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By Rev. Drs. Casey and Bob Baggott
Community Church of Vero Beach

What You Need to Survive

Do you remember the book, *Tuesdays with Morrie*, by Mitch Albom? The book chronicles the conversations between Albom and a favorite elderly professor of his, Morrie Swartz, who is dying of ALS. During the last weeks of his life, when Morrie is almost entirely immobilized and dependent on others for every aspect of his care, he offers Albom a remarkable insight. He says that when we are infants we need people to survive. And when we are dying we need people to survive. But amazingly enough, in between, we need each other even more!

What do you think about the old professor's assertion? Do you think we need each other to survive? Unfortunately, it seems that many of us forget our tremendous dependency upon one another. Instead we often slide through life with a sense of our own self-sufficiency, and only in rare and startling moments do we finally gain insight into our inescapable interconnectedness and our tremendous need for one another.

A thought-provoking piece by writer, Michael Walton, asks us to consider all our deep human interconnectedness this way: take something as simple as an article of clothing you are presently wearing. Is it yours alone? Where did it come from? Try to imagine the process from raw material, natural or synthetic. Is it cotton, grown from a seed? Who planted the seed? Is it polyester, made from petroleum products? What ancient fossils deep within the earth made the oil? How many different humans have touched and shaped the stuff of your clothing? Field workers? Rough necks on oilrigs? Who wove the material? What mind conceived the technology of weaving? Whose artistic soul imagined the colors and designs? Someone sewed it. Someone folded it. Someone inspected it. Someone shipped it. Someone hung it on the rack at the store. Someone sold it to you. Now contemplate the question again. Is it yours alone?

Of course, the thoughtful answer must surely be that it is only temporarily or even tentatively yours, because a whole host of people are connected to it. How many more people are connected to you through the food you eat, the home in which you live, the car you drive, the books you read, the internet you surf, the cell phone you answer? And on and on it goes.

We dare not allow ourselves the arrogance to ever believe we do it alone. So surely the old professor was right. Between the two hospitals, the one we are born in and the one we will die in, we need each other desperately to survive.

And of course, it is not only that we need each other for physical survival. We need each other for emotional and spiritual survival, as well. Perhaps that is why one of the earliest statements about human interconnectedness in the Biblical texts comes to us from the book of Genesis, where in God's voice we hear the words: "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner."

Who are your partners in life? Be grateful for all the ways they support you – and for your privilege of supporting them. After all, it is not good to be alone!