

“As A Team”

In my first year of vocational ministry, I attended a ministry conference. At the end of the first session, a group of older leaders asked me if I had lunch plans. Since I was by myself, the only lunch plan I had was to eat. They insisted that I come along with them for lunch. I tried to politely decline preferring to have my introvert break, but to no avail. I had a wonderful lunch with a group of brothers and sisters in Christ and that experience was very life giving.

Why was it life giving? It wasn't due to a life altering conversation or relationship that developed out of lunch that day. It was life giving, because of the example these leaders set for the importance of Christian community and what followed was a perspective shift.

First, I always brought someone with me to the conference. Second, I made a point that if I met a brother who was attending the conference by himself that I would invite him out to a meal. The result was so many rich, encouraging, and impactful conversations. It should continually astound us the way that Jesus is able to create and build community.

There have been a number of messages, conversations, and situations that have pointed my attention back to the necessity of community. My experience with ministry leaders is that we're often better at championing community than participating in it. I've heard more than one pastor describe his position of leadership as “being lonely at the top.”

My presumption is that most of the leaders who speak of ministry loneliness probably have had more than one situation where they have entrusted themselves to a congregation member only to be betrayed. I also want to make the concession that at times it is in the best interest of our congregations to be guarded if for no other reason, but to be obedient to being “slow to speak.”

On top of those dynamics it's an interesting era that we're living in. The advent of smart phones and social media serve like a shepherd crook that is pulling us into isolation where we can be “plugged-in” to a variety of “communities.” We can blog, vlog, tweet, snap, email, and comment our way into a digital realm where we get our “community fix” but never actually experience community as described in the Scriptures.

As someone whose ambition is to plant a church, but to do it “as a team” instead of “with a team” I am challenged by the endeavor of establishing a circle of people where everyone has high level of trust with one another. My hope is that we'd be encouraged today to pick up the phone and call the friend we've been putting off. Put coffee on the calendar and invite a handful of guys to join you. Finally, that we'd all be careful to live out what we teach.



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