



A MAN & HIS FRIENDS

EXCERPTS FROM *TENDER WARRIOR*

by Dr. Stu Weber

 **STAND COURAGEOUS**

A MINISTRY OF FAMILY RESEARCH COUNCIL
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FOREWORD

by Lt. Gen. (Ret.) William G. Boykin

In 1994, when I turned over command of the Delta Force, I felt like my life was falling apart. It was difficult enough to leave a military unit like Delta, where I'd experienced firsthand some of America's most valiant and dangerous battles. I had shared exhilarating victories and devastating losses with some of the nation's finest and most professional soldiers, some of whom did not come home alive, and that was devastating.

But leaving Delta wasn't the only challenge I was facing. My marriage was in trouble; my wife was struggling to cope with our move to Washington, D.C. and was spending more and more time in North Carolina on her own or with friends. She had carried an incredible weight during my time in command as the commander's wife. The numerous funerals that she attended while I lay wounded in Mogadishu took a toll on her, and before long we were separated and on the way to a divorce.

As I was leaving Ft. Bragg for the move to Washington, D.C., someone gave me a book called *Tender Warrior*. It was written by a well-known author and pastor named Stu Weber, who had served as a Green Beret during the Vietnam War before being called into ministry. The book turned out to be one of the best gifts I've ever received. That was true for several reasons. First of all, and most obviously, it spoke to me during a painful period of time and strengthened my faith. It also familiarized me with the idea of mentoring young men. That experience opened an unexpected door for me, and eventually led me into to, a new life and family.

Tender Warrior also introduced me to a true friend—the kind of friend I wish every man could have. Stu Weber, who wrote the book, has over the years become my real “Battle Buddy.”

What do I mean by a Battle Buddy? When Army recruits are being trained to start thinking and acting like soldiers and preparing themselves to go into combat, they are placed together in pairs by their commanding officers. The “battle buddy” nickname describes a kind of assigned best friend—assigned because the recruits don’t get to pick and choose who that buddy is going to be.

The idea is to have one particular man to talk to (and complain to) during training. The battle buddy is also always expected to be aware of your whereabouts and your mental and physical condition. You and he can provide encouragement to each other, keep one another out of trouble when off-duty, and have someone to rely upon. Later on, when in real combat, you can count on the fact that your battle buddy has got your back and you’ve got his. It’s an Army-imposed “friendship.” When a soldier goes through the nine-week Ranger course he is assigned a Ranger Buddy, which is the same concept and same purpose just by a different name. The concept works and has served the soldiers of our Army well for decades.

During my first year back at Ft. Bragg, I was commanding all the U.S. Army’s Green Berets. One day my chaplain said to me in passing, “We’re bringing in a guy to speak to us. He used to be in the Special Forces in Vietnam and he’s a pastor now, somewhere out west. His name is Stu Weber. Ever heard of him?” I was stunned. “Stop right there!” I told him. “Just let me know when he’s coming. I’ll definitely be there.”

When the day finally arrived, I was most certainly present. I couldn’t wait to talk to this man, whose book had changed the course of my life. “You don’t know me, but my name is Jerry Boykin,” I told him once we met. “Would you please come to my office?” He said, “When?” And I said, “It doesn’t matter—I’ll cancel everything I’ve got. I just want to talk to you.”

When Stu finally walked into my office, I said, “I owe you!” Then I told him the story. “I wouldn’t have thought about reaching out to a neighborhood boy, and I wouldn’t be married to my wife, if it hadn’t been for your book!” And that wasn’t the end of it. Not at all. In fact, it was the beginning of a rare and sacred friendship.

Today, Stu Weber is one of my battle buddies with a tremendous influence on my life. I am also one of his battle buddies (more about that below). He lives on the West Coast and I live in Virginia, but we manage to stay in close contact because we’ve developed a deep and candid relationship. We share things with each other, confide in each other, and encourage each other. We give each other counsel. I covet his advice because I’ve learned to depend on Stu. In fact, we have become hunting and fishing buddies. I fly all the way across the country to elk hunt or sturgeon fish with Stu just so we can spend quality one-on-one time together. It is important to both of us to share our thoughts with each other, including our fears and struggles.

But the most important thing is that I know he won’t compromise the things that I tell him. I also know that he won’t judge me; he’s going to understand what I’m saying and give me advice and counsel. And I’m going to do the same for him.

What follows are two chapters from Stu’s award-winning book, *Tender Warrior*. My prayer for you in reading these chapters is twofold. First, I pray that you will identify, connect, and deepen a relationship with a battle buddy. These two chapters are full of biblical wisdom on the subject. Second, I pray that getting a taste of Stu’s insightful book will inspire you to get *Tender Warrior* and read all of it, preferably with a battle buddy. God used it to change my life—literally! I pray God will use it in a great way in your life. We all need battle buddies to Stand Courageous!

CHAPTER TWELVE

REAL MEN STAND
TOGETHER
A Man and His Friends, Part 1



I had no rest for my spirit, not finding Titus my brother.

2 CORINTHIANS 2:13

Y*our love to me was more wonderful than the love of women.*” What words are these? Perverted words? Twisted words? The words of some pathetic sexual deviate?

No. A war-hardened veteran penned these words after his best buddy fell in battle. They were written by a warrior, with the piercing grief only a soldier mourning for a comrade-in-arms could begin to understand.

Twisted words? No. They are words straight and true—a swift, clean arrow shot from the heart of Scripture. David wrote these words after the death of his friend Jonathan on the bloody slopes of Mount Gilboa. What the son of Jesse expressed without shame in that lament was something that has burned deep in the soul of every man in one way or another for generations beyond memory.

A desire for friendship, man to man. A desire for friendship with nothing between. A yearning for friendship so real, so strong, so compelling, it is willing to share everything about itself and make deep and powerful promises.

Down deep at the core, every man needs a man friend.

Down deep at the core, every man needs a brother to lock arms with.

Down deep at the core, every man needs a soul mate.

MEN NEED FRIENDS WHO ARE MEN

Yes, beyond question, our wives are to be our most intimate companions. We're to be willing to die for our wives and our children instantly, and many of us are ready to do just that. But within the willingness to die for family and home, something inside us longs for someone to die *with*...someone to die *beside*...someone to lock step with. Another man with a heart like our own.

That's what David was saying about Prince Jonathan. Every warrior needs a fellow soldier. Every fighter pilot needs a wingman. David was demonstrating something that even the U.S. Army, in all its relational ineptitude, understands. When you're going to do something that stretches the very fabric of your soul, like get through nine weeks of Army Ranger school at Fort Benning, Georgia, you're going to need a buddy. A "Ranger Buddy." Those two words mean a world to me. It was my Ranger Buddy, Lou Francis, who clung to my arm, and I to his, through sixty-three days of unbelievable physical and mental trauma. Together we made it through the toughest experience either of us had ever faced up to that point in our lives.

