

**IT'S NOT
GOOD FOR
MAN
TO BE ALONE**

THE CASE FOR BROTHERHOOD

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It's Not Good for Man to Be Alone

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Introduction: The Manufacturer's Warning

When a car is built, the manufacturer does not only tell you what the car can do. He also tells you what is not good for it.

Do not put this fuel in it. Do not drive it past this speed. Do not leave it standing for months without starting it. Nobody argues with the manufacturer. He built the thing. He knows what it was made from, what it was made for, and what will destroy it. So we take the manual seriously, and we service the car on time, and we do not put diesel in a petrol tank because we feel like being independent that day.

Now hear this. In Genesis, after God made man, He looked at what He had made and, for the first time in the whole story, He said something was not good.

Not the darkness. Not the deep. Not the empty earth before He filled it. Man alone.

“It is not good for man to be alone.”

Chapter 1

It Is Not Good for Man to Be Alone

Read Genesis chapter 1 slowly and count how many times God stops and evaluates His own work.

Light, good. Land and sea, good. Vegetation, good. Sun, moon, stars, good. Fish and birds, good. Animals, good. Then He makes man and looks at everything He has made, and this time it is very good.

Good, good, good, good, very good.

Then Genesis 2:18. “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.”

The first “not good” in the Bible is not sin. Sin has not entered yet. There is no serpent in the conversation, no fruit eaten, no shame. The world is still perfect. Man is standing in a garden he did not have to work for, in the presence of God Himself, with no enemy, no lack, no sickness, no death.

And God says it is not good.

Sit with that. A man can have God, a job, a purpose, a beautiful environment and a clean record, and still be in a state that God calls not good, because he is by himself.

Two statements, not one

Now here is the part we usually collapse into one sentence, and we lose something when we do it.

God makes two separate statements in that verse.

The first: **it is not good for man to be alone.**

The second: **he needs help, a helper comparable to him.**

We hear them as one thing because we already know the story ends with a woman. But watch what God does immediately after He speaks. Verse 19. He does not make a woman.

He makes animals.

“Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them.”

Why? Because the first problem was the alone problem. And company solves alone. God brings Adam a garden full of living things, and Adam names every one of them. He is no longer by himself. There is noise, there is movement, there is life around him. The first statement has been addressed.

But then verse 20 tells us the second problem is still standing: “But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.”

None of them could help him. None of them were compatible with him. He can name a lion but a lion cannot carry anything with him. He can name an eagle but an eagle cannot understand him.

So God puts him to sleep and makes Eve.

Two problems. Two solutions. Alone was solved by presence. Incompatible was solved by a woman.

Why this matters for you

If you read the verse as one statement, the only application you ever get is: get married.

But if you read it as two, you suddenly see that God treats “you are by yourself” as a problem in its own right, a problem He moved on before He ever addressed the marriage part.

Which means this. A married man can still be alone. A man can have a wife in the house and no brother in his life, no father figure, no one he tells the truth to, and he is still living inside the first “not good.” And a single man is not automatically disqualified from obedience here. He can have brothers. He can have people. He can refuse to be alone long before he ever stands at an altar.

The verse is not primarily about a wedding. It is about the make of man.

You were not built to carry your life by yourself. You were not built to see your own blind spots. You were not built to be your own counsellor, your own corrector, your own encourager, your own witness. When you try, you are not being strong. You are running the engine on the wrong fuel and calling the smoke a personality.

Now let me show you what happens to men who ignore the manual.

Chapter 2

Men Who Were Alone

Five men. Five different roads into isolation. One consistent outcome.

Watch each of them carefully, because you will recognise yourself in at least one.

Cain: Isolated by Sin

Cain did not start alone.

That is the first thing to notice about him. He had a brother. There was another man on this earth who came from the same womb, worshipped the same God, worked the same ground. Cain had what most men are desperate for and he had it without trying, by birth.

Then jealousy came. Then bitterness. And in Genesis 4:8 he calls his brother out to the field and kills him.

And in one act, he is alone.

The question God asks

Now watch God. He comes to Cain and He asks a question: “Where is Abel your brother?”

God knows where Abel is. God is not gathering information. God asks questions to expose what a man is holding.

And Cain answers with the line that men have been quoting ever since, usually without knowing they are quoting a murderer: “I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?”

The answer to that question is yes.

Yes, you are your brother’s keeper. Yes, you are supposed to know where he is. Yes, his condition is your business. That is not being nosy, that is not being soft, that is the design. You are your brother’s keeper because it is not good for him to be alone, and you are the answer to that in his life the same way he is the answer to it in yours.

Cain asks the question sarcastically, like the idea is ridiculous. Many men live in that sarcasm. Who is going to check on me? Who am I to check on him? Everyone is grown. Everyone has their own life.

That is Cain’s theology and Cain’s outcome is on record.

What met him in the place of alone

Read what happens to him after. God tells him the ground will no longer yield to him, and that he will be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth.

And Cain says something that tells you exactly what isolation feels like from the inside: “My punishment is greater than I can bear.”

He is not repenting. He is describing his state. Too heavy. Too much. Cannot carry it.

Then he says he will be hidden from God's face, and that whoever finds him will kill him. Do you hear the fear in that? This is a grown man in terror of a world he now has to face by himself. And rightfully so, because the way we were made is to not be alone.

Sin does this. It does not usually announce itself as isolation. It announces itself as something you cannot tell anybody. And the moment there is something you cannot tell anybody, you have started walking away from the field with a body behind you.

The pattern to watch

Notice the order of events in Cain's life, because it repeats in men today.

Jealousy, first. Somebody else got the acceptance he wanted. Then bitterness, which is jealousy that has been left to sit. Then an act that cuts the relationship off completely. Then the loneliness. Then the despair.

It rarely starts with a man saying, "I want to be alone." It starts with an offence he did not deal with. The brother said something. The brother got something. The brother was favoured. And instead of talking about it, he lets it grow, and one day he stops picking up the phone, and he tells himself he is just busy.

Brother, if there is a man you have cut off over an offence, understand what you have actually done. You have not protected yourself. You have made yourself alone. And alone is a place with a curse attached to it, where the ground does not yield what it used to yield, where the work does not produce

what it used to produce, and where you find yourself saying, “This is greater than I can bear.”

God asked Cain where his brother was.

He is asking you the same thing.

Elijah: Isolated by Fear

If you want to see how fast a man can fall, look at Elijah, and look at the calendar.

