

BUILDING YOUR ONE ANOTHER TEAM

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INTRO

The cancelation of the 2020 men's NCAA Tournament put life into perspective for college basketball players, coaches and fans. Gonzaga coach Mark Few is quoted as saying "no 2020 March Madness was "traumatizing" for his players.

Over a year later, the 2021 NCAA Tournament has been played — ending with the national championship game between Baylor and Gonzaga this last Monday night.

There is a lot to be remembered about March Madness 2021.

UCLA nearly upsetting No. 1 Gonzaga in the final four will go down in the history books. Jalen Suggs' buzzer-beating three-pointer banked shot in overtime will be the highlight of this year's March Madness. But USA Today Sports says it was the entire game that turned out to be an "unexpected masterpiece of team work."

"What a great college basketball game," Few said after the win. "And to do it on the biggest stage is just awesome. I know we had a lucky half-courter at the end. But both teams battled, battled and dug as deep, I think, as they could."

Scott Drew, Baylor coach agreed: " That's what makes it March Madness; We'll be talking about that shot for 25-40 years. Just the raw emotion involved, it's what makes March Madness so special."

This last Monday night the championship game was played, and Baylor won their first ever national championship, handing Gonzaga their first loss of the season. Baylor player Jared Butler was named Most Outstanding Player for the NCAA National Championship. Apparently the title MVP is reserved for professional, paid athletes.

By the way, he gave God the glory and I found out that when he's available, he teaches 2nd and 3rd grade Sunday school.

MOPs or MVPs are important, but making the Final Four and winning the national title during March Madness takes a team effort

That's what we're going to look at today – living life with a team of people that will make you better.

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ONE ANOTHER SERIES

Pastor Brian has taken us through a series entitled ONE ANOTHER. He has shared with us that the Bible lists 59 “One Another” statements, showing how God expects us to behave toward other believers. We have learned that it’s impossible to live this out unless we are in community with Christians.

We have learned together some important truths about the ONE ANOTHERS in scripture.

We are to:

Care for One Another

Be United With One Another

Accept One Another

Carry Each Other’s Burdens

Bear With One Another

The bottom line is we need one another. We are not Lone Rangers. We need people around us to spur us on... Hebrews 10:24 tells us to “consider how to stir up one another to love and good works.”

We need to be in community with other Christians. We need to have a team. We need to have a ONE ANOTHER team: people that will help us grow in our walk with Christ.

Building Our One Another Team

So... how do you gather people around you, not just any people, but the right type of people? The Bible has a lot to say about who we ought to hang around. The Bible has a lot to say about relationships and connecting. A very famous passage in the Old Testament is in Ecclesiastes 4:9-12:

“⁹ Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. ¹⁰ For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!¹¹ Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? ¹² And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.”

That sounds like a team to me. This passage and many others like it suggest that you and I have got to be around teams of people that will not only protect us but will encourage us, fight for us, challenge us, pray for us, and provide for us.

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Because we're dreaming a little bit, would you dream with me a second about this ONE ANOTHER team of people? Imagine knowing somebody and being known by them – fully known. Imagine loving somebody and being fully loved by them. Celebrating somebody and being celebrated. Serving someone and being served by them. That's what we're talking about.

That's why God created us, to be relational. In our DNA we have a longing to connect with others. As He made His creations He said, "Good... Good... Good. Good..." but as he created man, He said, "Not good." Why? He said they don't come alone. God knew the isolating loneliness that can destroy a heart. He said, "They come in pairs. They come in teams." We need each other.

We need people in our lives. Not just any people. We need ONE ANOTHER teams. We need to raise the bar a little bit for the people that we hang around. Not just any people, but people who will improve us, will sharpen us.

Why? The Bible makes it real clear in Proverbs 13:20 *"Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm."*

If you think about it, the people that we connect with pass things on to us. They pass their values, their dreams, their goals, their convictions, their habits. We take them on from other people.