Some might argue with me, but I know of no more intense training regimen in the U.S. military. These guys know how to take a young man and stretch him tendon by tendon—physical tendon by physical tendon, emotional tendon by emotional tendon.

I remember well that last, most intense phase of our training, called "Unconventional Warfare." We were in the swamps of western Florida in the

dead of winter. I would never have dreamed Florida could be so cold. We were at the end of a several-days patrol, and nearly at the end of ourselves. We'd been without sleep for most of those days, and very nearly without food. Our particular mission required us to proceed to a certain set of coordinates at the corner of our map. Unfortunately, those coordinates happened to be on the other side of the Yellow River.

We had been staggering knee-deep through the numbing water of a cypress swamp for what seemed like eons. The temperature was below freezing, and our bodies were at the ragged edge of our endurance. The "knees" of the cypress trees, invisible under the black waters, savaged our shins and ankles. And the river was still somewhere ahead of us.

When we finally reached the river, it was practically indistinguishable from the water we'd been wading in. The only way we could tell it was a river was by the rapidly moving current and the lack of cypress trees.

Our goal was a piece of higher ground on the other side. We knew we couldn't get our clothes wet or the cold would finish us. So we stripped down to our skimpy briefs and, as we'd been trained, made a little float out of our two ponchos, with our rifles and packs protected. Wading out into the icy water, we were surprised by the strength of the current. Though we were both fair swimmers, we found ourselves being swept further and further downstream. It was fearsome. Reaching back for a burst of strength from some final untapped reserve, both of us began kicking with all our might. The effort was rewarded as we inched toward the slimy bank and finally achieved it.

We crawled out of the water, blue from the cold, trailing bits of river weed and slime. So delighted to be alive. So exultant at having reached our goal. I remember our looking into each other's eyes and then spontaneously throwing our arms around each other. We stood there for a moment on the bleak winter bank of the Yellow River, two dripping, shivering young men in their briefs, laughing and crying and holding on to each other as if we'd never let go.

If we each live to be a hundred, I expect neither of us will ever forget the camaraderie of that moment.

We'd made it. We'd stayed alive. The two of us.

Every man, whether he admits it or not, needs a Ranger Buddy. Every man needs someone with whom he can face adversity and death. Emerson wrote, “We take care of our health. We lay up money. We make our roof tight. We make our clothing sufficient. But who provides wisely that he shall not be wanting in the best property of all, friends—friends strong and true?”

WHY MEN DON'T HAVE FRIENDS WHO ARE MEN

A professor at Southern Methodist University had this to say after ten years of study on the subject:

To say that men have no intimate friends seems on the surface too harsh, and it raises quick objections from most men. But the data indicates that it is not far from the truth. Even the most intimate of friendships (of which there are few) rarely approach the depth of disclosure a woman commonly has with other women.... Men, who neither bare themselves nor bear one another, are buddies in name only.¹

Oh, we may *want* that friendship. Every man, whether he admits it or not, walks around with a hollow place in his chest, wondering if he is the only one. But there is something within us that keeps us at arm's length. *What is that something that keeps men distant and friendless?*

I saw a man about my age the other day in a crowded parking lot. If one Vietnam vet can spot another, then I knew this man for what he was and what he had endured. I felt an immediate love for him. He was on crutches, and one pant leg was folded and pinned up to the top. Everyone in that busy lot seemed to avert their eyes from this disabled gentleman. It's something we find ourselves doing in that sort of situation, isn't it? One glance tells us something isn't normal. Something isn't right. Something's missing. In the physical sense, this man wasn't “all there.”

I think most of us would have to admit that when it comes to open and vulnerable man-to-man friendships, we are walking on one leg. We're really not "all there." Something's missing. Something's pinned up and empty in our souls. We may be "kings" and "warriors," but we seem to have lost something of the tender side. So we're really one-legged men. We simply don't know how to fellowship.

If the most basic definition of "fellowship" is two fellows in one ship, then we don't know what to do with ourselves when we're out at sea. In a fine, fresh wind on a starry night when we stand together at the bow, looking out into the dark, mysterious depths—on a night that cries out for deep talk and sharing of the soul—we lapse into silence or mutter idly about how many chunks of salt pork it takes to fill a barrel below decks.

Kent Hughes, a thoughtful pastor in the Midwest, makes this observation about our culture:

There has been an interesting development in suburban architecture. Long gone are the days when homes all had large front porches, with easy access to the front door enabling one to become quickly acquainted with others in the neighborhood.

[Today] we have architecture which speaks more directly to our current values. The most prominent part of the house seems to be the two- or three-car garage. Inside are huge bathrooms with skylights and walk-in closets larger than the bedroom I grew up in. Modern architecture employs small living and dining rooms and now smaller kitchens as well, because entertaining is no longer a priority. Today's homes boast smaller yards and an increasing incidence of high fences.

The old adage that "a man's house is his castle" is actually coming true today. His castle's moat is his front lawn, the drawbridge his driveway, and the portcullis his automatic garage door through which he passes with electronic heraldry. Once inside, he removes his armor and attends to house and hearth until daybreak, when he assumes his executive armament and, briefcase in hand, mounts his steed—perhaps a Bronco or a Mustang—presses the button, and

rides off to the wars. Today's homes reflect our modern values of individualism, isolation, and privatization.²

Individualism...isolation...privatization. These are destructive words. Painful words. They have an empty sound to them, don't they? They leave a hollowness in our chest.

Patrick Morley, author of *The Man in the Mirror*, wryly observes that while most men could recruit six pallbearers, "hardly anyone has a friend he can call at 2:00 a.m."³

Referring to a recent study in Britain, sociologist Marion Crawford stated:

Middle-aged men and women had considerably different definitions of friendship. By an overwhelming margin, women talked about "trust and confidentiality," while men described a friend as "someone I could go out with" or "someone whose company I enjoy." For the most part, men's friendships revolve around activities, while women's revolve around sharing.⁴

We're not talking now about a golfing buddy. We're talking about somebody we can be soulish with.

Why are these things true? I have my theories. If we men comprise steel and velvet, most of us feel more comfortable with the steel. We find it easier to live out the "provide and protect" functions than the "mentor and friend" functions. It stands to reason that the hard side dominates the tender side. Many of us have underdeveloped tender sides because we've been taught wrongly about manhood. Not deliberately, but wrongly. We need to become more tender. The warrior in us wants to be strong and needs to be strong. But we don't want to admit to any chinks in our armor. We don't want to admit to any vulnerabilities—*the very element that is essential for true friendships*. Oh, the vulnerabilities are there, all right. But most of us have learned to carefully hide them. Some might call that manliness. Others might more accurately label it for what it is: *dishonesty*.

Friendship requires honesty. Friendship requires trust. So it also—no way around it—requires vulnerability. I think that’s the bottom line of this no-friends syndrome among us men. And it’s spelled P-R-I-D-E.

