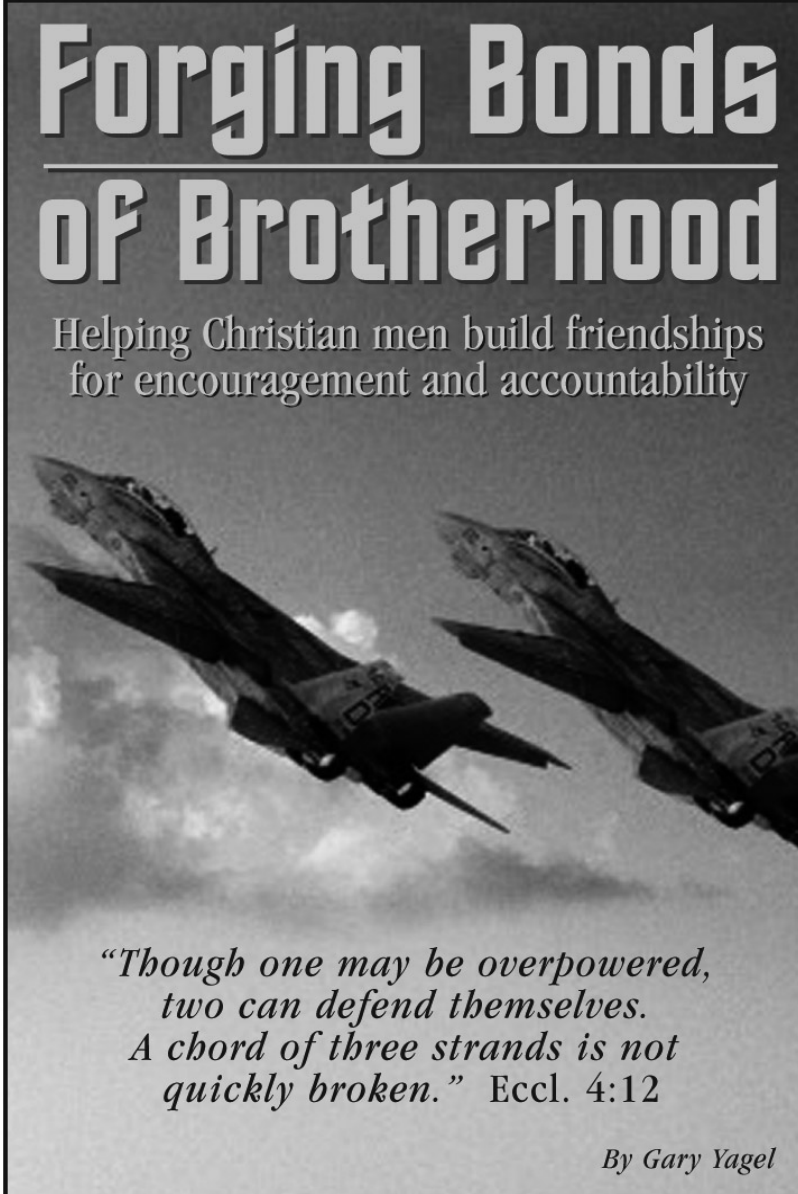


Eight Week Introductory Bible Study



**Forging Bonds
of Brotherhood**

Helping Christian men build friendships
for encouragement and accountability

*“Though one may be overpowered,
two can defend themselves.
A chord of three strands is not
quickly broken.” Eccl. 4:12*

By Gary Yagel

Be a warrior. Fight the battle. Find a brother.

Week 1: Study of Booklet

Forging Bonds of Brotherhood

Chapters 1-4

(Read Pages 3-21 before the study)

Warm Up

1. If “1” is “the pits,” and “5” is “great,” pick a number for the kind of week you are having and tell why you picked that number.
2. What has been your past experience meeting with Christian men for Bible study or encouragement/accountability?
3. If you had a best friend either as a boy or as an adult, describe that relationship.