So the challenge today is to surround ourselves with a team of people that will point us to Jesus. It may be relationships that already exist in our lives. The challenge is to take your relationships to a new level, to a deeper level. It may be developing new relationships, through being a part of a small group or an intentional discipleship relationship.

Doug Fields, Executive Director of the HomeWords Center for Youth and Family shares a process of how relationships go – from Superficial to Social to Spiritual to Significant then ultimately to Soulmate.

Superficial → Social → Spiritual → Significant → Soulmate

Doug says that one of the great illusions many of us live under is that we think higher of our relationships than they really are. The challenge is to step back and evaluate our relationships. Do we have relationships that are truly spiritual? Or do most of our relationships fall under "Superficial" or "Social"? Even here at church?

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We walk with a lot of people – but we don't journey with very many. Our ONE ANOTHER teams are people who are journeying with us through this life; the good times, and the bad. And they are not afraid to ask the hard questions, or challenge us to a closer walk with God.

Spiritual Relationships

You might look at this continuum and you say, "I've got some spiritual relationships!" And some might ask how I'm defining spiritual relationships. This is where something deeper begins to happen where you're moving towards spiritual maturity.

We might be in small groups or growth groups where we talk about God and figure that is a spiritual conversation and relationship. Someone has said "that some small groups are nothing more than just relaying Bible trivia back and forth to each other. Answer this question. Fill in this blank."

How do we move to spiritual or significant relationships within our existing groups?

Significant Relationships

What is a Significant relationship?

- You can call these people anytime
- You are real with one another, sharing authenticity and brokenness
- You do life together

Soulmate Relationships

At the Soulmate stage is really the significant people who you've done life with for many, many years. And at the end of life you can stand before them and say, "I'm known. I feel loved. I feel celebrated. I feel served." That's what we're talking about.

Let's use this continuum to help you evaluate some of our existing relationships and think about where they could go in the future. Let's use this to motivate us to perhaps pursue new relationships that will help us with our spiritual maturity.

So as we build our ONE ANOTHER TEAM, what kind of people are we looking for? Doug Fields shares this outline:

People who Motivate your character.

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Proverbs 27:17 *Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.*

Who are those people that when you are around them you just want to change? When you're with them it does something to your character that you want to be different.

For me, I want to be a more giving person when I was around Dick Swick when he was alive. He gave of his time, treasure, and talent. I want to have more faith in my journey when I'm around Pastor Brian or my growth group guys. I want to be a more loyal faithful friend when I'm around Dale Steele. I want to be more encouraging when I'm around my friend Shane Davis, who has an endless supply of encouragement for many.

People, often subtly, either bring you up or bring you down. Do an inventory of the people you're around. Do you have people that when you're around them you just want to be better? And if so, do what it takes to get around them. Make them part of your "One Another" Team

People who Value your soul.

These are people who will listen, people who will hear your heart, where it's safe to reveal yourself. It's safe to reveal who you are to them. You open up your inner life and you share your dreams and your hurts and your fears. They pray for you.

In our culture, people often share their hearts anonymously online, not face to face in a real relationship.

I don't want to trade my heart with a computer screen. I want to trade it with a person who will value it. The result of that is really healing. The Bible tells us that. James 5:16 *"Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed."*

Illustration: There was a time in ministry that I was struggling and wanted to quit. A friend of mine saw that in me, and came along side of me. He helped me realize that I wasn't crazy, but that what I was feeling was normal. His listening ear and understanding heart helped me to heal and to move on.

God uses people to impact people. Do you have somebody in your life that will value your soul?

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People who Praise your journey.

We all need encouragement. They long for somebody to look them in the eyes and praise something about them, and to do that on a regular basis along their journey.

Some of you are good at this. It's so natural and it comes so easy. You look people in the eyes and you say something spirit-led and it keeps them going and it lifts them up.

Others of us, we have to work at this. Hebrews 10:24 says *consider how to stir up one another to love and good works*. Consider...think about it...study up on it.

