Life Group Lesson
March 7th, 2010

Just for the leader…*(this is not your group lesson – it is just for you)*

"Relationships help us to define who we are and what we can become. Most of us can trace our successes to pivotal relationships."

As small-group leaders, we certainly need accountability in our lives. But we need more than that. We need friends. And there are lots of different types of friends that we need in our lives to keep us balanced, challenged, and sane.

If we look at the life of King David, we see three types of friends in his life. First, he had friends that he hung out with outside the realm of his calling. Secondly, he had friends that he also led that were loyal to him to the death. Finally, he had friends that were willing to call him out and give him a good kick in the butt when needed. Let's explore his life and relationships today to gain some insight on the types of friends that we need to surround ourselves with.

Jonathan
The friendship of David and Jonathan is legendary. Jonathan was the son of King Saul and the rightful heir to the throne of Israel. He knew that David had been anointed by the prophet Samuel to become the next king, but he still became like a brother to David.

We read in 1 Samuel 18: "Now when he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. Saul took him that day, and would not let him go home to his father's house anymore. Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan took off the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, even to his sword and his bow and his belt."

Jonathan not only befriended David, but he protected David from his enemies. Later in the chapter, we see Jonathan working to keep David safe from the murderous spirit of his own father, Saul. What strikes me as interesting about their relationship is that Jonathan's rightful place of leadership and David's prophesied place of leadership never entered into their friendship. It was never an issue.
As leaders, we need friends that are just that—friends, with no leadership demands or expectations. . Just people navigating life together.

Every leader needs a Jonathan—someone who recognizes the leadership gifts and calling inside of their friend, but doesn't allow that to be an issue in their friendship.

The Mighty Men
Secondly, David had a group of 30 mighty men who were willing to give their life for him. They included guys like Abishai, who killed three hundred enemies with a spear; Benaiah, who chased a lion into a pit on a snowy day; and Eleazer, who killed Philistines until he was too tired to lift his sword anymore.

Let's read in 2 Samuel 23:13–17:
Then three of the thirty chief men went down at harvest time and came to David at the cave of Adullam. And the troop of Philistines encamped in the Valley of Rephaim. David was then in the stronghold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem. And David said with longing,

“Oh, that someone would give me a drink of the water from the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!” So the three mighty men broke through the camp of the Philistines, drew water from the well of Bethlehem that was by the gate, and took it and brought it to David. Nevertheless he would not drink it, but poured it out to the Lord. And he said, “Far be it from me, O Lord, that I should do this! Is this not the blood of the men who went in jeopardy of their lives?” Therefore he would not drink it.

These guys were so committed and loyal to David’s leadership that they took a whispered wish as a command. Let me throw out a little disclaimer here. I am not talking about surrounding yourself with only “yes men.” I am talking about making sure there are people who are willing to give themselves to the path that God has called the team to walk.

What’s interesting is where these mighty men came from. They weren’t ready made leaders. In fact, they were pretty much losers. If we turn an entire book back to 1 Samuel 22:2, we find out who they were when David first met them: “Then others began coming—men who were in trouble or in debt or who were just discontented—until David was the leader of about four hundred men.”

These guys were loyal to David not because they were yes men or had been specifically and uniquely trained for their calling. They were loyal to David because he had been a friend to them first. We need people in our lives who understand and embrace what God has called us to and are willing to jump on that team and invest their lives into God’s work.

Nathan

Finally, David had a friend named Nathan who was not afraid to confront David and steer him back towards the right course. We all know the story. David was at the wrong place at the wrong time, committed adultery, and then orchestrated murder to cover the sin. The prophet Nathan confronted David: *Then Nathan said to David, “You are that man! The Lord, the God of Israel, says: I anointed you king of Israel and saved you from the power of Saul. I gave you your master’s house and his wives and the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. And if that had not been enough, I would have given you much, much more. Why, then, have you despised the word of the Lord and done this horrible deed? For you have murdered Uriah the Hittite with the sword of the Ammonites and stolen his wife. From this time on, your family will live by the sword because you have despised me by taking Uriah’s wife to be your own…. Then David confessed to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.”*

We need people that will confront us, challenge us, and give us a good swift kick in the butt. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, *“Nothing can be more cruel than the leniency which abandons others to their sin. Nothing can be more compassionate than the severe reprimand which calls another Christian in one’s community back from the path of sin.”*

As leaders, we need friends who recognize we are people in need of encouragement, correction, and rebuke and that will point us back towards God and his path. This is where accountability comes in. Who has permission to ask you any question at any time? To whom do you confess your sins? Who is praying for you and confronting you when necessary?