What caused you to be best friends?

Study

1. Look back, in Chapter 2, at the five obstacles to male connection that are given. Are there other obstacles you would add?

Which of the four do you think is the hardest to overcome and why?

Which is easiest?

2. Do you agree or disagree with the statement on page 11 (mid-page bolded), “*Unless Christian men are intentional about going beneath the surface and building a bond of brotherhood, they will naturally remain at the surface, cliché level in relationships?*”
3. Read I Sam. 18:1-4, Rom. 12:10, Phil. 2:3-11. David was the biggest threat and most significant rival that Prince Jonathan could have had in Israel. What does I Sam. 18:1-4 indicate about Jonathan’s feelings of rivalry?

How significant do you think Jonathan's actions in verse 4 were for his relationship with David?

How would you summarize the teaching of these three texts when you put them all together?

How would a failure to follow these verses be an obstacle to men forging bonds of brotherhood?

4. Read Mark 5:37-42, 9:2-9, and 14:32-42. What do these verses teach about Jesus' special relationship with Peter, James, and John?

In Mark 14:32-42, Jesus was facing the most severe trauma of his life, as he wrestled with the Father's will for him—the cross. What do you think was the significance of the fact that he wanted Peter, James, and John with him?

Application

1. Do you think most Christians today believe that being a follower of Christ means **both** a vertical commitment to Christ and a horizontal commitment to connection with some brothers?

Are your wife and kids supportive of you coming to this group?

In what ways do you think it is harder for Christian men today to become a band of brothers than it was for Jesus' band of twelve?

2. On page 21, the statement is made, “A *bond of brotherhood is formed when two or more men begin to share honestly what is going on in their souls.*” What are the biggest obstacles you need to overcome for your group become a band of brothers, where such a bond is formed?

What can the members of your group do to overcome those obstacles?

3. What spiritual battle can the other brothers help you fight by praying for you this week?
List prayer requests below:

Week 2: Study of Booklet Forging Bonds of Brotherhood

Chapters 5-8

(Read Pages 23-54 before the study)

Warm Up

1. What encouragements or successes have you had this week?
2. If you are married: What quality have you most appreciated about your wife this week?

If you are single: What quality do you most appreciate about the Lord this week?

3. If you are married: What do you think is the hardest part of being the spiritual leader in your home?

If you are single: What do you think is the hardest part of being single?

Study

1. Read Heb. 10:23. Have you ever “considered how to stimulate a brother or sister in Christ to love and good deeds?”

Why don't we do this more?

What do you think of the statement on page 24, "You can not regularly encourage someone who never reveals what is going on in his soul."

What have you learned about how to encourage other believers?

2. On page 25, there is a list of "one another" commands. Which of these commands simply imply special treatment of believers that we barely know, and which ones require us to have more than a superficial relationship with other believers to obey?
3. Pages 27-30 give six characteristics displayed by Christian men who are not connected to other Christian men for encouragement, support, and accountability. Which of these characteristics concern you the most? Why?
4. When Christian men are not connected, how would you describe the cost to those we love?
5. God's goal in our lives is to conform us to the image of Christ. Another way of saying that is that God's Spirit indwells us for the purpose of producing love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and self-control. Which of these Christ-like attitudes would you like the brothers to pray will be produced in you in the coming weeks?
6. Review the first four paragraphs under, The Process, pa 32-33. Describe the way *trust*, *time*, and *determination* are required to forge a bond of brotherhood.

Application

1. Look at the **Check 6** tri-fold, and read the first question under Check #1. When meeting with brothers to forge brotherhood bonds, why do you think it might be important to start

out asking the brothers to share a success or encouragement they've recently experienced?

2. Most men who use the **Check 6** tool don't meet for a full length Bible study. So, the point to **Check 6** is to introduce the Word of God directly into the discussion and to encourage Check 6 brothers to share an insight from their quiet time. Have you tried to establish the habit of meeting with God daily for Bible reading and prayer? If so, what have you found to be the benefits of such a discipline to be?

