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40 Days of Community

A Set of Thoughts, Ideas, Questions and Ponderings
Submitted for your Digestion
October 19, 2005 Day 24

Introduction: We are all in *"this"* 2gether. No one is getting out alive. As we explore what it means to be in community through Rick Warren's [better together](#) it is essential that we tailor make this study to fit our communities. This devotional is meant to be a conversation starter. It is personal musings on the daily readings' subject. If another author is not noted then the opinions expressed are those of Jodi Haier and only reflect her understandings and her journey. If you do not wish to receive a devotional a day for the next 40 days, please respond to this email with a thoughtful "no, thank you" " Instead of just forwarding this *please* send people's email to me. I am not trying to be a control freak but I want to know where God's going with this. People viewing this on the webpage can contact the webmaster with any comments. THANKS! Jodi

Fellowship 2gether: "cultivating a life in common"

(1Cor 1:10) Today's reading is about teaching. I may know something about that. I have taught for over 17 years and been married to a teacher for just about as long. Before that I was involved in the education process as student and teacher. I think that we need to remember that we are always teaching, even when we're not trying. We teach our children to lie when we make up excuses for why we aren't attending a function. When we change our children's ages so that they still fit in the 12 and under category, we teach. How we choose to argue, teaches. How we listen and discuss shows how much we value and respect a person. We have children in the same house, during small group. They are very occupied and provide us privacy. They also see the value each person places on the group. They hear us laugh and question. They see the respect that each person's opinion receives. We spend time reading the assigned scriptures and develop meaning based on our understandings. Reverend Warren would have us spend more time in the Word and use the Word in our teaching. As we learn about patience and truthfulness and forgiveness, I think we have to look at the lessons our lives leave. It is important to know the Word of God, it is more important to understand how it is relevant to our lives. We are all teachers, let us be aware of the lessons our classes are learning.

Grow 2gether: "accepting, affirming, and advising"

(Rom 15:7, 1Thess 5:11, Col 3:16) Did you realize that everyone learns differently? I learn by talking through things. (Isn't that a shock, Jodi learns by talking.) Often I state things as fact when actually I am testing the soundness of my thought process by launching it on an unsuspecting public. My dear friend and former colleague, David, learned through arguing. He was the ultimate Devil's advocate. He would take the other side of any argument because that is how he judged the merit of both propositions. Some of us learn through experience. If you don't live it, you can't understand the truth behind something. Other learners only see the big picture; they see the forest as ecosystem. Others see the trees, individual entities with needs, unique characteristics and special functions. While others learn through laws, lists and models. They see the world in order rather than chaos. I could go on for days about how people learn.

What we need to take from all this is that each of us is experiencing the world differently. Our small group is a laboratory where each person can learn about God's love in a variety of ways. Take a look at the people in your group. What is their style? If they are a do-er and you have yet to do anything, perhaps they are feeling out of the loop. If they are an idealistic dreamer or visionary and they haven't been heard, they may shut down. It is especially now when we are half way through that we may begin to hold people to our standards rather than God's standards. My friend, Bill Miller, has a favorite saying: "Familiarity breeds contempt." As we become more familiar with each other, we need to realize that the very thing that annoys us about someone may be their personal struggle to learn. A good teacher knows the difference between what a student needs and what they want.

Serve 2gether: “working 2gether with 1 heart & 1 purpose”

(Phil 2:2) What will your group teach the people you serve? Will we show institution or compassion? What relationships are we going to unleash on a wary public? Our group discussed our project and we realize that it is definitely beyond our scope. Each of us is going to need a team of people. We’ve encouraged each other to follow our passions. Each of us will end up being a leader. We share the vision of the finished product. We share a vision of how people are to be treated. We share our long-range goals beyond the project. Yet, each of us will have a singular experience. We will teach and learn, correct and celebrate. When we share back with our group we will realize that the whole was more than just the sum of the parts. It will be the sum of our hearts.

Worship 2gether: “come 2gether in my name”

(Matt 18:20)

*Bind us together, Lord,
bind us together with cords
that cannot be broken.
Bind us together, Lord,
bind us together,
bind us together with love.
Words by Bob Gillman*

Are we bound to be together? (destined) Are we bound so we will be together? (connected) Rick Warren tells us several times that God orchestrated our lives so that we would be surrounded by specific people at a specific time. He obviously believes that we were bound to be together regardless of our free will. I disagree. One of my mentors, Pastor Art Miner, says “God does not call the resourced, he resources those He calls.” I think that God will use those people that choose to give their lives over to His will. God will use Esther, Bill, Kevin, Val, Betsy, Ron and I to meet the present needs of the Kingdom. I think that love has bound me to these people with silken cords. I will be together with them because they are part of my journey and visa-versa. How many times did God have to place opportunities to love in front of me before I had the sense to notice? Once we are bound to God through the love of His son, we are bound to each other by the same love. God will lead if we allow ourselves to follow. God’s love will bind us together, if we accept the connection. God provides, we choose.

Reach Out 2gether: “get others to believe”

(Phil 1:27) Why do you listen to the teacher? What separates the panel expert from the audience? Are you a teacher, an educator or a professor? I teach by sharing portions of my life. Sometimes I share too much. Sometimes I share too often. This can leave me very vulnerable. I think it is this personal sharing that enhances my passion for the subject. I think it drives my curiosity. I think it is divulging the real me that invites others in. If I had nothing worth sharing than all this would be moot. (not mute, although that may help, if you really have nothing to say) Besides my experiences, I have values, knowledge, some small amount of wisdom, insight and a questioning spirit. My relationship with a VERY BIG God is also something I have to share. While this should be the easiest thing, I often make it the most difficult.

The Dean of Licensing School, Rev. Brian Homan, shared a story with us about one of his first churches. He had prepared each sermon meticulously, scripting it out carefully, researching it diligently. He had pages of notes to rely on. He did this every week. Finally, the matriarch of the church cornered him one Sunday before the service and asked what these papers were for. Brian was nervous. He knew that how she went the rest of the church would go. So, he explained the process he went through to prepare each sermon; how each word was pain-stakingly chosen. The woman put her hand on his and said, “Pastor, just tell us about the Jesus you know.” With that he put down his preparations and shared a living Christ with the congregation. When we share the Jesus we know, complete with our questions and doubts, hope and joy, we share the best part of ourselves.