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40 Days of Community

A Set of Thoughts, Ideas, Questions and Ponderings
Submitted for your Digestion
October 10, 2005 Day 16

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) What are you committed to? If you were asked, how would you respond? If you wrote down what you did over the course of the week, what would you discover? If your family and friends reported, would the story change? What if the person who knows the inner most depths of your motivations reported? Are we committed to loving God with all our hearts, minds, souls and strengths and loving our neighbor as ourselves? Do our actions reflect such commitment? We are cultivating a life in common. This activity creates even more commitments. These commitments are to help us love God and neighbor. Is that what we are really doing? When you meet with your group this week, ask yourself how this group can help you and your community love God and neighbor. It’s a commitment that’s worth keeping.

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

(Rom 15:7, 1Thess 5:11, Col 3:16) H.N. Malony in his clinical assessment of religious functioning defines Christian religious maturity. This is one man’s idea of how we are to be grown-up Christians.

Mature Christians are those that have identity, integrity, and inspiration.

They have “identity” in that their self-understanding is that they are child-ren of God-created by God and destined to live according to a divine plan.

They have “integrity” in that their daily life is lived in the awareness that they have been redeemed by God’s grace from the guilt of sin and that they can freely respond to God’s will in the present. They have “inspiration” in that they live with the sense that God is available to sustain, comfort, encourage, and direct their lives on a daily basis. These dimensions of mat-urity relate to belief in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

They pertain to the Christian doctrines of creation, redemption, and sanctification.

They provide the foundation for practical daily living. (Malony, Review of Religious Research, 1985, 28)

Living with identity, integrity and inspiration sounds like a balanced way to live. Do you know of anyone who regularly has attained this balance? Congratulate them on a job well done. Tell that person, “I admire your sense of self. You really seem to know who you are.” Or casually tell someone eye – to – eye, “I can always count on you

being you, and you being about God, love, trust, forgiveness, etc.” Or perhaps when you give that person a high five you can ask, “How did you hear that inspiration? I need more of that.” In order for us to grow in maturity we often need to recognize it in others.

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

(Phil 2:2) When people work shoulder-to-shoulder they fall into a rhythm. Sometimes it is like a piston, when one is up the other is down, one pushes, the other pulls. Sometimes they are performing complementary parallel tasks. One person loads, while the other transports. The songs of the chain gang were designed to accent this rhythm. Even many of our gospel songs’ obvious beat were used to move along slaves in the field. Sometimes this rhythm needs to be reinforced and respected. At other times the rhythm needs to be disrupted. Do you have people in your group that are gifted in either of these areas? Part of our message to our community is the nature of our groups. If we are well organized and efficient we will be respected. If we remember to laugh and have fun, we will be human. Identify your rhythm, set it to a melody, and sing the song. It may be the best we have to offer.

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

(Matt 18:20) Worship fills the space in between us. There is a song I love, with a chorus that asks, “How far is heaven?” I want to answer that question with, “at the end of us.” Worship allows us to join 2gether in common practices to minimize the space between us and deity. We share beliefs that are to shape our behavior. We are called to fill the empty spaces with others, longing for heaven. Worshiping is putting things into perspective where the center is not us. It is re-placing God in the center of our lives, so we can orbit according to His plan. We often take the place of the sun(son) when it doesn’t belong to us. Worship spans the gap between what we thought we could do and what God designed us to do.

I felt uncomfortable and misplaced this Sunday, because the two pews behind me were empty. I didn’t feel the closeness of family. I didn’t have voices raised in song in my ears. I didn’t have hands touching my back to join in prayer. I was sad because two or three families could have filled that spot. Were they missing because I had forgotten them along the way? Worship fills the space in between us, physically and spiritually. Let’s get on with the worshiping. We were designed for this, after all.

***Reach Out 2gether:* “get others to believe”**

(Phil 1:27) Have you ever made a human knot? Get 6-12 people together. Stand in a circle. Have everyone place their right hand into the circle. Everyone grabs a hand. Then everyone can put in their other hand. Everyone grabs a different person’s hand. You have created a knot. Now the fun begins. You are to untangle the knot without anyone dropping hands. It is possible.

When our church reaches out to others, are we a knot or a unified circle? Often I wonder if people can’t accept my hand because I’m involved in a knot. They don’t see how they would fit in this group. Do they wonder if I expect them to un-tie us, organize and strengthen us? Am I asking people to join in the chaos? Do they see our perfect order and think that we don’t need them. Is our circle empty and devoid of compassion? Is it the knot people react to or the finished product? Maybe it is neither, rather their invitation needs to be to the process.

Sometimes it takes someone from outside the knot to see our solution. Getting people to believe in the healing power of Christ is not about coming to people as perfect cookie-cutter Christians. We are asked to admit our “knotted-ness” and embrace the process. Can we invite people to a party in full swing? You bet! They probably will even bring the chips.