

MONDAY MANNA

9 September 2019

LIFE IS USUALLY BEST WITH OTHERS

By Jim Mathis

On a Sunday early this year, my wife and I went to church. At our church, worship could best be described as a party for God. We always have a great time. Even though each service officially lasts only an hour, typically we are there for at least three hours, drinking coffee, talking with old friends, and meeting new ones. This seems to be part of what the Bible means when it says, *"Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another"* (Hebrews 10:25).

Later that afternoon I went to my seasonal job with a tax preparation company. Since it was the day for professional football's Super Bowl, business was slow, but we have an international office with some brilliant, funny, immigrant tax professionals. We had a good time and the hours went by quickly.

After that I went to a Super Bowl watch party put on by our homeowner's association. I probably would not have even watched the game if I had been at home, but hanging out with the neighbours, talking and enjoying each other's company made for a good evening.

Being a natural introvert, I need a few hours by myself to regroup after spending an entire day being around people like that, but I can say without a doubt that "life is better together." The good times are better – and the bad times are not so bad – if we share them with neighbours, co-workers, church family, friends and relatives.

In the Scriptures we read a lot about the virtues of being with other people, not only for socialising but also for accomplishing important work. Here are some principles it teaches that have universal application:

Together we can share the load. It has often been observed that two horses pulling together can move multiple times the load that one horse can pull. The same often applies for us in the workplace, especially when the project we undertake is especially challenging. *"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work. If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity that man who falls and has no one to help him up!... Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken"* (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12).

Together we can work to improve our skill levels. Even the most talented individuals can benefit from interacting with others. We can reinforce one another's strengths, make suggestions for improvement, and even point out one another's blind spots. *"As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another"* (Proverbs 27:17).

Together we can shoulder responsibilities that one person cannot bear alone. Moses had been given the responsibility of leading the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt. Before long he realised, he was incapable of resolving all their problems and addressing their conflicts. In response, God appointed elders – other respected leaders – to take on the lesser responsibilities and free Moses to deal only with the most important issues that arose. We would be wise to seek similar assistance when needed. *"I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me"* (Numbers 11:14).

Looking at my calendar, I can see that this is going to be a good week because I have four times scheduled to get together with friends for breakfast, lunch, or just to talk. Life is best when we treat it like a team sport. Live it – and work it – with friends wherever you find them.

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

How would you compare a person who is introverted with a person who is extroverted? Someone has defined an extrovert as some who draws energy from people and needs to be around them, while an introvert is someone whose energy is gradually drained by being with people. Do you agree with that? Why or why not?

Which do you tend to be – more extroverted, or more introverted? How do you find that trait being manifested in your life?

Do you agree that even if a person is shy, or an introvert, they still need to be with people, willingly interacting with them not only socially but also in working cooperatively? What can be some of the pitfalls of not spending time with people?

In Genesis 2:18, God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone.” Do you think He was referring to companionship, or does this principle apply to other areas of life? Explain your answer.

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages:

Exodus 18:18

Mark 6:7-8

Acts 13:2-5

2 Corinthians 5:20

2 Timothy 2:2