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Subject: Day 4

40 Days of Community

A Set of Thoughts, Ideas, Questions and Ponderings
Submitted for your Digestion
September 28, 2005 Day 4

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 is normal? Is it the average? Is it what happens to most people? Well, aren’t most people illiterate or functionally so? Aren’t they poor, undereducated folks? Aren’t they the oppressed? Aren’t they the hungry souls yearning to be free? Aren’t they the people without a home or without a sanctuary within their life? Aren’t 40,000 kids going to die of starvation today? Why aren’t we normal? What kind of life in common are we cultivating? Check the pronouns. They are normal, so what are we?

When we seek to cultivate a life in common, I think we need to check who we are willing to be in common with. Our fellowship is only a club if we base it on anything other than love. Loving believers and those who have yet to believe is our call. You’ve met the believers and some of us (I’m talking me here) are hard to love. How much harder will it be to reach out in love to those who do not yet believe? Just because we are cultivating a life in common doesn’t mean it will be our standard that is what we share. We really are cultivating a life uncommon when we apply they Jesus standard and love unconditionally.

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

(Rom 15:7, 1Thess 5:11, Col 3:16) (p. 24) Who are you going to live for? Often I live for myself. It is easy and I know how to do it thoughtlessly and effortlessly. Then I live for my family. By family, I mean that network of people that I share the inner workings of my life with. Then I have friends and acquaintances that I care about. Often community members that are nameless, but a part of my routine, will be granted my attention. I do work under the premise, “There are no strangers, only friends I haven’t met.” But that question, “Who are we going to live for?” strikes at the center of my beliefs. Was there some heinous crime committed because of my priorities? Am I hell-bound because of my indifference? No. My assurance comes from the center of myself. I have given up the spot that

is solely ego, to create a sanctuary for the living Savior. Well that's wordy and presumptuous. What I mean is that my life is about my relationship with God, therefore if I live for myself it is in the context of that relationship with God. If I live for my family, it is the family that Jesus has ushered into my care. And they are bound to care for me too. If I live for friends, acquaintances and community members, then I am widening my circle of family, when I show them a God who loves them. Is the question "Who are you going to live for?" or "How are you going to live?"

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

(Phil 2:2) (p. 26 Question to Consider) "If you were put on trial for your faith, and your *expressions of love* were the only evidence, what would the verdict be? How do you define expressions of love? I ate at a burrito bar yesterday. It was set up as a Subway shop. One person took you through each part of the construction process, asking you questions along the way. "Rice? Chicken or Beef? Pinto beans or black beans? Guacamole, sour cream, salsa?" You get the idea. Well after question and answer 15, I added that I'd like a smile too. My server smiled and looked at me for the first time. The next two customers broke into giggles. Now everyone around me was working with 1 heart & 1 purpose. An expression of love is more than compassion, empathy and service. An expression of love breaks down the barriers that we put to protect us. An expression of love breaks down walls that society and propriety have placed to insure culture. An expression of love leaves us all vulnerable. We are vulnerable to giggle and smile. We are vulnerable to accept each other where we are. What if our purpose was to procure easy, happy, honest smiles at no cost? What if we started seeing each other as a result? What would the world be like then?

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

(Matt 18:20) "We lift our voices, we lift our hands, we lift our lives up to you. We are an offering. We are an offering. All that I am, all that I have, All that I want to be, I give to You. I give to You. We are an offering. We are an offering." I don't know the title or artist for that song. I'll update you when you update me. When we lift our voices, hands and lives, are we really offering something to God? Are we expecting this act to be a 2-way street? God will take our brokenness and leave us whole. God will lift our burdens. God will accept our praise as response to His love. Often, I walk into worship expecting a handmade, personal gift to be waiting on the altar. I came to be forgiven, rather than to forgive. I came to be served rather than offer hospitality. I came to be entertained, filled, and fed. (spiritually and physically) And all that I receive. "All that I am, All that I have, All that I want to be," isn't that asking a bit much? Yes. And nothing else will satisfy you. God is satisfied in our journey. Let us take a step 2gether in His name.

Reach Out 2gether: "get others to believe"

(Phil 1:27) Val Schmadel is a good friend of mine. (And I hope she still is after this little exposé.) During 40 Days of Purpose, she was not part of a small group. She went to church with her family faithfully, but no small group. I told her that when she felt called to come, she would be in my group. I told her that the group was praying for her. Then I asked the group to pray for her. (Well actually, we preyed on her. In a good way, really!) Each week we gave her an update of what was going on in group so she wouldn't feel out of place when she came. Not that she was going to come, but when she did, she'd know who we were and what we were doing. Other members of the group told her that they were praying for her as well. The group incorporated her despite her lack of attendance. In the end she really had no other choice. We had taken away all her excuses and given her only love and support. Now she is in my 40 Days of Community group with her husband. (Who I also hope stays my friend) If you ask her, she will tell you with a smile that I strong-armed her or forced her. She'll also tell you that she's glad. Jesus died for us while we were still sinners. Can't we love people even before they become part of our small group?

Biloxi-Bound prayers Try to pray for them at 11 (that's when they are meeting, it's 10 there)

Creator parent, Loving Brother, Fiery Spirit- Pour out your blessings on our group. Create new ties and commitments based on love, faithfulness and forgiveness. Use us as loving reminders of your amazing life. Ignite in us and others a passion to reach out to everyone who cries against the darkness. Let your Word be LIGHT! It is in Jesus' name we pray. AMEN!