One day he is on Mount Carmel. He has called down fire from heaven in front of the whole nation. Four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal have been dealt with. He has prayed and the drought has broken. He has outrun a chariot. This is the highest point of his ministry and possibly the most spectacular day any prophet has ever had.

The next chapter, he is under a tree asking God to kill him.

What he did in between

Jezebel sends him a message. One woman, one threat, no army attached to it. And 1 Kings 19:3 says he was afraid and ran for his life.

Now catch the detail that most people read past. Verse 3 says he came to Beersheba and **left his servant there**. Then verse 4 says he went a day’s journey into the wilderness, sat down under a broom tree, by himself.

He did not just run from Jezebel. He ran from his people. He put distance between himself and the last human being

who was still with him, then went another full day deeper into the wilderness where there was nobody at all.

And that is where he says it: “It is enough! Now, LORD, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers.”

Depression. Suicidal thoughts. From the man who had just called fire out of the sky.

Why the wilderness, not Jezebel, is the problem

We normally preach this as a fear story. Fear of Jezebel. And fear is in there, no question.

But watch the sequence. He was afraid, then he isolated, then he wanted to die. The fear did not kill him. The alone nearly did.

Because a man by himself has nobody to check his thinking. Listen to what Elijah tells God later in that same chapter: “I alone am left, and they seek to take my life.”

I alone am left. That is not true. God corrects him a few verses on and tells him there are seven thousand in Israel who have not bowed to Baal. Seven thousand. Not one, seven thousand.

So Elijah is not actually alone. He only believes he is. And he believes it because he has removed himself from every voice that could have told him otherwise. There was nobody in that wilderness to say, “Prophet, that is not what happened, there are still people standing.”

That is what isolation does to your reporting on your own life. You start giving God a version of events that is factually

wrong, and you believe it, because there is no one there to check the story.

God's prescription

Now look at how God treats him, because it is remarkably practical and it is not a rebuke.

First, sleep and food. An angel touches him and says, "Arise and eat." Twice. Nothing spiritual, nothing deep. Bread and water, because the journey is too great for you.

Second, He gets him out of the cave and talks to him.

And third, and this is the one we miss, the last instruction God gives him in that chapter is to go and anoint Elisha.

Go and get a brother.

The man who ran away from his servant is sent to collect a companion, and Elisha becomes the one who walks with him, serves him, refuses to leave him, and eventually carries his mantle. God's answer to a suicidal prophet included food, a word, and a man.

What to do with this

If you are in the wilderness right now, hear two things.

One, the thoughts you are having about yourself and your life are being formed in a room with no windows. They are not reliable. "I alone am left" felt true to a prophet and it was off by six thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine.

Two, the way back is not a dramatic spiritual breakthrough. It is a brother.

Get up. Eat something. Then go and find your Elisha, and stop running from the last people who were still standing with you.

Nebuchadnezzar: Isolated by Pride

Cain isolated himself through sin. Elijah through fear. Nebuchadnezzar shows us the third road, and it is the one most men are actually on.

Pride.

The man on the roof

Daniel 4 gives us the scene. The king is walking on the roof of his palace in Babylon and he says to himself (note that, to himself, there is nobody else in the conversation), “Is this not great Babylon, that I have built by my mighty power and for the honour of my majesty?”

While the word was still in his mouth, a voice from heaven says the kingdom has departed from him.

And he is driven from men. He eats grass like an ox. His body is wet with the dew of heaven. His hair grows like eagles’ feathers and his nails like birds’ claws.

Read that description again. Ungroomed. Unkempt. Living outside. Eating what animals eat. Looking like something the world does not recognise as human anymore.

Sometimes you look that way because you are alone

Here is the uncomfortable application.

Sometimes you look the way you look, you speak the way you speak, you do what you do, because you are alone. You live like an animal.

There is nobody who can say, brother, that is not how you talk to your wife. Nobody who can say, that shirt, no. Nobody who can say, you have been off for three weeks and you have not noticed. Nobody who can say, you are wrong on this one.

You are not being independent. You are being unsupervised.

And we have dressed this up so nicely in our generation. We call it privacy. We call it protecting our peace. We call it not letting people into our business. But when a man arranges his life so that no living person has the standing to correct him, that is not maturity. That is pride, and pride ends in a field.

The moment you cannot be told anything, you have already been driven from men.

Sanity looks like coming back

Now the ending, because this one has a good one.

Nebuchadnezzar says that at the end of the days he lifted his eyes to heaven, and his understanding returned to him, and he blessed the Most High.

And then Daniel 4:36: “At the same time my reason returned to me... **my counsellors and nobles resorted to me**, I was restored to my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added to me.”

Look at what restoration included. His counsellors came back. The men who advised him, who told him things, who

had access to him, they were part of him being back in his right mind.

So here is the summary of this man's whole story in one line.

It is madness for a man to do life alone, and sanity looks like coming back into relationship with your brothers and your friends.

Who can correct you?

I want you to actually answer this, not read past it.

Name the person who is allowed to tell you that you are wrong. Not someone who *would* tell you. Someone who is *allowed* to. Someone whose correction you would receive without going cold on them for three months.

If you cannot name one, you are on the roof, and the word is still in your mouth.

And if you can name one, when last did you make it easy for them? Because plenty of men have a mentor they never tell the truth to. That is a counsellor who has been fired without being informed.

Pride is not always loud. Sometimes pride is just a man who never asks.

Samson: The One-Man Army

Samson. Oh, brother Samson.

We all know his story. Strongest man in the Bible. Killed a lion with his hands. Killed a thousand men with a donkey's

jawbone. Carried the gates of a city up a hill. If raw power was the qualification for a good life, Samson would have died a legend surrounded by grandchildren.

He died blind, in chains, grinding grain for his enemies, in a building he had to pull down on himself.

And the difference between Samson and David is not anointing. It is not strength. It is not calling.

David built an army. Samson worked alone.

Read the list

Go to 2 Samuel 23 sometime and read the names of David's mighty men. Adino. Eleazar, who fought until his hand stuck to his sword. Shammah, who stood in a field of lentils and defended it by himself while everyone else ran. Benaiah, who went down into a pit on a snowy day and killed a lion.

Thirty-seven men, named, recorded, remembered. David's power was never only David's power.

Now go and look for Samson's list.

There isn't one.

He is a one-man army from the first chapter to the last. And because he was alone, he was an easy target for a woman like Delilah.

He could not see beyond his two eyes

Because he was in love, he could not see that this girl was what we call in our day a red flag.

