



BAND OF BROTHERS

COURAGE • HUMILITY • UNITY

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... *From Selfishness to God's Call*

"You cannot be my disciple if you do not carry your own cross and follow me. But don't begin until you count the cost." (Luke 14:27-28)

After Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, he began his first sermons by echoing the words of John: *"Turn from your sins and turn to God, because the Kingdom of Heaven is near."* (Matt. 4:17)

Jesus then began to call out those men who would commit to advancing the Kingdom of Heaven with Him by issuing the challenge, *"Come, be my disciples..."* (Matt. 4:18) We men who are part of the *Band of Brothers' Ministry* strongly believe that these are important days – and that once again God is calling out His chosen men in this generation to answer this same call to advance the Kingdom of Heaven. Our band has answered *"Yes"* to this call. In fact, many of us believe we are in the last days, and our desire is to be ready to obey whatever God may ask of us – regardless of what it may cost.

The cost of discipleship is different than the cost of salvation. Salvation is a free gift to those who believe. (see John 3:16) However, true discipleship has an option, *"If you want to be my follower..."* (Luke 14:26, see also Oswald, [My Utmost for His Highest](#), Feb. 2) Not all who believe in Christ and His gift of salvation are his true disciples. For the decision of discipleship, we are asked to consider the cost before we decide to confront the inevitable battles and overwhelming odds we will face.

Salvation is free, but *"you cannot be my disciple if you do not carry your own cross and follow me. **But don't begin until you count the cost...** What King would ever dream of going to war without first sitting down with his counselors and discussing whether his army of ten thousand is strong enough to defeat the twenty thousand soldiers who are marching against him? If he is not able, then while the enemy is still far away, he will send a delegation to discuss terms of peace. So no one can become my disciple without giving up everything for me."* (Luke 14:27-28, 31-33 NLT)

So to join Christ's army, one must be willing give up everything - *total surrender*

- "no matter the cost!" The battle for the Kingdom of Heaven will not end by negotiating with the enemy. There will be no settlement and no compromise. Good and evil will not co-exist under a treaty. This great war will end with God's absolute victory over evil.

By saying "yes" to this call, we are agreeing to carry our own crosses. We are asking God to take us through the painful, yet glorious process of sanctification - the journey of becoming true disciples - true warriors - true brothers of Christ. This decision is about absolute surrender to the will of God the Father - the decision to submit to the process of abandoning our selfish and demanding spirits. As stated by Oswald Chambers, "Sin belongs to hell and the devil. I, as a child of God, belong to heaven and to God. It is not a question of giving up sin, but of giving up my right to me, my natural independence, and my self-will. This is where the battle has to be fought." (Oswald, Dec. 9)

Discipleship is an unconditional surrender to God - even unto death. One of our brothers, who finished well, the apostle Paul, said that he "faced death daily." (1 Cor. 15:31) This difficult journey is the "narrow road," and "few" will take it. (see Math. 7:14) Some responses to God's call may be, "Yes, Lord, I will follow you, but ..." (see Luke 9:61) Yet for the decision of true discipleship, there are no caveats. There is no turning back. There is no "Plan B!" We men are being called to make a daily and eternal commitment. This covenant is only between you and God. This is an individual decision - no one else can make it for you and no one else can carry the burdens that you will be asked to bear.

"For many are called, but few are chosen." (Matt. 22:14) That is, according to Oswald Chambers, "few" will prove they are the chosen ones! (Jan. 14) "The chosen ones are those who have come into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ and have had their spiritual condition changed and their ears opened. Then they hear "the voice of the Lord" continually asking, *who will go for Us?*" (Oswald, Jan. 14) The "no matter the cost" disciples are the ones who consider the call of God and with perfect freedom and with a clear understanding that this road will be very difficult - overwhelming at times - yet they choose to answer by saying, *Yes - 'Here am I! Send me.'* (Isaiah 6:8)

God is in the process of rising up an army - those people pledging their allegiance to Him - "no matter the cost." There is no commitment that takes greater courage. For what will our God ask of us? What will it take to defeat sin's dominance of our lives, to become holy, and to fulfill our God-given purpose? It takes courage to pray, for instance, "Dear God help me to love my wife and children well - no matter the cost." "Help me to get out of my sexual, alcohol, or drug addiction, no matter the cost." "Help me to trust you with this broken relationship - no matter the cost." "Help me to trust you and not my finances - no matter the cost." "Help me to trust you in the midst of my physical or emotional handicap and pain - no matter the cost." "Help me to trust and follow you - no matter my circumstances." "Dear God, help me to be more like Christ - no matter the cost." The list goes on.... What type of "thorn

in the flesh" might God ask us to endure so that, like Paul, He can be strong and victorious in our weakness? Undoubtedly, our King will ask more from us than we think is humanly possible - because our mission will not be "humanly" possible. To survive, we will have to give up control and allow God to have victory through us.

When we are experiencing the cost of sanctification, of course we will pray to God and "beg" Him to remove our thorns. But we may hear in response, "*My gracious favor is all you need. My power works best in your weakness.*" (2 Cor. 12:8-9) God will not ask us to carry any more of a burden than is necessary for us to live out the purpose for which we were created. And there is no need to fear because our King promises us that He will give us His "gracious favor" when needed. He also promises that we will never be alone: "*And be sure of this, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*" (Matt. 28:20) With such power by our side, what enemy can stop this army? For "*all the powers of hell will not conquer it. And I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven.*" (Matt. 16:18-19) We must trust God that He really does have our best interests at heart - that He is good! The scars that we receive in these battles will not be in vain, and the rewards of receiving the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven will be eternal.

