

3 Effects of Thinking in Terms of “We” Instead of “I”

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The book and later movie, *Moneyball*, tells the true story of the Oakland A’s baseball team and their general manager, Billy Beane, who came to a crossroads in the way the team had to approach Major League Baseball. At that time, the A’s had a minuscule payroll compared to the large market clubs, and things were only getting more lopsided. The bigger clubs had more and more money and therefore could buy more and more players, and Beane had to find a way to manufacture wins with his limited resource.

Enter Peter Brandt, a young baseball executive who proposed an entirely new approach at the time. According to Brandt, all of baseball was making a fundamental mistake in their thinking about the game. Teams were focused on paying the best players, but Brandt claimed that using data, the A’s could instead focus on paying for wins and runs. The result was a roster of no-name players who had the unique ability to get on base better than most, and an unlikely playoff run as a result.

Now there are all kinds of lessons from this paradigm-shifting season – lessons about leadership, about data, about innovation and creativity. But there is also a lesson about team.

The A’s were focused on finding the players not that would win batting titles or home run records or strike out tallies; they were solely focused on what an individual player could contribute to the team in order to win. It was, in many ways, a “we” mentality rather than an “I” mentality in which each player knew their particular role. That’s a pretty unique thing.

We seldom have a “we” mentality, even when we should. Even when we are part of a team, part of an organization, contributing to a greater goal – we often still think of it in terms of “I.” Even, in fact, in the church – the one place in which we should most have a “we” mentality.

We should think that way because that is how the Bible largely treats us. Though it’s true that Scripture addresses us as individuals, much more often does it address the entire people of God. Here is one specific example:

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy (1 Peter 2:9-10).

Peter here is addressing the church. He is stating their corporate identity. He is not answering the question of who “you” are as individuals, but instead who “you” are collectively. It makes me wonder, in light of how much we have the “I” mentality, how things would be different if we thought more in terms of “us”? At least three effects come to mind:

1. We would bear with one another.

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all (Eph. 4:2-6).

What does it mean to bear with one another? It doesn't mean just putting up with someone else; instead, it means recognizing that every single person we interact with on a daily basis is bearing their own burden. They have struggles, anxieties, priorities, fear – just like we do. And when you have all those things, you tend to think only of yourself. But a “we” mentality makes us bear with one another – it makes us patient with those around us, making allowances for them, and considering them above ourselves.

2. We would confess to one another.

Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective (James 5:16).

Often times it is easier to receive a confession rather than give one; to bear a burden rather than relinquish one to be born by someone else. To receive someone's authentic confession – be it a confession of sin, of fear, of doubt, of whatever – requires that the other person trust me. It actually does not require that I trust them. But the other way around? Well, that's more difficult because I must humble myself under the weight of that burden that is too great for one person to carry. With a “we” mentality, each of us recognizes that the burdens we have in our personal lives are meant to be communally lifted. We recognize that we are in each other's lives as vehicles of healing.

3. We would feel with one another.

Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited (Rom. 12:15-16).

Oh, how easy it is to keep each other at an arm's distance. To acknowledge someone else's great joys or great sadness, and yet not really feel it. Perhaps that's because of our own insecurity – we find it difficult to rejoice with someone else because we feel slighted because things have gone well for them. And we similarly find it difficult to truly weep with someone else because doing so allows into our minds the possibility that we, too, will someday be the one weeping. And yet all of this distance has at its source the “I” mentality. Not the “we.”

The “we” feels. Laughs. Cries. Celebrates. Mourns. Together.

If you are a Christian, then you are a child of God, but that's not all you are. You have a “we” identity in as much as a “me” identity. Don't miss the blessing of living in the “we.”