

There is no Team in I

6 August 2006

Bible passages: **Ephesians 4:4-7a** (*The Message*).

“You were all called to travel on the same road and in the same direction, so stay together, both outwardly and inwardly. You have one Leader, one faith, one baptism, one God of all, who rules over all, works through all, and is present in all. Everything you are and think and do is permeated with Oneness.

But that doesn't mean you should all look and speak and act the same. Out of the generosity of Christ, each of us is given his own gift.”

In 1972 a crack commando unit was sent to prison by a military court for a crime they did not commit. These four men promptly escaped from a maximum security-security stockade to the Los Angeles underground. Today, still wanted by the government, they survive as soldiers of fortune. If you have a problem, if no one else can help...not even The Garden...maybe you can hire them.

<VIDEO> [Roll A-Team show intro.](#)

That's right, the A-Team. How many of you remember that show? It was a huge hit for NBC in the 1980s. You had an unlikely team

<IMAGE> [A-Team Photo](#)

Hannibal, Faceman, B.A., and Murdock. You guys remember that show, right? The A-Team came to the rescue of folks who were in trouble. It became a cultural icon...What's the most famous line from that show? That's right...“I pity the fool.” That show was a cultural icon...When I was growing up whenever someone was wearing too much jewelry, we used to say, “what, is that your Mr. T. starter kit?” But you know what I remember most about that show? With all the guns and car crashes...no one ever got hurt.

There is another iconic show from the 1980s...see, those of you from the 80s generation, we did actually contribute to culture...The other show was MacGyver. Remember that one?

<IMAGE> [MacGyver](#)

MacGyver was a little like the A-Team. Ol' Mac usually helped someone out of big trouble but he always had to get himself free first. Somehow MacGyver always seemed to get locked up, but he always seemed to be locked up in a place with lots of useful things he could jerry-rig together to

build...like...a car. You remember this guy, right? He single handedly revived the duct-tape industry. With his trusty Swiss Army knife and a roll of duct tape...watch out!

Okay, so what gives? What's up with the 80s TV nostalgia? Well we are talking about what it means to be part of a team today. Last month's issue of Fortune magazine was dedicated to teamwork. And all kidding aside, one of the articles said that in reality, the A-Team was a superb example of a team. Why? Because each member of the team was clear about their role on the team...a hallmark of effective collaboration. Each member of the A-Team was unique, what, with Mr. T and his Mohawk and jewelry, Hannibal with his cigar--but when they came together, they were spectacular as a team.

And that is the difference between MacGyver and the A-Team. MacGyver was a genius, but he worked alone. Truly that is at the heart of what we are exploring this morning—the title of today's message is “There is no Team in I.” In today's world, there is real tension between expressing our individuality, and being a team player.

There were several fascinating examples in Fortune of successful and not so successful teams. For instance there was an article about this guy Jim Vesterman who had been accepted to the prestigious Wharton Business School in Philadelphia where teamwork is cornerstone of their program. However, he had a burning desire to be in the military, so he received a deferral. Vesterman thought he knew what it meant to be part of a team, that is until his very first day at boot camp on Paris Island, South Carolina. It started with something called “two sheets and a blanket.” When the drill instructor starts counting, you have three minutes to make your bed complete with hospital corners and the proverbial quarter bounce. Vesterman, who eventually graduated first in every phase of his training, was very adept at making his bed. He got done quickly and proudly stood on the line...the first one finished! He assumed that he'd receive some commendation for his performance, instead he heard the instructor blow his whistle and say, strip em' clean, start it again. Vesterman ripped all the sheets off and started again, and again he

stood proudly on the line finished first. Again, he heard the whistle...again...then “We’ve got all day to do this right. Vesterman completed this cycle dozens of times before the drill instructor said, your bunkmate isn’t finished. At that point it dawned on him that he could help his bunkmate. The truth is until that point he’d been in competition with his bunkmate—he figured he’d stand out if he continued to finish first. What happened next crystallized for Vesterman what it means to be part of a team. Yet again, everyone started with unmade beds. Yet again, Vesterman finished first, but this time when he was done, he helped his bunkmate make his bed. BUT...whistle...AGAIN...This time they helped each other make the other’s bunk, and amazingly, they were able to make both beds in the time either one could do their own. BUT...arghhh...whistle...AGAIN. Then the two of them looked for others to help. Finally, everyone in their training class had their beds made in 3 minutes...everyone.

BAND: Rob Vesterman BB/Don Jenkins OH

How about that...wasn’t that cool? This is the essence of what we are talking about. Each one of these individually talented musicians using their unique talent to create something amazing together. There are 4 “I’s” up there, but not the selfish I, rather is what is known as the affiliatory “I.” The “I” that embraces and celebrates an individual’s unique qualities, but knows that the best experiences in life happen in concert together. That is what the Apostle Paul is writing about in his letter to the Ephesians. Paul said,

“You were all called to travel on the same road and in the same direction, so stay together, both outwardly and inwardly. You have one Leader, one faith, one baptism, one God of all, who rules over all, works through all, and is present in all. Everything you are and think and do is permeated with Oneness.

But that doesn’t mean you should all look and speak and act the same. Out of the generosity of Christ, each of us is given his own gift.”

I really hope some of what I have said this morning may have application in your work, or in your school projects this fall, but what Paul is saying transcends the material work world. What Paul is saying to us is more about embracing our God created uniqueness, but also remembering that we are all created to work together on God’s team to achieve this oneness. In

the business world this oneness would mean a company like Motorola who was on the skids economically and hadn’t had a market share product in years rethinking the way they do business. They tore down individual oriented silos and formed creative work teams—the result was the RAZR. For us though in our families, in our friendship and relationships, this oneness means we celebrate the diversity of the other and recognize that together we have much richer experiences.

The common denominator that runs through all of these teams whether they be business, family, friendships or the band is a common goal...what Paul called the oneness—that is that to be part of team we don’t check our individual gifts at the door, rather, we find a way to make them work together for a much greater outcome than we would be able to by ourselves.

CLOSING:

There is a story about the Chicago Cubs when they actually won a World Series...actually a few. Back in the 1906 through 1910 seasons the Cubs were actually very good winning two pennants and two World Series. The heart and soul of that team was the second baseman and the shortstop. Everyone who watched these two play together said they were poetry in motion...that they worked around second base in a seamless ballet. But the catch is, off the field, the two men,

Joe Tinker and Johnny Evers

couldn’t stand each other. As soon as the games would end they went their own separate ways glowering in mutual dislike.

In 1936, Evers was interviewed and asked how all that worked out...how that off the field these two guys couldn’t stand each other, but that on the field they worked so well together. He responded by saying, “Tinker and myself hated each other, but we loved the Cubs. That...is the oneness. That’s what the A-Team had that made them so special the ability to use their individual talents for a higher purpose. It is what God calls us to do—to use the unique talents with which we were created for a higher purpose—to create more productive, loving and just teams whether those teams are work, family, school or personal relationships.