**Journey – Week 4 (Accountability)**

**September 2-3, 2017**

Welcome to the final week of our series called Journey. We are all on a journey when it comes to our faith. There are a few things that we can make a priority to enhance our journey and make it the best possible.

Have you ever been in that place where you want to do something but you just can't get the motivation to actually get over the hurdle and make it happen? Whether it’s your diet, exercise, reading the Bible, doing homework, not playing video games or whatever it is that you need help with…we have all been there. Don’t you wish you had someone that could come and just fix all your problems? Like Mr. Make-It-Happen Guy or something like that!”

**(Leaders Note: Share a personal story of a time in your life where YOU could have used a Mr. Make It Happen)**

The reality is we need someone to crack the whip, encourage and challenge us in different areas of our life…and our faith journey is no different! We need that person who can call us out for doing something or acting contrary to how God is calling us to live. We need that person who can encourage us in our faith and in the calling God has for our life. We need that person who gives us a shoulder to cry on or a person to celebrate the victories. We need that person in our lives.

As we look at Scripture there is confirmation of this need throughout the Old and New Testament. The bottom line is that it’s a big deal. Have you ever felt like you are all by yourself? Totally alone? No one to count on or rely on?

That’s not a fun feeling at all to have. That feeling of being alone leads us to make terrible short-term decisions. We make these decisions because we are operating under the impression that we are all by ourselves and that we have no one that truly cares for who we truly are. Here is the main thing you need to walk away with from the message. It’s our THP for today!

**THP - Everyone needs at least one friend to care deeply about their faith.**

Do you care about the faith that your friend has? Is that something you think about?

Our passage of Scripture is going to be in the Old Testament. This is a book written by one of the wisest men to ever live: King Solomon, son of King David. This is the same David we read about who kills Goliath and writes most of the book of Psalms.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 – *“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.”*

This passage plainly tells us that two are better than one… and 3 are even better than that!

**Have you ever tried to break a stick before? Have you ever tried to break multiple sticks at a time…you know when you’re trying to clean up your yard or something? Even if all the sticks are easy to break individually, it’s much harder to do it together.**

Let’s think about this illustration when it comes to our faith. We can try to do it all by ourselves but that usually leaves us weak and vulnerable. We need to bring someone else into our life who cares about our faith as much as we do.

Proverbs 27:17, a verse we read a few weeks ago during the first message in this series, says this: *“As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.”*

I think we can all agree that an accountability style relationship can be really beneficial to us. Since we agree that it’s beneficial, start thinking about a friend who you trust that can be that person for you and how you could be that person for them. You see…it’s a two-way street. It’s not just about you getting the encouragement, the challenges, the hard questions, the celebrating, the tears, having someone in those tough moments. It’s YOU being the same for them. It’s caring about that person’s faith just as much as your own…it should benefit both of you. Both sides win!

If having this type of relationship is something you want for your life and for someone else’s life, you need to realize a few things. It takes commitment and discipline to be effective at helping someone else grow in their faith. You will have to care more for them than you do for yourself. Let’s be honest…that’s tough for anyone to do really well. There have been many accountability relationships that have gone by the wayside and fizzled out because both sides weren't all in. Here are a couple things you need to know about being in an accountability relationship.

**Accountability partners share burdens with each other.**

Galatians 6:1-2 says, *“Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. Share each other’s burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ. If you think you are too important to help someone, you are only fooling yourself. You are not that important.”*

What does it really mean to share burdens? It means stepping into the chaos and helping them. It means being aware of burdens that others face and to help without thinking of yourself better than them. Think of an over-packed traveler…if you have so many bags to carry around waiting to get to your destination you could easily give up. When you share burdens, you help carry “the luggage” of that person’s life.

**Accountability partners are open with each other and committed to praying for each other.**

James 5:16 *– “Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.”*

Accountability only works if you are 100% transparent with all of your failures. If you hold anything back from this person, there are secrets and where there are secrets, there is darkness. When we hold back from how we have been or are rebelling against God’s plan for our lives, then we are choosing to not beat that sin. We then choose to hide it and hope it goes away. That sin enslaves us: there is no freedom.

*John 8:34 – “Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.”*

When you are 100% transparent with someone else, the odds of you staying as a slave to your sin gets significantly less with their help and from the help of the Holy Spirit.

**Accountability partners help each other…no matter what.**

James 5:19-20 – “*My dear brothers and sisters, if someone among you wanders away from the truth and is brought back, you can be sure that whoever brings the sinner back from wandering will save that person from death and bring about the forgiveness of many sins.”*

You should never give up on your accountability partner. They need you to not give up on them and you need them to not give up on you. So, let me recap our THP one more time and then close out with some questions for you.

**THP: Everyone needs at least one friend to care deeply about their faith**

The question is will you invite someone into your life, into your chaos to help push you closer to Christ and will you be that person to help push someone else in their faith as well? I understand that some of you may think you’re too young to do this or that you’ll get serious about it when you’re older. However, we can’t be Christians by ourselves. We need each other.

**(Leaders Note: Mention accountability cards and key chains here before moving into closing group time. Explain their purpose.)**

As we discuss this in our groups today, let’s focus on how we can hold each other accountable to following Christ to the best of our ability! Let’s pray!