



BAND OF BROTHERS

COURAGE • HUMILITY • UNITY

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Unity in the Brotherhood

"Now all of you together are Christ's body, and each one of you is a separate and necessary part of it.... But no part is important on its own." (1 Cor. 12, Msg.)

"We know what real love is because Christ gave up his life for us. And so we also ought to give up our lives for our Christian brothers..." (1 John 3:16)

"A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken." (Eccl. 4:12)

"As iron sharpens iron, a friend sharpens a friend." (Prov. 27:17)

"If another brother is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path.... Share each other's troubles and problems, and in this way obey the law of Christ." (Gal. 6:1-2)

"Don't speak evil against each other, my dear brothers.... God alone, who made the law, can rightly judge among us. He alone has the power to save or to destroy. So what right do you have to condemn your brother?" (James 4:11-12)

"Frodo wouldn't have gone far without Sam."

(Frodo, Lord of the Rings)

**Jesus said, "My prayer for all of them is that they will be one,
just as you and I are one."**

(John 17:21)

"The Lord now chose ... other disciples and sent them on ahead in pairs...."

(Luke 10:1)

Banding Together. Before we fully engage in our mission in this War, it is essential that we band together with trusted companions. In the great epic battle against evil in *The Lord of the Rings*, the leaders from all of middle earth met at Rivendale to discuss how to destroy "the Ring," and thus prevent it from getting into the hands of the evil leader Sauron. The cause of good in the world

depended on the successful mission of the Ring being destroyed by throwing it into the fires of Mount Doom.

The wise Elf Lord Elrond, who understood the dangerous quest that faced them, first challenged the men, "You will unite or you will fall." But the men of middle earth, the elves, and the dwarfs all argued at the council of Elrond about which *one* of them should take the Ring. Finally, Frodo Baggins, the simple and humble hobbit was compelled by fate to submit to his calling, "I will take it! I will take it!" But even more importantly, Frodo had the humility and wisdom to admit his shortcomings: "But I do not know the way!"

Gandalf, the mentor figure and wizard in the story, is immediately drawn by Frodo's humility to offer his assistance: "I will help you bear this burden, as long as it is yours to bear." Aragorn then joins in by offering his gifts to the mission, "By my life or death, if I can protect you, I will! You have my sword." Then immediately Legolas and Gimli are inspired to offer their unique and different strengths: "And you have my bow!" responded Legolas. "And my ax!" followed Gimli. And Sam, Frodo's wonderful and loyal hobbit friend asserts, "Mr. Frodo is not going anywhere without me!" So a total of nine companions of the "Fellowship of the Ring" each offer themselves to the dangerous mission to destroy evil in the world. This Fellowship offers a wonderful illustration of a group of men uniting to accomplish something truly great and noble that could never have been achieved alone.

God has given all his children unique and powerful gifts that can be used to accomplish great things, but only if they are united. Like in *Lord of the Rings*, each of the companions has different strengths. Frodo is humble. Sam is a loyal and brave protector of Frodo and a great encourager. Aragorn is a strong leader and experienced fighter. Legolas can sense danger and trouble from afar. Gimli is fearless in spite of his physical shortcomings. And Gandalf is a wise and powerful wizard. All are very different, but all become essential to the awe-inspiring cause to save middle earth. The message from scripture about our Great War is the same: "God's various expressions of power are in action everywhere; but God himself is behind it all. Each person is given something to do that shows who God is: Everyone gets in on it, everyone benefits. All kinds of things are handed out by the Spirit, and to all kinds of people!" But using these gifts alone would be worthless. What makes the body of believers powerful is how they work together: "A body isn't just a single part blown up into something huge. It's all the different-but-similar parts arranged and functioning together.... No part is important on its own." (1 Cor. 12, Msg.)

Unity in the Brotherhood: The power of Christ has been bestowed on the full body of believers. We were never designed to fight this War alone. We need each other! The great causes for Christ will be accomplished by banding together. Paul always traveled with a companion. David needed Jonathan. In one of the great battles described in the Scriptures, Joshua was down leading the troops, while Aaron and Hur held up the arms of Moses. Christ modeled

brotherhood by surrounding himself with 12 other men. And "the Lord now chose ... other disciples and sent them on ahead in pairs...." (Luke 10:1)

In this Great War, there will be no "Lone Rangers." (Heck, even the "Lone Ranger" in this American Old West classic story, needed his Indian friend Tonto!). God is looking for the men who realize that in this War we will not go far without surrounding ourselves with other real and authentic Jonathan/David friendships. The prayer of Jesus to his Father God just before His crusade to the cross shows the critical importance of banding together: Jesus said, "My prayer for all of them is that they will be one, just as you and I are one." (John 17:21)

We are not alone. Satan wants us to believe that we are alone in our foxholes, and that our struggles and addictions are unique and isolated to us. Evil wants us to think that if we were open and honest about our battles that no one could ever truly understand or, better yet - love us. That is a lie! Our internal and hidden battles and our feelings of loneliness are common to all. And when our sins and dark places are exposed to the light by walking in authentic friendship and brotherhood with other true followers of Christ - we will experience love, power, and freedom.

