

## **Made from Mud - Unique Not Better: The Loner**

Joe - June 24, 2018

**Series Big Idea:** Men and women are created in the image of God. While we share this design blueprint, we represent different variations of his uniqueness. Instead of placing higher and lower values on our representations of God, we need to embrace how our uniqueness is lived out. This series explores four pillars of biblical manhood: the protector, the spiritual leader, the lover, and the connector. When we live out these four pillars, we step into intentional living and purposeful leadership of our families.

**Message Big Idea:** Being totally self sufficient is prized in our culture, but God has designed us to live in community. God exists in community through the Trinity. He created us in community with him in the garden. It's his original intent for us. We can't just put our heads down, go to work, and provide for ourselves and families. We need to take the lead in engaging others together.

**Main Idea:** There is power in community

**Main Text:** Genesis 2:18, Luke 22:14, Proverbs 27:17

### **Reflection/Discussion Questions:**

1. How have you been a "lone wolf" in your life? What areas are you currently doing this alone that you know you need help with? What is keeping you from asking for help?
2. Jesus lived in community with others, look up three examples of Jesus in community with others and compare them. How are they similar? How are they different?
3. What has been your biggest struggle with finding a community to belong to? What do you need to do to make this less of a struggle?
4. True spiritual growth happens in community. How have you personally experienced spiritual growth in your own life because of the community of people around you?
5. From this series, what are your next steps? How are you going to live out a life of community with others as called has called us to? Are there things you need to add to your life or take away in order to make this possible?

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### Message:

Hey everyone! My name is Joe and I am one of the teaching pastors and today we are finishing up our series called Made from Mud: Unique Not Better. Over the last three weeks we have focused on talking about a much needed topic; biblical masculinity. And we have talked about different expectations our culture tends to have about what a man really is in comparison to what God has called us to be.

First we talked about as a man it is our responsibility to be a defender; not just of our immediate families but of those around us. Then we talked about how as men we should be spiritually leading and lastly we spent some time discussing how we as men are to love; which is much different than the world has taught us to love.

And today, we are going to close out the last week of our series talking about the value of community. As people and as Christians, God had designed us to live in community with people. We are built to long after as seek healthy relationships and to be a member of a community with people that are for us.

But as men, our society has begun to teach us something different. Society has taught us that as men we should be able to do things on our own. It has taught us that we should be strong enough, make enough money, handle all the problems that exist around us and we should be able to do those things without the help of others. But it is an interesting concept because humans are inherently social, even if you are an introvert in some way you tend to seek out community and friendship, even if it were only with a few people. But often times for men, we try to live life on our own and we act like a lone wolf.

The term comes from studying wolves. Wolves are inherently social, just like people, but from time to time a wolf for whatever reason will get excluded from the pack and that becomes known as the lone wolf. But a lone wolf in the wild are rather rare, and we see the term beginning to be used in books in the late 1800s and it slowly became a more popular term to use.

But what is really interesting about it is that the term itself should imply something negative. In nature the term is suppose to describe an animal, which is suppose to be a social animal has now that has gone off by himself. But what we have done is in many case, not all, but many times we have taken that term, which is suppose to be negative and we have taken it and applied it to our masculinity in a positive.

So now instead of being on the outside being seen as a negative thing, we attribute our self worth as a man and as a child of God to our ability to do things by ourselves. We refuse to ask for help when we need it because we rather power through and figure it out ourselves than ask something that may know more than us.

Here is a good example of how I missed it in my own life, a while back my family and I

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took a trip to California and on the way back our tire pressure light came on. So we are in Blythe and we pull over at a gas station to check the air in the tires and it 105 outside, we have like 4 more hours to drive to get home and as I was filling up the tires with air my wife got out of the car and says "Hey you have been filling that tire up for a while, you are going to over fill it." And my immediate reaction as "um I think I know how to fill up a tire with air. The pump has a gage on it. Why can't you just trust me to fill up a tire?" So she walks away, I am filling up the tires with air and she comes back with a pressure gage she bought inside of the gas station. Well it turned out that the gage on the air pump was not working properly and I overfilled each tire.

You see I was sitting here out in the sun and heat thinking as a man I should be the one who does this and I don't need any help. I was lone wolfing it. I was trying to do something on my own when instead I should have understood that my wife was for me.

And it is that mentality, the mentality that we as men should be able to do anything without help, we no longer share our weaknesses, our struggles, our thoughts and emotions with other anyone let alone other men. Or at a minimum, if we do share, we are cautious what we share because we don't want to appear weak to someone else. And this is something that women often struggle with as well. It may be for different reasons than men, but for men one of the biggest reasons why we don't share is because we are afraid, we are afraid that people are going to judge us or think less of us, and because of that we choose to live life on our own. Even though there are people around us, even though we may be married or hangout with friend or live the jobs that we have, instead of truly engaging with the people around us we choose to live life on our own.

