

5 Cs to Move From the Red Zone to the End Zone

Men are notorious for nurturing superficial friendships that center around the safer subjects of sports, business, sex and almost anything other than what's most important.

We men protect our reputation and ego by surrounding ourselves with other men who want the same thing and don't want to expose any true vulnerabilities or be held accountable for behaviors. "How's work going?" "Did you see the game last night?" is easier than "How's the marriage?"

Over the last 15 years, Every Man Ministries surveys reveal that only 1 in 10 men over 30 years of age have someone in their lives they would call a "true friend" who knows them at a deep or personal level. The irony of this reality is that we also know the margin of victory for men at the personal level is often ... one other man, who is a true friend, who "gets under the rock" with you on the deep issues of life.

So, whether or not you've got a close friend, here are the 5 "Cs" we know move men from the "red zones" of life to the "end zones" of celebration.

1. Consistency. The principle of frequency, meeting regularly and connecting on an ongoing basis gives men a go-to guy for all things besides the typical chit-chat small talk. Breaking consistency can lead to isolating, which is the enemy to forging new character in Christ.

"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." (Heb. 10:24-25)

2. Confession. The principle of authenticity provides men a

confidant with whom you can be honest and who will tell the truth even when it hurts. This may be men's highest hurdle, because we are afraid of lowering the veils and opening our lives, beliefs and concerns and (gasp) sharing our feelings. Your friend will not have all the answers, but he will be someone to confess true struggles that all men fight. This is a friend who is authentic, not synthetic, and will be frank instead of a flatterer.

"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective" (James 5:16).

"He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion" (Prov. 28:13).

3. Care. The principle of empathy gives men an ally in the "good fight of faith," one who cares about the needs, hurts, hopes and dreams of another. It's masculine empathy from masculinity, which is not femininity. When tough times arise, and they will, men need men who care enough to be attentive, available and willing to assist.

"A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity" (Prov. 17:17).

4. Confidentiality. The principle of safety gives men an environment to dig deep without being condemned for struggles. A true friend will honor the code of confidentiality and be able to "talk about anything." Within this umbrella of safety, men can confide true issues with living a life serving Christ and others, transforming concerns into convictions. But it takes a brother who will help hold you accountable within the code.

"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus..." (Rom. 8:1).

“My eyes will be on the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me; the one whose walk is blameless will minister to me” (Psalm 101:6).

“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him” (John 3:17).

5. Completion. The principle of maturity involves having a friend who can hold a position of authority in your life. God is designed for vertical authority, but a friend can provide horizontal authority, standing in your blind spot. He will be able to see things about yourself that you may not and have the ability to guide you toward completing the character maturity issue in your life. This kind of friend can bruise your ego, so it may be healed by Christ.

“Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses” (Prov. 27:5-6)

“Let a righteous man strike me—that is a kindness; let him rebuke me—that is oil on my head (“oil” refers to presence of God). My head will not refuse it, for my prayer will still be against the deeds of evildoers” (Psalm 141:5).

Men need one man to pursue victory in all areas of life. Even Jesus had John. Moses had Aaron. David had Jonathan. Paul had Timothy. Greatness comes from one great friend.

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