We then are taught to have a monument of the commitment we have made with our God. Because when the battles get fierce and the fog sets in, it will be hard to remember and believe in God's goodness. So it is helpful to have a reminder of the decision we have made and the reasons we made the choice to follow God - "no matter the cost."

We learn much of this type of commitment from the story of Joshua. (Joshua 24:14-28) Speaking to the people of Israel, Joshua said:

"So honor the Lord and serve him wholeheartedly.... Serve the Lord alone. But if you are unwilling to serve the Lord, and then choose today whom you will serve....

But as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord."

But the people answered Joshua saying, "No, we are determined to serve the Lord!"

"You are accountable for this decision," Joshua said. "You have chosen to serve the Lord."

"Yes," they replied, "we are accountable...." "We will serve the Lord our God. We will obey him alone."

So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day..., committing them to a permanent and binding contract between themselves and the Lord.... As a reminder of their agreement, he took a huge stone and rolled it beneath the oak tree beside the Tabernacle of the Lord.

Joshua said to all the people, "This stone has heard everything the Lord said to us. It will be a witness to testify against you if you go back on your word to God." Then Joshua sent the people away, each to his own inheritance.'

In the *Band of Brothers' Ministry*, many brothers use the *Band of Brothers' Ring* to serve as a monument and reminder of our covenant to follow Him – "no matter the cost!" We then band together and go out into the world, using our individual gifts, "our own inheritance," in a unified effort to glorify the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Once we have made the decision to say "Yes" to the call of our King, we then are commanded by Him to engage in the battle side-by-side with other men of God - other brothers of Christ! Our King sends his disciples out in "pairs." (see Luke 10:1) But few men in our generation have real and authentic, Jonathan/David type relationships with other men. Most men walk alone and carry hidden shame.

- *Do you have another man in your life who knows your complete, unfiltered and uncensored story?*
- *When you fall to intentional sin, do you have a man in your life to which you always confess your sins?*

If the answer to either of the questions above is "no," then you are walking alone! Without being fully known, we cannot be adequately protected, fought for, nor loved. And if we walk alone, we cannot live out the heroic story for which we were created. Therefore, Satan's primary strategy is to divide and conquer by fooling us into fighting our battles alone - in secret and in shame. For the enemy knows that when Christian men finally unite for the causes of Christ, then the end is near. Because the power of our triune God has been bestowed in the unity of His true disciples.

Once we have made the decision to engage for Christ, "no matter the cost," and once we have found other true brothers to unite with in the battles ahead, only then are we ready to obey the command to "*go and make disciples of all the nations.*" (Matt. 28:20). There are not many of us in this *Band of Brothers Ministry* - we few represent a small, grass roots movement. But God used only 12 men to start this revolution. And He may only use a few disciples to finish the job. For "*nothing can hinder the Lord. He can win a battle whether he has many warriors or only a few.*" (1 Sam. 14:6 NLT) Yes, in this generation God is raising up a band of fully devoted, "no matter the cost" followers. "*We few, we happy few, we Band of Brothers*" will be used by God to advance the Kingdom of Heaven. For we have chosen to follow him into battle - unconditionally.

When Christ returns to earth in visible form, He will return armed for battle - ready to strike down the nations, with his robe dipped in blood and the armies

of heaven following him on white horses. (see Rev. 19:11-16) "On his robe and thigh [will be] written this title: *King of Kings and Lord of Lords.*" Jesus came last time as suffering servant, a lamb as a sacrifice for our sins. He will return as a military commander - a conqueror and king to execute judgment. Jesus says, "*I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.*" (Matt. 10:34) If we are followers of Christ, then we are following Him into battle - to help advance the Kingdom of Heaven. Our risen Lord is calling out to us to join Him, "**Come, be my disciples ...**" (Matt. 4:19)

Our powerful God could destroy the enemy with a single thought without our help. Jesus could return in His glory today and set the world straight and give us our glorious and restored bodies - and one day He will! But God allows evil to remain and have dominion over those of this world. *Why?* Because God's *greater purpose* is to *transform us to become like his Son* so that we can enjoy the same Father-son relationship as Jesus - even if this takes some time. (see Rom. 8:29) God is ultimately patient with us, but right now He is wooing us and calling us out as men. So for now, there is a collision of the kingdom of light with the kingdom of darkness - an epic battle of good versus evil.

The term "*Kingdom of Heaven*" can be used interchangeably with "*Kingdom of God.*" Some writers of the gospels used the term "Kingdom of Heaven" instead of "Kingdom of God" because of their Jewish belief to never pronounce God's name. The battle for the Kingdom of Heaven/Kingdom of God will not be completed until all evil in this world is destroyed and removed. The *Band of Brothers' Ministry* is commissioned to be part of the advancement of God's Kingdom against evil forces. "*For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against the evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world.*" (Eph. 6:12)

It is "*for such a time as this*" that men once again will unite to wield their swords and engage in the battle for the Kingdom of Heaven! These are important days. God is in the process of rising up an army, and there is an incredible opportunity for men today that is unique to our generation. The final days are fast approaching! We believe that complete victory for the Kingdom of Heaven is near. We are all being called to take our rightful places in the larger story, to be "transformed" into brothers of Christ, and to join Jesus Christ our King in the war to end all wars. God, the angels in heaven, a cloud of witnesses, and all of eternity are waiting for your answer. "Consecration (being dedicated to God's service) is our part; sanctification (being set apart from sin and being made holy) is God's part." (Oswald, Nov. 27) We now are being called to do our part by saying "yes" to the call of our King. Join us - *No Matter the Cost!*

How will you answer the call?

"If you maintain [your personal relationship to your personal Redeemer and Lord] at all costs, letting everything else go, God will fulfill His purpose through your life. One individual life may be of priceless value to God's purposes, and yours may be that life." Oswald, My Utmost, Nov. 30