But God did not design us to live in isolation. He made us to live in community together. So today let's take a look at why God calls us to live in community together.

Take your Bibles and turn with me to **Gen 2:18-20 on (page 2)** Don't forget that if you are watching online, the scripture is available for you there as well.

**18** The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

**19** Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. **20** So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals. But for Adam no suitable helper was found."

Now if you continue to read on in the story of creation, you will see that God goes on to create Eve. But the reasoning behind why he made a helper for Adam is important. Surrounding Adam was the vastness of God's creation, with all the plants and the animals and all of these things that existed around him and even though he was surrounded by all these things there was not one thing suitable to be his partner. In the

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vastness of creation he still was on his own.

Now we tend to read scripture and think of it all happening in a relatively short period of time, but the truth is that we don't really know how long Adam was alone for. God gave Adam the responsibility of naming all of the animals, that would take a really long time. But despite the fact that Adam has given a task, despite the fact that he was surrounded by this amazing creation full of strange and wonderful things and that God was present with him in the garden said it is not good for him to be on his own.

God did not design us to live alone and to isolate ourselves from the world, he designed us to live and exist in the world. To be a part of it.

But in our culture has taught us the opposite! As men we have come to believe this idea that we need to be able to do things by ourselves. We live with few if any friends of real depth. Or the friends that we do have we don't open up to. But God did not design us that way and it is not the way that Jesus lived.

Jesus, who was the son of God, choose to live in community with people.

Even though there is a good portion of his life we don't know about, what we do know is that when Jesus started his ministry work one of the first things he did was call his disciples to follow him. And once he called his disciples to follow him, he spends the next three years of his life and ministry with these men. Eating meals, telling jokes, building relationships and helping them grow, strengthening their faith.

Now, being God, he could have found a way to do what God had sent him to do by himself. Think of all the things that Jesus had done. Jesus himself

- Healed people of incurable diseases
- Fed thousands of people, multiple times, a crowd of 5000 and then 4000
- He cured lepers
- Turned water to wine
- Calmed a storm
- Walked on water
- And raised people from the dead

Just to name a few! Jesus could have done it all on his own but instead he choose to live in community with others.

The greatest example I think we see of Jesus in community with others, is at the last supper. Turn with me in your Bibles to **Luke 22:14 (page 720)**

**13** Peter and John left. They found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover meal. **14** When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles took their places at the table. **15** He said to them, "I have really looked forward to eating this Passover meal with you. I wanted to do this before I suffer."

I want to stop there for a moment, because it is easy to skim through this part and get to the part many of us are familiar with and that is the part where Jesus and his disciples take communion together for the first time. But did you notice what Jesus said, "I have

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really looked forward”

Think about what is happening, Jesus and his disciples have now been together for years. For years they have traveled everywhere together, witness miracles, have had countless conversations over meals and teachings. Imagine the relationships they had build together and Jesus knows what is about to happen. The crowds are gone, the people the watched his miracles aren't around, He knows he is about to be betrayed and die and as this passover celebration begins Jesus calls his closest friends, his closest followers together and says I have been really looking forward to this. And together for the last time they break bread and eat and share in communion together.

Jesus himself valued community, he modeled it and lived it out in a tangible way. He did not sit back and hope it would come to him, he went and sought it out, calling the disciples to him.

But why does God call us to that? Why does he call us to live in community together?

### **Because there is strength in community**

Honestly there are a couple of verses we can look at that show us how and why to live in community but I think the most simplistic answer we can find, the one that sums up everything is found in Psalms 27:17

Psalms 27:17 “As iron sharpen iron so one person sharpens another.”

We are called to live in community together because together is how we grow, together is how we support and life each other up, together is how we lift one another up, together is how we learn to care and love people. That is what it is really saying in Proverbs. Just liked when you grind a knife against a sharpening tool, when we are, challenging each other to live and grow in Christ we sharpen one another.

And honestly this can be a long and tiring process. If you have ever seen a sword or a knife being sharpened, especially the way they would do in in ancient or medieval times, it can take a long time. Not only that but it takes a lot of precision and a lot of intentionality to get the kind of edge that you want. And the same is true in our Christian lives together, we can sharpen and grow one another, but we can't do this alone. We have to do this with others because....

