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From: Jodi Haier [jodester32@twcny.rr.com]
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To: jodester32@twcny.rr.com
Subject: rainy days and Mondays always get me down-Today's devotion

40 Days of Community

A Set of Thoughts, Ideas, Questions and Ponderings
Submitted for your Digestion
October 12, 2005 Day 18

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) Why do we join hands to pray? Why do we lay hands on people for healing? Why does touching a shoulder provide support and comfort in one instance and restraint in another? What role does touch have in our fellowship? What about personal space and privacy?

Each human contact transmits thousands of messages between the parties involved. Part of Emmanuel, God with us, is that tactile contact. It is very difficult to lie through touch, because so much becomes transparent. That is part of the reason why sometimes people are very uncomfortable if you are just holding hands. It is the same reason that it is the only thing to say when there is nothing left to say. There is a transfer of energy, heat, pressure, presence and compassion through touch. There is no hiding place. Make touch a part of your small group meeting. A handshake, a hug, a prayer circle or a hand huddle are all ways of supporting and revealing each other through touch. There was an old telephone ad, “Reach out and touch someone.” Let’s do that. I believe for every hand that is brave enough to reach out, there are several who could respond.

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

(Rom 15:7, 1Thess 5:11, Col 3:16) Is there a limit to what you can accept? I love Marguerite. For all her faults she is my dear sister-friend. Have you ever noticed her feet? I’ve seen lots of feet but wow! Ugly only begins to describe them. Now Marguerite is very comfortable about her feet. I’ve seen them scare young children. They even scare me a little. Yet those feet were designed specifically for a purpose. Jesus would tenderly wrap those feet in fluffy white towels after washing them with His tears. Some people say Marguerite was given those feet to keep her humble. Others say they are a product of her life experience. I see her feet as evidence of the depth of God’s love. If God can love feet like that maybe he can love the scars on my abdomen. A God that would wash feet like that, lovingly, may be able to see beyond commercial beauty or simple appearance to truth. If feet like that could be useful and even beautiful, what else could God’s love use? In your small group, do you have “ugly feet?” Is there something about each person that may be difficult for them or others to accept? How is God bringing good to and through this situation? I know that I pray thankfully that Marguerite never runs out of socks and shoes. However, I appreciate her strikingly unique feet as evidence of a God that is bigger than cosmetics. What can you accept and appreciate about your fellow group members?

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

(Phil 2:2) I was speaking to Dr. Richard Raney, a local psychologist and fellow traveler. We were discussing 40 Days of Purpose, and the subsequent 40 Days of Community. We also speculated on the next series. Dr. Raney joked that perhaps the next series should be 40 Days of Garbage. I immediately told him that, I was stealing that idea for today's devotion.

When Ron and I moved from our first home to our present location, we literally threw out a ton, yes a ton, 2000 pounds, of garbage. There is really no telling how many tons of garbage we brought with us. We moved into a larger home and I can only surmise that we have even more stored garbage. If we could develop 40 Days of Garbage into a viable campaign, I think that it would benefit the entire world. We could learn how God intended for us to live garbage free, sleek and efficient. We would learn values that would focus our hunger for materials. We would practice good stewardship through a reduce, reuse, recycle program of environmental friendliness. We would help each other promote clutter free living through accountability groups. We would celebrate a simple green lifestyle.

Maybe we already have this campaign. The refuse we are focusing on is soul garbage. It contains the burdens and hurdles that have been placed by us and others between us and God. Our soul garbage may contain the very material things I was joking about. It may contain material that is much more hazardous waste. Perhaps part of our church wide service can be about garbage removal. Can we help each other reduce, reuse, and recycle that which no longer has a purpose? Imagine how sleek, efficient and light we could be if we got rid of the garbage in a way that respected our planet and our Lord. 40 Days of Garbage, great idea, let's get the copyright.

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

(Matt 18:20) Is our sanctuary, a sanctuary? Is that room a safe place? Is it safe enough for me to have a bad hair day? Could it contain my anger and disappointment? Would my brokenness be an embarrassment? Is it safe for a sinner like me to enter close to the holy of holies? Does our sanctuary have a safety net? What or who will catch me if I fall? What if I become lost? Is there a beacon in the window to lead me home?

Who is being kept safe in a sanctuary? I hope it is not me. As much as I wish to be uninterrupted in my worship of God, I hope that I can be the essential Jodi in my place of worship. I hope that I can question and cry, laugh and lift up, argue and create. I hope people hold me accountable for helping others do the same. I hope that a sanctuary is a place where it is safe to encounter God in all forms. I hope it is not my wants and needs that are being kept safe. Maybe we should put up signs that say, “God at Work! Be Aware!” So that we understand that a sanctuary that is safe for God may be a very dangerous place for people seeking a quiet, undisturbed life. Is our sanctuary safe? I'm not sure anymore. I'm not sure I even want it to be, for me.

Reach Out 2gether: “get others to believe”

(Phil 1:27) I spoke with Jim Dimpleby today. (Dimpleby Funeral Services) I asked him what he thought was the greatest need in our community. His answer was basically that we need more community in our community. We need to engage with our neighbors and share our lives. Isn't that what this campaign is all about? How are we connecting people to each other and to God? It is not enough to cook good food and let the smell permeate the neighborhood. If we don't sit down with people at the table (once they get there) then we have lost the opportunity to connect. As we reach out 2gether, we need to do more than engage the community we need to join it. It is the only way to really influence anything. We don't have to be of this world, but we are meant to be in it. Have you asked anyone what they think the community's greatest need is? Share with me, we can make a difference. (Yes, I'm talking about Iowa, Albany, Biloxi, Costa Rica, UAE and Whitesboro)