



The Bond of Adversity

by Rubel Shelly

Want to know how to build unbreakable bonds of friendship and intimacy with another human being? Want to know the secret to team-building in your company? Want to know how to unite a fractured family or quarreling church?

But I'm not sure I ought to tell you. The answer could scare you off. More than that, it could make you decide the price is too high to pay.

Imagine, for example, that you wanted to make a cohesive, inseparable unit out of a mismatched group with gender, ethnic, religious, educational, and geographical backgrounds that are incredibly diverse. Let's say there are seven of them. They're male and female, white and black, from Georgia and Kansas and New Mexico — you get the picture, right? There's a single mother, a married man, a single guy — but enough on their diversity. How would you unite them?

Here's a sure-fire way: Throw them together as POWs during a war.

The seven American prisoners of war rescued in Iraq had very little in common before their ordeal. Five were from the ambushed 507th Maintenance Support Company; they took a wrong turn on a road headed toward Baghdad. The other two were an Apache helicopter crew; it went down during hostilities. They were together for three weeks as prisoners in a variety of locations.

Thrown together by adversity, they have become inseparable. Both as POWs and now, they are watchful and protective of one another. They are deferential. They share everything from jokes to pecan pie to life stories. Both the soldiers who rescued them and the medical teams taking care of them now smile and tell of the "strong emotional bonds" the seven developed during their ordeal.

Office mixers, church picnics, and family vacations are great. But they don't have the desired effect of creating a team atmosphere and bonding the different individuals to one another. It usually takes a crisis for that. Hardship. Shared pain.

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I wouldn't wish trouble on anybody. But who hasn't noticed that the thing which really bonds people to one another is sharing and surviving trouble? Instead of scattering, employees "hunker down" and get through a lean period. Rather than split up because of their "irreconcilable differences," her cancer or their child's arrest forces them to cling to one another and learn to love again.

Don't give up on the less-than-ideal relationships in your life. Believers are living in enemy territory here on this planet! And we really do need each other.