



SOAR

Marriage Growth-Track

Week 12 - Day 3

Sharpening Iron

by Justin and Amber Paulk

As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.

Proverbs 27:17

This is not just an outdated adage that pertains to weapons makers; it is also highly relevant to us as individuals if we hope to improve in just about any area of our lives. This is what we see in this verse:

- We need community to help us spiritually grow;
- We become better when we are held accountable;
- Surround yourself with godly people

This short and simple verse calls forth images of ancient craftsmen forging steel blades and hammering them into shape. Once formed, the ironsmiths would further hone them to become sharper and stronger by slicing one blade against another. This process didn't weaken the iron compounds, but actually ended up strengthening them.

It works just like that for us. Especially when we're involved in small groups. These communities of trust help us to keep our compass pointed north, towards Christ, even when we're tempted not to. In the middle of all the fellowship, there's also accountability within the group and that's where the 'iron sharpening iron' analogy comes in.

This is because most of us are 'super smart' and full of 'helpful' advice when it comes to someone else. We're full of 'you should do this' and 'I wouldn't do that if I were you' comments when we're talking about others. But when it comes to us...we're not so quick to heed our own advice. No doubt, constructive criticism is much easier to dispel than to follow. But it is easier to receive from those you trust that have your best interests at heart.

The whole sword-making process is incredibly similar to our walk with Christ. We begin as this sort of raw material, not very useful in its current state. But God views us otherwise. He recognizes our potential. He can see that we have the potential to become a great ambassador for sharing His story with others. He also knows that, before we can become a useful resource in the sharing of the Gospel, we first must be formed and sharpened and honed to be prepared to do battle in a world in which so much goes

against Christ's teachings.

The accountability of a small group is one of the best ways of crafting our best selves because when we come together, it is for the purpose of building each other up by speaking truth and hope and encouragement into each other's lives. Surrounding yourselves with men and women of God and holding each other accountable is a cornerstone of God's intentions for the community found in small groups.

It also helps to shore up our marriages when we are in the regular company of other couples working towards improving their relationships as well. Living your life surrounded by a community of friends that will call you out on bad decisions or offer alternative ways of handling difficult situations makes it so much easier to get through and past the rough patches that happen in every marriage.

Discussion Questions:

1. Have you as a couple ever found yourselves leaning on the church or group of neighbors and friends for practical support?
2. Has anyone ever come to your rescue?

Action Steps:

Spend some time discussing with your spouse how you have been blessed by your friends and neighbors for what they have given to you, and determine how you can identify a couple that could benefit from your help.

Prayer:

Lord, we know that you are the creator of all things and that you provide us with the knowledge and insight and truth we need to be successful. We also know that part of your plan is for us to engage in the community of other believers. We are grateful for the opportunities small groups provide for us to come together to sharpen one another. We know that you are for us and want the best for us and that surrounding each other with love and truth will help us to reach our potential.