

We're Better Together!

A few weeks ago, I ran a 20-mile trail race called the Coldwater Rumble in Goodyear, AZ. It all started late last year when I ran into my friend Mike and he asked if I wanted to join him in a half-marathon in the nearby foothills. Even though it had been years since I had run 13.1 miles, I figured I had some time to train, the weather was cooling down, so I said, "Hey, why not?"

Well, no sooner had we survived that madness that Mike reached out again: "You know, they've got this 20-miler coming up in January..." Ugh. Okay, fine.

This race, however, was different: yes, there would be the sharp climbs, jagged rocks, and deep sand as before, but what really concerned us was the distance. So, even though we are both competitive guys, we agreed that this time we would run the race together, start to finish, to the bitter end, no matter how long it would take.

So that's what we did. Thus, in just barely under four hours, we crossed the finish line, together. But here's what I found interesting: as we chatted after the race, it became clear to both of us that had we run it separately, neither one of us would have done as well. In other words, *we realized that we really were better together.*

How did we know? Well, there were moments when Mike had the energy and he was setting the pace. It was in those times that, if I'm honest, I sort of hated his guts. He was feeling great, running well, and I was struggling just to keep up. But then there were moments when I was ahead, and I felt like I could go forever, and he lagged behind. In fact, he even admitted at one point he wanted to shoot an arrow in my back (which actually made me feel better about all the thoughts I had about him!).

Running together meant that we were able to push each other, encourage each other, learn from each other, and ultimately prevail, together. Scripture makes it clear on numerous occasions that we are better together. We are challenged to love one another (1 Jn 4:7), serve one another (1 Peter 4:10), encourage one another (1 Thess. 5:11), even provoke one another to good deeds (Heb 10:25)! Why? Because *we're better together.* Not only did my little race remind me of this, but the last two months as District Superintendent have as well.

A few people have asked what my vision is in this new role. In short? I'd love to see what they saw in Acts 16:5 "*So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.*" And a huge part of that vision begins with this idea: No Pastor Left Alone.

I'm not gonna lie – in a district with 200+ congregations, that's going to be a challenge. While I'm encouraged as I travel around about many of our pastors connecting at regional gatherings (or clusters), I know there are many leaders who are going through that nagging sense of isolation.

TIM JACOBS • District Superintendent

So, for what it's worth, I want you to know that we at EFCA West are here for you. **In fact, my cell number is (623) 262-5268.** Call me. Anytime, day or night. For anything. Got a question about our district? Call me. Having a challenge with your board? Call me. Feeling stuck in your position? Call me. Just want prayer? Well, you know. I'm not saying I have all the answers, but what I am saying is this: YOU ARE NOT ALONE. And, YOUR LIFE AND YOUR MINISTRY MATTER!

All that to say, I'm glad I ran with my friend Mike. Running, for a lot of people, is a solo sport. So is ministry, unfortunately. And, it's a longer journey than most of us anticipated at the outset. We each are running the race God has set before us, we all have different callings and responsibilities. But we don't have to do it alone. *We're better together!*



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