We all want to think of ourselves as some kind of warrior, as some kind of man’s man. Unfortunately, though, as much as we love John Wayne, there is a side to the Duke that never emerged. All you ever saw was the steel. You never saw the velvet, unless it was for a fleeting moment in *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*. And the truth is, he did change a baby’s diaper in the religious-themed western fable *Three Godfathers*. Otherwise, John Wayne left us with the impression that real men stand alone. And so they do—when it is necessary. But the only reason it seems “necessary” most of the time is our stubborn, unyielding pride.

Real men stand together. We need to start thinking that way. Real men need one another. Real soldiers love each other.

Hal Moore and Joe Galloway capture that love powerfully in the prologue to their great book about the Vietnam War, *We Were Soldiers Once...and Young*:

Another war story, you say? Not exactly, for on the more important levels this is a love story, told in our own words and by our own actions. We were the children of the 1950s and we went where we were sent because we loved our country....

We went to war because our country asked us to go, because our new president, Lyndon B. Johnson, ordered us to go, but more importantly because we saw it as our duty to go. That is one kind of love.

Another and far more transcendent love came to us unbidden on the battlefields, as it does on every battlefield in every war man has ever fought. We discovered in that depressing, hellish place, where death was our constant companion, that we loved each other. We killed for each other, we died for each other, and we wept for each other. And in time we came to love each other as brothers. In battle our world shrank to the man on our left and the man on our right and the enemy all around. We held each other’s lives in our

hands and we learned to share our fears, our hopes, our dreams as readily as we shared what little else good came our way.⁵

It's always been that way. Real soldiers stand together. It was that way in Hal Moore's Ia Drang Valley in 1965, and it was that way long before in the hot sands of Alexander's ancient Near East. Real world conquerors stand arm in arm. Alexander the Great was "great," I suppose, because at one time he owned most of the habitable real estate on the planet. His secret weapon was something called the "Macedonian Phalanx," which was little more than a simple military formation with a straightforward mandate: "You never go into battle without the man beside you."

The Macedonian Phalanx was a formation that allowed the man's weak flank to be protected by his buddy. With his shield in his left hand and his sword in the right, a soldier thrusting with his blade could find his right side exposed, vulnerable to the enemy's spear or sword. In the Macedonian formation, the warrior had a trusted man guarding the area where he was most exposed. Although Alexander came along centuries after David, I think the son of Jesse would have called such a companion "the man of my right hand." Where I am most vulnerable and exposed, that's where I want the man of my right hand.

Dr. Charles Sell writes, "Men who have neglected intimate friendships with other men have far greater difficulty handling the midlife turmoil. These men are also devastated at retirement because their whole basis of significance and identity evaporates, and they're left without a network of friends or support."⁶

Close friendship with a man or a woman is rarely experienced by the American male. Author David Smith asserts:

Men find it hard to accept that they need the fellowship of other men. The simple request, "Let's have lunch together," is likely to be followed with the response, "Sure, what's up?"⁷

Can you imagine women saying that to each other? My wife calls your wife and says, "Let's have lunch." Your wife says, "Great, here's my calendar.

Where shall we go?” But a man will say, by implication, “What’s going on? What’s your problem? Why are you doing this?”

Dr. Smith continues:

The message is clear: The independent man doesn’t feel he needs the company of another man. In fact, the image of the independent man is that he has few if any emotional needs. Therefore, men must manufacture nonemotional reasons for being together...⁸

Most of us think we have to conjure up “practical” reasons or excuses for picking up the phone and calling another man. That’s part of the myth that says I have few, if any, emotional needs. If men get together, it’s because, in Dr. Smith’s words:

A business deal must be discussed or a game must be played. Men often use drinking as an excuse to gather together. Rarely do men plan a meeting together simply because they have a need to enjoy each other’s company.

Even when men are frequently together, their social interaction begins and remains at a superficial level. Just how long can conversations about politics and sports be nourishing to the human spirit? The same male employees can have lunch together for years and years and still limit their conversations to sports, politics, and dirty jokes, and comments about the sexual attractiveness of selected female workers in their office or plant.⁹

A WILLINGNESS TO GO DEEPER

Going beyond those surface subjects requires transparency. What transparency says at the bottom of it all is, “I really need you. I’m going to take the risk and be honest enough to tell you who I am.”

Someone pointed out to me a moving little piece from a magazine.

Because it deals with relationships, I think we Tender Warriors can learn something from it. The woman who wrote the article states:

One day the doorbell rang and there stood my beloved brother. It was a delightful surprise. His work as an executive of an international petroleum company keeps him out of the country most of the time, so his visits are rare, unexpected, and usually really brief.

It seemed as if he'd just arrived when, after an hour, he got up to say good-bye. I felt tears sliding down my cheeks. He asked why I was crying. Hesitating, I said, "Because I simply don't want you to go." He gave me a surprised look. He went to the phone and left a message for the pilot of his company's plane.

We had a wonderful forty-eight hours together. But I suffered a nagging feeling that my selfishness had caused him great inconvenience. Because I had told him I needed him.

Some time later my brother received an important award for his contributions to the oil industry. A reporter asked him at the time, "Is this the greatest honor that you've received?"

"No," he said, "my sister gave me my greatest honor the day she cried because she didn't want me to leave. That's the only time in my life anyone ever cried because they didn't want me to leave. It was then that I discovered the most precious gift one human being can ever bestow on another is to let him know he is really needed."¹⁰

That's transparency. That's the destination toward which we must journey. Yes, sometimes our childhood patterns keep us from progressing on that journey. If children are to be seen and not heard, if boys don't cry, then we tend not to be very candid about our hurts and needs.

A DETERMINATION TO PRACTICE

Practice, practice, practice sharing your emotions. Find some moment in your week that's been especially emotional for you, and then pick out that friend whose name is turning over in your mind and heart today and go share your emotions with that friend. Start at whatever level. If you need to prime the pump, start with your wife. Most women would treasure a husband's attempt to climb out of his shell.

I remember when I began trying—really trying—to express some honest emotion to my wife. It was like learning to speak all over again. It took some stuttering and stammering, but I had a growing desire to let her know what was going on inside me. I recall one night in particular. It was a number of years ago, following our middle son's high school basketball awards program.

Blake followed his older brother Kent at Barlow High School. Kent was big and tall and mobile and made a name for himself as a starter on the varsity squad. Blake was smaller and shorter. He didn't have the obvious physical advantages of his brother. It was a little intimidating to think of finding a niche at a high school where guards were a dime a dozen.

But he did make the team. Before the season began, the coach said, "I wish we could start twelve guys. Hey, we'd kill everybody in the league! But the rules say we have to start five. So I want you to know that we're going to start five, and then we're going to have three or four substitutes, role players as we call them. Beyond that, we're going to have three or four practice players. Whether you believe me or not, guys, the starters and the role players and the practice players are all essential to this team."

