

Why We Need Committed Relationships in Master Builders

by Pete Beck

Many love fellowship or ministry but are not interested in real commitment and the safety it brings. One of my favorite observations is that "the banana that stays with the bunch doesn't get peeled."

We have to want help and be humble enough to foster the relationships that will provide covering and help in the time of need. Fortunately, there are many lone pastors and independent brethren in the Kingdom today who are sincerely looking for fellowship and identity. This is undoubtedly a result of the moving of the Spirit of God. Many have come to understand their vulnerability in standing alone. They know that real effectiveness is the result of being part of a larger group. Thus, the Spirit of God is creating a great yearning for unity and this is certainly a good thing.

Scripture gives many examples of the importance of working with others as well as the dangers inherent in remaining alone. Perhaps the most poignant example is found in the book of Judges and the story of the people of Laish:

"So they went to Laish, to a people quiet and secure; and they struck them with the edge of the sword and burned the city with fire. There was no deliverer, because it was far from Sidon, and they **had no ties with anyone**"

(Judges 18:27-28). Emphasis mine

The people of Laish were peaceful, minding their own business and by all accounts were independent and happy. Undoubtedly, they never considered that a day would come when they would need help from outside. Yet that day did come and there was no deliverance, because they were far from help (Sidon) and they had no ties with anyone.

Scripture is clear that the more dedicated a man or woman is and the more aligned with God's purposes, the more the enemy will target him or her. This is especially true for leaders and their churches. He will attack wherever he finds a weak point, unhealed wound or unconfessed sin. Satan and his demonic forces hate the Church and every believer in it. He especially hates shepherds, for he would like to scatter the flock.

One of the ways God has ordered for our protection from the enemy is to receive help from the brethren. The Body of Christ is made up of many parts, gifts, and levels of understanding. The members of the Body need each other (see I Corinthians 12:14 -26 and Ephesians 4:7-16). These Scriptures are to be fulfilled in each local church as its members function together and through five-fold ministry relationships.

Yet even though we are technically members of the Body, we can be alone in the battle.

When David sought Uriah's death he devised a plan whereby he would die in battle by the hand of the enemy (II Samuel 11:14 -15). David knew he could achieve Uriah's death by ordering him into the gate where the battle was fiercest and simultaneously ordering Joab to withdraw support from around him. Uriah's fate was sealed. Chances for our survival are slim if we are alone in the midst of the battle. Yet that is exactly the situation that many leaders find themselves in today-alone in the midst of the battle. This does not mean they have no acquaintances. It means they have not developed relationships of depth, trust and unity sufficient to achieve a true covering.

To look a positive example, Saul's first act as king of Israel was to rally all Israel to save the men of Jabesh-Gilead (I Samuel 11). Surrounded by the enemy, these men in desperation sent messages to their brethren to come and help them. Saul came and brought Israel with him. What an example of the Body of Christ in action! A great deliverance was wrought as the men of Jabesh-Gilead recognized their limitation and called upon their brethren to help.

Another good example can be seen in the life of David. During his lifetime, David faced many power struggles as well as betrayal by those closest to him. His son Absalom, his son Adonijah, and his nephew, Joab. Yet because he had established a strong relationship with his mighty men they faithfully served him in his time of need. At one point they even rescued him from several giants who would certainly have killed him (II Sam. 15:21). David's relationships with his mighty men are not only a key lesson on the value of being a good leader, but of the need to be rightly related to others in order to take and maintain a kingdom.

Perhaps the writer of Ecclesiastes summed it up best:

"Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up. Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; but how can one be warm alone? Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken"
(Ecc, 4:9-12)

In recent years, we have all bemoaned the sad witness of the nationally known ministers who have become public spectacles. As this was happening many pastors have said, "If only he had had a relationship with someone who could speak into his life." Yet very often the fallen brother was proud, independent or cynical and even in crisis could not see the value of counsel and real cover. If he had, he might have avoided falling so hard. Apostolic fathers ought to cultivate such trust and relationships above all.

The Danger of Independence

There are many leaders today who, while recognizing their need for fellowship, don't really want any close relationships that might involve commitment on any level. Some of them have had horrific experiences in the past relating to legal or ambitious men who used them or their churches for their own self-aggrandizement. Many just don't see any need for help or are too proud to admit they don't know everything

But, let us return to Laish. When those who came to Laish to conquer it arrived, this is how they saw the inhabitants of the district:

"So the five men departed and went to Laish. They saw the people who were there, how they dwelt safely, in the manner of the Sidonians, quiet and secure. There were no rulers in the land who might put them to shame for anything. They were far from the Sidonians,

and they had no ties with anyone" (Judg. 18:7)

What a picture of a confident people feeling safe and secure with no need for anyone else. There were no rulers (magistrates) in the land to which they were accountable. They had no outside relationships. They lived "like" the Sidonians, but they were far away and had no relationship or accountability to them or anyone. And the truth is, no one else had a relationship or was accountable to them either! No wonder they were such an easy prey.

The fact that the people of Laish dwelt alone and therefore perished is not meant to suggest that outside help will always save the day. Yet it is God's best that we receive help from one another since none of us have all the insights and gifts necessary to solve every problem. Nor do we have ability to perform every task. Solomon perhaps said it best; "Where no counsel is, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety" (Proverbs 11:4).

There are special people that God puts into our lives to help us develop in the natural; parents, teachers, coaches, Marine Corp drill instructors, mentors in business and the like. Our progress nearly always depends on our ability to receive, assimilate and put into practice what they can teach us. In the same way, God gives us others to help us in the development of our lives spiritually as well. Just as natural development depends on the assistance of others, so life in God requires those special relationships to guide us in the way. Why would God want us to be independent in our spiritual development? We need to earnestly look therefore and be open to those special relationships that God provides so that we can receive the maximum benefit in our spiritual journey.