And it was not even subtle. Judges 16 is almost comedic in how obvious it is. She asks him directly, to his face, where his strength lies and how he can be bound and afflicted. He lies. Men jump out of the room and try it. This happens again. And again. And again.

Three times he watches this woman set a trap using the exact information he just gave her, and on the fourth time he tells her the truth.

How does a grown man not see that?

Because he could not see beyond his own two eyes. That is the problem with being alone. You cannot see from all angles. You get one perspective, yours, and yours is the one currently in love, currently tired, currently justifying, currently telling itself this time will be different.

Samson was left making conclusions all by himself. And any man who makes every conclusion by himself will eventually make one that costs him everything.

Count what being alone actually cost him

Slow down here, because this is the part that should frighten you.

He literally handed his life over to death. He lay down in the lap of betrayal and fell asleep there. And then:

There was no army to wonder why he had not come back that night. Nobody noticed he was missing. A man of that stature disappears and no search party forms.

There was nobody wondering, “this guy always gets into fights when he goes to see this lady.” There was no

friend with the pattern in his head, no one who had watched the last three times and could say, brother, every time you go there something happens.

There was nobody to give him a hint or a warning. No one to say what everybody outside that relationship could see plainly.

There was no army able to storm the palace and rescue him. When he was captured, there was no rescue attempt, because there was nobody whose brother he was.

And then the worst part.

Even in his dying days, his prayer for strength was so that he could take out the people in that room. “Strengthen me, I pray, just this once, that I may with one blow take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes.”

The prayer was not, *Lord, send so-and-so to come and help me.*

It never occurred to him. Not once, in his whole life, did it occur to him.

He died alone, having a mind to be by himself.

It was not good.

The lie of the one-man army

Every generation of men has a version of this lie, and ours is loud. Self-made. I do not need anybody. Trust no one. Lone wolf. Move in silence.

Understand that when you adopt that, you are not choosing David. You are choosing Samson.

You are choosing a life where nobody notices you are missing. Where nobody has the pattern of your behaviour in their head. Where nobody warns you about the woman, the deal, the decision. Where nobody storms the palace.

You might be strong enough to win most fights. Samson was. Strength was never his problem.

His problem was that he had nobody who would come looking.

Do you?

Judas: Isolated by Shame

Judas is the hardest one, because his isolation happened inside a group.

This man walked with Jesus. He was in the twelve. He was there for the miracles, the multiplied bread, the storms that stopped. He had eleven brothers around him constantly. He had the Son of God as his closest companion.

And he still managed to end up alone.

He had to leave to betray

Notice something about the mechanics of the betrayal.

To do what he did, he had to go out. He had to leave the eleven, go by himself to the chief priests, negotiate by himself, and come back with a secret sitting in his chest.

Betrayal required separation first. It always does. Nobody sins in the middle of the group. You step out, you handle it alone, and you come back to the table looking normal.

And by the time he is leading soldiers through the garden, the separation is complete. He is standing on the opposite side of a group he ate dinner with hours earlier.

Remorse is not the same as returning

Here is what I want you to see, and it is the most important thing in this chapter.

Judas felt bad.

Matthew 27:3 says that when he saw Jesus had been condemned, he was remorseful. He brought the thirty pieces of silver back. He stood in front of the chief priests and said out loud, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.”

That is a confession. That is a man who knows exactly what he did and says it plainly.

And it did not save him.

Because he confessed to the wrong people. He took his guilt to the priests instead of taking it back to his brothers. And the priests gave him the answer the world always gives a man in that state: “What is that to us? You see to it.”

You sort it out yourself. Your problem.

So he threw the money down, went out, and hanged himself.

The one door he never used

Now compare him with Peter.

The same night, Peter also failed. Publicly. Three times, with cursing, in front of witnesses. And Peter wept bitterly.

But Peter went back to the group.

That is the entire difference between the two men. Not the size of the sin. Arguably denying Him three times in one night is not a small thing. Peter went back to the eleven and stayed there, and days later he is on a beach eating fish with Jesus being restored and recommissioned.

Judas stayed out.

The door back was not locked. He just never walked through it, because shame told him he was no longer one of them.

And what I have seen through every one of these five men is this: **this isolation thing comes to kill people.** Cain lived in terror. Elijah asked God to end it. Nebuchadnezzar lost his mind. Samson died pulling a building down on himself. Judas took his own life.

Sin, fear, pride, self-sufficiency, shame. Five different entrances, one exit.

If you are the one holding something

Somebody reading this has something they have never told another human being.

You have been managing it alone for months, maybe years. You show up, you serve, you sing, you look fine. And the whole time there is a thing you have decided you can never say out loud to anybody, because if they knew, that would be the end of you.

Hear me carefully. That thing is not what will destroy you. The aloneness around it is.

Judas did not die because he betrayed Jesus. Peter betrayed Him too. Judas died because he took the weight of it out of the room and carried it by himself to a place where nobody could reach him.

Go back to the group. Tell somebody. Not everybody. Somebody.

That is the door. Use it.

What these five men prove

They are proof that a man who is alone can easily be depressed, can easily make wrong decisions, can easily go into error.

That is why God, in His wisdom, said this thing of you men being alone is not good.

Now let us look at the other side.

Chapter 3

The Good That Comes When Men Are Not Alone

Same Bible. Different men. Completely different outcomes.

We have spent a chapter in the graveyard. Now let us go and look at the men who lived.

David and Jonathan: Brotherhood That Outlives You

And we start with a friendship that should not have been possible.

Two men who had every reason to be rivals

Jonathan was the king's son. The heir. The next in line to the throne of Israel by every natural right.

David was the boy who had just killed Goliath and whom the women were already singing about in the streets. Saul his thousands, David his ten thousands. Everybody in that palace could see where this was going. Saul certainly could; he spent the rest of his life trying to kill David over it.

Jonathan was the one man with the most to lose from David's rise.

And 1 Samuel 18:1 says the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and he loved him as his own soul.

Then verse 3: they made a covenant. And Jonathan took off his robe, his armour, his sword, his bow and his belt, and gave them to David.

He handed the heir's clothing to the man who would take his place.

That is not networking. That is not “we vibe.” That is a decision, made deliberately, to be for a man rather than in competition with him.

Covenant is a decision, not a feeling

We must be honest about how most men do friendship. We do it by proximity and convenience. We were at school together. We work together. We watch the same team. And when the proximity ends, the friendship quietly ends with it, and we do not even mourn it. We just say, ah, we grew apart.

Jonathan and David cut a covenant. They said words to each other about what they would be. And later, in 1 Samuel 20, they extend that covenant to each other's descendants. Jonathan asks David to show kindness to his house forever.