What have you learned about being consistent in this discipline?

Week 3: Based on Check #1 “Our Need for Encouragement”

Warm Up

1. Share your spiritual pilgrimage with each other. Did you grow up in a Christian home? How did you meet Christ? What has your walk with Christ been like since then?
2. Nineteen out of twenty Christian men have no best friend. What do you think are the reasons for this epidemic of isolation?

Study

Read Eph. 5:17

What do you think the “therefore” refers back to? Why is it important to encourage and build up each other?

Is encouraging a brother the same as building him up? If not, what is the difference?

Read Heb. 3:13

Notice the reason given for encouraging each other. How do human hearts become hardened? In what way is sin deceitful?

Why do you think we are commanded to encourage each other “daily?” Do you think God means for us to take “daily” literally, or does God mean for us to encourage each other *often*? Explain your answer.

Read Prov. 18:24

What do you think is the point to the contrast between these two categories of friends?

Read Phil. 2:25

Paul describes Epaphroditus as a brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier. How are these descriptions different and how are they similar?

Why would Paul be especially close to someone like Epaphroditus?

Do you think it is realistic for a Christian man to have some close brothers like Epaphroditus in the twenty-first century? What challenges would have to be overcome?

Application

1. If you have had a friendship in the past with a Christian guy or group of guys who were closer to you than a brother, tell us about it.
2. Does that kind of brother seem attractive to you or scary? Why?
3. Men get beaten down constantly, which is why we need brothers to build us up. Rank the following, 1-6, according to what you think Christian men get most discouraged about. (1=most discouraged, 6=least discouraged)

- _____ Issues at work that wear him out and the feeling sometimes that his hard work is not appreciated.
- _____ Struggles in his marriage over his wife’s expectations, finances, sex, home management, etc.

- _____ The feeling that his life is out of control and he is reacting to life instead of managing and focusing his life according to God's goals.
- _____ Repeated failure with temptations he feels he should not be failing with so often like giving in to lust, his temper, having a critical tongue, resentment or withdrawing when his wife isn't attentive to his needs
- _____ Difficult circumstances like tight finances, a job he dislikes, health issues, or extended family responsibilities that wear him down
- _____ Struggles with the kids. With younger kids, being worn down by their irresponsibility, fighting, defiance, or disrespect. With older kids, being discouraged over some of the decisions they make.

4. Go to your **Check 6** tri-fold and follow *Check #1*.
5. **Note that at the next study you will be asked to share some Scripture that has stood out to you from a sermon or from your own quiet time.**
6. Have the man who took the most initiative to form the group or partnership close in prayer.

Week 4: Based On Check #2 "The Centrality of Scripture"

Warm Up

The first chapter of this booklet tells the story of Frank, the pastor who crashed and burned by having an affair with his secretary. Have you known someone who had a similar fall? Did he have a band of brothers surrounding him? What were the consequences of his fall?

Chapter 2 gives 4 reasons why 19 out of 20 Christian men have no best friend or band of brothers. Rank these in the order of what you think are the most significant reasons (1=most significant) and explain your ranking.

- _____ Difficulty with intimacy in general
- _____ Shame—embarrassment over their failures and struggles
- _____ The cultural view of masculinity—the failure to confront the sinful component of our masculine drives of **self-reliance** and **independence**
- _____ Busy-ness—we are so consumed with the above-the-waterline parts of our lives that we neglect the important, below-the-waterline issues
- _____ We don't know what we are missing. We all have friends, but have not been intentional about going to the deeper level and forming a bond of brotherhood with other men

_____ Other reasons men have no brothers close to them

Study

Read John 15:1-8

Practically speaking, what do you think it means to “abide,” or “remain,” (NIV) in Christ?

What does it mean for his word to “abide,” or “remain,” in us? In practical terms, how do we make sure this happens?

