

Collecting People

There is something about sitting on the water with a fishing rod in your hand that has a way of putting life into perspective.

Maybe it is the quiet. Maybe it is the sunrise. Maybe it is the fact that, for a few hours, nobody is asking you to solve a problem, answer an email, attend a meeting, or make a decision.

Or maybe it is the people.

Over the years, fishing has taught me plenty of lessons about patience, preparation, persistence, and even failure. But one of the greatest lessons has nothing to do with catching fish.

It is about collecting people. And no, I don't mean collecting people in the sense of counting how many names are in our phones or how many followers we have on social media.

I mean intentionally building a life filled with good people.

People who challenge us. People who encourage us. People who make us laugh.

People who tell us the truth when we don't necessarily want to hear it. People who are there when things aren't going well.

And perhaps most importantly, people who make us better simply because they are part of our lives.

The people we meet matter

Throughout our lives, we cross paths with thousands of people. Some are only in our lives for a few minutes. Some stay for a season. Others become lifelong friends. And occasionally, we meet someone who changes the direction of our lives without ever realizing the impact they had.

I have been fortunate to meet a lot of people through the military, veterans organizations, fishing, family, and just everyday life.

Every one of those relationships has added something. Sometimes it was knowledge. Sometimes it was encouragement. Sometimes it was a different perspective. And sometimes it was simply a reminder that I wasn't walking through something alone.

That is why I have started looking at relationships differently. Instead of asking, "What can this person do for me?" I think we should be asking:

"What can we learn from each other?"

That is a completely different mindset.

We don't have to be the smartest person in the boat

Anyone who spends enough time fishing knows there is always somebody who knows something you don't. They may know a different technique. They may understand a particular lake better. They may know how weather affects fish. They may have a completely different approach to solving a problem.

And if we are willing to listen, we can learn.

Life works the same way. We don't have to walk into every room believing we have all the answers. In fact, some of the best growth happens when we recognize that we don't.

There is tremendous value in surrounding ourselves with people who have different experiences, different skills, and different perspectives. That doesn't mean we have to agree with everyone. It means we are willing to listen.

Collect people, not positions

One of the dangers of leadership is becoming too focused on titles.

Commander. Chairman. Director. President. Manager.

Those titles may tell us what someone's responsibility is, but they don't tell us who that person really is. The best relationships I've developed haven't necessarily come from people with the biggest titles.

They have come from people who showed up. People who kept their word. People who helped when nobody was watching. People who cared. Those are the people worth collecting.

Because eventually, titles disappear. Positions change. Organizations change. Jobs change. But relationships can last a lifetime.

Be someone worth collecting

There is another side to this lesson. If we are going to talk about collecting good people, we also have to ask ourselves a difficult question:

Are we someone others want to collect?

Are we dependable? Are we encouraging? Do we celebrate other people's successes? Do we listen? Do we make people feel valued? Can people trust us?

Are we the person who walks into a room and makes things better, or the person who makes things harder?

Those questions can be uncomfortable. But they are important. Because relationships aren't simply about finding good people. They are about becoming a good person to have in someone else's life.

Don't overlook the quiet people

Some of the most valuable people in our lives may never ask for recognition.

They may not be the loudest person in the room. They may never stand at a podium. They may never have a title.

But they show up.

They work. They listen. They help. They encourage. They quietly make a difference.

We need those people. And sometimes we need to be those people.

Not every contribution needs an audience. Not every act of service needs a photograph. Not every good deed needs recognition.

Sometimes the greatest impact we have on another person happens when nobody else knows we were there.

Relationships require maintenance

There is another lesson fishing has taught me. You can't expect equipment to work perfectly if you never maintain it.

Relationships are similar. They require attention.

A phone call. A cup of coffee. A text message. A fishing trip. A simple "How are you doing?"

We shouldn't wait until somebody needs something from us to reach out. If every conversation begins with a request, eventually people will stop answering.

Relationships are built long before we need them.

That is why we should check on people simply because they matter. Not because we need something. Not because we want something. Just because they are part of our lives.

Who are you collecting?

So here is the Coffee Cup Challenge for this episode. Think about the people in your life.

Who makes you better? Who challenges you? Who encourages you? Who tells you the truth? Who can make you laugh when you need it most? Who would answer the phone at two o'clock in the morning?

And then ask another question:

Who needs you?

There may be somebody in your life who needs a phone call today. Somebody who needs encouragement. Somebody who needs a friend. Somebody who simply needs to know they haven't been forgotten.

Make the call. Send the message. Invite them for coffee. Go fishing. Sit on the porch. Do something.

Because at the end of our lives, I don't think most of us will wish we had collected more things.

I think we'll remember the people. The conversations. The laughs. The hard times we made it through together. The lessons we learned from one another. And the people who helped us become who we were meant to be.

