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From: Jodi Haier [jodester32@twcny.rr.com]
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To: jodester32@twcny.rr.com
Subject: today's devotion (Sandy made me late)

40 Days of Community

A Set of Thoughts, Ideas, Questions and Ponderings
Submitted for your Digestion
October 5, 2005 Day

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) If someone asked you, “What is your life?” what would your response be? We are asked to cultivate a life in common and most of us do not know what our life is. Rick Warren would say, based on 40 Days of Purpose, that we have 5 Purposes. (Worship, Discipleship, Fellowship, Mission/Ministry, and Evangelism) My life does include each of these. Each is a focus. They are not the sum total of my life.

Laughter is included in each of these, yet it also stands alone. It is obvious that God has a sense of ironic, sarcastic, silly humor. Laughter is surrender. One loses control if only for a moment in laughter. Laughter is contagious. Even fake laughter can cause an authentic response. There is the adage that no one will write on their tombstone, “He never missed a day of work.” It is sad that many tombstones could say, “She laughed too little.”

Joy is a gift. It is a state of being overwhelmed with the limitless possibilities of happiness. Joy comes in all sizes. It is relentless in its availability. Yet many people cannot find it or do not know how to surrender to it. I would love my obituary to list all my moments of joy. I would love for my great-great grandchildren to reminisce about my capacity for joy and its legacy.

Growth is a natural occurrence. Each of our purposes demands growth. Growth in and of itself is a sign of life. Without this one attribute we might as well be a rock. Hard, impenetrable, inflexible ore is used for our foundations, but it never grows of its own volition. A plant, through phototropism (my vocabulary word of the day), will overcome any obstacle to bask in the light. It understands, as much as plants can, its basic need for light. Humans however often run from experiences that may produce the very thing that helps define our life, change.

As you cultivate a life in common, please remember to also grow in joy and laughter.

Grow 2gether: “accepting, affirming, and advising”

(Rom 15:7, 1Thess 5:11, Col 3:16) Jesus meets you where you are. Some people won’t go to church because they aren’t good enough yet. Well if that was the criteria, every church would be empty. When Pastor Marilyn asked us to simply tell our story, I was flummoxed. Where would I begin? Can you remember a time when Jesus met you right where you were? Have you ever received peace, understanding, comfort and/or acceptance out of the blue? Have you received support from an unlikely source? Has inspiration arrived in the nick of time? If you can even partially answer yes to any of these questions, then Jesus has met you where you are.

Remember, God didn’t send his Son to witness the perfection of mankind. He sent his son as man in

perfection. Jesus sacrificed everything his life could have been to show us how to live. While we were still sinners, Jesus chose to sacrifice all so that we might live.

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

(Phil 2:2) Jesus knows your name. My family and I have prepared and served a meal at Hope House. We got a lot out of it. The job was completed. People were fed. But I missed the point. Jesus knows your name. I left Hope House not knowing anyone’s name. I got out of there with no God spilled on me at all. I didn’t eat with people in fellowship. I didn’t offer a personal prayer. I didn’t comfort a child. I had done a good thing, but I left the better thing for someone else. As you work 2gether, remember what is good, what is better and what is blessed.

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

(Matt 18:20) Jesus won’t reject you. Many people fear the reaction of others. One couple I knew wouldn’t stay for coffee hour because they felt they were overdressed. Some people won’t come because they don’t have silent children. (Who does?) Another person feels uncomfortable because they love to raise their hands in praise. I feel the peer pressure when I am too weak to stand during songs. Peer pressure is rarely about overt criticism; it is usually about unspoken expectations that may or may not even exist. I have found a way to make people more comfortable. I confront and affirm the differences. I tell the person who lifts their hands that I feel their reverence and it enhances my worship. I support the parent who is embarrassed by their child’s over-exuberance. I tell them my stories and we laugh. I wear what I want to church and explain that when Jesus looks at me, he sees my love not my couture or lack thereof. As for my own weakness, I recognize my self-consciousness as being self-centered. I am not the center of attention nor should I be. Besides my weakness allows others to serve and be strong. Jesus won’t reject us.

Reach Out 2gether: “get others to believe”

(Phil 1:27) Do you know someone who doesn’t want to hear about that God-stuff because they are fine just the way they are? My response is a Billy Joel classic, “Just The Way You Are.” “Don’t go changing to try and please me (God) you never let me down before.” I think that people, while afraid of change, are really concerned with condemnation. Even though Rick Warren says “He (Jesus) is far more interested in changing us than he is in condemning us,” I think Rick’s left something out. John 3:17 states “For God did **not** send his Son into the **world** to **condemn** the **world**, but to **save** the **world** through him.” Even though we will be changed in the process, God created our essential being; therefore we will still remain after the transformation. We will be the updated, new and improved version of ourselves. Anyone who has lost considerable weight or increased their fitness rarely longs for the day when a flight of stairs was a daunting task. You are fine just as you are. When you turn towards God (repent) you are shown in the best light, with your best foot forward and not in your mouth.

Biloxi Bound Prayers**

Who among you are ready to go and be the hands and feet of Jesus? We need people who are willing to answer the cries of help of our brothers and sisters in Biloxi. You need nothing but your desire and a little training. Please start praying about this NOW! The NCNY conference will send people in January/February. Those teams are forming. We need teams to perform triage so these communities can survive until January/February. I would love to send a small group from 40 Days of Community. Pray. Talk about it with family and friends. Talk to Pastor Marilyn. E-mail me. There is a way that everyone can be involved.

Heavenly Father, Comforter, and Healer: Use me. Use my resources. Use my network of contacts and connections. Use my family and friends. If not in Biloxi, then show me where. If not in prayer then show me how. You created me for times such as this. I ask for guidance and support. Use me to fulfill your will. I am fearful of this prayer because it demands my surrender. I know that Jesus will meet me where I am. Jesus will call me by my name and accept me and my gifts, such as they are. Just as I have not been rejected, let me not reject you and yours. I pray that you use me as I follow the example of your son. AMEN!