They put language around it. They made it a commitment, not a mood.

Brothers, some of your friendships need a conversation. Not a dramatic ceremony. Just a man saying to another man: you are my brother, I am for you, and I am not going anywhere.

You would be surprised how few men have ever heard that

said to them out loud.

What the covenant produced, years later

Now here is where it gets glorious.

Jonathan dies. He dies in battle alongside his father, and David writes one of the saddest songs in scripture over him.

Years pass. David is king now. Established, victorious, secure on the throne. And in 2 Samuel 9 he asks a question that nobody asked him to ask:

“Is there still anyone who is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan’s sake?”

For Jonathan’s sake. The man has been dead for years and David is still keeping a covenant with him.

They find Mephibosheth, Jonathan’s son, crippled in both feet, living in a place called Lo Debar, which means a place of no pasture. Forgotten. Hidden. Fully expecting to be executed as the last of the previous dynasty.

And David restores all of Saul’s land to him and says, “You shall eat bread at my table continually.”

A crippled man goes from nothing to eating at the king’s table for the rest of his life, because of a friendship his father had before he was born.

Generational impact

This is what men do not consider when they treat relationships as optional.

The impact of men choosing to have real relationships can reach generations after a man has gone. Jonathan's decision to love David in 1 Samuel 18 was still paying out to his son in 2 Samuel 9.

Your friendships are not only for you.

The men you are in covenant with now are the men who will show up for your children if something happens to you. The brothers you build with in your twenties are the ones your son will call uncle and go to when he cannot talk to you. The relationships you invest in are an inheritance you are storing up for people who have not been born yet.

And the opposite is also true. If you build nothing, you leave nothing.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego: Three Men in a Fire

There is a moment in Daniel 3 where three young men say one of the boldest things ever recorded, and I want you to notice a small word in it.

The king has built a golden image. The whole province is bowing. The music plays, everybody drops, and three Hebrew boys stay standing. They are dragged before Nebuchadnezzar, who gives them one more chance and then asks the question: "Who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?"

And they answer him:

"Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of your hand,

O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.”

Now the small word.

We.

We do not serve your gods. Nor will we worship. Our God whom we serve.

Not I. We.

The decision was collective

These brothers made a decision together to stick together and hang on to what they believed. And they made it before the music played, because you do not construct a position like that under pressure. You arrive with it.

Somewhere before that day, three young men had a conversation. They agreed on what they believed and they agreed on what they would do about it. And when the whole province went down, three men stayed up, and each of them could see two others standing.

Do you understand how much easier it is to stand when you can see someone else standing?

The hardest thing about conviction is not the conviction. It is being the only one. A man can hold a position by himself for a while, but the loneliness of it wears him down long before the opposition does.

Be with people who stand where you stand

So here is the instruction from this chapter, and it is simple.

Be with people who believe what you believe, who will stand for what you stand for, and who will stand *with* you.

Not just men you enjoy. Men who are going the same direction. Because the day the music plays in your life, and it will, you want to look left and right and see men who are not moving.

If everyone around you is bowing, you will bow. That is not weakness, that is gravity. Change who is around you before the furnace, not during it.

What their togetherness produced

And look what happened to them.

They are thrown in, bound, into a furnace so hot it killed the men who carried them. And the king jumps up and says, “Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? Look, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.”

Four men in the fire.

Three brothers who loved each other, stuck together, believed the same thing, and experienced one of the greatest miracles recorded in the Bible.

They came out and there was no smell of fire on them. Not a hair singed. And a pagan king made a decree over an entire empire because of what he saw three young men do together.

This is good.

That is what good looks like. God said it is not good for man to be alone. Here is what good looks like: men together in the fire, and a fourth man in there with them.

Moses and Aaron: A Brother Becomes Your Strength

Every man has a place where he is weak. The question is not whether you have one. The question is what God does about it.

Watch what He did for Moses.

The insecurity

Exodus 4. God has appeared in a burning bush, given Moses the greatest commission in the Old Testament, done signs in his hand, and Moses is still saying no.

And his reason is not rebellion. It is insecurity.

“O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.”

I cannot speak. That is his objection. A speech problem, real or imagined, is standing between this man and his entire destiny.

God answers him first with a rebuke (who made man's mouth?) and then, in verse 14, He does something I find remarkable.

“Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well. And look, he is also coming out to meet you... So he shall be your spokesman to the people. And he himself shall be as a mouth for you.”

God’s solution to Moses’ weakness was a man.

He did not heal the tongue. He did not remove the insecurity. He sent a brother who was strong exactly where Moses was weak, and said, this one will be your mouth.

Two kinds of men

There are men who strengthen you and there are men who become your strength.

The first kind encourages you. They speak life, they check on you, they remind you who you are. Every man needs those.

But the second kind is different. The second kind actually carries the part of the load you cannot carry. Aaron did not tell Moses, “You can do it, brother, believe in yourself.” Aaron opened his mouth and spoke to Pharaoh.

That is what a real brotherhood does. It covers your gaps.

You are not good with money and there is a man who is. You cannot hold your temper and there is a man who can talk you down. You have no idea how to be a father because you never saw one, and there is a man who will let you watch him do it.

God’s provision for your weakness is frequently a person. And many men are praying for a supernatural fix to something God has already answered with a phone number.

And together they took down Egypt

Now do not miss what these two did once they were joined.

Together they walked into the most powerful court on earth. Together they confronted a king who was worshipped as a god. Together they stood through ten plagues while Egypt fell apart around them, and they walked out with a nation behind them.

The powers of Egypt did not fall to a man with a good speaking voice. They fell to two brothers with a rod and an assignment.

That brother in your life is not just company. He can help you take down the power of singleness. The power of poverty. The power of that habit you have been fighting since you were fifteen. He can become a strength.

Two are better than one

The same principle shows up again in Nehemiah's day.

Nehemiah is the builder, the man with the burden for the broken wall, the strategy, the permits from the king, the work assignments. Ezra is the priest, the scribe, the man of the Book. And in Nehemiah 8 you find them together, the wall standing, the people gathered, Ezra opening the scripture from morning till midday while Nehemiah stands with him.

One rebuilt the structure. One rebuilt the people. And what you got was not just a wall, but a nation that could actually live inside it.

Ecclesiastes 4:9 says it plainly: two are better than one,

because they have a good reward for their labour.

Wow. There was a reward, the rebuilt temple and the restored city, and it came because they were two. And that made them better.

