

Life is a Team Sport
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We are preaching through Colossians verse by verse in a sermon series entitled Christ Above All. Today I'm preaching on Colossians 4:7-18

Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here.

My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.) Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me.

Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis.

Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings. Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea.

Tell Archippus: "See to it that you complete the work you have received in the Lord." I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

My sermon today is entitled Life is a Team Sport.
 Paul rarely did anything alone. He did ministry with an apostolic team.

What is true in ministry is also true in life!
 You need friends who travel with you through life.
 You need friends who encourage you and pray for you.
 Without a team – who rejoices with you when you win?
 Who encourages you when you lose? Who coaches you on how to improve?

Life is a team sport, and no matter how good or talented we may think we are, none of us are that good! We will not get very far unless we surround ourselves with a team!

1- Everyone needs a team

We all need a team of people in our lives who will help us become all God wants us to be. And we need to be strategic about who those people are.

Remember – the people in your life will either:

- Build you up or bring you down.
- Draw you closer to God or draw you away from God.

We all need a team of people around us in life. And that does not just automatically happen! You must intentionally build a group of people who are on your team.

Jesus was way better than any of us and He still had a team. Mark 3:14 says:

Jesus appointed twelve—designating them apostles—that they might be with Him.

The Wuest Translation says *constantly be with Him*.

It means they accompanied Him wherever He went.

They stood near Him – they stood by Him – they stood with Him!

Jesus had people who were with Him – who is with you?

He had people who stood by Him – who’s standing by you?

From the examples of Christ, Paul and others, we see that church is a team sport. Many people view church as place where a few people do the ministry and everyone else sits and watches.

But actually, we are all on the team and we all have a role to play!

- If the church were a sport – there would be no one sitting in the stands because everyone would have a position on the team.
- If the church were a ship – there should be no passengers – only crew!
- If the church were an orchestra – there would be no audience – well, there would be an audience of 1! Everyone would play an instrument.

In his closing to the letter to the Colossians, Paul lists his teammates.

Some prayed.

Some communicated important information.

Some were travel companions.

But all were important to the team.

We tend to skip over lists of people like this in the Bible. Especially in books of the Old Testament where there are long lists of hard-to-pronounce names. But these people were important enough for God to include their names in the Bible.

Let’s look at why these people listed in Colossians were important to Paul.

Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful

minister and fellow servant in the Lord. I am sending him to you for the express

purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts.

Tychicus was the pastor of the church at Ephesus.

Paul says that he sent Tychicus to them for a they purpose: that he might know their situation, and second so that might know his situation.

That way they can comfort each other and give each other encouragement.

2- You need people on your team who really know you

They need to know you and you need to know them.

Who knows your dreams – successes – failures – issues – circumstances?

Who rejoices when you rejoice and grieves when you grieve?

By the way – these kinds of friendships aren't developed on Facebook!

The kinds of friendships are developed face to face!

That's why Paul was sending them Tychicus to talk to them face to face.

The letter he was writing was not enough.

There needed to be something called interpersonal interaction.

I've read articles recently about how loneliness and suicide are on the increase in America. A survey of 20,000 adults found that most Americans are considered lonely. The surprising thing is that most older Americans are not lonely, but the younger you are, the more likely you are to be lonely.

The loneliest generation is Generation Z – those between the ages of 18-22.

Millennials were close behind, followed by Gen X.

Older generations are the least lonely.

The sad thing is that loneliness is associated with a shorter life span.

This reduction in life span is similar to that caused by smoking and is greater than the lifespan reduction caused by obesity.

This is serious!

Some of the reasons for loneliness are the breakdown of the family, people are too busy for relationships and overuse of social media.

Social media has its place, but statistics show the more social media you use – the lonelier you feel.

Another reason for loneliness is that Americans are more committed to themselves than to community. Loneliness is much higher among those who don't attend church. A recent Harvard study shows that regular church attendance leads to longer life, better health and marital stability.

The researchers found that people who went to church more than once a week, had a 33% lower risk of dying during the study period, compared with those who said they never went.

The reasons behind this are that those who attend church have increased social support and a more optimistic outlook on life.

Some of you today are feeling alone today. Please realize that relationships are God's antidote for aloneness. Psalm 68:6 says *God places lonely people in families*. And the church is the family of God!

So – press through your fear and reach out to others in the family!

Start attending our breakfasts for men and women and meet some people. Or get involved serving in a ministry. Some people try that and still don't make relationships. Why? Because they make it all about themselves rather than others.

You sit there waiting for someone else to approach you and they are sitting waiting on someone to approach them.

Get up – get outside of yourself and reach out to some people.

If you never initiate – you'll never have relationships!

And everyone needs a team!

Verse 9 mentions a man named Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you.

“Onesimus” was a slave of Philemon in Colossae. He had run away from his master, had been led to the Lord through the ministry of Paul, and was now being sent back to his master by Paul. Paul wrote a letter to Philemon when he sent Onesimus back, and he tells Philemon that Onesimus is his “beloved brother.” This shows us that –

3- You need people on your team who fight for you

By this I mean you need people who have your back.

They will defend you to other people when you are wronged.

They will stand up for you when others put you down.

And you need to defend other people when they are wronged.