Blake chose to believe the coach. He ended up being one of the practice players, but he stuck with the program. He practiced hard and stayed ready. Still, he didn't get into the games too much unless they were substantially ahead or substantially behind. So in the course of the season he played a limited number of minutes.

When the awards ceremony came, Linda and I sat together in the high school cafeteria, listening to Coach Johnson announce the awards. Every year, the two most coveted awards were the Most Valuable Player trophy and

the Most Inspirational Player trophy. Coach went into the usual long buildup prior to the “inspirational” award, talking about what a certain young man had meant to the team and to his teammates. Finally, he called out the name: “Blake Weber.” He may not have had as much playing time, but he spent his energy encouraging others. He had marked his team.

Something happened inside of me that night. I experienced more sensations than I could readily describe. My heart filled with potent waves of emotion. This was the boy I had been so concerned about because he had to walk in the big shoes of his brother. This was my middle guy, surrounded by two brothers with individualistic personalities. This was the kid who, in years past, I was most afraid would struggle with positive self-image. And even though he got into the game sparingly, even though he barely got a chance to really handle the ball, he had such a positive self-image that he won the Most Inspirational Player Award. I tingled all over.

I remember driving home with Linda that night, opening and closing my mouth a few times before I could get out any words. It wasn't easy for me to talk about something so personally moving, something so deep inside. The old Stu Weber would have kept it bottled and corked on a dusty back shelf of memory. But that night I didn't want to put those feelings in a bottle. I didn't want them gathering dust on a back shelf. So I took the plunge. Staring straight ahead at the road, I finally said, “Lindy, I just want to tell you what's happening inside of me—what happened when his name was called tonight.” Bit by bit—and then in a great rush—the pride and gratitude and wonder of it all came out through my lips. *And it felt so good.*

Practice sharing your emotions. Find somebody who seems more relaxed and skilled at it, and watch how they do it. When you open your Bible, spend some time in the psalms with David. This was a true man's man and mighty warrior who knew how to put his emotions into words. He knew how to spill his guts before God. He knew how to cry out his fears and discouragement and hopes and joys. You can see the whole range of feeling in this man's words. Joyful laughter. Shouts of praise. Burning anger. The deep hurt of betrayal. Paralyzing fear. Overwhelming waves of discouragement. Sweet relief. Overflowing gratitude. Love. It's all there. He's all over the emo-

tional, spiritual map. His journey is the spiritual journey of a Tender Warrior, recorded forever in Scripture for warriors like you and me who want to follow in his wake.

Practice with your wife. Practice with the psalms of David before your God. And practice with other men too.

I have one friend in particular who knows me—my marriage, my heart, my life. And I know him and his. As I'm out driving around on my errands during the course of a week, I often find myself thinking about him, praying for him. (Now when I'm out on my hospital calls or other business and think of my wife, I try to stop and give her a phone call. That was a *gargantuan* step for me to take as I've been struggling to learn to speak her language. It has taken a lot for me to remember to stop, dial her number, and say, "Hey, I was just thinking of you." She always appreciates that.)

I decided to take another massive step. I decided to try that with my friend. I was in Chicago. At O'Hare airport. There were thirty minutes between flights, and I picked up a telephone and called him.

I almost found myself wishing he wouldn't be home. I almost choked and hung up when I heard his voice on the other end. *What in the world am I doing? What in the world is he going to think?* But I didn't choke. I heard myself saying into the mouthpiece, "I have no reason for calling you except to say I've had you in my mind today. I've had you in my heart." That was not easy for me to do. But just a few minutes later, I was on that next flight to who knows where, and I was glad I had done it. We had a good conversation. I was encouraged.

SMALL STEPS PAY OFF

When my father was in World War II, he made friends with a young man named Joe Carter. They were young draftees, plucked out of a peaceful civilian life and thrown into the same barracks at training camp. For a good chunk of the war, they were together. Serving together. Sweating together. Dreaming together of home. It has been over fifty years since they last saw

each other. But every year, without fail, my dad gets a birthday card from Joe Carter in the mail.

It's hard to believe that friendship started when my dad walked across the barracks one afternoon to offer a guy named Joe one of the chocolate chip cookies he'd just received in a package from home. Dad is now in his seventies. And every once in awhile, he will pause and look out the window with a distant stare. Then, with a smile on the corner of his lips, he'll say, "You know...I should grab a train and go see my friend Joe."

A fifty-year friendship sprang from a single chocolate chip cookie. It's that way sometimes. All it takes is breaking the ice. All it takes is walking across the barracks. Or across the hall. Or across the street. Or across the room to pick up the phone. It takes a willingness to choke back some pride and reach out a hand.

Are you giving yourself to anyone? Are you opening up to anyone? Do any of your fellow soldiers know where the chinks in your armor might be? Are you looking for a soul mate, a Ranger Buddy?

Some dark day when your knees are weak, the current is swift, and the water is cold, you will be glad you did.



Let the Truth Hit Home

A MAN FACES HIMSELF

1. Ready? Swallow. Pick up the phone. Call your best friend just to see how he's doing—no other agenda! Tell him that's why you're calling.
2. If you're not used to sharing your emotions, pick a time and a place with your best friend where you can practice. Talk about moving moments, events, or incidents in your past. Gradually work to those in the present.

A MAN MEETS WITH HIS FRIENDS

1. How do you react to King David's words about his friend Jonathan: "Your love to me was more wonderful than the love of women"? What elements of true and wholesome friendship do you think David has in mind?
2. How would you describe your own friendships with other men? Casual? Close? Intimate? Nonexistent? How might you improve them?
3. Do you have someone you consider your Ranger Buddy? If so, describe your relationship. If not, how might you work to obtain such a friend?



4. Evaluate the statement: “Real men stand together. Real men need one another. Real soldiers love each other.” Do you agree or disagree? Why?

5. How difficult is it for you to be transparent? Describe a time when you went out of your way to be transparent.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

LOCKING ARMS
A Man and His Friends, Part 2



How have the mighty fallen in the midst of battle!

Jonathon is slain on your high places.

I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathon....

Your love to me was more wonderful than the love of women.

DAVID TO JONATHON, AFTER GILBOA (2 SAMUEL 1:25–26)

I first learned the word *piton* in the same Army Ranger school I described in the last chapter. We did some tension climbing, where we would climb on vertical surfaces with nothing above us to pull us up, and with rope fed through snap links. The piton is a little anchor bolt. We would find a crack in the wall face, drive this piton into the rock, put the snap link on it, and pass the safety rope through it. That way, we knew we would never fall below that point. We might fall—because we were doing some unbelievable things—but the piton would catch us. We wouldn't fall any further than the anchor in the rock.

So what is a piton of friendship? It's a relationship principle that you can count on. It is an anchor bolt in a relationship that will bear your weight,

that will hold you up when you find your fingers are slipping. There are other elements in a friendship, of course, but these are basic anchors. You don't want to fall below these levels.

