



# BAND OF BROTHERS

COURAGE • HUMILITY • UNITY

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## *Humility in The Mission*

*"You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength ... and Love your neighbor as yourself." (Mark 12:30-31)*

*"He has sent me to proclaim that the captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the downtrodden will be freed from their oppressors, and that that time of the Lord's favor has come." (Luke 4:18-19)*

*Jesus said, "Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples." (John 13:34-35)*

*"I wish the ring had never come to me... I wish none of this had happened." (Frodo)*

*"So do all who live to see such times, but that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us." (Gandalf)*

*"Above all else guard your heart, for from it flow the springs of life." (Prov. 4:23)*

*Jesus says, "Anyone who does God's will is my brother." (Mark 3:35)*

*"As for me, God forbid that I should boast about anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Gal. 6:14 NLT)*

**Every being has a purpose or mission.** Even Satan has a purpose: "The thief's purpose is to kill and steal and destroy." (John 10:10) **So what is God's purpose/mission statement?** "All things happen for good for those who love the Lord and are called according to **His purpose.**" (Rom. 8:28) What is **God's purpose** stated in the very next verse? "God chose **us** to *become like His Son*, so that His Son would be the first born with many **brothers.**" (Rom. 8:29) God is in the process of transforming our hearts so that we become more like Christ - yes even brothers of Christ - sharing the same Father. Wow - What an identity! What a heritage! What a legacy! We are being invited to enjoy the same Father-Son relationship that Christ has. Yet this is a process of becoming holy - a saint ... becoming who we were created to be - a process called

*sanctification*. And the good news is that He orchestrates this process if we let God have His way with us. "So now Jesus and the ones *he makes holy* have the same Father. That is why Jesus is not ashamed to call them *his brothers*." (Heb. 2:11) As we become more *like Christ*, our hearts thereby will desire to fulfill **Christ's mission statement**: Jesus said, "He has sent me to proclaim that the captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the downtrodden will be freed from their oppressors, and that the time of the Lord's favor has come!" (Luke 4:18-19) Further, Christ said his "purpose is to give life in all its fullness" (John 10:10) and that his purpose was to be "a King." (John 18:37) As we become brothers of Christ - joining Him in the Royal Family - our hearts' desire will be to help "set the captives free" and to offer "abundant life" by demonstrating and sharing the Good News about the love of God. So we will be taking on the identity and purpose of Christ. Yes, we will want to fight for the hearts of our brothers, our wives, our children, and those persons God brings in our paths. No, this is not the easy road, but it is the glorious road for the few, the chosen - the ones who answer "Yes" to the "no matter the cost" call of Christ.

"Now the whole offer which Christianity makes is this: That we can, if we let God have His way, come to share in the life of Christ. If we do, we shall then be sharing a life which was begotten, not made, which always has existed and always will exist. Christ is the Son of God. If we share in this kind of life, we also shall be Sons of God. We shall love the Father as He does and the Holy Ghost will arise in us. He came into this world and became a man in order to spread to other men the kind of life He has - by what I call 'good-infection.' *Every Christian is to become a little Christ*. The whole purpose of becoming a Christian is simply nothing else." C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, p. 153

**"The most important commandment is this: ... You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength ... The second is equally important: Love your neighbor as yourself." (Mark 12:30-31)**

**"My prayer for all of them is ... that just as you are in me and I am in you, so they will be in us..." (John 17:21)**

**Our primary mission is to know, love and glorify God.** God's purpose is for us to become like Jesus Christ his Son. So what would it be like to relate to God the Father the way Christ does - to share in the same Father-Son relationship? What does it mean to love God and to know God - to have a real relationship with the Creator? How do we even approach God? Do we approach Him as a powerful King, a friend, a daddy, or all of the above? Do we enter His presence with trembling because of His power, or do we approach His throne like a small child would feel safe in drawing near to his loving father - to "Abba" - to "Papa?" God has characteristics of both the lamb and the lion. By following Christ unconditionally and becoming more like Him, we can have a relationship

with God the Father and make it the first and most important thing. Everything else flows out of this primary relationship with God the Father. Although blessings, health, and success in our ministry or vocational calling can be good desires of our heart, they are not the central focus of the mission. They are secondary to the mission. *(For a great book on this topic, please read "The Papa Prayer" by Dr. Larry Crabb.)*

We then are asked to love others out of our love for God - to be a reflection of God's love to others just as Christ did. It's easy to recognize a "noble cause" - it is a cause that is about loving God or others. **Stated quite simply, our core mission is to love God and others well.** Demonstrating the love of God from the core of our hearts to others is what it means to advance the Kingdom of God. To accomplish this, we must "escape the decadence" in our lives, live a life of "moral excellence," become more holy, and thus learn to "know God better." If we do this, we will receive the "glory and goodness" of Jesus Christ our King! ... What a legacy!

