

Four Men Walking

Four Men Walking And when they could not get him to a place in front of Jesus because of the throng, they dug through the roof above Him; and when they had scooped out an opening, they let down the mat upon which the paralyzed man lay. Mark 2:4 the Amplified

Are you aware of the intestinal fortitude that is required to be named among the few who are actually willing to Wreck the Roof?

Many have heard about a man named Dietrich Bonhoeffer. From his cell in the Flossenburg concentration camp, he wrote: "The church is only the church when it exists for others." Unfortunately, many well-meaning Christians fail to see the deep needs of others around them because they suffer from "Roof Tile Syndrome."

Roof Tile Syndrome occurs when we are so caught up in the preaching of Jesus that we turn our backs on those who are still outside the building. We become barriers rather than gateways. It's when we begin to care more about keeping things in tact than we do about restoring lives that have been shattered.

Mark 2 paints a picture that I believe we need to look at often in regards to locating the antidote to the Roof Tile Syndrome. This is a story about four men who tapped into a supernatural force that had the audacity to swallow up the powers of darkness.

It is not a description of four men who stumbled upon a miracle by sheer mistake, but a description of that we, as Christ Followers, can expect to experience when we lock shields and work together towards a common goal. This is an account of four men who moved themselves from the realm of friendship into the realm of brotherhood.

There are four characteristics possessed by these men that really jump out at me when I read these verses. I believe that as we increase our understanding and develop these same characteristics in our lives that we, too, can begin to believe God for the unbelievable. We can position ourselves to demonstrate the enemies defeat on a daily basis and become true Roof Wreckers!

(Don't be shy. As you read through these four characteristics go ahead and rate yourself on a scale from 1 to 10. If you're lacking in any of these four areas -change. Refuse to be paralyzed by a Roof Tile Syndrome.)

1. Great Endurance

Long before these four had ripped off tiles and dug holes through the roof they had demonstrated great endurance. The distance they had carried their friend wasn't a short one. They were late for the meeting. Had they only a short distance to travel they would have, more than likely, been among the first to arrive. But they were late. They were so late that there wasn't any more room inside the house. People were standing around outside peeking in the windows to catch a glimpse of Jesus. Along their journey they would have encountered a multitude of excuses to turn back but they didn't. They kept on going pushing through the pain of carrying a lost soul. The terrain itself is difficult, even without the added dead-weight of a paralytic man and the stretcher upon which he laid. In addition, the climate in this part of the world is hot and the between the dirt and the sweat running into their eyes, who would have blamed them had they given up? Even upon reaching their destination they were faced with opposition that would have defeated most of us.

But they refused to quit and found their way through the crowd and onto the rooftop. How's your endurance? Do you possess a tenacity that refuses to lose or have you come up with reasonable foundations to excuse you from continuing until the end? Are you playing through the pain or using your pain as a qualifier for elimination?

2. A Team Spirit

It would have simply been an impossible task for any one of these men to have accomplished this alone. I believe that if any two, or possibly even three, of them had attempted this on their own success wouldn't have been achieved. But when all four of these men agreed to lay their differences aside and to work together the impossible became possible.

When one became tired, another became an encourager. There could be no arguing along the way or fighting about who would have the front and who would be stuck at the back. They simply needed to work together. They would have needed to praise the efforts of one another to boost each other's spirit. At times, when weariness and frustration began to appear, they would have been required to reinforce each other's confidence with words of inspiration and to cheer each other on towards their agreed upon goal. Team Spirit was demanded by the task that they had chosen to take on.

What about you? Are you a team player? Do you find yourself looking for ways to encourage others around you when you sense their strength is beginning to wane?

How important is it for you to be at the front of the line? The team mentality doesn't come to us naturally. We must consciously work at developing this mentality or we'll find ourselves sabotaging the efforts of others and, in turn, destroying the overall chances of winning a victory for ourselves and for the team.

3. Committed to the Cause

Understand that these men probably weren't retired and rich. In all likelihood, each of these men had a family of their own and jobs they worked in order to provide food for the hungry mouths they needed to feed. Had they been wealthy, they would have simply hired someone else to take their friend to see Jesus. But instead, sporting events and fishing trips were put on hold while these four worked together towards their common goal.

To these four, the possibility of changing a man's final outcome was of greater importance than their own current situation. They were four men on a mission. They understood the importance of getting this man into the presence of Jesus, regardless of the cost. Certainly, this wasn't the only paralytic man in the region. But these were the only four men who recognized the value of The Cause to which they were committed. Just as when David headed out to fight Goliath, they realized The Cause for which they invested their lives.

It is obvious that these four men had encountered life-changing moments of their own in the presence of Christ. Their lives had to have been touched by the power of God that flowed through Jesus. It was what God had done for them that promoted such a great commitment to carry another man to Christ. These men had lives of their own, yet they understood that God had empowered them to participate in changing the lives of others. They understood The Cause.

How's your commitment to The Cause? Do you live your life in a way that promotes the Kingdom or are you too busy building your own kingdom? Let's even consider our church life. Do we attend church services hoping to receive something that will change our life or are we hoping and looking to experience the opportunity to give of ourselves in order that the lives of others might be changed?

4. Intense Focus

These four men were true champions. They demonstrated great endurance, a team spirit, total commitment AND Intense Focus. They refused to allow anything to take their eyes off of the prize.

Without intense focus their endurance would have surely waxed thin. Had they not possessed intense focus, their ability to work together would have dissipated quickly and their commitment would have been easily undermined. Because of their Intense Focus, they were able to experience a great victory from beginning to end. That intense focus allowed them to move their paralytic friend all the way from point

A to point B, without missing the mark. It only makes sense that these men would have experienced many challenges along their journey. Yet, those challenges aren't even brought up in Mark's account of this story. Why? Because the challenges were overwhelmed by the Glory that was revealed through their actions! (Romans 8:18)

And don't forget this! Wrecking the Roof was one thing. Lowering that man through the roof without dumping his body off of his stretcher was quite another! At that last moment, everything within them had already been tested to the limits. After carrying their friend that long distance and after climbing up and digging through the roof, they still needed the strength and focus to lower his weight safely to the floor. Their ability to work together reached the zenith of its potential as they gave a living-demonstration of their commitment and intense focus. From their very first step until that very last second, Intense Focus was crucial to their success.

One of our enemy's greatest strategies is to rob us of our focus. How easily are you distracted? What does it take to get you to take your eye off of the goal? Are you still stretching towards the prize or have you settled for less than God's best rather than fight your way to finish line?

Leon Willis, a great Man of God and a wonderful friend, once posed this question: "If you haven't arrived yet ... do you still want to get there?" It is my desire to motivate you towards great success. As members of The Church of the Living God, we need to insure that we're not paralyzed by the Tile Roof Syndrome. We need to be certain that our lives are focused upon The Cause and that our Team Spirit is high and our Endurance is strong. We have the ability to watch the impossible become possible if we'll develop the characteristics within ourselves that will position us to believe for the unbelievable.

We believe in you,

Pastors Thom and Shelby