FOUR PITON PRINCIPLES OF FRIENDSHIP

Israel faced desperate days in that oppressive year of 1050 BC. The young kingdom was in pain. Misery. Humiliation. The nation faced harsh military domination by her neighbors, the Philistines. I use that word *neighbor* in the same sense that Iraq was a “neighbor” to Kuwait before the Gulf War and that Nazi Germany was a “neighbor” to Poland before World War II. The Philistines were a coarse people, a militarily strong people. They had bullied and intimidated Israel for years. Backs were bent low. Heads were down. Men passing each other on the dusty roads couldn't meet each others' eyes. The dominance was so strong, Scripture says, that blacksmiths weren't allowed in the country because the Philistines didn't want any weaponry made.

Israel was helpless in these days. Down and depressed and demoralized and discouraged. Life in the nation was a concentration camp of despair.

Then there was Prince Jonathan.

This young man, the son of King Saul, was an initiator. Masculine to the core. He saw the downcast eyes, slumped shoulders, and drooping heads. He saw all of that, but he still had some hope in his eyes and some fire in his belly. Prince Jonathan believed in the God of Israel. He believed the things he had been taught from childhood about the God of the universe and the God of his people.

Armed with this faith in the living God—and with one of the few swords available in Israel—this young man thought long and hard about taking the initiative. Breaking the stalemate. Giving the Philistines back something of their own medicine. Jonathan had his weapon, all right. Nobody could take it away. If you can't imagine pickpocketing Jim Bowie's

knife or sneaking Jesse James's pearl-handled Colt from its holster, don't bother trying to picture a Philistine militiaman walking away with Prince Jonathan's sword.

Circumstances needed to change. Life needed to be different. God's people ought not live in defeat and humiliation. So Jonathan thought through what he might do.

On a given day, armed with this sense of conviction, he and his armor bearer stepped across a line in the sand.

Now the day came that Jonathan, the son of Saul, said to the young man who was carrying his armor, "Come and let us cross over to the Philistines' garrison that is on the other side." (1 Samuel 14:1)

The prince made his crossing at a little ravine near Michmash.

Between the passes by which Jonathan sought to cross over to the Philistines' garrison, there was a sharp crag on the one side and a sharp crag on the other side, and the name of the one was Bozez, and the name of the other Seneh. The one crag rose on the north opposite Michmash, and the other on the south opposite Geba. Then Jonathan said to the young man who was carrying his armor, "Come and let us cross over to the garrison of these uncircumcised; perhaps the LORD will work for us, for the LORD is not restrained to save by many or by few." His armor bearer said to him, "Do all that is in your heart; turn yourself, and here I am with you according to your desire." (vv. 4-7)

Jonathan's masculine heart of steel and initiative shines through. "Perhaps the Lord will work for us, for the Lord is not restrained to save by many or by few." Arithmetic isn't all that critical when God is on your side. His armor bearer doesn't wait for a direct command. "Go for it," he responds. "Let's do it. I'm your man, heart and soul."

Look at what follows:

When both of them revealed themselves to the garrison of the Philistines, the Philistines said, “Behold, Hebrews are coming out of the holes where they have hidden themselves.” So the men of the garrison hailed Jonathan and his armor bearer and said, “Come up to us and we will tell you something.” And Jonathan said to his armor bearer, “Come up after me, for the LORD has given them into the hands of Israel.” Then Jonathan climbed up on his hands and feet, with his armor bearer behind him; and they fell before Jonathan, and his armor bearer put some to death after him. That first slaughter which Jonathan and his armor bearer made was about twenty men within about half a furrow in an acre of land. (vv. 11–14)

Can you read into the neat, clean, white spaces between those lines of biblical text? Can you imagine what was happening here? This was hand-to-hand, face-to-face combat. This was muscles tight, teeth clenched, chests heaving, blood splattering, bones snapping, voices yelling, and swords flying. *And they did it.* Against ten-to-one odds. In one bloody little half acre of land, overlooking a dry ravine, fighting hand to hand in the hot Middle Eastern sun.

When it was all over, two warriors were standing and twenty Philistine corpses were strewn like rag dolls across the sand. Can you imagine standing there when it was all over, swords and arms and shields dripping with gore? Can you imagine what they must have experienced together in those moments? Smiles? Joyous eye contact? Hugs? Arms locked together, raised to the One who had enabled them?

Just two men left standing, casting long shadows. Jonathan was victorious. It was a great day for him, his armor bearer, and God’s people.

What followed? As you read on in Scripture, it becomes obvious that Jonathan’s courage added some fiber to the Israeli army. They stood up straighter. Lifted their eyes. Squared their shoulders. The heart returned to them. They succeeded in rebelling against the Philistine bully boys.

When all the men of Israel who had hidden themselves in the hill country of Ephraim heard that the Philistines had fled, even they

also pursued them closely in the battle. So the LORD delivered Israel that day, and the battle spread beyond Beth-aven. (vv. 22–23)

The army covered some turf that day because one lone man said to his friend, “Would you go with me? Maybe the Lord will work for us. In fact, I’m sure of it. Let’s go climb that cliff and strike a blow for the Lord.”

Following this mini rebellion, Israel enjoyed a few breaths of free air. There were some pleasant days in the land. It was better. All too soon, however, King Saul turned back to his old, careless ways, and the nation once again began to slip away from a courageous walk with God. As a result, they lost His blessing, and the Philistine army rushed back in to fill the vacuum.

By the time you flip over to chapter seventeen, there is absolutely no one to face a Philistine champion in single combat. No one. Not even Jonathan. Not even the plucky prince who had crawled hand over hand up that crag and, with a cry of joy and faith, taken on a whole garrison. When Saul asked for volunteers, Jonathan wasn’t there to take a step forward. There’s no record of him being the one to stand in the gap against a nine-foot loudmouth named Goliath. Why? Scripture doesn’t tell us. But I think it’s reasonable to speculate that the valiant prince might have been thinking thoughts such as, *Here we go again. Back under these jokers’ thumb. Whining in a corner like scared puppies. How many crags do I have to climb? How many garrisons do I have to fight alone? Why do we always end up here? I can’t carry this battle on my shoulders. I just can’t do this anymore.*

For the moment, perhaps, Jonathan lost heart. The warrior-prince stepped back into the shadows. But God hadn’t run out of heroes.

David spoke to the men who were standing by him, saying, “What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should taunt the armies of the living God?” (1 Samuel 17:26)

Can’t you just hear him, this upstart Jewish kid fresh from the sheep pens? “What’s going on here? Who is this big goon? Why is he getting

away with that stuff? We're God's people, aren't we? Life shouldn't be like this." It sounds like an echo of Jonathan, doesn't it?