Hebrews 3:13 *But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.*

Jesus Christ was a master of this. He saw in people things that they didn't see in themselves. He praised them and He encouraged them. Simon Peter was a recipient of this. To those who knew Simon, he was a big-mouthed, clumsy, impulsive, spontaneous fisherman. Jesus looked at him and said, "I'm not going to call you Simon. I'm going to call you Peter (*Petros*, rock)." We later read about Peter's life and how the Bible refers to him as a pillar in the church. He became what Jesus saw in him.

MVPs

Consider the people for our ONE ANOTHER team – People who Motivate your character, Value your soul and who Praise your journey – our MOST VALUABLE PLAYERS. If I could say to you, "Would you like this? Would you like somebody in your life who would do this for you?"

Chances are many of us in here, if not all of us have had someone in our life at some time that motivated, valued and praised us. They may not be there any more but at some time they were in your life.

Here is a challenge: tell that person how they have been a part of your ONE ANOTHER team. I also encourage you to ask other believers who their ONE ANOTHER team MVPs have been. Just ask them "Who is your MVP? Who did you write down?" I think we've probably already had this person intersect our

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lives. I want you to pause and celebrate that and say, “God, thanks that You’ve sent somebody in my life.”

How do we surround ourselves with these people now to live the life that God intended us to live?

Here’s the ABC’s of developing an ONE ANOTHER team.

A – Acknowledge your desire and your need for people in your life.

This is where it starts. Acknowledge it. “I would like those types of people in my life.” This is where it starts.

Some of you have read in the Old Testament about the relationship between David and Jonathan. It’s one of the best examples of biblical friendship that there is. 1 Samuel 20:17 says “*And Jonathan made David swear again by his love for him, for he loved him as he loved his own soul.*”

The context of this is Jonathan saying, “Let’s recommit to our friendship. Let’s recommit that we are really loyal to each other because I need you in my life. As things are about to get very intense, I need to know you are there for me.”

That’s what I’m asking you to do in this first point. Acknowledge what you know that’s there. Would you recommit to what God has wired in who you are, that you want this in your life? You want to know and be known. You want to love and be loved. You want to celebrate and be celebrated. You want to serve and be served. Just acknowledge it. That’s the starting point. And as you acknowledge it, some of you may need to acknowledge you’re scared. That’s OK. Or “I don’t know how.” Or “I’m frustrated because I’ve tried this with other people.” That’s fine. Acknowledge it.

You may lead a comfortable life, a respectable life. You may even have a life that looks spiritual. But if you miss this relational adventure that God has got planned for us, you’ll really miss out on a major component of life – connecting with God’s people.

B – Broaden your perspective.

Broaden your perspective of who might be part of your ONE ANOTHER team. I think a lot of us give up too early. We say, “I really want it to be *that* person. And you have one person in mind. You kind of have a mentor in the sky. And when you can’t get that person you give up. Instead of focusing on one, broaden it.

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Some of you are thinking, “If only I could have lunch once a week with Pastor Brian I would be more spiritual.” The point is this: There might be other people who can be part of your ONE ANOTHER TEAM. They might be younger, they might be older; they may be someone totally unexpected.

It takes humility to be willing to learn from and be challenged by the people God brings into our life. Proverbs 11:2 reminds us “*When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with the humble is wisdom.*”

Take a broader perspective and we see each other with this sense of wonder. “Yeah, maybe they could be on my ONE ANOTHER team. Maybe I could connect with them.” We don’t limit life to a few. Broaden your perspective.

C – Cultivate the relationships you already have.

Instead of always saying, “I’ve got to find new people,” you probably already have people that God’s entrusted to your life that you could just take those existing relationships deeper. Instead of just pretending that they’re significant, treat them like they’re significant. Instead of pretending that there’s authentic love, really go after it. Romans 12:9-10 says, “*Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. ¹⁰ Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.*”

I think a lot of us just cruise through life pretending that we love people. Don’t just pretend. Really go after it. Cultivate what’s there.

