

Don't Be Stupid

Ready:

"Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The urgent request of a righteous person is very powerful in its effect." -James 5:16

Set

I think it is built in us. There is something in us that says we can stand alone; that we don't need others. From the youngest athlete to the oldest, many of us have the mentality to do things by ourselves. We are self-disciplined and independent. I once heard an athlete say, "We would have a great team except for all my teammates." Yes, we talk team, but we value self.

Not only does this happen in sports, but it also happens in our spiritual lives. Doesn't loving God come down to just me? Yes and no. Yes, you do need to love God with all YOUR heart. No, you cannot do it alone. Don't fall into that trap of isolation. Don't be stupid! Living the Christian life is a "we" thing not a "me" thing. There is a great African proverb that states, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

Isolation is the Christian's silent enemy. But don't get solitude and silence (two powerful spiritual disciplines) mixed up with isolation. Isolation is pulling away and saying, "I can live out my faith on my own, and I don't need anyone to help me." There is pride in isolation. We begin to think we can live our faith through our own power. Once we distance ourselves from those who know us best, small (and large) changes begin taking place in the absence of accountability. Isolation makes people believe that sin can be committed free of consequences. King David held that mindset until the prophet Nathan showed up (2 Samuel 12). Additionally, isolation makes us think that we are the only people wrestling with a particular sin, problem, difficulty or addiction. We begin to believe that no one else will understand us, so why should we open up and seek help? We think that if we keep a lid on our problems, that we will contain it.

Accountability is a non-negotiable in the Christian life. It stops the sin of isolation. So many people I know have gone down in flames because they did not have someone in their life to hold them accountable. Even though the word "accountability" is not in the Bible, Christ and His disciples modeled accountability, and there are numerous verses that reveal the value of it. Even the disciples were sent out by pairs. For 30 years, I have had at least one accountability partner I meet with on a regular basis — someone who asks me tough questions. Accountability has allowed me to live for Christ with greater purity and passion. Truthfully speaking, I don't know if I could survive if not for the people who hold me accountable. I need to have a brother in Christ getting in my face and making sure I'm doing what I've committed to do (i.e. spending time with Lord daily, keeping my eyes pure, spending

quality and quantity time with my family, making wise financial decisions, and training my body). It is called 360-degree accountability with every aspect of my life evaluated. If you do not have someone like that in your life, watch out. You are wide open to the sin of isolation!

I once heard that the banana that is separated from the bunch gets peeled first. Don't be stupid and think you can live for Christ without being connected. Live the Christian life as it is intended to be lived: as a team sport.

Go

1. Why do so many people think that the Christian life is an individual thing? Where does this thinking come from?
2. Do you have an accountability partner? How have others helped you in your spiritual journey?
3. What other examples in the Bible come to mind when thinking about lack of accountability?
4. Why is isolation so easy and accountability so hard?
5. How can an accountability partner help you glorify God as a competitor?

Workout

Romans 15:1-2; Ephesians 4:25; Hebrews 3:13; James 5:16

Overtime

"Jesus, I want to finish the race of faith well. I don't want to drop out or even stumble over the finish line. My desire is to run with endurance and keep my eyes fixed on You. Help me to find friends who can help me finish strong and whom I can help as well. I ask for strength to break the sin of isolation and secrecy. Help me to be open and transparent with at least one other believer. I don't want to live out my faith alone anymore. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen."

Bible Reference:

James 5



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