What kind of fruit is Jesus speaking of, when he says it is only produced through abiding in Him? How have you seen this truth in your own life?

Read Col. 3:16

In Greek, the “you” in whom the word is to dwell is plural. In other words, Paul is not talking about an individual memorizing Scripture (as beneficial as that is,) but about discussion among the believers that is centered in God’s Word. Practically speaking, how do you think Paul envisioned the Colossian Christians letting the Word of Christ richly dwell among them?

Read Proverbs 27:17

What is the process that you think this verse is describing?

Following this metaphor, how do you think men get spiritually dull?

Why do we need other men rubbing up against us so we get sharpened?

Application

1. At some time in your life have you set a goal to meet with God every day for Bible reading and prayer, but failed?
2. What are the chief obstacles most men face to achieving this goal?

3. What are some things you have learned about overcoming these obstacles?
4. As you launch this new partnership or group, what is your goal for having a Quiet Time with God?
5. Go to your **Check 6** tri-fold and follow Check #1 and Check #2.
6. Close in prayer.

Week 5: Based In Check #3 “God’s Goal is Transforming Our Character”

Warm Up

Share an experience from your childhood when you were punished, not so much for doing something wrong as for having a bad attitude.

What are some of the most important lessons you’ve learned about how a bad attitude can be changed to a godly one?

What Christ-like attitude such as love, forgiveness, patience, humility, faith, or gratefulness, do you believe God has been helping you grow into a little more? What are some of the ways God has been doing that?

Study

Read II. Peter 1:3-8

If God’s divine power has given us everything we need for godliness, why aren’t we more godly?

Notice that Peter tells us we have been given the knowledge of God so that we might partake of the divine nature. How does knowing God help us partake of the divine nature, i.e. become more Christ-like in character?

Based on verse 3, how would you answer the preacher who says, “You’re trying too hard. You need to **let go** and **let God** do his work in you?”

Most men are driven to be effective and productive in what they do. What does verse 8 say about reaching this goal? What does this verse teach about the relationship between accomplishment and character?

Read Galatians 5:19-26

Notice that the acts of the sinful nature are grouped into 4 categories. Our sinful nature corrupts our sexuality, our worship, our relationships, and our recreation. Which of these corruptions do you think is most obvious in the world, and which is the least obvious? Which one do you think today's Christians struggle with the most?

Take turns giving a quick, one sentence definition of each of the 9 fruits of the Spirit as well as the opposite attitude.

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------|
| 1. Love | Opposite: |
| 2. Joy | Opposite: |
| 3. Peace | Opposite: |
| 4. Patience | Opposite: |
| 5. Kindness | Opposite: |
| 6. Goodness | Opposite: |
| 7. Faithfulness | Opposite: |
| 8. Meekness | Opposite: |
| 9. Self-control | Opposite: |

Since producing these Christ-like qualities in us is the Holy Spirit's goal, and Christians are not very Christ-like, what do you think we are doing to hinder the Holy Spirit's work?

Read Romans 8:28-30

Specifically, for whom do all things work together for good?

According to verses 29-30, what is that purpose? How does this compare with what we've seen in II. Pet. 1:3-8 and Gal. 5:22-23?

Notice that Paul links all things working together for good with God's purpose for Christians, which is that they be conformed to the image of Christ. How then can such things as heart-wrenching suffering, unfair treatment, and difficult circumstances work together for good?

Application

1. Go to your **Check 6** tri-fold and do **Check 1** and **Check 2**.
2. Read Matthew 5:1-12. Notice that Jesus began his explanation of the kingdom lifestyle with a focus on 8 inner attitudes, called the beatitudes. Look at these 8 carefully. Which one of these do you think God has been working on in you lately? Share this with your partner or group so they can record it as a prayer request. *You have just completed **Check 3**.*

Prayer Request List For Godly Attitudes from Matt 5:1-12

First brother:

Second brother:

Week 6: Based On Check #4
“Being An Effective Spiritual Leader To Your Family”

Warm Up

Pick 3 words to describe the home you grew up in.

