

RESCUE

RESCUE, PART 4: STUMBLING ALONG

Why is it some people go through extraordinarily tough times and are broken, while others are not? Let's look at the secret to weathering the storms of life.

Every one of us has had that feeling that we have everything in our lives “under control.” We all have a tendency to be independent and decide we don't need any help handling life decisions or the choices we make—until it's “out of control”. Only then are we willing to reach for help, but then it's usually too late to avoid the consequences of our own isolation. Thankfully, God designed us with the unavoidable need to give others access to our lives in order to prevent the consequences of our own autonomy.

BIG IDEA: Everyone needs support now to avoid the need of life support later.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

We are hardwired for community. All of us need a tribe of friends and family who see us regularly, call, and show they care about our well-being. When we have a flourishing tribe, we feel peaceful, connected, at ease ... normal. When we do not, we may lapse into loneliness, isolation, and depression.

In his book *Tribe: On Homecoming and Belonging*, Sebastian Junger defines a tribe as “the people you feel compelled to share the last of your food with.” Junger points out Ben Franklin's observation that white people who were ransomed from Native American tribes invariably ran away to rejoin the Indians. Franklin wrote, “Though ransomed by their friends and treated with all imaginable tenderness to prevail with them to stay among the English, yet in a short time they became disgusted with our manner of life and took the first opportunity of escaping again into the woods.”

Our manner of life. If white people ran away from American society then, what does that say about our society now? Junger's main focus in his book is on war veterans who develop PTSD when they leave the intimacy and comradery of the platoon and return home to a society full of disconnected people.

1. What job have you tackled by yourself that you should have asked someone to help you with? What were the results?
2. Share a time in your life when you felt yourself “drifting” into independence or isolation.
3. What's one scar you have on your body? What's the story behind it?
4. We get scars from ourselves or from others — whether physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual. With a quick estimate, which would you say you have more of? Why do you think that is?
5. Scars tell our stories — but so can our healing. What's one tragedy or pain you've experienced that still bothers you? How have you started to find healing for that?
6. *With your Bible or Bible App, read Ecclesiastes 4:8-12.*

This is the case of a man who is all alone, without a child or a brother, yet who works hard to gain as much wealth as he can. But then he asks himself, “Who am I working for? Why am I giving up so much pleasure now?” It is all so meaningless and depressing. Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls down, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble. Likewise, two people lying close together can keep each other warm. But how can one be warm alone? A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.

Ecclesiastes 4:8-12 (NLT)

7. What is the status of the man in verse 8? How materially successful is he? At what cost? What is he questioning?
8. What are the benefits of two in verses 9-12?
9. Before joining your first Community Group, what were some of the reasons you gave for not wanting to be in a group? How would you respond to someone wrestling with the same reasons now? What were some unexpected benefits of your group experience?
10. *With your Bible or Bible App, read Matthew 17:1.*

*Jesus said to his disciples: "Things that cause people to **stumble** are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come."*
Luke 17:1 (TNIV)

11. Looking back, what have been some of your stumbling blocks (ideas, people, wealth, hard times)? Do you think it's possible for you to encounter something today that could cause you to stumble away from God? Please explain your answer.
12. Can you think of examples (from your experience or others') where a small group's involvement made someone's difficult time easier or less traumatic?
13. Chris said, "If you don't have community when you need it least, it's impossible to find community when you need it most." Are you living with the consequences of your own isolation now? How could it be different if you'd given somehow access to your life?
14. How would your childhood have been different if your parents had been in a community group? How is your current community group experience affecting your children?

MOVING FORWARD

Our church is built on this principle: circles are better than rows. Still, creating authentic community takes time, trust, and commitment. What can you do this week to invest in your current group experience? What can you do to cast vision for a friend or family member who is currently not in a community group?

CHANGING YOUR MIND

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.
Ecclesiastes 4:9-10