Verse 10 mentions others who were important in Paul's life.

My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas.

Aristarchus was a fellow prisoner with Paul, and he was his friend.

Mark is John Mark, the nephew of Barnabas. He is the writer of the gospel of Mark. The fact that he was mentioned shows us that:

4- You need people on your team who forgive you and whom you forgive

You may remember that Mark left Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey, and because of this Paul didn't want to take him along on his second missionary journey.

But Paul was wrong in his judgment of John Mark and he acknowledges that here. Paul mentions John Mark again in 2 Timothy 4:11.

Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry.

This was only possible because they forgave each other. Paul forgave Timothy for quitting in the middle of a missions' trip. Timothy forgave Paul for not wanted to minister with him again. They worked it out and became teammates.

Relationships are messy and will always require forgiveness. None of us are perfect and we do things that hurt each other. But we need to work through it and forgive each other.

These days people can “unfriend” you very easily. I don't understand that. I know there are times were must set boundaries with people and even times to cut off relationships. But those times should be rare – not common.

We are living in times when people are easily offended and they write each other off with no intention of ever working it out. That cannot be true of us as believers! We must forgive those who wrong us and ask for forgiveness when we wrong others.

In this passage – Paul also mentioned Barnabas. Barnabas played a huge role in Paul's life.

5- You need people on your team who encourage you

Barnabas was the first to believe that Saul of Tarsus had really become a believer. He was the one who introduced Paul to the believers in Jerusalem when the other Christians were too suspicious and fearful to meet with him.

Barnabas is mentioned in the New Testament 28 times. The first mention is in Acts 4:36-37 –

Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement), sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.

The first mention of Barnabas calls him an encourager. Most translations call Barnabas the son of encouragement, but some say some of comfort, or consolation, or exhortation.

Literally – Barnabas means son of prophecy. What does that have to do with encouragement or comfort? Well – we find the New Test. purpose of prophecy in 1 Corinthians 14:3

Everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort.

This shows us that a Barnabas is one who strengthens us when we're weak – encourages us when we're down – and comforts us when we hurt.

It may take several different people who do this for us, but all of us need the Barnabas ministry in our lives. Next Paul mentions *Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me.*

6- You need people on your team who comfort you

All of us go through tough times in life and we need people there who will comfort us. By the way - life goes both ways.... If you want people to be there for you in tough times you need to be there for others in the tough times. Proverbs 18:24 says:

A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

Who is “closer to you than a brother or sister”? Who stands by you in good times and bad? Some people say God does and that is true. But the Apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 7:5-6

When we arrived in Macedonia, there was no rest for us. We faced conflict from every direction, with battles on the outside and fear on the inside. But God, who encourages those who are discouraged, encouraged us by...

How do you think God encouraged Paul? Here's how: *...by the arrival of Titus.*

God could have encouraged Paul all by Himself – but sometimes God does some of His best work through people! All of us need God – but all of us also need friends from God.

Next, Paul mentions Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.

7- You need people on your team who pray for you

We need people to do for us what Epaphras did for the Colossian church. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.

Prayer is the most powerful force in the universe. So, people who pray for you are some of the most powerful people on your team. Who is wrestling in prayer for you? We need people who encourage us with their prayers and we also need people who encourage us by their presence.

As much as I want to, I can't make friends for you. I can't make you get connected. All the church can do is provide opportunities for you. It's up to you to reach out and get connected.

But if all you do is come to church on Sunday morning, walk in and walk out without greeting anyone or getting involved, you will probably never get connected. You must take advantage of the opportunity to get in a small group or one of our many ministries.

God created is to be a family that is devoted to one another so together we can love God and love people. Yet so many people think, "I'll just go to God on my own and get everything I need by myself." No you won't!

Yes – you should go to God on your own. But Isaiah 65:8 says

The new wine is found in the cluster.

Your one little grape doesn't have it all. We need each other.

One snowflake is nothing, but if a bunch of snowflakes stick together, they can stop traffic.

One wave is no big deal, but if you combine a bunch of little waves, they become a powerful tsunami.

One raindrop is no big deal, but God combined a bunch of raindrops and flooded the whole earth.

The new wine is in the cluster. That's why we need to be on a team.

We have authority over Satan as individual believers, but the Bible says that one of us puts a thousand to flight and 2 of us can put 10 thousand to flight!

There is exponential power when we do spiritual warfare together!

That's because the new wine is in the cluster.

You can pray alone – and you should - but there is power in the prayer of agreement. Jesus said in Matthew 18:19:

If two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.

There are some things we receive only receive when we pray together.

That's because the new wine is in the cluster.

You can receive spiritual gifts from the Holy Spirit – but other believers have other gifts that you need but don't have! That's because the new wine is in the cluster.

You can worship alone – and you should - but when you worship with other believers, Jesus said Matthew 18:20:

Wherever two or three of you gather together in my name, I am there with you.

There's a realm of God's presence we don't get into on our own!

That's because the new wine is in the cluster.
Do you want anointing? It's in the cluster.
Do you want revival? It's in the cluster.
Blessing? It's in the cluster.

I want everyone here to experience the new wine that's in the cluster. That's why we want everybody to build a team of relationships.
I'm talking about 100% of our church.
I'm talking about you.