It is good for a man to have people, because with people, he can build.

Joshua and Caleb: Courage Has a Witness

Twelve men went into Canaan. Twelve men saw exactly the same things.

They all saw the giants. They all saw the fortified cities. They all saw the size of the people. And they all saw the fruit, a cluster of grapes so heavy it took two men and a pole to carry it back.

Twelve men, one landscape, one set of facts.

Ten came back and said, “We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we... we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.”

Two came back and said something completely different.

Caleb did not stand alone

Numbers 13:30. Caleb quiets the people before Moses and says, “Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it.”

And then in chapter 14, when the whole congregation is talking about stoning them, Joshua and Caleb tear their clothes and speak together: “The land we passed through to

spy out is an exceedingly good land... do not fear the people of the land, for they are our bread.”

Two men, standing against two million.

Now here is what I want you to see. Caleb was bold in chapter 13. But when the crowd turned violent in chapter 14, it is Joshua *and* Caleb who stand.

Courage had a witness.

You can get courage because you are not alone

Men who were not alone were courageous. And it is good for a man to be courageous.

But understand where courage often comes from. It is not always something you generate inside yourself in a quiet room. Very often, courage is something you catch off another man.

You can be brave because there is someone to be brave with.

The ten spies were not less intelligent than Joshua and Caleb. They were not looking at different giants. What they lacked was one other man in that group who would say what they were thinking. And when nobody spoke first, ten men agreed with each other into forty years of wandering.

That is what happens in a room of men where nobody has the courage to say the true thing. Everyone waits. Everyone assumes they are the only one who sees it. And the wrong decision passes unanimously.

You need at least one other man who will tear his clothes

when you tear yours.

Forty-five years later

Read what Caleb says in Joshua 14, when he is eighty-five years old and finally claiming his portion.

“I am as strong this day as on the day that Moses sent me; just as my strength was then, so now is my strength for war... Now therefore, give me this mountain.”

He is still standing. Still strong. Still asking for the hard territory.

And who is he asking? Joshua. The other man who stood with him in Numbers 14, now leading the nation.

The two men who refused to be part of a scared majority are the only two of that entire generation still alive to walk into the land. They came into Canaan together as young spies and they divided Canaan together as old men.

Everyone else died in the wilderness.

That is the reward for standing together. Not just survival. The mountain.

Jesus and the Twelve

If any man in history had a case for doing it alone, it was Jesus.

Think about who we are talking about. God in human form, come to earth to deliver the world from the grip of the enemy. A miracle worker. A walk-on-waterer. A multiplier of bread. A healer of the sick, a raiser of the dead. He could

feed thousands with a boy's lunch and settle a storm with His voice.

He needed help from nobody.

And yet Mark 3:13-14 says He went up on a mountain, called to Him those He Himself wanted, and appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out.

That they might **be with Him**.

Before the sending, the being with. He wanted them around Him before He ever gave them an assignment.

Why He of all people did this

He did it because He understood that it is not good for man to be alone.

And catch this. Although He is God, He had come into a realm where God Himself had established that men should not be alone. He was not going to violate the design in the very world He designed. He stepped into the make of man, and the make of man is a make that needs people. So He got people for the work.

He let ordinary men eat with Him, travel with Him, ask Him stupid questions, misunderstand Him publicly, fall asleep on Him in the garden. Fishermen. A tax collector. A zealot. Men who argued about who was the greatest while He was walking to the cross.

The all-sufficient One built a small group.

What those twelve became

And because of these twelve, we know about Jesus today.

Think it through. The gospel did not spread because Jesus wrote a book. It spread because men who had been with Him could not stop talking about it. Peter preaches at Pentecost and three thousand are added. John writes letters that we are still reading two thousand years later. Matthew records the sayings. Thomas, by tradition, goes east as far as India.

Even the religious authorities noticed the source of it. Acts 4:13 says that when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marvelled, and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

They had been with Him. That was the whole qualification, and everyone could see it.

Such a big work would not have been done if Jesus had done it alone.

What this settles

I want to close this chapter here, because Jesus settles the argument completely.

If you tell me you are strong enough to do life alone, my answer is: stronger than Jesus?

If you tell me nobody around you is on your level, my answer is: was anyone on His?

If you tell me people will just slow you down and let you down, my answer is: one of His betrayed Him, one denied

Him three times, and all of them ran. He still built with them, restored them, and handed them the whole assignment.

Jesus knew exactly what these men were going to do to Him. He picked them anyway, ate with them anyway, called them friends anyway.

So let us stop pretending our reluctance is discernment.

We have now seen both sides. Men alone: despair, depression, madness, betrayal, death. Men together: generational impact, miracles, strength, courage, building, and a gospel that reached us.

The case is closed. So the real question is no longer *whether* a man should have relationships.

The question is *which ones*, and *how*.

That is what the rest of this book is about.

Chapter 4

Defining “Relationship”

Before we talk about which relationships you need, we have to agree on what the word means. Because men use it loosely, and loose definitions produce loose living.

Open a dictionary and you will find something like this: a relationship is the way two or more people, groups or things are connected, communicate, and behave toward each other.

That is accurate. It is also cold. It describes a connection without telling you what holds it up.

So here is my definition, and the whole rest of this book stands on it.

A relationship is a commitment to a person or group that is built on love and trust.

Three words in that definition are doing work. *Commitment. Love. Trust.* Take any one out and what you have is an acquaintance.

Where I get this from

I did not invent this. I got it from the way God does relationship with us.

John 3:16. “For God so **loved** the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever **believes** in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

There it is. God loved. Man believes. Two parties, two postures.

And what does that produce? Everlasting life. But what is everlasting life?

Jesus answers that Himself in John 17:3. “And this is eternal life, that they may **know** You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”

Know Him. That is to say, that we may be in relationship with Him.

So read the most famous verse in the Bible again with that understanding: God so loved the world that whoever believes Him will not perish, but will have relationship with Him.

Everything stems from there. The care, the way you show up, how you choose to communicate, how you choose to treat people. All of it is hinged on those two things.

Love without trust is not a relationship

Now sit with the second half, because this is where men fall down.

You can have love, but without trust there is no relationship.

You can genuinely care about a man and still have no relationship with him. If you do not believe his counsel, you will not ask for it. If you do not believe you can count on him, you

will not call him when it matters. If you do not believe you can be open with him, you will manage what he knows about you forever.

There is no relationship in it.

And where there is no belief, there can be no depth. Watch how this works even with God:

If you do not believe the Bible, you will not desire to go deeper into His word. Why would you dig in a book you do not trust?