*"As we know Jesus better, his divine power gives us everything we need for living a godly life. He has called us to receive his own glory and goodness! And by that same mighty power, he has given us all of his rich and wonderful promises. He has promised that you will escape the decadence all around you caused by evil desires and that you will share in his divine nature.*

*So make every effort to apply the benefits of these promises to your life. Then your faith will produce a life of moral excellence. A life of moral excellence leads to knowing God better. Knowing God leads to self-control. Self-control leads to patient endurance, and patient endurance leads to godliness. Godliness leads to love for other Christians, and finally you will grow to have a genuine love for everyone....*

*So, dear brothers, work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen." (2 Peter 1:3-10)*

The Bible teaches that there is only one way to prove to the world that we are true disciples of Christ - that sanctification is taking place in our lives: *by our love for one another.* (John 13:35) We are then commanded by our King to go and tell and demonstrate the Good News about the freedom, love, and salvation offered by Christ into the entire world - to everyone, everywhere. (see Mark 16:15) In other words, we are to "offer the brotherhood of Christ." So we are here on earth to allow God to have His way with us regarding His mission: *to transform us to become more like Christ - to love God and others like Christ.* Here is the good news: showing true love for God or others is not something we can "make happen." Here is the difficult news:

demonstrating Christ-like love requires death to self-obsession - which is the great battle of this Great War - and this will be painful. As we die to our flesh and become more like Christ, we will be amazed by our capacity to love. Hang on, God is up to something really good - it's what we were created for!

**"Don't be impatient for the Lord to act!  
Wait patiently ..."** Psalm 37: 7, 34

**"Those who wait on the Lord will find new strength. They will fly high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint." (Isa. 40: 31)**

**Faithful will the Small Assignments while Waiting on God.** Within the context of our "first things," Christ does have specific assignments for his disciples - his warriors. But there will be seasons of drudgery, pain, and tremendous waiting on the fulfillment of the specific vision God has given us. "Does God really have a noble and unique purpose for my life that truly matters?" we question. "Yes, I thought God gave me a vision for my life's calling, but why is it taking so long?" During these seasons of waiting, we are taught the importance of patience, humility, and trust. This is an essential part of our sanctification. Moses waited for 40 years to complete his assignment after receiving a vision to free the Israelites from bondage in Egypt. Abraham and Sarah waited 20 years before Isaac was born. We may think, "But I can't wait that long!"

However long it takes, we will learn that God's timing is perfect and that He has so much to teach us as we are being transformed into brothers of Christ and are being prepared for our specific assignments. We are being asked to be faithful with the small assignments so that we can be trusted with the larger ones. For example, how can God entrust us with impacting our community, our city, or our world if we are not impacting our wives and kids in a Godly manner?

In the *Parable of the Talents*, the master asked three men to invest his money. He gave five bags of gold to one, two bags to another, and one bag to the third, "dividing it in proportion to their abilities." The master was pleased with the first two servants who doubled his money. He celebrated them by saying, "Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been *faithful in handling this small amount*, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let's celebrate together!" (Matt. 25:21)

To the third servant, who lived in fear and didn't utilize the investment the master had made in him, the master was furious: "You wicked and lazy servant! ... From those who are unfaithful, *even what little they have will be taken away*. Now throw this useless servant into outer darkness...." (v. 29-30) If we are part of our King's brotherhood, the Spirit of God will ordain and anoint us to accomplish specific assignments for Him. But we must be faithful with the

smaller assignments before He will entrust us with more.