David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have taunted. This day the LORD will deliver you up into my hands, and I will strike you down and remove your head from you. And I will give the dead bodies of the army of the Philistines this day to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel." (vv. 45–46)

I don't know where Jonathan's voice had gone, but here was a fresh voice singing the second verse of the prince's own ballad of courageous faith. It was a faith rooted in the very nature of God. Apparently it fanned some flames in Jonathan's spirit. David's bravery and white-hot love for God evidently served to draw the prince out of the shadows. As the chapters of 1 Samuel continue, you see a warrior's heart begin beating in the prince's chest once again.

David had stood alone. David had stood strong. David had stood faithful. David had faced the odds. David had taken action. And a disillusioned hero named Jonathan found a friend. Someone that marched to the same tune. The warrior's song that apparently had died in the prince's throat found full voice once again. Only this time, it was a duet.

Note what happens as the chapter draws to a close.

Now when Saul saw David going out against the Philistine, he said to Abner the commander of the army, "Abner, whose son is this young man?" And Abner said, "By your life, O king, I do not know." And the king said, "You inquire whose son the youth is." So when David returned from killing the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul with the Philistine's head in his hand. Saul said to him, "Whose son are you, young man?" And David answered, "I am the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite."

Now it came about when he had finished speaking to Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as himself. (1 Samuel 17:55–18:1)

Jonathan had seen the whole thing. And when David spoke to King Saul, his father, the king's son heard his own heart beating in another man's chest. From that moment, the souls of the two men were knit together.

What a strong statement. Their *souls* were knit. How do souls get knit? Through four piton principles of masculine friendship. Let's look at them, one at a time.

I. SHARED VALUES

You may have many friends in the course of your life, but you will never have a *soul mate* who does not walk with your God. It was David and Jonathan's *souls* that were knit together. The soul is that invisible part of us that combines our minds and wills and emotions. Here were two men whose minds believed the same truth, whose wills locked on to the same course, whose emotions burned at the same injustices.

They were committed to the same God. They loved the same kingdom. They marched to the same tune. They were headed in the same direction. They even dreamed about the same thing: a day when their people, their families, their friends, their kingdom could actually live in hope before God.

Now these guys didn't necessarily have the same interests. One was a prince; the other was a shepherd. They didn't necessarily have the same skills or talents or bents. *But they had the same values.* That's at the core of all meaningful friendships, particularly man-to-man. At the core level, at the passion level, at the vision level, they were the same. You don't have to have identical interests or the same kinds of hobbies to be friends.

I have lots of friends here on the staff at Good Shepherd Church, but I'm thinking now of one, Steve, who's probably as different from me as any man in our fellowship. Steve is detail oriented; I barely know how to spell the word "detail." Steve is competent with numbers; I'm on the verbal side of things. Steve has all daughters; I have all sons. Steve is a specialist with incredible skill; I'm an incurable generalist. Steve is an artist—he can spend

hours patiently carving a single piece of wood; I can't even sit still long enough to play a game of ticktacktoe. We don't have any of the same interests or skills or hobbies or pastimes. *But we are soul mates.*

At the *values* level of our lives we're walking together, step for step. How we want to live well with our wives! How we long to see our children make a difference in a world that's yet to come! We're committed to the same kingdom. We're committed to the same body of Christ. We're committed to the same vision of ministry. He was willing to write off his career in order to be with us here at the church. Our friendship doesn't require the same interests or hobbies. It doesn't *require* listening to the same music, reading the same books, or eating at the same pizza parlor. At the core of who we are, there are shared values. And that is enough.

David and Jonathan both wanted to be part of something that mattered. They wanted to change the way things were where they lived. They wanted to be a part of something bigger than themselves. They owned a flaming desire to serve that greater cause. They wanted to sacrifice together. They wanted to leave a heritage that mattered. They spoke with passion of their futures, their children, and their children's children. They wanted to put their mark on a kingdom and, if necessary, to die together for it. Because of their shared values, they were willing to stand together for something much larger than themselves.

That's at the core of friendship. It's much bigger than golf or football. It's much wider and deeper than trout fishing or skiing or woodworking or the Elk's Lodge. It's much more elemental than common interest. It's at the core level of values where we decide we want to do something together no matter what it costs us. That shared dream bonds men together. It's the very essence of meaningful male friendship.

I'm thinking of a scene in the musical *Les Miserables*. In the midst of the French Revolution, a bunch of young men are gathered in a pub the night before a battle. They're students, hardly more than teenagers. But they're part of the Great Revolution, and when daylight comes they must man the barricades. They know they will most likely never see another sunset. And that night...in that little pub...that night before they die together for the principles of the Revolution, they become blood comrades. Brothers. Soul mates.

And they sing a song, “Come Drink with Me.” Their song says, in effect, “We’re in something bigger than we are, and we’re in it together. We’re willing to pay the price, so we are going to enjoy this last evening together.”

Let’s sing together. Let’s go for it together. Let’s die together if that’s what it takes. Shared values are at the heart of it all.

2. UNSELFISH LOVE

You would have to look long and hard through the pages of Scripture—or history—to find a more ringing story of selfless love:

The soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as himself... Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, including his sword and his bow and his belt. (1 Samuel 18:1–4)

Jonathan was saying, in effect, “Son of Jesse, I love what I see in your heart. I’m willing to die with you. Everything I have is yours, and I want to be with you. Take it all.” In essence, he surrendered to David the very symbols and emblems of his office. He handed them over to a ruddy young warrior out of the hills who dressed in homespun and spoke with a back-country drawl. The two young men were soul mates from that moment. Unselfish love has incredible bonding power.

I’ll never forget an incident many years ago when I was in seminary. I found myself carrying a full academic load, holding down three jobs in different parts of the city, and trying to be a husband to Linda and a daddy to two little boys.

We had nothing. We’ve never been so poor, before or since. We subsisted on smelt (tiny migrating fish) that friends caught in the rivers and ten-cent packages of green peas from Safeway when they had once-a-month stock-the-freezer sales.

Life was stressful and times were lean...but I had a desire in my heart to go hunting. One of my last acts before I got out of the military was to buy a rifle. I’d never had one of my own, so I found a good deal, spent a chunk

of my final paycheck, and got my gun—knowing it would probably be a decade before I could again afford to get one. I had a friend who knew how much I longed to go hunting and how I needed a break from my busy schedule. So we agreed to go hunting together.

No, there wasn't time, and no, there wasn't money. But we went.

I had been so busy and stressed out and overwhelmed before we left that I hadn't even had time to get my rifle sighted in. But I figured, hey, sighting the rifle—and even finding some game—that's the irrelevant part of hunting. It was just getting out in the woods and being there with a friend that really mattered. So I told him that I didn't have time to sight my rifle, but that it didn't really matter. After all, I laughed, I probably couldn't hit anything even if it was sighted correctly.

"It's okay, Stu," he said quietly. "I'll do it for you."

So he took my rifle. It was an old Savage seven-millimeter Remington Magnum with no scope on it, just some open sights. He took it to sight it in. Then a few days later, we piled into our rigs with our wives and took off.