So don't just collect trophies. Don't just collect titles. Don't just collect accomplishments.

Collect people.

Collect the kind of people who make the journey better. And while you're doing it, make sure you're becoming the kind of person somebody else is grateful to have collected along the way.

Until next time, keep the coffee hot, keep your line tight, and keep collecting good people.

One Person. One Conversation. One Cup.

COFFEE CUP CLUB FAMILY

Episode 9 Workbook

COLLECTING PEOPLE

A practical guide to building better relationships — and becoming someone others value.

This workbook belongs to: _____

Date started: _____

Start With a Cup of Coffee

Before you begin, take a few minutes to slow down.

Put the phone away. Grab your coffee. Take a breath.

Then think about the people who have influenced your life.

You don't have to complete this workbook all at once.

The goal isn't to write perfect answers.

The goal is to be honest.

1. The People Who Made a Difference

Think about the people who have influenced your life.

Someone who taught me an important lesson:

Someone who encouraged me when I needed it:

Someone who challenged me to become better:

Someone who stood beside me during a difficult time:

Someone I wish I had stayed in better contact with:

What did these people teach me?

2. Your Inner Circle

Think about the people you spend the most time with. List three to five people who currently have a meaningful influence on your life.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Do these relationships make me better?

☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes ☐ Not always

What do I appreciate about these people?

What do I contribute to their lives?

3. Becoming Someone Worth Collecting

Relationships work both ways. Take an honest look at yourself and rate each quality from 1 to 5.

1 = I need significant improvement

5 = This is one of my strengths

Quality	Rating
I listen well	___ / 5
I keep my word	___ / 5
I encourage others	___ / 5
I celebrate other people's success	___ / 5
I am dependable	___ / 5
I make time for people	___ / 5
I admit when I'm wrong	___ / 5
I tell people the truth respectfully	___ / 5
I check on people without needing something	___ / 5
I make people feel valued	___ / 5

What is my strongest relationship quality?

What is one area I need to improve?

4. The Phone Call

Think of someone you haven't talked to recently — someone who might appreciate hearing from you.

Their name:

Why have I lost touch?

What would I like them to know?

When will I contact them?

Date: _____

Time: _____

Don't just write it down.

Make the call.

5. The Quiet People

Think about someone who contributes without receiving much recognition. Maybe it's a coworker, a volunteer, a family member, a friend, a veteran, or a neighbor — someone who simply keeps showing up.

Who is that person?

What do they do that others may overlook?

When was the last time I thanked them?

How can I recognize them this week?

6. Relationship Maintenance

Just like a boat, a vehicle, or a fishing reel, relationships require maintenance. Check three things you can do this week.

- ☐ Call someone
- ☐ Send a handwritten note
- ☐ Invite someone for coffee
- ☐ Have lunch with someone
- ☐ Go fishing or share a hobby together
- ☐ Check on someone who may be struggling
- ☐ Thank someone
- ☐ Introduce two people who could benefit from knowing each other
- ☐ Apologize for something that needs to be addressed
- ☐ Simply ask someone, "How are you really doing?"

My three actions:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

7. The People I Want to Collect

What qualities do you want in the people you surround yourself with? Choose your top five.

- ☐ Honest
- ☐ Dependable
- ☐ Positive
- ☐ Humble
- ☐ Encouraging
- ☐ Loyal
- ☐ Hardworking
- ☐ Compassionate
- ☐ Trustworthy
- ☐ Funny
- ☐ Wise
- ☐ Courageous
- ☐ Faithful
- ☐ Curious
- ☐ Servant-minded

My five:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

8. The Coffee Cup Challenge

This week's challenge is simple:

Collect one person.

Not literally. Reach out to someone you would like to know better — someone who could teach you something, someone you could encourage, someone who shares an interest, someone who needs a friend, or someone you've been meaning to call.

Who will you reach out to?

What will you do?

When will you do it?

What happened?

9. Final Reflection

Finish these sentences.

The people who have influenced me most are...

One person I need to appreciate more is...

One relationship I need to invest more time in is...

One quality I want to become known for is...

One thing I can do today to make someone's life better is...

Take This With You

We spend a lot of our lives collecting things.

Money. Awards. Trophies. Titles. Equipment. Possessions.

But eventually, those things become memories.

The people are what remain.

So this week, don't worry about collecting another accomplishment.

Collect a conversation. Collect a friendship.

Collect a lesson. Collect a memory.

And most importantly:

Be the kind of person someone else is grateful to have in their life.

Coffee Cup Family Reminder

Collect people. Invest in people.

Encourage people. Be there for people.

Because life is better when we don't have to travel the road alone.

One Person. One Conversation. One Cup.