**“The true test of a person’s spiritual life and character is not what he does in the extraordinary moments of life, but what he does during the ordinary times when there is nothing tremendous or exciting happening.”**

Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost* (Oct. 12)

As we are obedient to God's will for our lives, we will be given special assignments that we were uniquely created and gifted to accomplish. But to give us hope and perseverance during the seasons of waiting and drudgery, God will give us special names or visions which reveal our identity and His heroic purposes for us. Have you ever asked God your name? Or have you ever asked God, "What do you think of me, and what are the plans you have for me if I totally surrender to your will - no matter the cost?" (see Jer. 29:11 NLT)

"God gives us a vision, and then He takes us down to the valley to batter us into the shape of that vision. It is in the valley that so many of us give up and faint. Every God-given vision will become real if we will only have patience.... God has to take us into the valley and put us through fires and floods to batter us into shape, until we get to the point where He can trust us with the reality of the vision. Ever since God gave us the vision, He has been at work. He is getting us into the shape of the goal He has for us, and yet over and over again we try to escape from the Sculptor's hand in an effort to batter ourselves into the shape of our own goal." (Oswald, *My Utmost*, July 6)

### **Our "Compelling" Assignments; The Temptation of Pride**

In the *Lord of the Rings*, Frodo had delivered the evil Ring to Rivendale and was hoping his mission was complete: “We did what we set out to do,” proclaimed Frodo. “I am ready to go home.” Frodo then realized his call, the burden of carrying the Ring, was not yet over. The battles ahead to accomplish his mission became even more intense. As he sat pondering his fate, Frodo lamented to Gandalf, “I wish the ring had never come to me. I wish none of this had happened.”

Gandalf responded, “So do all who live to see such times, but that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time given to us.”

Every brother will be given a unique assignment in this Great War. And it’s not for us to decide. Our King knows the unique gifts he has given to us and how he wants to utilize them in the war. “As it is, we see that God has carefully placed each part of the body right where he wanted it.” (1 Cor. 12, Msge) Once you truly surrender to our King, God will not allow you just sit back and be comfortable. As you grow in Christ, you will want to engage in this War – tasks that do not fall within God’s priorities will begin to feel more meaningless. At

times, we will try to run, but there is one thing with which you can be sure – our King’s pursuit of His chosen children is relentless! He has been described as the “hound of heaven.” You will feel compelled to follow his purposes, because “you do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price.” (1 Cor. 6:19-20)

Paul understood this when he said, “preaching the Good News is not something I can boast about. I am compelled by God to do it.” (1 Cor. 9:16) Even Jesus felt compelled to prepare for his mission. After Jesus was baptized and he heard his Father’s affirmation, “immediately the Holy Spirit *compelled* Jesus to go into the wilderness.” (Mark 1:12) Feeling compelled is really a wonderful thing – it’s purposeful. It’s something you want to do, but often will feel very difficult, crazy, and almost always overwhelming. If you are curious about God’s will or direction for your life or vocation, ask the question, “Do I feel compelled?” But even as we feel compelled, there will be much waiting on God's perfect timing.

As stated by Oswald Chambers, “All of God’s people are ordinary people who have been made extraordinary by the purpose He has given them.” (Oct. 25) Any brother of our King certainly has a grand, noble, and royal call that is orchestrated by our good and powerful Savior. At times, the deeds God will accomplish through us will make us feel incredibly anointed and powerful – which is true. As Jesus said, “The truth is, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works...” (John 14:12 NLT) Wow! Doesn’t that seem amazing? While our King walked the earth, he healed the sick, multiplied fish and bread in baskets, cast out demons, and even raised the dead. Other disciples also were used to accomplish some miraculous feats. Jesus once sent out his twelve disciples with this mission: “Heal the sick, raise the dead, cure those with leprosy, and cast out demons. Give as freely as you have received!” (Matt. 10:8) In this generation, as God allows us to be a part of some amazing works, we must remember that our powerful gifts "all originate in God's Spirit." (1 Cor. 12. Msg) God is the one doing these powerful miracles. He is using us as His instruments.

