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40 Days of Community

A Set of Thoughts, Ideas, Questions and Ponderings
Submitted for your Digestion
October 6, 2005 Day 12

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) I made corn muffins and slathered them with butter and drenched them in dark molasses. Val made me goulabkis. (go-wum-keys) Their sauce is rich and the cabbage firm. Marlene and her mom, Bocci, showed me how to make pierogies, plump and decadent. Pat made me soup and bread, satisfying through my soul. We often joke that Methodists love to eat. It is said that we can’t have a meeting without food. This is not a bad thing. When we share food, we are sharing our heritage: those memories of comfort and abundance, hardship and survival.

The corn muffins were good but they connected me to memories of my mom and her loving care. They connected me to Jessica and her southern roots. Val’s offering connected me to her legacy of care. She continually shows her love through action. The pierogies invited me into Marlene’s mother-daughter bond and connected me with a shared history. Pat’s soup and bread fed a community. It brought people together, alleviated burdens, created fellowship and strengthened friendships. Part of fellowship is sharing that which is essential. Food provides energy for action, and it is a tangible gift of love and legacy, history and survival, comfort and care. As we cultivate this life in common, let us not forget to feed each other with the bread of life, in whatever form it takes.

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

(Rom 15:7, 1Thess 5:11, Col 3:16) One of today’s scriptures is from Colossians 4:6. It reads “Always talk pleasantly and with a flavor of wit, but be sensitive to the kind of answer each one requires.” There is a story that tells of a three year old walking into the church nursery. Upon seeing all the babies, he turns to his mom and asks, “Where do babies come from?” The mom stammers and begins to talk of mommies and daddies and special parts. She doesn’t know if her baby is ready for wombs and penises. (penii??) After a few moments of awkward silence, the boy pats his mom’s hand and says, “No, mommy, these babies, where did they come from?” The boy wanted to now why there were new babies in the nursery, not the physiology of reproduction.

How often do we really take the time to be sensitive to the kind of answer each requires? Often husband and wives get into arguments because they are wired differently. A wife presents a problem to her husband (father, brother, uncle, male co-worker) and immediately the man works out a strategic attack plan. Actually this would be wonderful if that is what the woman wanted. Often women (mothers, wives, sisters, daughters, aunts, female co-workers) do not want the solution they want to be heard. Women generally process through language. It is by talking that they form understanding, resolution and their own strategic attack plan. Men (again generalizations may be inaccurate) are

generally action oriented. (not orientated) Why talk about a problem when you can act on it in the same or less time? How can we solve this dilemma? Tell people what we need. Imagine how relieved my husband will be in knowing that he doesn't have to make this problem that has reduced me to a blubbering mass, better. How special will a wife feel if a husband promises to share the details of his adventures or includes her in the process?

When we pray, God is sensitive to the kind of answer we require. That is why, we "can't always get what we want, But if we try sometimes, we just might find, we get what we need." (Rolling Stones, Go MICK!) We need to have the same sensitivity in our fellowship as well.

Serve 2gether: "working 2gether with 1 heart & 1 purpose"

(Phil 2:2) Does your service build in friendships or build on them? Does your service depend on the courtesy, familiarity and authenticity of already cultivated friendships? Is your service courteous, respectful and uplifting to those you are serving? Do you frequent the place you serve so people can meet the real you? Are you being authentic or are you the "Christian Servant" you? When your group serves it needs to be taking a risk large enough that we must depend on our fellowship to sustain us. However, we must not be seen as a closed and insular group or clique. Instead of looking at your project as service, look at it as opportunity. Allow God to put a human face and spirit on His love. Remember back when we were babies in Sunday School, or boy and girl scouts? "Make new friends but keep the old. One is silver and the other gold."

Worship 2gether: "come 2gether in my name"

(Matt 18:20) One of my favorite songs has this phrase in it. "Let the spirit of the Lord rise above us." (Randy and Sue can you help me with the credits here? Title and artist?) When I sign this, I sign: "Let the spirit of the Lord rise among us." The action for above is putting one hand over the other. The action for among is slaloming one finger in and out through the fingers of the other hand. One action has us separated from the spirit. The other has the spirit moving amongst us.