If you do not believe God has good plans for you, you will not go the depth of obedience. Why would you surrender to someone you suspect is going to short-change you?

Chapter 5

The Four Kinds of Love

Now, as believers our definition of love has to be different from the world's, because the world only has one word for it and it collapses everything into feeling.

The Bible has more than one.

Agape (*ah-gah-pay*): unconditional, sacrificial love.

Phileo (*fih-leh-oh*): brotherly love, affection, deep friendship.

Storge (*stor-gay*): family love.

Eros (*air-ohs*): romantic, passionate, physical love.

Four words. Four different kinds of love.

And here is the thing that unlocked this whole teaching for me. These four kinds of love are also telling you the four kinds of relationship you are supposed to have.

God said it is not good for you to be alone. He did not leave that hanging. He gave you four categories of relationship you can have:

Love	Relationship
Agape	God
Phileo	Brothers and friends
Storge	Family
Eros	Marriage

A man who is missing one of these four is carrying a hole he will try to fill with one of the others, and it will not fit. A man with no brothers will lean his whole weight on a woman. A man with no God will make an idol out of a friendship.

So in order to be in a healthy place you need four kinds of relationship. All four.

Now let us look at them one at a time.

The Four Relationships a Man Must Have

Start With God

Jesus was asked which is the great commandment in the law, and He answered without hesitating.

“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment.” (Matthew 22:37-38)

First. Great. Not first in a list of equals. First in order and first in weight.

So the first relationship is not with your brothers, your family, or your wife. It is with God. And there is a reason it has to be in that order.

He makes you better for everybody else

Why do we start here? Because God has a way of making you better for your other relationships.

You cannot give what has not been worked into you. A man who has not been dealt with by God will bring an undealt-with man into every other relationship in his life. His marriage gets his temper. His friends get his pride. His children

get his silence.

God's word transforms you. His word builds you into the man this generation needs. And then that man goes and does relationship properly everywhere else.

Look at how directly God's hand touches even the most "natural" relationship you will ever have.

Proverbs 18:22 says, "He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favour from the LORD."

Read that carefully. The romantic relationship, the eros one, comes with favour attached from the Lord. So the hand of God is in that marriage, empowering the journey. You are not walking into it on your own strength and charm.

That is amazing. The relationship you thought was the most human of them all is underwritten by God.

So it does not make any sense to chase relationships three, four and two while ignoring number one. You are running after things that only work properly when the first one is in place.

What this relationship actually looks like

Let me be practical, because "have a relationship with God" is the kind of phrase that can mean everything and nothing.

Look back at the definition. Commitment, built on love and trust.

Commitment means it is not mood-dependent. You do not read when you feel spiritual and disappear when you do not. You have set times, and you keep them the way you would

keep an appointment with a man you respect.

Love means you actually want Him, not just what He can release. There is a way of praying that is really just placing orders. God is not a service provider. He is a Father who wants His son in the room.

Trust means you believe Him when the evidence is not in yet. You obey before you understand. You go the depth of obedience because you have concluded that His plans for you are good, not because you can currently see how.

And knowing Him is the point. Not knowing about Him. Eternal life is that you may know Him. Many men know a great deal about a God they have never spent an hour alone with.

Do not skip this one

I have watched men try to build brotherhood without this foundation, and it becomes a club. Good men, good times, braai on a Saturday, but nothing that can carry weight. There is nothing to appeal to when two of them fall out. There is no higher loyalty than the friendship itself, so the friendship cannot survive being wrong.

But when both men are committed to God first, something else is available. You can be corrected without it being personal. You can be told the truth because both of you have submitted to a truth above you.

Start with God. Everything else in this book works better downstream of that, and some of it does not work at all without it.

Brothers and friends

The second great commandment came attached to the first.

“And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” (Matthew 22:39)

So the second relationship a man must have is friendship and brotherhood. Men must have friends. Men must have brothers. This is *phileo*, and it is not optional or secondary, it is attached to the great commandment.

Three levels

Now, within this category of brotherhood, there are three levels. And a man needs all three, not just the one that is most comfortable for him.

Level one: men above you.

These are men who have gone before you. Men who are further along, who can be an example you can follow. These are the mentors, these are your spiritual leaders, older men. These are the men who make you.

You need somebody whose life you can follow. Not somebody perfect. Somebody ahead. A man who has already been where you are going, who can tell you what is on the other side of the decision you are agonising over, because he made it fifteen years ago.

And you must give them the right to speak. A mentor you never tell the truth to is decoration.

Level two: men at your level.

Proverbs 27:17 says, “As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.”

These are your peers. Your home boys. The men you share your ideas with, your dreams, your plans. They encourage you and they sharpen you.

Notice how iron sharpens iron. There is friction. There are sparks. Two pieces of metal at the same hardness grinding against each other. That is what produces an edge. If every conversation with your friends is smooth and agreeable, nobody is being sharpened. You are just being polished.

Level three: men below you.

2 Timothy 2:2 says, “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

Not below you in value. Nobody is below you in value. These are the men you are raising. The ones coming behind, who look at you as an example, who you are pouring into and encouraging.

And you need them for your own sake, not just theirs. A man who is only ever receiving becomes soft and self-focused. Something in you matures the day a younger man starts watching how you handle pressure, and you realise you are being followed.

The summary

Put the three together and you have the shape of a whole man:

A man is made by those above him, sharpened by those

at his level, and raises those below him.

Look at your life honestly against those three. Most men have one. Some have two. Very few have all three, and the missing one is usually where the trouble is.

If you have no one above you, you are unteachable and you will repeat avoidable mistakes for twenty years.

If you have no one beside you, you have no edge, and no one who knows what your week is actually like.

If you have no one below you, you have no legacy and no accountability of the kind that comes from being watched.

Go and get the one you are missing.

Prayer

Father, open my eyes to see those You have given me as brothers, as friends. May I not miss them because of pride or arrogance. Show me those You have given the grace to make me, those with the grace to sharpen me, and those with the heart to hear when I am lifting them. In Jesus' name.

Family, and the God Who Substitutes

The third relationship is family. Storge. A man must have a good relationship with his family.

And notice the mercy in how God arranged this. In His wisdom of not wanting man to be alone, He gave every single one of us a family. You did not have to earn it, apply for it, or be likeable enough for it. You arrived on this earth already belonging to people.

That is grace built into the structure of the world.

But we do not live in the ideal world

In the ideal world, every father would be present. Every mother would be present. Every sibling would be there for each other, and the family would be the first place a man learns he is not alone.