Needless to say, Jesus will use His brothers in this generation of this Great War to accomplish amazing works. This is hard to comprehend, but that’s His plan. During those moments when God uses us for great victories, our greatest adversary will be the temptation of pride. As we witness some amazing works accomplished through us - of course we will get excited. Our response should be to fall on our knees. But the sin of pride is the great nuclear warhead in this battle. It's the last great assault of the Enemy - it is all Satan has left, but it is his greatest weapon. Pride took out the most powerful angel Lucifer; it took out Adam and Eve; and it can take us out. “The Devil will use that pride to make him fall.” (1 Tim. 3:6 NLT) Pride in ourselves can quickly render us useless to our King – for “the Lord despises pride. Pride goes before destruction and haughtiness before a fall.” (Prvbs. 16:5, 18)

So how does God keep us from falling into pride? By examining the lives of His disciples in scripture - we learn that often times God uses suffering! That's why Paul finally accepted his thorn and considered suffering "pure joy." Without the "wounds and scars," the heroic stories of the early disciples would not be told today. Without the revelations and insights and the resulting humility one embraces through suffering, the disciples would have attempted to honor themselves rather than our King. Scripture teaches that the life of a true disciple is a life of suffering. Although the heroes of the faith suffered, not one of them who finished well would trade their legacy with anyone. No one can demand or take their own true glory - which is the goal of pride. But for those who finish well, *God chooses to bestow it!*

At times God will need to work on our pride, but at other times we will feel trampled, unworthy, and defeated. The assignments from our King at times will feel like a great burden. No one in the middle of the ravages of war wants "the burden of the Ring." Even Jesus lamented, "I am under a heavy burden until [my mission] is accomplished." (Luke 13:49) He pleaded with God to take away his "cup of suffering" - his burden. During these times we will need to embrace the power that resides in us, because "now we are united with [Jesus] who was raised from the dead." (Rom. 7:4) We can always approach God as a child and rest in His arms. Faith and hope will be our greatest allies. We will want our brothers during these moments to pick us up, wipe off the sweat and blood, mend our wounds, and remind us of our Christ-like identity and purpose. As Paul stated, "That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day." (2 Cor. 4:19) During these intense battles it will do us well to trust in our King's goodness and to dream about the great celebration that is waiting for us. Don't quit, because "I am sure that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished..." (Phil. 1:6)

Doesn't it feel like walking a razor-thin tightrope between recognizing our name and identity, being obedient to our mission, desiring rewards and honor for faithful service - without falling into the death-grip of pride? It is! However, these two realities are designed to co-exist: "So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and in His good time He will honor you." (1 Pet. 5:6) So we must rely on "the mighty power of God" to rescue us from this seemingly "mission impossible." But remember, this seemingly "foolish plan of God is far wiser than the wisest of human plans." (1 Cor. 1:25)

**The Source of the Power.** As we see such great feats accomplished through us, there is some safety against pride if we understand from where the power originates. In a classic fight between King Arthur and the "black knight" King Pellinore, both men fought hard and valiantly, but Arthur's sword broke and he would have been killed but for the intervention of Merlyn. Arthur's prideful self didn't like being rescued by Merlin, but he had suffered deep wounds and would otherwise have died.

After hearing from Merlyn about a sword that would not break, King Arthur set out and retrieved the sword "Excalibur" from a lake in the Forest of Adventure. This sword was so sharp that it could slice either a feather or an iron bar. With his new sword in hand, Arthur again challenged Pellinore, but he forbids Merlin from interfering this time. No help was needed. Arthur easily defeated his opponent Pellinore and did not suffer even a scratch.

After this great victory Arthur was feeling pretty good about himself and his new sword. Merlyn then asked Arthur whether he would rather have Excalibur or the sheath which holds it. "Excalibur!" exclaimed Arthur. Merlin went on to explain to Arthur that the great power was in the sheath because whoever wears it could not be harmed in battle.

This infuriated Arthur: "Merlin, I do declare that you have taken from me the entire glory of that battle. For what credit may fall to any knight who fights his enemy by means of enchantment. I have half a mind to take this glorious sword back to the magic lake and cast it where it belongs." To which Merlin responded, "Assuredly you are right in what you say. But bear in mind that you are not an ordinary knight but a king. Your life belongs not to you but to your people. You have no right to imperil it, but you should do all that lies in your power to preserve it. Keep the sword so that it may safeguard your life." (p. 94)

This story from King Arthur closely parallels how great feats are accomplished in this Great War. Before Christ entered into his glory, he told his disciples: "And now I will send the Holy Spirit, just as my Father promised. But stay here in the city until the Holy Spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven." (Luke 24:49) God's people are given a special power that resides within us that can be used by God to accomplish great and noble feats. If we abide in Him and are obedient to his will for our lives, we too will watch His incredible power work through us for the cause of good against evil. These powerful gifts that are resident in us "all originate in God's Spirit." (1 Cor. 12, Msge) If we remember from where our strength originates, then it helps to defeat the spirit of pride.

