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A Call for Community

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What if you don't have to do this alone?

What if we weren't meant to live in these bubbles of self-sufficiency ready to pop with priorities we manage and overflowing daily planners? What if God's given us assistants?

To me it sounds, well, too easy. I've trained myself to put one foot in front of the other, keep my chin up and run on adrenaline. Try telling me to '*just do your best and forget the rest'.* I'll offer a sincere smile, nodding yet dismissing the wisdom in your words.

Why?

Because I've learned to define the currency of success as self-sufficiency and independence. Asking for help means I'm not working hard enough or measuring up high enough. Makes sense...right? Not so sure...

HELP: A four letter word in my personal pocket dictionary defined as ‘weakness’. Truth is, I innocently just want to make my own way a little under the radar not coming across as a nuisance or inadequate.

So, me ask for help? Not even when widowhood wears me so thin I can hardly withstand the wind. Not when single motherhood has my knees hitting the floor in frustration.

Then this: Ecclesiastes 4: 9-12. I’d glossed over it before but the timing wasn’t right. This time it hit me square in the stubborn, seemingly self-sufficient head.

“Two are better than one, because they have a better return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has not one to help pick him 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 chord of three strands is not quickly broken.”

Lord, am I doing this all wrong? I work to honor you, to respect busy lives of others, to give back and give away, to sacrifice myself as your servant. ….But, maybe servant-hood doesn’t mean living without need in my own life…. Have I been playing the martyr and sacrificing self-care?

No, it's worse. I’ve been sacrificing ‘soul care’ to live in self-sufficiency*. The stress of trying to do it all alone without support distracts and deters me from what You really want from me.*

Standing alone on an unknowing pedestal of perfectionism, ***sacrificing soul-care*** until I’m shivering in the cold, according to Ecclesiastes. Ouch.

Avoiding intimacy, never vulnerable but perpetuating my own aloneness like that.

Can you relate? Read again those Biblical words. Are you convicted like I? Or do they offer you comfort and a sense of **community**?

I long for the former, a life alongside **Christian comrades supporting each other in community**.

I’m getting there. I’m softening my solitary ways the more I meditate on the Word.

I’m calling out more often, leaning in and learning to accept assistance from neighbors and friends. When I’m worn thin, there’s warmth just in knowing someone’s there to ***pick me up, encourage me, and give me perspective, validation and a community collaboration.***

God says we were made for companionship…Christian companionship. I've avoided the idea because it reminds me of the love I lost when my husband left for heaven. But, I’m certain it's not romantic love God's referring to when He says, ***‘A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.***’

He wants us to work together, to support, hold up, hold on to and defend each other. Who am I to go against that Godly grain?!

Community. Comrades. Companionship. It’s risky! Pricey, too! Especially for someone raised with ideals of independence, like me. But I now see such value in vulnerability!

We aren’t meant to do ‘life’ alone. Jesus formed churches to gather in worship, God gave us governments to guide and created cultures to thrive…all communities with common goals. Each time we lean into a Christian community we feel a sense of ***inclusion***.

But God knows it’s not only inclusion we need. As women and moms working hard we require validation, too.

So, why not tip toe off our pedestals to faithfully fill our needs through the hands of helpers God gave us? It’s not a nuisance. It’s us offering others opportunity to obey God’s command to serve one another.

Then, when we’re called we obey and open our hearts, lending the loving hand.

You see? Through community we are ***held up and held accountable***. We give and receive, support and seek.

I’m still learning to lean on others. But, as a single working mom, I know more now than ever I wasn’t made to do ‘life’ alone. I value the village God built around my girls and me!

I look for ways to use my own time and talents but without tapping myself out. When I white knuckle the wheel of over-commitment I easily fall further from God, even when I’m giving!

Is it not true for you, too? When we’re stressed and doing it all alone, we become distracted from the life He wants us to live, losing touch with what’s most important.

Please, take it from a former overly independent martyr (I mean mother!), stay close to a Christian community. Whether it’s spiritual, occupational or simply a hand in your house, you don’t need to do this all alone. I never thought I’d say it but I value living in greater vulnerability.

We’re all in this together *so let's go forth and build a world of encouragers, of faith bringers, of Lord lovers, of Christians in community. After all, we already have enough critics!*

Learning to Lean in,

Katie

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