Unfortunately, that does not always happen.

Some of you had a father in the house who was not in your life. Some of you never met yours. Some had a mother who could not cope. Some have siblings who are strangers with your surname, and some have buried the people who were supposed to be there.

So what do we do? If a man needs family, and mine is not there, or does not want me, or has passed on. What happens then?

This is why we start with God. Because God, in His wisdom, has given us substitutes.

Jesus said it plainly in Mark 10:29-30. There is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children for His sake who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time: houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children.

Now, in this time. Not only in heaven. Now.

God Himself steps in as Father

Psalm 68:5 says, "A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy habitation."

Understand what has happened there. God looked at the fatherless and did not only delegate. He also said, I will do it. I will be the father.

No man in the faith should let the absenteeism of his father negatively change the trajectory of his life. God is your Father.

Hosea 14:3 says, “for in You the fatherless finds mercy.”

Psalms 10:14 says, “You have seen it, for You observe trouble and grief, to repay it by Your hand. The helpless commits himself to You; You are the helper of the fatherless.”

The fatherless are so dear to God that He Himself stepped up to the plate and said, I will father you.

Wow.

And beyond that, He gives you men who will act as fathers to you. Look at how Paul speaks to Timothy. “This charge I commit to you, son Timothy” (1 Timothy 1:18). That is not biology. That is a man who fathered another man in the faith, and it was real enough to be written into scripture.

Prayer

I want us to pray for those who are saying that the struggle of not having a father has negatively affected them, and that as a result they fear the future.

We pray that God opens their eyes and their hearts, that they may see and experience God as a Father. We pray that the anxiety and the fear that comes from this will no longer be a stronghold, and that they will be comforted by God.

God has observed your grief. He has seen it. And He is the

helper of the fatherless.

Siblings, and the friend who sticks closer

Proverbs 18:24 says, “A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”

Closer than a brother. Because God understands that some siblings will not stick close, He gives friends who do.

Jesus Himself pointed to this. When He was told His mother and brothers were outside asking for Him, He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, “Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.” (Matthew 12:48-50)

Now, do not hear what I am not saying.

I am not saying intentionally disconnect from your biological family because you feel you have a friend who can take their place. That is not the message. The Bible says pursue peace with all men (Hebrews 12:14), and that includes the difficult ones with your surname. Do the work. Make the call. Forgive the old thing.

It is just that in the event things do not go according to plan, and for many men they have not, God has given substitutes. You are not stuck. You are not disqualified from family because yours did not work.

He is a Father to the fatherless, and He has friends for you who stick closer than a brother.

Eros: Desire Under God's Order

Then the fourth kind of relationship is eros. The romantic one.

We must talk about it honestly, because a book for men that skips this is not being spiritual, it is being cowardly.

We acknowledge it exists

This one is between a man and a woman, as God designed it in Genesis. He is the one who made Eve and brought her to Adam. He is the one who put the desire in you.

So we acknowledge that it exists. The desire for romantic relationship, the attraction, the wanting to be choose someone. That is not a defect and it is not carnality. God installed it.

But because we are Christians, there is a way we do things.

The order

We do not express this one outside the confines of marriage.

That is the line, and I am not going to soften it. It is important, but its importance does not give us a licence to violate God's order.

Hear that carefully, because that sentence covers a lot of ground. Yes, you have the desire. Yes, God gave it to you. Yes, it is good. But, the strength of a God-given desire is not permission to satisfy it in a way God did not authorise.

Everything God gives has an order attached. Fire in a fireplace warms a house. The same fire on the carpet burns it

down. Nobody says the fire was bad.

And let us be plain about what living outside that order actually costs, because we normally only frame it as sin, and men have become numb to that word. It costs you clarity. It attaches you to people you were never meant to be attached to. It makes you dishonest in a relationship that was supposed to be the one place you were fully known. And it puts you in the exact position Samson was in, lying down in a lap, unable to see straight, with nobody allowed close enough to warn you.

Marriage is good, and you should want it

Now, truth be told, there will be some people God calls to not be married. Paul was clear that singleness is a legitimate calling and, for some, an advantage.

But that is a calling, not a consolation prize, and it is not the default.

Marriage is good and it is from God, and we must desire it. He said it Himself: it is not good for man to be alone, and then He made a helper comparable to him. He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favour from the LORD.

So do not let a cynical generation talk you out of wanting it. Do not let what you saw growing up decide it for you. And do not let bad experiences convince you that the whole institution is a trap.

Want it. Prepare for it. Pray for it. And in the meantime, build the other three relationships properly, because a man who has God, brothers and family is a man who comes into a marriage with something to give, instead of arriving empty

and expecting a woman to be his God, his brother, his mother and his counsellor all at once.

She cannot be all four. She was never meant to be.

That is why there are four.

The Dimensions of Love

The Four Dimensions

Paul prays something over the Ephesian church that gives us a measuring instrument for love.

“That you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the **width** and **length** and **depth** and **height**, to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge.” (Ephesians 3:17-19)

Four dimensions. And 1 Corinthians 13 gives us the expressions of love, but Ephesians gives us the measurements. So let us use them as a guide for how we are relating.

Take your friendships and hold them against these four.

When your love is wide

Width means you can relate with multiple people.

The idea of “I can only relate with this one person because they are my friend” is not correct. As men in this house we must be able to relate with each other, across ages, across backgrounds, across which group you normally sit with.

Granted, not everyone will know everything about you. That is right and healthy. You cannot be fully open with fifty men and you should not try. But have your people. Plural.

Because there is safety in numbers.

A man whose entire support structure is one other guy is one relocation away from having nobody. One fallout. One job transfer. One offence. And he is Elijah under the tree saying, "I alone am left."

Width is insurance. Build it before you need it.

When your love is long

Length means it endures.

We want to be able to say, in the future: "I have known John since we were in varsity. That is him now, three kids, a wife, and doing well for himself. Our relationship has gone the distance."

I have known my Pastor for over ten years. That is longevity. The love is long.

Length is the dimension our generation is worst at, because we treat people as seasonal. We change friends the way we change phones. Something goes wrong and instead of repairing it, we replace it, and then wonder in our forties why nobody at the funeral has a real story about us.

Long love means you stay through the boring years. You stay when he is doing better than you and you are struggling to be happy about it. You stay when he is struggling and it is inconvenient. You stay through the misunderstanding that took eight months to sort out.

Anyone can be a friend for a season. Length is a decision, made repeatedly.