We took two campers. My dad loaned me his camper, and my friend and his wife took theirs, and we headed over the Cascade Mountains for eastern Oregon to go deer hunting. We arrived at our camp site at ten o'clock on a chilly night. I can't describe how good it felt to be out of the city. The star-strewn sky, the deep quiet, and the fragrance of pine trees and sagebrush were like a tonic. Before we hit the sack that night, our friends invited us over to their camper for a steaming mug of hot chocolate—and maybe an Oreo or two.

As I sat down at the little table, my friend said casually, "Oh, by the way, I have your gun here."

He brought out my gun and handed it to me. And there, mounted on it, was a shiny new scope, worth more than the rifle itself. It was completely sighted in. Ready to go. My heart was taken, not because of the value of the gift, but because of the value of the expression. That particular gesture at that particular moment in my life hit me in a way I can't easily describe. We became a little more bonded at that point because he had unselfishly given to me without any fanfare or any big deal. There was no mention of it. It was just something he had wanted to do for me, and that was the end of it. But

it wasn't the end of it. John Holmlund's spontaneous act of unselfish love has warmed my heart through long years. I will never forget the act, or the friend. We're still hunting together more than twenty years later.

I want you to notice something else in this David-Jonathan friendship. Something that isn't there. It's conspicuous by its absence. Jonathan stripped himself of his royal robe and gave it to David along with his sword, bow, and belt. What's missing from that picture? What's not there?

Jealousy.

There is none. There is absolutely no competition or comparison between the two men. Jonathan didn't rehearse his inventory of who he was and what he should have. He just yielded his rights and gave generously to his friend. There is no evidence of comparison.

Friends stand by unselfishly, and we draw strength from that.

I have another friend. I don't see him very much anymore, maybe a couple times a year. But more than twenty years ago, he looked me straight in the eyes and made this statement: "Stu, I want you to listen to me a minute. Someday, somewhere, somehow...you're going to need *something* very much. I don't know when. I don't know what. I don't know why. But I do know I want you to call me. I will be there."

That's unselfish love. That's a piton principle you can hang your very life on.

3. DEEP LOYALTY

The plot of this unforgettable saga thickens when Jonathan's father, King Saul, becomes insanely jealous of young David and tries to remove him from the scene:

Now Saul told Jonathan his son and all his servants to put David to death. But Jonathan, Saul's son, greatly delighted in David. So Jonathan told David saying, "Saul my father is seeking to put you to death. Now therefore, please be on guard in the morning and stay in a secret place and hide yourself... I will speak with my father about you; if I find out anything, then I shall tell you."

Then Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father and said to

him, “Do not let the king sin against his servant David, since he has not sinned against you, and since his deeds have been very beneficial to you. For he took his life in his hand and struck the Philistine, and the LORD brought about a great deliverance for all Israel; you saw it and rejoiced. Why then will you sin against innocent blood by putting David to death without a cause?” (1 Samuel 19:1–5).

Jonathan was saying, “You’re jealous, Dad. *I’m* the one who should be jealous. I’m the prince, the heir to the throne, and I’m not jealous or intimidated. I’d give my life for this man. Why can’t you open your eyes and see that he’s on our side?” Jonathan’s loyalty was so deep he was even willing to defend his friend when face to face with his father, the king. Loyalty is absolutely essential to a friendship.

Listen to these verses from 1 Samuel 20. Prince Jonathan is speaking to David:

“If it please my father to do you harm, may the LORD do so to Jonathan and more also, if I do not make it known to you and send you away, that you may go in safety. And may the LORD be with you as He has been with my father. If I am still alive, will you not show me the lovingkindness of the LORD, that I may not die? You shall not cut off your lovingkindness from my house forever, not even when the LORD cuts off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth.” (vv. 13–15)

Could our friendship live through the generations, David? Even when it’s going great for you, when the Lord has done for you all that’s in His heart to do, will you remember me? Will you remember my kids after I’m gone?

Jonathan made David vow again because of his love for him, because he loved him as he loved his own life. (v. 17)

Have you ever said something like this to a friend? “My wife and I have talked about it and we would really be honored—if something ever hap-

pened to us—if you would raise our children.” You need to consider making that a part of your legal will. What a comfort to hear loyal friends say, “If anything would happen to you and your wife, we’d be honored to have your children. We’d be honored to be part of your future. Our friendship will live through the generations. Let’s get it in writing.”

Loyalty is something you *express*. You say it out loud. You write it down. It isn’t just understood in some vague sort of way; it is expressed in a vow, in a covenant, in a promise, in a conversation man to man. We need to learn to express it—a complete and total loyalty that says, “You are my brother.”

After the death of Hollywood great Jack Benny, fellow entertainer George Burns had these words to say about his longtime friend: “Jack and I had a wonderful friendship for nearly fifty-five years. Jack never walked out on me when I sang a song, and I never walked out on him when he played the violin. We laughed together. We worked together. We ate together. I suppose that for many of those years, we talked every single day.”¹

A man-to-man friendship says, *I’ll never walk out on you. Barring unrepentant sin against the Lord God, you’ll never be able to do anything that will repulse me or break our fellowship.*

4. REAL TRANSPARENCY

We spoke of this piton briefly in the previous chapter. There can be no soul-level friendship without it. In 1 Samuel 20:3, David spoke his heart again, saying:

Your father knows well that I have found favor in your sight, and he has said, “Do not let Jonathan know this, or he will be grieved.” But truly as the LORD lives and as your soul lives, there is hardly a step between me and death.

In verse 9, Jonathan replies, “Far be it from you! For if I should indeed learn that evil has been decided by my father to come upon you, then would I not tell you about it?” Implication? *Of course I would!*

Verse 41 tells us that “David rose from the south side and fell on his face

to the ground, and bowed three times. And they kissed each other and wept together, but David wept the more.”

I’ll never forget when my brother experienced a season of separation from his lovely and loving wife. Today you would never know that they’d been through those kinds of waters, but there were twenty months early in their marriage when they didn’t live together. I remember my brother coming and staying with us at our home. I don’t even remember how long it was, but it wasn’t long enough. I wouldn’t trade those months of closeness and sharing for anything. I remember crying together. I remember rubbing our beards together as we cried. I’d never hugged my brother like that before. I’ll never forget it. I don’t think he will either.

David and Jonathan were not ashamed to embrace and weep together. They were that genuine with one another. They were that unconcerned with their “image.” They expressed their emotions with utter and total transparency.

It was Jesus who said, in effect, to his men: “You know, I used to call you all slaves. I used to call you all servants. I’m not going to do that anymore. I’m going to call you friends, because friends know what’s going on with each other. And I’m going to include you in the know” (see John 15:15).