Describe your parent's relationship and how you think it may have affected you.

Describe your father and his spiritual leadership in your family. Are there holes in your heart because of some needs you had as a child that he didn't or couldn't meet?

Study

Read Matt. 5:21-23

Here, Jesus teaches that the sixth commandment prohibits more than murder. It also prohibits wounds to the soul. What 3 types of wounds to the soul does Jesus prohibit?

Have you experienced this kind of wound at the hands of someone else? What did it feel like?

According to verse 24, what is the solution to the problem when we've wounded the spirit of another?

What do you think happens to a man's relationship with his wife or children if he wounds them but doesn't seek forgiveness and reconciliation.

Read Deut. 6:4-9

Here, God gives us 4 specific steps for training our children. Why do you think this training begins (verse 5) in OUR hearts with OUR love for God?

Why do you think, the second step (verse 6) is to have God's commands on our hearts?

Verse 7 begins, "Impress them (God's laws) on your children." The Hebrew word, "impress," means "to stamp or engrave." It suggests memorization. Why do you think more Christian parents aren't committed to making sure their kids are memorizing Scripture?

The rest of verse 7 and following give the fourth step—talk with your kids about how to apply God's word in the various situations you are in during the day. What do you think is required for parents to do this effectively?

Application

1. Go to your **Check 6** tri-fold and do *Check #1, Check #2, and Check #3*.
2. What aspect of home leadership are you finding most difficult?

3. The Greek word used for the love we are to show our wives is “*agape*,” which means “sacrificial love.” It is best defined as *making whatever sacrifice is necessary to meet the needs of another*. Turn back to page 42-43 and review the list of a wife’s needs. What additional ones would you add?

What needs of your wife do you need to focus on during the next week?

4. Notice that the last verse you read (Eph. 6:4) is counter-cultural in addressing the FATHERS and not the mothers when it comes to parental training. What significance does this have for you?

Notice also that fathers are not to passively watch their children grow up, but to “bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.” **What have you been doing lately to disciple your children?**

5. Verse 4 also commands fathers not to exasperate their children. The parallel passage in Col.3 says, “Fathers, do not embitter your children.” Exasperating or embittering our children is the result of us losing our battle with a short temper, a critical attitude, a sharp tongue, or impatience. It also results from refusing to admit or apologize when we are wrong and from overworking, which prevents us from meeting many of the needs they have for a relationship with us. **Right now if one of these battles is especially fierce for you, let the other brother or brothers know so they can be praying for your battle.**

Prayer Request List For Tough Spiritual Battles At Home

First brother:

Second brother:

6. You have now completed Check #4.
7. Close by praying for the brother on your right.

Week 7: Based On Check #5 “Tapping Into The Power of Accountability”

Warm Up

Is the word, “accountability,” a positive or negative term in your mind?

It’s been said that a key principle to keep in mind in business is that people tend to follow through on what you *inspect* not what you *expect*. What do you think of this statement?

Do you agree or disagree with this statement: *Most Christian men know they need accountability to other brothers to be the Christians they want to be.*

Study

Turn to page 44 and re-read the 5 paragraphs under *Check 5: Personal Accountability*. What are the components of relational accountability, and why are they important?

How would you answer someone who says, “I don’t want to be in an accountability group because I don’t need more people pointing a finger at me?”

Read Heb. 13:17

This is an example of *structural* accountability. Based on this verse, explain the relationship that should exist between Christians and their leaders.

Read James 5:16, Col. 3:16, Eph. 5:21, and Prov. 27:17

In what sense do each of these verses support the idea of *relational* accountability, i.e. Christians being accountable to fellow believers?

Application

1. Go to your **Check 6** pocket tri-fold and do Checks #1-#4.
2. Open the **Check 6** tri-fold and read aloud BUT DON’T ANSWER questions, **a-f** of **Check #5 Accountability: Since our last meeting**. This is a picture of the level of trust and accountability we want you to have with each other **at some point**.

