

Introduction:

In **Acts 3**, Peter and John met a lame man on their way to the temple. As the old children's song says, "He held out his palm and he asked for an alm and this is what Peter did say, 'Silver and gold have I none. But such as I have give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk!'" The man went walking and leaping and praising God. A crowd formed and Peter preached his second recorded sermon. Instead of simply telling us about the number who believed, Luke explains in **Acts 4:1-3** that the priests and the Sadducees arrested them and put them in custody. They brought Peter and John before the High Priest and his family, along with elders, rulers, and scribes. They grilled them and threatened them. Then they warned Peter and John to quit speaking in the name of Jesus. It doesn't say what threats accompanied their warning, but I can imagine.

In **Acts 4:23**, when Peter and John were released, the text says "they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them." Why? Why did Peter and John go to their friends? Why didn't they just go home and pray about it on their own. Why didn't they just rely on God and deal with it by themselves. I'll tell you why. Because when we make it, I make it.

All this year, we have talked about victory. We have talked about making it. I hope you've learned a great deal about victory. I hope you have confidence in your victory through Jesus Christ. I hope you are excited that Jesus Christ will give you the victory. But I hope you understand that you will never get the victory on your own. You will never get the victory by coming into this big group to worship God on Sundays and then going out on Monday to live your life on your own. You need a group. You need friends that you can run to when life is happening. You need a group with whom you can say, "When we make it, I make it."

Discussion:

- I. God has never intended for anyone to make it to Him on their own.
 - A. **Ecclesiastes 4:9-12** drives this home. Two are better than one. A threefold chord is not quickly broken. We need others who can provide great reward for our toil. We need some who will lift us up when we have fallen. We need those who will strengthen us to resist when the enemy attacks. We need some who will comfort us when we are out in the cold. No wonder Jesus sent disciples out two by two. No wonder Paul traveled in a group. We need others.
 - B. God has never intended anyone to be a lone wolf, an army of one, a strong and mighty tower. He has expected us to rely on Him by relying on each other. He has expected us to be friends with people we meet here. He has expected us to be support to and be supported by people we meet here. He has expected us to understand that when we make it, I make it.
 - C. I first heard this mantra in the context of a twelve step program. A recovering alcoholic who had years of sobriety was asked why he continued to attend the meetings. He had been sober for years. Surely he didn't have to keep going to the meetings. Surely by now he had overcome the addiction. His response, "Because when we make it, I make it" was life-changing. It was profound. His point was he attends to support his fellow alcoholics. However, his point was not that he attends because his fellow alcoholics need his support. Rather, if he was going to survive, even after all these years, he needed what he got from supporting others. And that is exactly where we are. There is not a group of Christians that needs you or me to help them otherwise they won't make it. Rather, if you don't find some other Christians to support and help, you won't make it. If I don't find some other Christians to support and help, I won't make it. If we make it, I make it.
- II. From house to house
 - A. Why, in **Acts 2:46-47**, did the Christians not simply meet in the assembly but also in one another's homes? Why, in **Acts 5:42**, were they teaching in the temple and from house to house? Why, in **Acts 12:12ff**, were the Christians gathered together to pray in homes rather than as the entire assembly? Why, in **Acts 20:20**, does Paul boast that he taught not only publically but from house to house? I'll tell you why: when we make it, I make it.
 - B. Here is the problem. As this crowd in this room gets larger, it naturally becomes harder to establish the connections that provide the support we need on a day-to-day basis. As this crowd grows larger, it is easy to

simply be alone in the crowd. It is too easy to walk in, walk out and not give or receive the very support we need from our brothers and sisters. It is too easy to die on the vine in this crowded room.

- C. What is the solution? Is it to make sure we are never part of a crowd? No. We learned a few weeks ago that we need both [the assembly and the living room](#). We need to be reminded of the army. We need to stand together in the presence of God. We need to celebrate what God has done for all of us. We need to share our resources for greater kingdom impact. We need to be motivated to soar higher. If we never allow assemblies to get crowded, we miss out on the great blessings that the Jerusalem church was able to experience in its crowd. But we also need to be reminded of our family. We need to sit together in the moments of life. We need to celebrate what God is doing in each of us. We need to share our time and ourselves for deeper personal discipleship. We need to be challenged to dig deeper. We need what can only be accomplished in the living rooms and in the kitchens. We need what can only come from the small group of disciples living life together on a weekly, sometimes daily, basis. We need the group about which we can say, "When we make it, I make it."
- D. We need the group of friends we can run to when prayer is what is needed (cf. **Acts 4:23**). We need the group of friends who can lift us up when we've fallen. We need the group of friends who can comfort us when we are afflicted. We need the group of friends who can resist the enemy together with us. We need the group of friends who can work together with us, challenging us, pushing us to do greater things together than we could ever accomplish apart. We need the group of friends who is depending on us and upon whom we are depending. We need the group of friends about whom we can say, "When we make it, I make it."

