

Traits of a GB Relationship: Prayer and Encouragement

As you read this series on the traits of a God Buddy relationship, I trust these posts are helping you deepen your friendship with another man who will help you become a better man.

The second group of traits of GBs that includes Confrontation, Confession, and Accountability coupled with Patience and Kindness, is followed by the traits of Prayer and Encouragement. These and the upcoming traits help your God Buddy relationship thrive.

Encouragement Defined

Ask for the definition of encouragement and you'll get a cliché like "Encouragement is the act of giving individual support used for motivation". But actually, the French word for encouragement means to give someone else your courage. Courage is like love—the more you give it away, the more you have.



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Everyone Needs Encouragement

As we battle the ups and downs of life, everyone needs support and encouragement. Generally speaking, men need as much encouragement as possible (although I believe both men and women can always use encouragement for that matter).

Men though seem to thrive on receiving positive comments rather than negative comments. This applies to the workplace from their boss and colleagues, at home from their spouse, or from coaches on sports teams or teachers at school. And since we will all fall down at some point in life, we need someone to pull us up and support us. We will all enter "the valley" of despair and need a hand to help us up. That support comes through prayer and words of encouragement.

Support through Encouragement



Far too often in our culture, either due to pride or embarrassment, men live in isolation. Many guys no longer have close friends to celebrate their victories or to encourage them through their difficulties or to cheer for their accomplishments.

Men especially need to be encouraged to live in community with other like-minded men. We need to know that plodding along the road of life alone will destroy us, and along with us, our marriage and our kids. Men need to band together, for themselves, and for their families.

Be a Barnabas

As I wrote about in this previous post on the Three Relationships Every Man Needs, Barnabas was nicknamed the “son of encouragement” by the early church (Acts 4:36). He was the kind of guy you want to have around you. He wasn’t just a spiritual cheerleader, he was a man of great conviction who wanted to see the church grow and did all he could to make it

happen.



Barnabas and Paul traveled together on the first of Paul's three missionary journeys and became close peers and friends. He was at Paul's side (Acts 9:26-30) and supported his conversion story so much that the other believers accepted Paul. Due to Barnabas' encouragement, Paul became more confident in his new-found faith and spoke boldly about Jesus.

Encouragement was and is an essential way of God Buddy's extending grace to each other.

Support through Prayer

In his book *Celebration of Discipline*, Richard Foster makes the statement, "Of all the spiritual disciplines, prayer is the most central because it ushers in perpetual communion with God."



Most people pray when they are in trouble or want to receive something. They ask God to meet their needs and/or desires. Prayer seems to come most naturally when we are in a crisis or someone we love is sick or needs our support. We have all heard the expression, "There are no atheists in foxholes." Perhaps another way to say this is, "When we think we're in trouble or danger, we pray."

But do you pray for someone "just because"?

When we take an honest look at ourselves, no matter how successful we may appear in the world's eyes, we are weak in some areas and strong in others. But we all need prayer. We fight spiritual (and non-spiritual) battles each and every day so a man of prayer recognizes his dependence on the Lord and seeks Him out in prayer every day. Not just for himself but for others, especially for his God Buddy.

This idea to pray every day can be quite daunting to many of

us. But even the smallest of “arrow prayers” (quick short one-sentence prayers asking for God’s help while we’re in the middle of a crisis, problem or daily activity or praising Him for a blessing right after it occurs or you recognize it)

Biblical Support

Biblical encouragement isn’t focused on complimenting someone on their promotion or how good the food was they made or how great they are at golf or tennis. That kind of encouragement is certainly important, but the encouragement the Scriptures offer refers is explicitly *Christian* encouragement. I would call it GB encouragement.

There are several Bible verses that encourage us about God’s plan for our life:

- Mark 10:27 says, “Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God.’”
- Romans 8:28 tells us, “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”

And as believers, we are to encourage and pray for others:

- 1 Thessalonians 5:11 suggests, “Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.”
- The book of James encourages, “The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.” James 5:16b (NIV)

God Buddies Support Each Other with Prayer and Encouragement

Encouragement is shared with the hope that it will lift your God Buddy's heart out of despair when they are down. It encourages them when their faith journey is a struggle. It points them to God's promises that assure them all that they are facing is under God's control.

Perhaps you have heard of the acrostic ACTS to apply to prayer. A is for Adoration. C is for Confession. T is for Thanksgiving. S is for Supplication.

Well, I'd like to suggest that same acrostic but with a twist to apply to prayer and encouraging your God Buddy:

A is for Authentic.

Pray for your GB to become authentic with you. Encourage him to be genuine and bring no pretense. Your relationship needs full disclosure and authenticity to help you both become better men.

C is for Committed.

Pray that you and your GB are committed to making your relationship last. Encourage frequent get-togethers, even if it's just to hang-out or watch a game. Your friendship should not become programmatic nor should it become stale and routine. But it does need commitment.

T is for Trust.

Pray that you will learn to trust each other completely and speak the truth in love. This means being honest and open about your weaknesses. Encourage your GB to trust any constructive feedback is good.

S is for Supportive.

Pray that you will remain supportive of each other through good times and bad times. Encourage your GB to pray for you so the relationship is not a one-way street.

As we journey through life, everyone needs prayer and words of encouragement. Be a Barnabas to your GB and pray frequently for him. It will help you both grow in godliness.

God Buddies also share a desire and willingness to improve so the next set of traits is about Teachability.