**True spiritual growth happens in community** . Now understand that I am not diminishing what we do here on Sundays. Coming together as one church to worship and learn is important. But the greatest way to grow in Christ is not to just listen to a 35 minute message on a Sunday, the greatest way to grow as a person is to spend time with others diving into the truth of who God is.

God's word is alive and active! And when we are with our community, asking questions, reading scripture, sharing our life experiences and truly reflect on God's word in our lives we have this incredible opportunity to allow God to shape us and mold us in ways

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nothing else can.

So how do we do that? How do we live in community together?

First is that before you can live in true honest community with others, **we have to put our pride away**. And men in particular really struggle with this is probably the cause of most of the problems we create for ourselves is our inability to set our pride to the side. Even if we don't do it purposely at times, we allow our pride to direct our thoughts and actions because we rather be viewed a certain way or at least internally feel like we have it all together.

That is why we as men don't tell our wives or our friends how we are feeling. We don't post stuff on social media that lets people know we are having a hard time and could use help. Or we sit in a group with other guys and pretend everything is ok when our world could be falling in around us. It's our pride.

When we allow our pride to run us, when we lone wolf it because we don't want to hear the advice of others and we are too prideful to sit for a moment and say I don't have it all figured out, we dishonor ourselves and we dishonor those around us that truly want to help us.

When my wife jumped out of the car in 105 degree heat she didn't come out of the car with the intent that she was going to stomp out my manhood. She came out because she knows more about cars than I do, and she had a feeling the gage was broke and I was just trusting it. I let my pride stop me from getting the help I needed.

How are we ever going to get the help we need, whether it is physical or spiritual, without setting our pride to the side?

The second thing is that **we find a group of people that are for you**.

This is hugely important because if we don't have people we can trust then we can not live in true community together. And finding that community can take time, but there is an important part of this that we all have to do, no matter who you are, single married, man, woman it doesn't matter. We all have to be willing to open up and let new people in.

And trust me I get it, that is not always easy. But our willingness to be open and bring people into our lives can have a hug impact not just one someone's life.

A good example of this for me was when I first joined the Marine Corps the unit I got stationed to was in 29 Palms California, people there call it the 29 stumps or The Stumps because there is not a whole lot in 29 Palms. But we moved to California and within 3 months of getting stationed there I was going to get deployed, and on top of that, Niki my wife was pregnant, in a new place with no family, we were literally by ourselves.

And one day when I was checking the mail, my neighbor, who I had never met before, came out and started talking to me and when I told him I was leaving soon for deployment he said "Don't worry, we will take care of your wife for you." Now at first I

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thought this guy was way too forward, but what I didn't know in that moment was that Randy was a Christian and couldn't go on deployment because of a medical condition he had, so he and his wife made it their mission to take care of people's families when they were gone.

Then another family at our church, opened their small group to us and that small group became our family. So much so that to this day we still talk, their kids still call me and my wife aunt and uncle. If it wasn't for those people, opening their lives to us I don't know how much harder it would have been for us as a family. And it is all because one guy who did not know me walked out his front door and decided to be Jesus to me.

I learned more during those years about the importance of community than any other time in my life. As men we shared hardships of what we were going through at work, in our marriages and the struggles we as men had. As a community of families we learned together as well, because during that time every single family we had become close to had some type of hardship. One family the dad had a medical condition, another family had their own business that they lost, they ran out of money and had no food. And during all those hard times each of us was able to be there for the other, helping, supporting, meeting one another's needs.

Isn't that what God has called us to? When he says love your neighbor as yourself? He called us to love one another, care for each other, to lift one another up. Why? Because together we are the body of Christ, each Unique from one another, but no one better than the next.

And together as one body, in community together we not only have a chance to learn more and grow deeping in God and learning who he is but we have an incredible opportunity to be Jesus to those around us.

### **Because there is power in community**

So right now, let me ask you, where do you find yourself today? What is your next step? How are you going to move forward when you leave here today? And honestly, that step is going to look different for each of us. Collectively we are all in different stages of life. Some of you in here have been living in community for years, you are mentoring people, bringing new people into your lives and that is a great thing. But no matter who we are we can take this moment today and see how we can continue to live in community as God has called us to.

Today as we end these series on masculinity and what God calls us to be as men, we have men's groups in the cafe. I want to encourage you men that are here to take some time, go through the groups that are there and see if any are a good fit for you. Or maybe you have been thinking about starting a group and now you are finally ready to make that decision.

And I know it is challenging because we may not feel like we are ready but guys I want to encourage you to be brave and to make that step. If you are not ready for a Bible study group, find a group that you can just hangout with and get to know. Whatever it is

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you do, start today to build that brotherhood with others.