THIS IS YOUR GROUP LESSON

Two Things Mark The Church

1. Where the **SCRIPTURES** are rightly divided

The church should be preaching the entire word of God to the members of that body on a consistent basis – every weekend service, Life Group, meeting, etc. Members, in turn, should be studying the scriptures on a consistent basis and applying them to their lives.

Read 2 Timothy 3:16.

Questions:

1. According to this scripture, what are the reasons for the Word? Should all of these be part of our preaching?
2. Are you studying the scriptures on a consistent basis?
3. What was the last scripture you memorized?
4. What scripture have you been living out this week?

2. Where the **SACRAMENTS** are rightly ministered – which are **BAPTISM** and **COMMUNION**

The church should also observe the sacraments listed in scripture – baptism and communion. We baptize people after they give their lives to Christ. People who have been saved and baptized can also take part in communion at church services.

Read Matthew 26:26-29 and 1 Corinthians 11:23-28 about the Lord's Supper.

Read Acts 8:26-40 and Romans 6:3-5 about Baptism

Questions:

1. Have you been Biblically baptized after being saved? If not, why?
2. Do you understand the importance of communion (The Lord's Supper)?
3. Do you take part in it when we do it as a church body?

Was there such a thing as actual church *membership* in the New Testament?

The Bible clearly infers that there was indeed membership in the early church:

1. The early church kept rolls (1 Timothy 5:9, 11; Luke 10:20).
2. Local churches sent letters of recommendation to each other (Romans 16:1; Colossians 4:10).
3. Churches assumed responsibility for brothers and sisters in Christ.
4. Believers in local churches submitted to one another.
5. Believers valued & submitted to church leaders who watched over their souls (Hebrews 13:17).
6. Local churches exercised discipline (1 Corinthians 5:2, 13; Matthew 18:15, 17). How could a brother or sister be removed from a church fellowship if there was no formal or at least understood membership?

Why Join A Local Church

Some may ask “why do I need to join or become a member of a local church?” Not only is it Biblical and a sign of obedience to the Lord, there are tremendous benefits of joining a local church. Here are a few to consider:

1. The early Christians did (Acts 2:41, 47;4:4; 5:13-14; 1 Corinthians 16:2). The New Testament does not name one Christian who was not a member of a local church. By implication there were some, but faithful believers were commanded to meaningfully identify with the local church and to nurture it (Hebrews 10:25).

2. The Bible teaches that as a believer I am to be under the spiritual authority of local church leadership (Hebrews 13:7, 17; Matthew 18:15-17).

3. I need a local assembly of believers to experience all the “One Another’s” of the New Testament. The church is to be my extended family of care, support, and accountability.

4. I am to be equipped to serve. As I do, Jesus’ church is built up, strengthened in unity, and matured (Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6).

5. The church stimulates and encourages Christian living and service (Hebrews10:24).

6. The church offers a time and place for congregational celebration in worship, biblical proclamation, and the practice of Christ’s ordinances (Acts 2:42).

7. The New Testament emphasizes the local church; 23 of the 27 books of the New Testament were either written about the church, to individual churches, or to the leaders of local churches. The word *church* occurs 114 times. At least 92 of those occurrences refer to local churches. The word *church* refers to the universal body of Christ only 14 times. The local church is the embodiment of the universal church; it is intended to be a visible body.

8. Jesus Christ died to establish the church, including its local embodiment. As His children we, too, should love and serve His church (Ephesians 5:25; Matthew 16:18).

Questions:

1. Are you a member of Family Church?
2. What does a member of a local body do?
3. What does a local body do for a member?