When the love is deep

Depth is vulnerability.

And oh, this is where a lot of men fall short. This is where the trust element of relationship shows itself, and this is where most male friendships hit a ceiling and stay there for twenty years.

We covered it earlier and it bears repeating here: you can have love, but without trust there is no relationship. Depth is only possible where there is belief. If you do not believe a man can hold what you tell him, you will never tell him anything, and the two of you will be friends for a decade without ever having a real conversation.

I want to say something about how men and women differ here, because it explains a lot.

A woman takes time to warm up. She is like a heater, slow to get going, and she needs the time. Time to open up, time to trust, time to let you in. But once she reaches a point where she has chosen her person, that relationship is usually deep.

Men are like a light switch. Flip it and we are on. We are quick.

Put a braai stand and some meat down here and you will see something. Put the PSL on and you will see something. Within ninety minutes we are laughing like we grew up together.

That is a strength, honestly. Men can connect fast.

But that is also exactly where our downfall is. We are quick, and there is no depth. We mistake the speed of the connection for the strength of it. Ten years of Saturdays and neither of you knows what the other is actually afraid of.

Depth is what we are missing. Not friends. We have friends. We need depth.

When the love is high

The highest dimension is the one that looks like God.

John 15:9 says, “As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you. Abide in My love.”

That is the ceiling. When the love in your relationships starts to resemble the way God loves, that is high love. Love that stays after failure. Love that gives without invoicing. Love that speaks the truth and does not withdraw when the truth is not received well the first time.

High love is not sentimental. It is the most solid thing on this list.

Wide, long, deep, high.

Most men have some width and, if they are fortunate, a bit of length. Almost nobody has depth. And depth is the one that changes everything, so we are going to spend the last chapter on how to actually build it.

How Jesus Built Depth

I have said that depth is where men fall short. So it would be unfair to end the book there without telling you what to do

about it.

I want to share five things I learned from watching how Jesus built with His men. He is our example in this the way He is our example in everything else, and He built depth with twelve ordinary men in about three years.

Here they are. None of them are complicated. All of them cost something.

1. Eat together

John 21:12. Jesus is on the shore after the resurrection, He has made a fire and cooked fish, and He says to them: “Come and eat breakfast.”

And the next line is beautiful. None of them dared ask Him, “Who are You?”, knowing that it was the Lord.

They knew who it was. They had a relationship. They did not ask, who are you to invite us?

Men, we must be able to say it. My man, come over. My man, let us do this. Let us go out here.

It sounds small. It is not. The table is where depth starts, because eating together takes time and there is nothing else to do with that time but talk. You cannot rush a meal the way you rush a phone call.

And this is the entry point most men skip. They are waiting for a deep conversation to happen spontaneously. It will not. Invite the man for a meal. That is the beginning.

2. Pray with and for one another

Luke 22:31-32. Jesus says to Peter: “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail.”

Sit with that for a second. Jesus was praying for Peter about something Peter did not even know was happening yet.

And in the garden in Matthew 26:38, He asks His men to stay and watch with Him.

Praying for each other brings depth. And here is the thing that surprised me the first time it happened: when you regularly pray for your relationships, God begins to give you insight into things to pray for in your friend's life. Things he never told you. You find yourself praying about something specific and later he mentions it, and you realise God has been letting you in.

That is a level of connection you cannot manufacture socially. It only comes through prayer.

Do not just tell your brother you will pray for him. Actually pray. And sometimes, pray with him, right there, out loud, in the car park.

3. Be vulnerable

Matthew 26:38 says, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me.”

That is God in flesh telling His friends He is not okay.

He did not perform strength in front of them. He told them the state of His soul and asked them to stay near Him.

And in Mark 8:27 He asks them, "Who do men say that I am?"

Hearing what people say about you is a very vulnerable thing to do. And notice, He did not ask the people. He asked His friends. He had a vulnerable moment with His brothers.

If Jesus could say "I am sorrowful, stay with Me," you can say "I am struggling, I need you around."

Somebody needs to go first. It might as well be you.

4. Be honest

Mark 8:29. Jesus follows up with: "But who do you say that I am?"

And Peter answers, "You are the Christ."

Peter was not afraid to say what he thought. He spoke. That is what made him useful in that group. He was the one who said things out loud.

Depth requires men who will say the actual thing. Not the safe thing, not the churchy thing, not the thing that will keep everybody comfortable. The real thought.

You cannot have depth with a man who only ever agrees with you. And you cannot have it with a man who never tells you what he really thinks about your plan, your relationship, or your attitude.

5. Be rebuked and corrected

This is the last one and it is the hardest.

Matthew 16:23. A few verses after Peter's great confession, Jesus turns to him and says, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offence to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."

That is a severe rebuke, and it was delivered to the same man who had just been commended.

And Peter stayed.

That is the part I want you to see. Peter took a rebuke from his friend and did not leave. He did not sulk, he did not go cold, he did not start looking for a group where he would be appreciated. He remained, and three years later he is preaching at Pentecost.

Hebrews 12:6 says, "For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives."

Correction is a feature of love, not a breach of it. And a relationship where nobody can correct anybody is a relationship with a ceiling on it, permanently.

So allow yourself to be told. And when you tell another man something hard, do it as a brother and not as a judge.

Do these five

Eat together. Pray for one another. Be vulnerable. Be honest. Be corrected.

There is nothing mystical there. It is five practices you can start this month with one man.

Pick one man and invite him for a meal. That is it. Start there.

It's Not Good for Man to Be Alone

As men, we must have deep relationships.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

Let us go back to where we started.

When a car is made, the manufacturer tells you what is not good for it. And when man was made, the Manufacturer looked at everything He had made and said, for the very first time, that something was not good.

A man by himself.

We have watched what that costs and we have watched what it produces when a man refuses to be alone. So here is the conclusion, and it is the same sentence we began with:

It is not good for man to be alone.

Man must have people. Men must have community. Men must have deep, meaningful relationships.

You have a relationship with God to build, brothers to find, family to make peace with, and a marriage to prepare for. You have men above you to learn from, men beside you to sharpen you, and men behind you to raise. You have five practices to start with: a meal, a prayer, an honest word, a vulnerable moment, and a correction received without leaving.

None of that will happen by accident. Every man in this

book who was alone got there by drift or by decision, and every man who was not alone got there because somebody made a covenant, spoke up, went back, or called a brother.

Do not read this and feel something. Read this and call someone.

Because you are your brother's keeper. That question has been standing since Genesis 4, and the answer has always been yes.