3. Now, open the **Forging a Foundation** tri-fold read aloud BUT DON'T ANSWER questions 1-4 and the optional question. Then read **Forging a Foundation Covenant of Commitment**, also in the tri-fold. Usually a new a group should start with **Forging a Foundation** in order for brotherhood relationships to grow and the trust level of the group to deepen enough to ask the accountability questions in **Check 6**. More mature groups can use **Forging a Foundation** and include the optional question on the fruit of the spirit.

At some point, however, the brothers need to move to the accountability of **Check 6**, and it is possible that the group would want to skip using the **Forging a Foundation** tri-fold and start using **Check 6** right away. Discuss with each other the following questions: “Is there any reason for our group to skip right away to **Check 6**? If we start with level one (**Forging a Foundation**), should we plan to use the optional question?”

4. Begin using the **Forging a Foundation** pocket tri-fold right away by answering Question 4, “What spiritual battles can I help you fight through my prayer for you?”

(If you plan to use **Check 6** right away, remind everyone that the accountability questions will be asked the next week. Then go to Check # 6 on the Check 6 pocket tri-fold, and answer the question, “*What spiritual battles can I help you fight through my prayer for you?*”)

Prayer Request List For Spiritual Battles

First brother:

Second brother:

5. Close by praying for the brother on your left.

Week 8: Based On Check #6 “Becoming Warriors Who Pray”

Warm Up

What do you think are the biggest hurdles to praying faithfully for each other’s spiritual battles? What have you learned about overcoming those hurdles?

Study

Read Eph. 6:10-20

Because we are engaged in a spiritual battle, Paul tells us that we must wear the right kind of armor as we do our fighting. According to vs. 18-19 how do we actually fight?

What do you learn from Paul's request to be prayed for?

Read Mark 9:14-29

According to Jesus, what is the ultimate weapon in the battle with Satan?

Read John 10:10a, Rev. 12:17, and I. Peter 5:8

According to these verses, what is your enemy's intent?

Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

Summarize the reasons given in the text for why two are better than one.

What does this text say about the obstacles you will face?

About the environment that will surround you?

About the enemies who will attack you?

Application

1. Go to your ***Forging a Foundation*** (or ***Check 6***) pocket tri-fold and complete questions 1-3 (questions 1-5 in ***Check 6***.)
2. Read Exodus 17:8-13. Nearly all commentators agree that in that culture Moses' action of lifting his hands represented prayer. Realizing that the Old Testament often gives physical pictures of spiritual realities, what do you think this story teaches us about prayer?

Do you agree or disagree with, these words from John Eldridge, “*Behind the world and the flesh is an even more deadly enemy...one we rarely speak of and are even much less ready to resist. Yet this is where we live now—on the front lines of a fierce spiritual war that is to blame for most of the casualties you see around you and most of the assault against you.*” (Wild at Heart) Explain your answer.

3. Since our lives are made up of a certain fixed number of hours and days, it has been said that intercessory prayer for each other is actually laying our lives down for each other. Do you agree, or think this is overstating the case?
4. Which of your friends or loved ones are fighting tough spiritual battles and need you to lift up your hands in prayer for them?
5. What spiritual battle can your brothers be helping you fight through their intercessory prayer for you this week? (Note this is question 4 in ***Forging a Foundation***, question 6 in ***Check 6***.) Be sure to write down the prayer requests on a file card that can be kept in the pocket tri-fold.
6. Remember that next week, the entire agenda will be the discussion questions from ***Forging a Foundation*** or ***Check 6***. The group you are forming is not intended to be a bunch of scholars who give their opinion on a book or Scripture text. It is a ***band of brothers gathered to fight***.
7. Close your time in prayer for the specific requests you’ve shared.

Be a warrior. Fight the battle. Find a brother.