from absolute dread to absolute joy in seconds. Every parent fears not being able to help their child. To learn that they now realized they could help each other reminded me of the need we have for social supports in our lives — family, friends and even professional helpers. God designed us to live in community, to help each other out, so we do not have to face life’s difficulties alone.

Who, amongst your family and friends, are your supports? When we are younger, our main helpers are our parents. As we grow, our network expands to include more family and friends. We may have certain people with whom we share more of our spiritual journey and people with whom we talk about our finances. Our prayer partners may change over time. All of this is expected, but the important thing is to have a network and use it.

Ecclesiastes 4:9–12 lists some different ways that others can help in times of trouble, how they ease each other’s burdens, or work together to be stronger. Since our country is still trying to contain the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and social isolation measures are still in place, this is a good time to reassess who our supports are right now. For my boys, they’ve learned to help each other on the playground, with spelling words and, apparently, with lunch! However, they still come to mom or dad when they are scared or their tummy hurts.

The pandemic may have shifted who we are close to, or who we can depend on. Therefore, we need to reassess. As the school year is starting and the weather is changing, we may need different things and, maybe, different people. Without support, we are more likely to be lonely, anxious, stressed or depressed. We can counter that by strengthening our social networks, both family and friends! I truly believe social connections are an integral part of God’s design of humans, one which we honor by both giving and accepting support from others.

Sometimes we go through major life events that require more support than just a listening ear or half of a peanut butter sandwich. The same God who gave us family and friends, provides knowledge for counselors, social workers and psychiatrists to provide a different type of support. When you need professional help, please trust that God has prepared them to support you, too.

Remember that God is faithful and, with every temptation, also provides a way out. May your network always include someone who can help you — and maybe even share their lunch! ■

Melissa Ponce-Rodas is an assistant professor of Psychology at Andrews University. She and her husband, Segundo, have twin boys, Samuel and Jonathan. Her research and advocacy revolve around the intersections of religion and domestic violence.



▲ Melissa Ponce-Rodas