

MEN'S LIFE BLOOMINGTON & GOD @ WORK

Tuesday, February 25, 2020

Guy Friendships not Dud(e) Friendships

Overview: The importance of intimate guy friendships should not be surprising when we think of the beauty and form of relationships embodied in the Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. There is great mystery in the trinity, but the bible weaves a continuous story showing **intentionality, intimacy, sacrifice, honesty, and trust** as it tells the describes these relationships. There are also several examples in the bible of the depth and importance of guy friends (David and Jonathan, Elijah and Elisha, Daniel and his companions, Paul and Epaphroditus). As men in the Lord, let us intentionally foster meaningful, intimate, guy friendships so that we can be a light to our families, our communities, and even the acquaintances God places before us.

God At Work In My Life: Sean Chambers

Segment Questions:

- How does the purpose of Men's Life support the importance of guy friendships? In what ways is the group friendship different than the one on one guy friendships discussed in this lesson and biblical examples.
- How does investing in intimate guy friendships help us in our interactions with our families, communities, and everyday people in our lives?
- As you look at the 4 examples of biblical guy relationships, discuss the importance of intentionality, intimacy, sacrifice, honesty, and trust in developing and fostering these types of bonds.
- Paul was not a "lone ranger" in his ministry or life, even though he remained single and was often physically alone. I gave one example of Paul's guy friendships, think of others and how relationships influenced and strengthened his work for God.
- How can mentoring someone be a form of building guy friendships and in what ways is it different?
- As you consider the relationship of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, how did their friendship impact their lives under Babylon rule? What traits do you see in their friendship?

Action Questions:

- What actions are you taking or are you willing to take to deepen your guy relationships? Share examples to help each other think differently or get new ideas.
- Intentionality seems dominant in the biblical examples of guy friendships. Our lives ebb and flow regarding our ability to be intentional or us needing a guy friend to be intentional towards us. Share how you have balanced this in your life.
- Take a moment to think of those guy friendships which have influenced you the most. Consider steps you are committed to do this coming week, month, and year to let them know their impact or to recommit to intentionally building a deeper relationship. Share if willing (names aren't necessary)

Personal Prayer: God, we thank you for the examples of guy friendships in the bible. As men, we can often be fooled by the world to think being a man means to be independent, strong, and able to fix all problems ourselves. You clearly give us a different example. As disciples of Christ, help us to be intentional in fostering meaningful, intimate, and open guy friendships to help us and to help them in the labor you have set before for us so that we are a light to our families and our communities. In Christ's name, amen.

Introduction

As I thought of my topic, being on male friendships, I went to the Men's Life webpage to recall our purpose, which is stated: "Men's Life exists to support men in their walk with Christ. We come together to discuss the issues and the problems that are common to me. To support each other, to pray for one another, and to glorify God." I am drawn to this purpose and I have been blessed to be part of Men's Life for more than 8 years, maybe 10 years. I owe my knowing and coming to Men's Life to Rick Thatcher who I met at ECC and overtime he encouraged me to consider coming, and I did. I consider Rick an important brother in Christ, dear friend, and one whom I know I can depend on. Rick and I haven't spent a lot of time alone or socializing together, but through Men's Life and being church members together (serving on Deacons and Elders) that bond has formed. I am thankful for his friendship, and I can walk through several more friendships with men in this room. As I thought of how this happens here, I turned to scripture and biblical examples of male friendships which led me to 5 key words – **intentionality, intimacy, sacrifice, honesty, and trust**. Gratefully, I think we have been able to build practices to foster these 5 key words as a group which isn't easy. Today, though, I want to discuss the next level; something that I hope we have all developed with some specific men and are willing to continue to foster and grow deeper. I'm speaking of building intimate, one on one, accountable guy friendships where we truly do life and see life with each other. This isn't something we will need or will be able to do with all men in this room or all men in our lives - so don't stress or feel guilty. But, if we are willing to be prayerful and intentionally invest in key men in our lives, I believe we will grow in our faith and commitment to God (As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another. Proverbs 27:17) and in turn, feed this community we call Men' Life and ultimately help bring a piece of God's kingdom to our greater community. As one example, I mentioned how much I appreciate my friendship with Rick and owe being part of Men's Life to his interest in me. However, we haven't grown an intimate one on one friendship as I am concentrating on today; and that is ok. A deeper friendship, one which I have been blessed to grow in a more intimate way, is with Aaron Brown. We are in similar stages of life with kids, family pressures, and work pressures, as well as many common interests. By each of us willingly and intentionally finding time to spend together in meaningful conversation and accountability, as well as trusting to share our struggles and true walks with God, we have formed a guy friendship to love and support each other, our families, and the communities, like Men's Life, which we both care about. There are beautiful examples of guy friendships in the bible which I share here:

David and Jonathan (1 Samuel 18-23): **18:3** And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. **20:17** And Jonathan had David reaffirm his oath out of love for him, because he loved him as he loved himself.

Elijah and Elisha (1 Kings 19:15-21, 2 Kings 2:1-16): Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here; the LORD has sent me to Bethel (Jericho, Jordan)." But Elisha said, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you." Repeated 3x.

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah (Daniel 1-3): 1:3-13 Together, they refuse to eat from the King's table; Chapter 2, Dream; "Then Daniel returned to his house and explained the matter to his friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. ¹⁸ He urged them to plead for mercy from the God of heaven.."

Paul and Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25-27): "Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs.... ²⁷ Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. ."

Proverbs 18:24 (NIV) - One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

Last, let us not forget about Jesus and his disciples who traveled and lived together for 3 years. As men in the Lord, let us intentionally foster meaningful, intimate, guy friendships, acknowledging one another as brothers, companions in labors, and fellow soldiers of the truth, so that we can be a light to our families, our communities, and the acquaintances God places before us.