Why do we stay at superficial relationships? The number one reason is “Because we’re so busy.” To go deep takes a little bit of time. We’re so busy. We move around, and building relationships is hard.

Bloom where you’re planted. It may only be for a season of life but take them deeper, see what God might bring out of them. Cultivate what’s already there.

How? Be open. People who have deep friendships may be introverts or extroverts, they may be young, they may be old, they may be wealthy, they may be poor. One thing they have in common is that they’re open. They’re transparent. They are authentic. They allow people see what’s going on in their hearts. If you can’t be open you’re going to stay at superficial the rest of your life.

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How to Ask Questions

Another thing is to ask questions. How do I cultivate these relationships? Don't just ask the questions that we tend to go through in life: So...how's it going? (Not really wanting an answer...)

How to ask questions: (Not original with me, but a great reminder)

1. Launch a question: "How are you doing?" Then stay there with your eyes. Focus on them. You'll find they feel very uncomfortable. Nobody does that. Your eyes communicate "I really care how you answer."

2. Listen to their heart. When they say how they're doing, listen to their heart. "That sounds hard... That makes sense." Many of us struggle with this. What we want to do is we want to fix everybody. Someone is deeply wounded and we offer a band-aid. We want to fix it. Or we talk about ourselves. A lot of times we say, "How are you doing?" and they answer and then we say, "You think that's bad! Let me tell you about me. Listen.

3. Love on them. "I appreciate you saying that... Thanks, that was big."

4. Let them share more. "Is there anything else? Is there more you want to share?"

Side note: Parents, use this with your kids. Some of you get so frustrated because you say to your kids, "How was school today?" They answer: "Fine!" Some say, "Good." Then we get all mad that they won't share more.

Instead of sending them to bed, put them to bed. Parents, isn't it true that you get more out of your kids at bedtime, sitting on the bed, talking to them, than you get out of them all day long. Why? Because they don't want to go to sleep. Use this with your kids.

Same principle is true for marriage, in dating relationships, etc.

D – Dare to ask a few to begin the journey.

Who will join you on your ONE ANOTHER team? I'm talking about a few. You can't go deep with everybody. But you can with a few. Jesus ministered to

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thousands. He hung out with twelve. And the Bible tells us that there were three that He loved the most. The Bible also tells us in Proverbs 18:24 *“A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother...”*

You’ve got to dare. You’ve got to take that next step.

It could be to get involved in a small group. We call them Growth Groups. You can let us know that you are interested on your connection card or on the Edgewood App

It could be beginning an Intentional Discipling relationship, connecting with someone who could walk beside you and help you grow in your relationship with Christ. Let us know through the App as well.

Join a small group. Search out an intentional discipleship relationship. Take that dare. Know that it’s tough. Life is too short but when you can live it with a few people that you love and that love you, that’s how God intended it.

E – Express God's love in these relationships.

The Bible says in 1 John 4:11 *“Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”*

That takes us back to the ONE ANOTHERS:

Care for One Another

Be United With One Another

Accept One Another

Carry Each Other’s Burdens

Bear With One Another

We need to love each other that way. But here’s the point: you can’t give what you don’t have. If you don’t have God’s love in your life, you can’t give it out to other people. Love comes from God. 1 John 4:7 *“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.”*

Maybe you are here today and you readily admit: “I’m not a Christian”. You’re just kind of checking out this God thing. What I want to let you know is you are precious to God. God loves you. You’re precious to Him, no matter what you’ve

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done, no matter where you've been, no matter what somebody has done to you, no matter what you've done to other people, you're precious to God. And God wants to have a relationship with you. Being in a relationship with God is such a big deal that God took the most drastic measure that He could and He sent His Son Jesus Christ to die on the cross as payment for your sins so you and I could be reconciled to God and have that relationship with Him.

(Invitation to respond)

But this Christian life is not meant to be lived alone. Gather your MVP team. May we build our ONE ANOTHER TEAM, motivating one another's character, valuing one another's soul, and praising and encouraging one another's journey.

Prayer

Communion