III. Livingston House-to-House Meetings

- A. Because our shepherds understand we need this group of brethren who can circle around us, this smaller more intimate setting where we can dig deeper, where we can share with each other, where we can challenge each other, motivate each other, encourage each other, comfort each other, they have been working this year to develop and encourage house-to-house relationships. We've talked about this in several congregational presentations and in multiple sermons since the beginning of the year.
- B. I am excited to share that we are ready to kick this off. Today we open up our House-to-House meetings for you to sign up. As soon as this assembly is over, you will be able to go to the member tables at the back of the auditorium and sign up for the group you want to be part of. While our long term plans are to develop enough house-to-house meetings that every member can participate, we hope you understand that we need to develop this at a slower pace. In the spring we had some pilot groups that helped us develop some leaders. Right now, for our fall session, we are able to handle 10 house-to-house meetings with a limit of 14 adults (by that we mean post high school) per meeting. That will allow us to have about 50% involvement. Our goal is to ultimately have at least 80% involvement, but we realize it will take a couple of years to develop that leadership and get that level of involvement.
- C. I gave some highlights about this plan in our congregational presentation last week. Please allow me to dig just a bit deeper with you this morning.
 - 1. H2H Purpose: H2H meetings exist to develop more meaningful relationships that will prompt deeper connection and service to one another by mutually digging deeper in applying God's Word to our lives. The purpose is not to socialize, though we hope you will desire to socialize with your fellow participants. Our goal is to strengthen discipleship.
 - 2. As I mentioned last week, there will be three aspects to each meeting. Share, study, prayer.
 - a) *Sharing*: There will be a time for check in and sharing. Here's what is going on in my life this week. Here are good things to thank God for. Here are struggles. Here are places of needed support. Here are special prayer requests.
 - b) *Study*: This is the opportunity to discuss the questions that will be in each week's program. This will be the meat of the meeting that helps us grow and know where to support each other.
 - c) *Prayer*: This is the time for the groups to pray together.
 - 3. **II Peter 1:5-8** says, "For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (ESV). There is one item on this list that most churches do really, really well. Can you guess which one it is? That's right: knowledge. In just about everything we do we focus on knowledge. Our sermons, our classes, our special series all focus on knowledge. We are establishing H2H to work on the other virtues on this list.

4. Thus, understand, that while there is a “study” portion to our H2H meetings, the study is not intended to provide more Bible knowledge. Rather, it is designed to challenge and provoke us to dig deeper on the knowledge that was expressed in our Sunday sermon (usually the AM sermon). The study portion is designed to get you thinking about, discussing with other Christians, and applying what was taught in the Sunday sermon in the midst of friends and supporters.
 5. I’ve heard what we are trying to do described this way. Have you ever watched a football game? Before each play, most teams gather up in a huddle. The players gather around the quarterback. He calls the play. “686 Pump F-stop on two.” Then they run the play. They do that over and over again on the playing field. Then comes half-time. During half-time the coaches start reviewing with the players. How is it actually going on the field? What adjustments need to be made? Our Sunday assembly is like that huddle. We are calling the plays. Our H2H meetings are like half-time. We are in the middle of the game but now we get to assess with other disciples. How is it actually going on the field of life? What adjustments need to be made? What support is needed? What support can be given?
 6. While each H2H meeting will likely have refreshments (after all Christians can hardly get together for anything without eating something), we are not making meals part of these meetings for two reasons. 1) We do not want the socializing to overshadow the real purpose of each meeting. 2) Since we want this to spread throughout the congregation, we don’t want to strike fear in the hearts of any who might otherwise be willing to host other H2H meetings that will come up. We certainly hope you will want to get together at other times with your H2H group for meals, and we’ve instructed leaders and hosts that they may want to make 1 or 2 of the meetings special and include a meal. But for the most part we are restricting this aspect to refreshments.
 7. One of the different aspects of this program is rather than simply being ongoing, we are having three sessions per year. A fall session that is 13 weeks (12 sessions, taking Thanksgiving week off), a Winter/Spring session that is 12 weeks long, and a Summer session that is 10 weeks long. You will be free to sign up for any meeting that has an opening (though right now, we ask you to limit yourself to one of the meetings). Within the first three weeks of each session, you will be allowed to drop out of the H2H meeting with only one question asked. When you inform the leader that you are dropping out (and if you are dropping out, you must inform the leader so they know of the opening), he will ask you one question, “Can I help you find another meeting?” At the end of the fall session, you will be given a feedback card. On that card, in addition to giving helpful feedback for your leader and for the program in general, you will be given three choices. You will be able to say either 1) I want to stay in this group next session, 2) I want to try a different group next session, or 3) I want to take a break from groups next session.
 8. Our hope is that through this time together each week, you will be developing a circle of friends like James and John had in **Acts 4:29**. Our hope is you will develop that group of people about which you will be able to say, “If we make it, I make it.”
- D. As soon as our assembly is over this morning, you will be able to sign up for your group. Here is what we ask. Please be mindful that we have limited space during this session. Obviously, no one will be able to attend every single meeting of one of these sessions. However, please understand you are making a commitment as you sign up. You are saying you will attend and be an active part of the meeting. If you know you won’t be able to attend even half of the sessions, please leave room for someone else.

Conclusion:

In **Acts 12**, Herod decided to do the Jews a favor by troubling the church. He captured James, one of the apostles and killed him with the sword. He then arrested Peter. In the middle of the night, Peter was awakened by an angel and released from the prison. When he realized he really was rescued, he went to Mary’s house where some of the disciples were praying. Have you ever wondered why he went to her house? He wasn’t planning on staying there. Why did he go there? I can only speculate that Peter went there because he knew there would be a group of Christians there. If so, that means this was a regular occurrence at Mary’s house. Why do you think Mary would have these groups of Christians over to her home like this? I can tell you why. Because when we make it, I make it.