

Number 133

Why You Need a Band of Brothers

by David Delk

Tom recently shared with me the story of Bill, an old friend of his who he reconnected with about a year ago. Bill was at a turning point in his life and expressed a desire to get together. Since then, Tom has been meeting with Bill every week. During that time, Bill has consistently taken two steps forward and three steps back in his spiritual life. Tom has felt frustrated, taken for granted, angry, and ambivalent – and sometimes all at the same time.

The other day Bill and Tom were at lunch and Tom shared again with Bill the joy of complete surrender to Jesus Christ. Bill was at the breaking point. At 57 years old, he finally shared how sexual addiction was ruling and ruining his life. In a spirit of brokenness, he's now ready to move forward. Tom and he are going to attend a group meeting together for Bill to begin the process of healing.

What did God use to break through strongholds that had been present for thirty years in Bill's life? Was it some brilliant theological insight? Or perhaps a new counseling technique honed from years of research studies? Was it the perfect book that opened Bill's eyes? It was none of these things.

God used a friendship.

Men and Friends

Men today battle an insidious loneliness. The world tells them to fill this void with success, power, activity, sex, money, building the perfect family, living through their kids, technology, toys, and on and on. Every time a man realizes one substitute is empty the world puts another one forward as the answer to his longing.

Most men are surrounded by people. They work with men. They have neighbors on both sides. They may attend a church on Sunday mornings and sit in the crowd. They may even call some of these people friends. But in most cases they are not friends in the biblical sense. Most men have many acquaintances but lots of men have no real friends.

And the truth is that it is impossible for a man to stay on track without friends. It's not that he will probably get off track. It's absolutely certain that a man who does not bind himself to other men will lose his way.

Made for Relationships

Why do we have such a deep-seated need for friendships? Consider Genesis 1. In that chapter five times – at the end of each day – God says the things he made were “good.” And at the end of the sixth day, after he had made man, he said it was “Very Good.” So if you were listening to this account, you would hear the repetition – “it was good...it was good...it was good...it was good...it was good...it was very good.”

So imagine your surprise when you got to Genesis 2:18 and heard “...it was not good.” What was not good? “It was not good for man to be alone.”

God is three persons in one being. He has existed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit from eternity. They are an eternal band of brothers in the trinity.

Adam as a single person could not fully live out the image of God without being in a relationship with another person. Marriage is the most intimate of these relationships, but the scriptures teach the power and necessity of other types of relationships as well.

So if you are not living in authentic relationships it is impossible for you to do what you were made to do – to reflect the image of God through your life. And in a world of temptation and struggle it will be impossible for you to stay on track.

What God Does Through Relationships

God uses relationships to encourage us to keep the faith and walk with Christ. You need friends who can “stimulate you to love and good deeds” (Hebrews 10:24). You need men in your life with whom you can “bear one another's burdens”

(Galatians 6:2). The great commandment of Christ is to “Love the lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:27).

Having casual acquaintances isn't good enough – we need to bind ourselves to a few other men who can help us become all God intends for us to be. This can be difficult. It's often easier to just do our own thing without taking the time and energy to let another man get close. But like many things that are convenient, it's also counterfeit. God uses real friendships to shape and mold us for His glory.

Why Leaders Need a Band of Brothers

More than anyone else, leaders need authentic friendships. Not only are leaders in special need of accountability because of their position (James 3:1), but leaders need even more encouragement and support because of the difficulty of their work.

Leaders also need to be part of a shared mission. Your effectiveness as a leader will always be limited if you strike out on your own to do things by yourself. You need to learn to compromise, submit, and ally yourself with the mission of others. This is what it means to be the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12).

Biblically, God's calling on you to be part of the body is equal to his calling on your life in your area of passion. There are things we learn by being in a team that we cannot learn any other way. And there are things that God does through us in a team that He will not do any other way.

It may be that God's first call on your life as a leader is to bind yourself with other men, and then to pursue the passion He has given you. Most leaders do it the other way around. They have a dream from God and they pursue it above all else. If other men want to join them, fine. But if those men don't agree or aren't headed in the same direction on the same time frame then these leaders leave them behind without a thought.

The scriptures teach something else. The scriptures teach that we should work together as a body to help every Christian become mature in Christ. It's almost certain that God won't give you a dream without providing the context of relationships for it to be lived out.

Don't abandon relationships quickly or easily. Perhaps God has things for you there that you won't get anywhere else. Perhaps your ideas aren't as good as you think. Perhaps you need to be on a different time table. Whatever the case, submit yourself to a band of brothers for the glory of God.

That's why Man in the Mirror is creating a community for leaders who disciple men – so they can connect for encouragement, learning, and greater efficiency. That's what *The Fourth Seed* is all about – creating a dialogue among leaders who disciple men. It's a great tool for you and your leadership team to use to deepen your friendships with one another.

No matter the models of our culture, don't go it alone as a leader. Allow God to place you in a band of brothers. Serve them, love them, fight for them – and allow them to do the same for you.

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