I will seek out a Band of Brothers, for whose lives and legacies I will fight, so that we may be lights in a dark world.

Covering our Brothers' backs. We need a few other men in our foxholes - a Band of Brothers - for whose lives and legacies we will fight, so that together we may be lights in a dark world. We need friendships where we will cover each others backs in the battles of life - and "share each other's troubles and problems." These are men for whom we covenant to fight *for* their true identities in Christ and to fight *against* their perverted and sinful natures. These friends encourage us and speak the truth about our rightful heritage as "brothers of Christ" when we get lies from the enemy about who we are. And they are there to remind us of the truth when our sinful natures are evident. They are men for whom God has given you a lens for who they are - filtered through the love of Christ.

Friendships without Judgment. "If another brother is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should *gently and humbly* help that person back onto the right path." (Gal. 6:1) We are asked to love and fight for our brothers *without judging* them. When we confront another brother about his sin, we must ask ourselves, "What is our primary motivation - love or condemnation?" For scripture states that God alone, a being of perfect love, is the only righteous judge among us. Too often, we disciples try to elevate ourselves by believing the lie that our "lesser" or "different" sins make us more worthy than our brothers' sins. It is easy to make ourselves feel better when we may not struggle with a particular sin that gets more press. *Do we somehow think we are more worthy of God's grace when we may not have fallen to the sins of*

adultery, homosexuality, or abortion? This is a trap from the pit of hell, which will lead us to serving out of a spirit of pride rather than a spirit of humility. Judgment is the greatest weapon of the enemy. All sin separates us from God and from the call of our King. And God warns us that pride is the most destructive sin. Yet unconditional love for our brothers is the greatest weapon we can wield on behalf of our King. And it is the key to victory.

Love for a brother without condition or condemnation is how the Saints will be asked to "lay down their lives" in this War. And it will be the key to overcoming Evil's dominion over this world. So we want to "encourage each other and build each other up," for we are in this fight together. (1 Thes. 5:11) And we must allow our Band of Brothers to be there to challenge us, correct us with "humility and gentleness," and to pick us up when we fall. For "wounds from a friend are better than many kisses from an enemy." (Prov. 27:6)

Relationships with no Secrets and no Condemnation. *We need relationships of no secrets* - where in the sacred bond of grace, *with no condemnation*, we tell our complete stories. Our stories include our failures, struggles, and temptations. *Our deepest desire is to be truly known - with all our faults - yet still be accepted, loved, forgiven, and believed in* - this is what Christ offers all of us. The need for unconditional love is part of our DNA - it is what we were created to receive. As brothers of Christ, we want to offer this type of love to others. *If we are not truly known, it is impossible for us to feel truly loved.* It is important to be loved not for what we have done, but for who we are under the covering of Christ's blood. When our true identity in Christ is called out, believed in, and fought for by another man of God, then Evil loses its grip.

It's hard to know how to fight for each other if we do not share how Satan attempts to take us out. By sharing our most shameful stories with our close brothers and telling about the lies that confront us, we arm our brothers with the information they will need to know how to pray and fight for us. We also will be encouraged by sharing our battle stories, because as we compare our stories we will see that we all are being attacked with lies from the Enemy. But we also will recognize that God is clearly by our sides - that He will never abandon us - for He is "with us always!" The Rescuer always comes! Often, God uses our brothers as instruments of His rescue.

Satan wants to Divide and Conquer. Evil wants to discredit our noble purpose, turn us against each other through our pride, and thereby divide and conquer. And if divided, we would be defeated, for "Any kingdom at war with itself is doomed. A divided home is also doomed." (Luke 11:17) Satan will use jealousy, envy, and a judgmental attitude to separate us. Evil knows that if we unite, we will be overcomers and defeat the enemy with the power of Christ. The Bible teaches that in the end, the Saints overcome and defeat the enemy by "the blood of the lamb, *the word of their testimonies*, and they were not afraid to die." (Rev. 12:11) We want to share *our testimonies* in the bond of sacred brotherhood; with the humility that we all need the redemption and

grace that comes through the cross of Christ. The war against the world, flesh, and Satan is relentless. But together we will be overcomers - living in purity, truth, obedience, and unity so that we can be victorious warriors and Saints of our Living God.

Do you have a friend who fights for your life and legacy?
Do you have a friend who has a God-given lens for your rightful heritage in Christ?
Do you have a friend who believes in you, regardless of the sins you have committed?
Do you have a friend who fights for your eternal legacy more than even his own?
Do you have a friend who encourages you and builds you up?
Do you have a friend who fights against your sinful nature with "humility and gentleness?"
Do you have a friend who picks you up when you fall?

WHY NOT BE SUCH A FRIEND FIRST? ...
AND THEN YOU LIKELY WILL GET SUCH A FRIEND!

"... because of their Testimony ..." (Rev. 12:11)