**"Not afraid to die."** At times these assignments from our King will feel like tremendous burdens, but we know deep in our hearts that some burdens we were specifically and uniquely designed by our creator to carry. The assignments will seem overwhelming, but we know that it is the Spirit in us that will claim the victory. For all these God-given missions, we are willing to lay down our lives, for *"they were not afraid to die."* (Rev. 12:11) But sometimes it is easier to say we will die for our God, our brothers, and our God-given assignments than to endure the suffering and truly live for them. In the midst of the battle, when we are facing the overwhelming odds and the weight of the burdens feel too heavy, our great challenge is to trust God's good plan for us and still to be willing to cry out, like Christ, *"Thy will be done!"* And, like Christ and like Job, even if from our circumstances it appears like our God has



forsaken us, we pray that we will have the humility to worship and praise our God even during the trials and tribulations *allowed* by Him: "The Lord gave me everything I had, and the Lord has taken it away. *Praise the name of the Lord!*" (Job 1:21) "And in all this, Job did not sin by blaming God," (Job 1:22) but he trusted in God's ultimate good plan for his life.

"There is only one relationship that really matters and that is your personal relationship to your personal Redeemer and Lord. If you maintain that at all costs, letting everything else go, God will fulfill His purpose through your life. One individual life may be of priceless value to God's purposes, and yours may be that life..." (Oswald, *My Utmost*, Nov. 30)

**Humility for the Mission:** One of the paradoxes we will find in the War against evil is that some of the seemingly "less important" or "weaker" people from a human and worldly perspective may have the most important roles in this war. This is similar to the story in *The Lord of the Rings*. Frodo, the humble hobbit who was part of the weakest race, was the chosen ring bearer. All middle earth rallied behind the success of his specific assignment in the war. It took such a pure and humble heart to have a chance to resist the evil temptations of the ring. In our War, we all represent parts of the overall body. But "some of the parts that seem weakest and least important are really the most necessary." (1 Cor. 12:22) Just as Frodo's fate was tied to the missions of his other companions, in our war "it makes no difference whether the [role] is ... higher or lower. You give it dignity and honor just as it is, without comparisons." (1 Cor. 12, Msg) All of our missions also are intrinsically linked together in this War. So "if one part hurts, every other part is involved in the hurt, and in the healing. If one part flourishes, every other part enters into the exuberance." (1 Cor. 12, Msg.)

**"No matter how significant you are, it is only because of what you are part of. I want you think about how this keeps your significance from getting blown up into self importance."**  
(1 Cor. 12, Msg.)

**Peace in the Midst of Hard Circumstances.** Like Paul, even though we are not yet home to our final destination of heaven, we have hope that even here on earth we can learn to "live happily whatever the circumstances." (Phil. 4:11) As we give up control of our lives and trust in God's purpose for us - even during seasons of pain and drudgery - we learn that we can experience peace and rest from the Holy Spirit in the midst of difficult circumstances. As stated by Oswald Chambers, "The things that happen do not happen by chance - they happen entirely by the decree of God. God is sovereignly working out his own purposes... If we have a purpose of our own, it destroys the simplicity and the calm, relaxed pace which should be characteristic of the children of God." (Oswald Chambers, Aug. 5) So this war does not have to feel hopeless during our trials and tribulations. In fact, we can rest in peace knowing that our loving

God is in control.

We are here for an important mission - **God's mission for us** - and the **Band of Brothers** will not miss out! After all the battles are fought and all of our assignments, both big and small, are completed - all of us long to hear, "*Well done my good and faithful servant.*"

### Humility vs. Pride

"Humility precedes honor." (Prov. 15:33; 18:12)

"The Lord despises pride." (Prov. 16:5)

"Pride ends in humiliation, while humility brings honor." (Prov. 29:23)

"Pride goes before destruction." (Prov. 16:18)

So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and in His good time He will honor you." (1 Pet. 5:6)

"The greatest curse in our spiritual life is pride."  
(Oswald, My Utmost, Jan. 12)

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