

Two Are Better Than One: Walking Together

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For the past few articles we have been looking at Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, 12.

⁹Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their efforts.

¹⁰For if either falls, his companion can lift him up; but pity the one who falls without another to lift him up.... ¹²And if someone overpowers one person, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not easily broken. (CSB)

In the first post regarding this scripture I shared with you this is a good description for men to apply Proverbs 27:17, *"Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another"* (ESV), into their lives to encouragement men as they develop an intentional relationship with God.

In the previous article we looked at verse 9 encouraging men to work together. In this article we will look at verse 10 encouraging men to **walk together**.

In the last decade one of my joys has been to pour my life into other men.

1 Thessalonians 2:8 shows the example of this as Paul and his companions spoke of their passion towards the people of Thessalonica;

⁸We cared so much for you that we were pleased to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us.

Eleven years ago, while I was going through some health trails of my own I was invited to join a small group of men on Saturday morning from my church. I discovered this group of men were men who not only loved the Lord but had a strong desire to pour their lives into other men.

- Men who encourage other men as they are going through their own struggles of life.
- Men who share their own battles and how they walk through those struggles.
- Men who taught God's word.
- Men who encourage scripture memorization.
- Men who would hold me accountable. Ask me some hard questions about integrity, bible reading, my devotion time.
- Men who would pray with me and be available whenever necessary.

This had a dramatic effect on my life. This drew me closure in my walk with God, more than anything else I had ever done in the church. It helped me to develop an intimate and intentional relationship with God. More so than I had ever known. And because of that time in my life, God gave me a passion – a burden – to minister to men.

Today I meet with men regularly. As an example, I meet with one group of men once a week early in the morning at a local McDonald's restaurant before they head off to work. We talk about their past week; their rewards and their struggles. I ask them what they are reading, in the bible and in general. I ask them about their devotion time. We study God's word. We pray. This is Walking Together as men deal with the issues of life and the culture of the world we live in. Encouraging men by letting them know they are not alone and there is someone there that can help pull them out of the pit if they fall.

We men have a knack of trying to do life on our own. But when you look at scriptures you see this is not how Jesus showed us. Jesus pulled 12 men close to him to teach and encourage. He pulled three of those men – Peter, James, and John – even closure to pour His life into those men.

Jesus modeled what it really means to disciple – to mentor. To go after the real issues that affect an individual's relationship with God and others. And the only way you can do that is to develop an intentional relationship with others.

Jesus taught his followers to make disciples, not converts. The way a believer moves from one to the other is through the intentional discipleship of their character, knowledge, vision, and skills. While evangelism brings people to Christ, discipleship brings people to "*full growth* in Christ" so they can be "equipped for every good work" (Eph 4:15, 2 Tim 3:17).

When Jesus pulled those 12 men into his circle He knew what we all know: men are like icebergs – we only see the tip; but, there's a much deeper spiritual drama unfolding below the waterline.

Men in the church today face the same challenges and frustrations as men outside of the church. That should not be. For example, in the book 'No Man Left Behind' it states that for every ten men in the church;

- Nine will have children who leave the church.
- Eight will find their jobs dissatisfying.
- Six will pay the monthly minimum on their credit card bills.
- Five will have a major problem with pornography.
- Four will get divorced – affecting one million children each year.
- Only one will have a biblical world-view.
- And, all ten will struggle to balance work and family.

Men, we need each other. As I talk with men, without exception, every one of them will tell me they struggle the most when they are alone. Every one of us need a man who can walk alongside of us. This is what discipleship is all about.

When we talk to men we find that though they may not be showing it on the outside, we find that many men are hurting. Something is holding them back from feeling fully alive.

They inevitably mention one or more of seven inner aches and pains that most men feel when they are trying to do this journey on their own:

- I just feel like I'm in this alone.
- I don't feel like God cares about me personally – not really.
- I don't feel like my life has a purpose – it feels random.
- I have these destructive behaviors that keep dragging me down.
- My soul feels dry.
- My most important relationship is not healthy.
- I don't feel like I'm doing anything that will make a difference and leave the world in a better place.

So, what do we do about it. What do we do to help these men and how will it impact the church?

We will discuss that next time as we look at verse 12 of Ecclesiastes 4. It will be the third action that we need to apply in our lives as we encourage men in their walk with Christ – the action of **Watching Together**.

Together in the adventure and challenge to disciple men – Mike.