Two of my favorite worshippers are Bailey and Bryce. Bryce drums along and sings and shouts. Bailey dances and sings and shouts. The joy of the Lord is in abundance whenever these two are in worship. Bailey rushes at Michele in the middle of a tambourine dance and hugs her for all she's worth. I imagine that is what God wants to do in response to her worship. Bryce tosses up a balloon and follows it with his laughter. I imagine that is the glory of the Lord rising among us. What bedlam we would create if all of us jumped and sang and danced and laughed in response to God's work. Oh to have the freedom of a child, to worship with our whole being. Oh how quickly we grow old. (Thanks Sally, for reminding me what is important.)

Reach Out 2gether: "get others to believe"

(Phil 1:27) Love the people of the world, but not the values of the world. Christians are often labeled "wussy-babies" because we are marked by our love. Have you ever been corrected by and in God's love? I have. (And too many times to count) I have wrongly condemned and judged (usually in this reverse order) many people only to have God show me their loving spirit and dedicated journey. God and His children hold me accountable for the promises I have made. In baptism and confirmation, the congregation responds with the promises listed below.

We give thanks for all that God has already given you
And we welcome you in Christian love,
As members together with you
In the body of Christ
And in this congregation
Of The United Methodist Church,
We renew our covenant
Faithfully to participate
in the ministries of the Church
by our prayers, our presence,
our gifts, and our service,
that in everything God may be glorified
through Jesus Christ.

If we are held accountable to these promises and Christ grows in our life, we will not be "wussy-babies" but Warriors of Love. I can't wait to be fitted with my armor of God. (From Ephesians 6:10-18 belt of truth, breast plate of right living, shield of faith, helmet of salvation and sword of the spirit, (which is the Word of God)). I bet I'll be stylin'. Let

me humbly meet the challenges ahead.

Biloxi News*

HeyYa'll!

Roberta, Lina & I are about to return up North tomorrow (today10/6). I have to tell you I don't want to leave. Yes I miss my family, my friends and my church, but I am going to miss all these God people and I feel like we are leaving them when we could do so much more.

Today Roberta is back again "mucking houses. This is her third day this week. She had to get them to pray yesterday to help this new team get a little God centered. You all would be so proud. She is amazing and has learned to tell a good story when she returns each day to our host home. We have learned how to laugh about horrible things and frustrations, cause that's all you can do to stay sane.

Lina & I worked all week meeting with different school districts. We have lots of good information about connecting schools, classrooms, teachers and children. The St. Martin Elementary school loved the fans made by the Tree House and the letters and drawing made by the third grade class at Westmoreland Road. We are finding that although they still have some class room needs, the largest need is the teachers and children that lost everything. We have encouraged all districts to keep up their web site and make it real accessible for us to sign up for individual needs.

Last week we worked on My Sister, Mary, and Brother-in-law, Otto's land to clear debris and glass--it looks so much better. My sister, Brenda, has persisted and is supposed to get a FEMA trailer within the next two days. We think she has found a place to put it. Someone from her church, her spiritual mentor actually, has offered her back yard. She can't put it on her land because it is much to dangerous there. It would be like putting your home in the middle of a dump. It may take six to eight months for them to clear all the debris around that neighborhood. The same goes for sister and brother-in-law and my niece.

I can't even the stress on everyone in this area. It seems like every day they have a new life decision to make. The traveling is rough because of traffic-a couple of their bridges are out and it adds twenty to an hour on anywhere you have to go. And you can't contact FEMA by phone or email-you have to go to one of the makeshift offices they have set up. Frustration with insurance is huge as well. Even if you have flood, wind and loss of use clause, the paper work is overwhelming and sometimes they will offer crazy things. You hear a story daily- A Kindergarten teacher yester day told me that her 70 year old mother was waiting for her insurance agent. The city had bulldozed her house and now the insurance people were giving her a hard time saying that she had to prove that there was flood damage. Now if you knew this street-all the houses were under water and what is there to prove. The city came in an condemned it.

Well I could go on and on --but I'll close for now and know that we have extended your love here and they truly feel it. Keep praying for more to come here. There is so much to do. You will be blessed 100 times what you give. Lots of Love and Thank you so much for letting me come! Marguerite Edwards

10/11/2005