

# RULE 3 ■ Know Your Family

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## The Family of Partnership



### Surveying the Site

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1. Who was your best friend in high school? How did you meet? What did you do together? Are you still close to him or her?
2. Tell about your first kiss.
3. Whom do you consider a partner in life who is not a blood relative? Or who is most “like family” to you who is not a member of your biological family?



### Checking Your Toolbox

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Our adult lives are characterized by a long list of relationships. When we were young, we depended on parents and other older people to care for us, because we could not do things for ourselves. As adults, we are more independent, and so we form relationships of common interest and mutual support. These relationships take a number of different forms, such as marriage relationships, long-term friendships, and partnerships with people at work. These people form a new family, the family of partnership. (Your family of partnership may include some people from the family that you inherited, but maybe not.)

All these relationships are important parts of our self-development as men. Men need a variety of strong relationships with other men and women in order to be healthy. We are social creatures. Although we think of ourselves as independent, we are really interdependent. In other words, we're at our best when we are working with other

people, not when we're all alone. When God created the first person, according to Genesis 2, God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone” (Genesis 2:18). For that reason, God has made both men and women, so that in pairs and in groups, we can be together with other people. That is the way we are meant to be, working and living together in partnership and community.

- Name three significant people with whom you share life.

What makes them so important to you?

Our adult relationships with other adults fall into several general categories. At work, we form partnerships with other men and women. Because we are working closely together toward shared goals, we find part of our fulfillment as men in work. Through friendships with other men and women, we share our interests and dreams in a variety of ways, from fishing and football to the kinds of books we read or restaurants that we like. We may have a best friend, but often we are healthiest when we have a number of friends in different parts of our lives. Church friends are a very important part of our life as men.

For some men, two relationships are especially important. With brothers and sisters, we can form lifelong bonds. Men share more early and formative experiences in common with their brothers and sisters than with almost anyone else, so these are important relationships throughout life. The other important relationship is often the most significant one—a relationship of love and long-term commitment with a mate or

spouse. This kind of relationship is very intense because so much is shared, from the pleasures of sex to the logistics of daily life, from combined finances to the mundane routines of the home. These relationships are most healthy when they embody a mutual respect and a mutual interdependence. For other men, these are not the most important relationships. Some men don't have brothers, sisters, or spouses; at some points in life men might not feel close to these kinds of people. But almost all of us need friends and partners in our lives. Of course, not every man does—some of God's greatest men didn't have marriage partners. In Genesis 2—3, God depicts a partnership between a man and a woman. Adam, the first human, was not quite right when he was alone. When God created Eve, they bonded through sex, through commitment, and through daily life. They were partners in every sense. Many of us experience life to its fullest God-given potential in the context of long-term, committed relationships. Whether we experience lots of partnerships, a few intense relationships, or a life alone with God, each is a gift from God that makes us more fully alive.

■ Are there people from the family you inherited who are still significant for you today? Who are they?

What makes relationships difficult to sustain?

What makes relationships worth all the trouble?

How can God use your partnerships for God's glory?

## Blueprints

He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the LORD.  
Proverbs 19:14

House and wealth are inherited from parents, but a prudent wife is from the LORD.  
Proverbs 18:22



### Conversation with the Master Carpenter

Close your session with prayer. Lift up any prayer concerns or insights. Thank God for your friends, neighbors, and coworkers and the roles they play in your lives.



### On-the-Job Experience

1. Think of a project to work on together with your wife, girlfriend, or significant other. Make the plans and enjoy the time together as you follow it through, or think about your most romantic date with your wife, girlfriend, or significant other. As a surprise, set a night together and do it all over again.
2. Pick someone out of your men's group whom you'd like to know better. Invite him out for lunch or dinner.