

Coach House Church BEACONS

NO LONE RANGERS

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Can you imagine going through life entirely on your own steam? Think about how many things we need to even begin to get going in life: first of all, we require other people to make us, and then consistently look after us at their enormous inconvenience for a very long period of time. Alongside that we need constant input from teachers and guides to develop more abstract skills in school, and friends and peers who we enjoy and grow our social skills with.

Next, think of all the things that naturally limit us. Even our environments and backgrounds filter the sources of knowledge we encounter whether it be certain sports, musical instruments or other hobbies. Like Cool Runnings suggests, you're unlikely to win an Olympic Gold in the Bobsleigh if you grow up somewhere without snow, ice and the prevalence of that sport. We have personal limitations too, and we realise this as we get older. I have the right physique for running, but I'm rubbish at heavy lifting – I'm too long and bendy. I know I love music, but I'm also pretty sure I won't progress beyond playing a few basic chords on a guitar because my mind isn't naturally wired that way. I could become a heavy lifter, I guess, if I ate massively more than someone else. And if I dedicated all my time to it, at the sacrifice of many other things, I could become a good guitar player too. We all have things we gravitate towards and other things we can only force ourselves towards.

Even art, which I enjoy creating, is not purely self-imagined and self-created. My images often look original, but there's always a reason why I start my pencil in a certain position and move it in a certain way, and assume, as I begin drawing, the shape of the thing I'm going to draw – chances are I've seen it elsewhere. I've caught sight of it in Lord of the Rings, a game I played or even a shading style I took a glance towards on a random drawing.

Wherever we find ourselves, we are a jumbled mixture of people with all sorts of talents and gifts – and the church is no different. Secondly, whatever our abilities, we have to admit our immediate reliance on other people for our initial survival, growth and development as human beings. We are never as independent as we think.

Take a look at Proverbs 24:5-6:

5 The wise prevail through great power,
and those who have knowledge muster their strength.

6 Surely you need guidance to wage war,
and victory is won through many advisers.

This isn't often the emphasis in tales about typical heroes. I find films with unstoppably powerful protagonists very interesting. They have a solution to every problem, they can win any contest, they have absolutely mastered their skills or a combination of the above. They stand out and apart from everyone else. People like Achilles in Troy or Superman. Media like this skews our view of things because it focuses on the most exciting and visible parts of the story. Even stories that focus on the hero's development (like Rocky) show a training montage which would have taken weeks and months to perfect in a true timescale.

Think about the collective effort involved in victory based on these verses from Proverbs. The first bit is not controversial 'The wise prevail through great power.' - but look how they acquire that power as you read on - they 'muster their strength'. In other words, they bring their strength together with others to achieve victory. Verse 6 is explanatory. The strength of the wise is based upon having many 'advisors' and 'guidance' to wage their battles. Pulling in each of our unique skills and perspectives to achieve any goal will help us to cover each other's blindspots, weaknesses and lack of experience.

This note of wisdom applies universally to all sorts of situations, but I think it is pertinent to mention how it connects to spiritual warfare. Before I do that, there are two parts of scripture I'd like to mention to give you a fuller view of the subject. 1 Corinthians 12 goes into great detail about how believers complement each other with their different gifts, given by God, working together for the same purpose. Second is Ephesians 6:10-20 which begins by saying this: "[...] be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes." Before going on to outline how we 'gear up' to face demonic opposition. The apostle Paul then applies this more generally in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 to describe Christians in battle against slander, arguments and personal struggles like in verse 5 which says this: "5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

Daily, we face opposition from the world, the flesh and the devil - which is one neat way to summarise it. The world includes cultural and societal forces that push us away from Jesus. The flesh is our human desires which tempt us to go our own way. And the Devil who actively tries to trip us up and prevent us from following Jesus. These are battles which we cannot face alone and cut off from others. We must hear the advice of other Christians and guidance that is wiser than our own. We fight the same fight to follow Jesus more closely and make him known throughout the world.

I will end here with 3 encouragements and 1 application:

God will never leave you nor forsake you - this is said first in Deuteronomy 31:6 and then echoed in Hebrews 13:5. As Christians, we are never cut off from God. We are never in absolute isolation from him, however we feel.

Nothing can separate us from the love of God – this is primarily echoed in Romans 8:37-39. Whatever happens, God shows his love to us through Jesus and that will never change.

God is mighty – Ephesians 6:12 tells us to be strong in God's power. We win only because he is with us and by relying on him. He's not weak, and he knows exactly how to help us as we gear up for the fight.

Seek out Christians whom you can help and be helped by. We will never find the perfect people who give 100% perfect advice or help. However, we are called to encourage one another and bear each other's burdens as we follow Jesus. You can help another person to follow Jesus and they can help you.



JONNY KNIGHT



Coach House Church

leadership@coachhousechurch.org // 0161 432 5604
the coach house church, 222 wellington road north, stockport sk4 2qn