What defines our friendship is the telling of ourselves. The revealing of emotions. David Smith, author of *The Friendless American Male*, writes,

Very early in life, little boys receive the cultural message that they’re not supposed to show emotions. Expressing feelings is generally a taboo for males. Boys soon learn to dread the words, “Don’t be a sissy. Big boys don’t cry. Aren’t you a little too old to be sitting on your daddy’s lap?” Other messages come through loud and clear—Boys have to learn to be men. And to be a man means you conceal your emotions.²

Boys do need to learn to be men. But being a man does not mean concealing your emotions. Part of being a man is real transparency. It’s also a piton principle of friendship.

John Powell's classic book *Why Am I Afraid to Tell You Who I Am?* walks us through some of the degrees of transparency that we need to be alert to. When we're communicating with our friends, there are at least five levels of communication. The *cliché level* is little more than elevator talk. It's a quick "How ya doin'?" without really waiting for the answer. It's a "Whaddya think about this weather?" when you really don't care. The degree of transparency in this sort of communication is practically nil. You can have an exchange like this with total strangers. In fact, this kind of empty chatter serves as a protective relational buffer that *keeps* people total strangers.

Then there's the *fact level* of communication, which is sharing what you know. The degree of transparency is a little more real, but it's still the kind of talk that you can engage in with just about anyone. Do you remember the old television series *Dragnet*? The hard-bitten police sergeant, Joe Friday, was always interrupting some lady's woeful recitation of her miseries with the monotone line, "Just the facts, ma'am." Facts are the hallmark of this level of conversation. And while facts reveal what you know, they do little to reveal who you are. This sort of talk holds people at arm's length. It doesn't let them in.

Next comes the *opinion level* of communication. This is sharing what you *think*. You're starting to let a little bit of yourself out, but you're still keeping people at a "safe" distance. Yes, there are fewer people you can communicate with on this level, but you really can't build a relationship on opinions. Friendship has to go deeper than that.

When you finally get to the *emotional* and *transparent levels* of communication, you are actually sharing who you are. The degree of transparency greatly increases, and the number of people with whom you can share is much smaller. The levels of trust and commitment and bonding take a dramatic upward curve on the friendship chart. That kind of sharing makes for much deeper and stronger relationships.

Emotional communication means conveying hopes and fears and dislikes and aspirations and disappointments and sorrows. It's giving away who you are. It's giving away a part of yourself. Sometimes we're not very good at this sort of thing because of a false concept of manhood and pride that

prevents us from sharing our feelings. Or maybe we have a warped view of spirituality that says, *If I was really a good Christian, I wouldn't feel this way.* That's pure bunk, of course. The New Testament brims with exhortations to humble ourselves, speak truthfully, and encourage one another along this sometimes bumpy road called the Christian life.

We need to practice sharing our emotions with other men. So it isn't easy. So what? Who ever said that growth *was* easy? Kent Hughes writes:

Men, if you're married, your wife must be your most intimate friend, but to say "my wife is my best friend" can be a cop-out. You also need Christian male friends who have a same-sex understanding of the serpentine passages of your heart, who will not only offer counsel and pray for you but will also hold you accountable to your commitments and responsibilities when necessary.³

I'll never forget the day, maybe twenty years ago, when my friend interrupted me midsentence. There was steel in his eyes as he looked right into mine. His words were, "Why don't you just DO IT. It's your JOB as his father." It was a confrontational statement and it stung—for the moment. Nevertheless, because he was my friend, I had given him the right to say it. His words struck deep and strong, and they made a change in my life.

Transparency is very real, very powerful. When you practice it with a true friend, you will find that friend increasingly drawn to you rather than repulsed. The reason we *don't* tell people what we feel is because we're afraid they won't like us. Yet Scripture says that every temptation you face, every sin you struggle with, every liability that curses your life *is common to man.* We all struggle with the same things, to one degree or another. So everything that's killing you is somewhere in the chest of every man you know. The Bible also says that everything you have that's an asset, an encouragement, a positive trait, *is a gift from God.* Those things being true, none of us have anything to brag or boast about. None of us has anything to feel cast down or destroyed about that is not common to man.

So here we have four principles of friendship. Four principles hammered into the rocky face of daily life. Drive them in deep, Tender Warriors. You never know when you might lose your grip. You never know when you might fall. Real friendship will keep you from hitting the bottom.



Let the Truth Hit Home

A MAN FACES HIMSELF

1. Plan a two- or three-day experience with your closest friends—camping, fishing, something you enjoy. Make your specific objective (around the fire?) to clarify your shared core values. Determine how you can encourage each other to practice and strengthen them.
2. Take some time out this week to let your closest friend know how much you value his loyalty, transparency, unselfish love, and core values. Make it explicit to him what you admire.

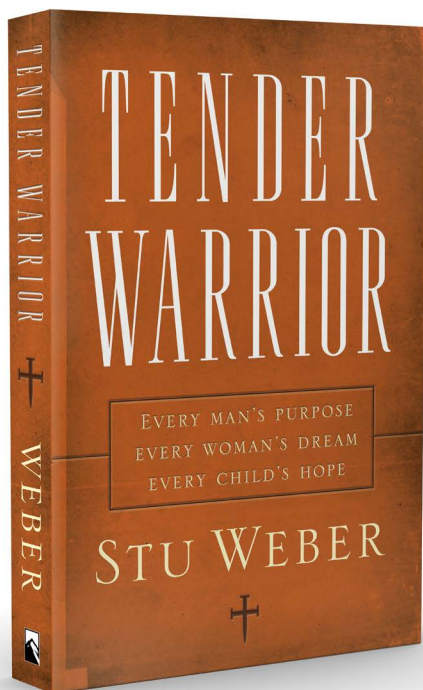
A MAN MEETS WITH HIS FRIENDS

1. Evaluate the statement, “Arithmetic isn’t all that critical when God is on your side.” Describe a time when you acted on this principle.
2. Do you have a male friend whose soul is knit to your own? If so, how did it get that way? How did the friendship blossom?
3. Since core values are critical to intimate friendship, have you determined what your core values are? List them.



4. How do you show unselfish love to your closest friend(s)? What act of unselfish love on the part of a close friend has meant a great deal to you?
5. How do you recognize deep loyalty in a friend? How do you know when it's absent? How do you develop it in yourself?
6. Do you have at least one male friend with whom you can be completely transparent? If so, how did the transparency develop? If not, what can a man do to find and develop such a friend?
7. How much time do you spend with close friends discussing matters that matter—things that touch the heart as well as eternity? When you have such discussions, what topics come up? What topics do you wish came up more often?

A COMPELLING PICTURE
OF BALANCED MANHOOD
ACCORDING TO GOD'S VISION.



The definition of manhood is often obscured by a culture in moral free fall. But this book defines a powerful blueprint for being the man—the Tender Warrior—that God desires for you and your family. Weber presents the characteristics of tender warriors—including learning to speak the language of women, watching out for what lies ahead, and keeping commitments—in an upfront, straightforward style that challenges readers to realize God's plan for men.

Stu Weber's now classic teaching on a man's vigilance, staying power, and consideration for the women in his life will move you to pursue the man you were created to be.



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