



7 DAYS OF DEVOTIONS

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# BE STILL

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*Sweet friendships refresh the soul and awaken our hearts with joy. Proverbs 27:9*

Grace Community Church, Johnstown



# DAY 1. INCREASE YOUR INTENTIONALITY

REREAD ACTS 2: 42-47

Amber, Lauren, and Areena spoke about the importance of intentionality in our friendships.

The earlier followers of Christ met together and “did life” together daily. It just isn’t practical to expect that fellowship be limited to special meeting times and it isn’t explained that way in the Bible. We often miss so many opportunities for God to work through our friendships when we limit our interactions to special meetings where 100% focus is placed on each other.

How do you practice intentionality in your friendships?

What did God reveal to you about ways you can increase your intentionality in your friendships?

*Father, Thank you for the beautiful gift of friendship! I thank you for showing me how to be a friend. I have the greatest friendship I could ever desire in You! Reveal areas in my life where I can be an intentional friend. Show me missed opportunities of the past so I can be reminded to look for the opportunities you put in front of me today. In Jesus name, Amen.*

## DAY 2. AM I TOO BUSY?

READ PSALM 42:2 & LUKE 10: 38-42

We spent a lot of time talking about how to do life together and that God doesn't only want us to meet at "special" times. We see through the story of Mary and Martha that Jesus doesn't want us to be so focused on the responsibilities we believe we have that we avoid structured time with others, but especially with Him.

How can you adjust your time so you aren't get too caught up in the responsibilities in your life so as to avoid setting aside special times with God?

In contrast, how can you adjust your life so as not to exclude God from being present as you go about your responsibilities?

How can you apply these insights to your friendships?

*Gracious Father, I get so caught up in all the things I think I need to get done. Many days, I feel like it is difficult to manage it all. I confess, at times, in my efforts to finish my checklist, I am often like Martha. I may even feel aggravated that others aren't joining me in getting things done. Please forgive me for my wrong focus. Thank you for wanting to take the time to sit with me. Thank you for directing my agenda, always leaving room for You to be first! Without You, everything truly is meaningless. Please keep showing up, even when I don't stop what I am doing and sit down with you. Give me those gentle nudges to stop and enjoy the time you give me to fellowship with you and the wonderful friends you have given me. You never give me too much to do. In Jesus name I pray, Amen.*

## DAY 3- HEEDING THE SPIRIT

READ ACTS 8:26-38

ACTS 8:29- THE SPIRIT TOLD PHILIP, "GO TO THAT CHARIOT AND STAY NEAR IT."

Areena shared the story of someone God had asked her to reach out to and, unlike Philip, she didn't heed the Holy Spirit. The woman passed away unexpectedly and under difficult circumstances.

Were you reminded of any situations where the Holy Spirit prompted you to do something and you didn't follow through?

What can you see as the consequences of avoiding the assignment?

What is something the Holy Spirit is asking you to do that you have been putting off? What are you going to do differently to act on this assignment now?

*Dear Lord. You are so much greater than we can ever imagine. The truth is, You don't need us to fulfill Your plans, but You choose to use us. I confess I don't always look at the assignments You give me with joy and enthusiasm. I often put them at the bottom of my list or don't put them on my list at all. Please forgive me, Father. I want to be used by You! Don't take me off your list! Give me Your heart. Help me be humble in accepting all assignments you place before me, remembering You choose to use me! I fall short so often, Lord, but my heart longs to serve You by serving Your people! In Jesus name I pray. Amen*

## DAY 4. LIVING IN THE LION'S DEN

READ GENESIS 15:1, DANIEL 6:16–23,  
PSALM 3:3 & PROVERBS 30:5

We spoke about how God asks us to be vulnerable in our relationships. When we purpose to live life with each other, true vulnerability can really challenge our feelings of safety. Stretching hurts sometimes and vulnerability can open us up to pain. There are a lot more chances we may get caught in the web of selfishness or our sinful natures when we are doing life together– when we are just living out our day to day with each other. We know there is nothing hidden from the eyes of the Lord but it's easy to ignore God's presence when we get caught up in our own hearts. We often live under that lie that because we can keep things hidden from each other we can keep things hidden from God. As we see in the story of Daniel in the lion's den, the king was distraught that Daniel had to be thrown into the den, but he made the order anyway.

God regularly not only allows, but makes the order for us to be put in harms way, sometimes physically as in the case of Daniel, but oftentimes emotionally. But He makes many promises in scripture to be our shield.

How does God recognize our safety can be a concern when we are placed in a vulnerable situation?

Do you think He empathizes with our fears?

Identify a scripture passage where Jesus experienced the same emotions we do in a difficult circumstance. What did He do?

*Write a prayer using a Bible promise, asking God to shield you in times of vulnerability and fear.*

# DAY 5- CAN I BE TOO VULNERABLE?

Read Ephesians 6:10-17 & Proverbs 30:5

It says "To those who take refuge in Him" ...not those who take refuge in themselves. Something I never really pondered before. Refusing to be vulnerable really is a form of self-protection and implies a lack of trust in God's desire and ability to shield us. We really limit God's ability to grow our faith more than we end up keeping ourselves safe. I get so excited when I think about how God has attended to every detail of our protection from the harm that may come from this world. We have no need to protect ourselves. In Ephesians 6, we see how God has given us a tangible illustration of His protection. I find it is helpful to visualize God putting on my armor while I pray through the verses in Ephesians 6. I ask Him to make me more discerning of the spiritual battles taking place around me so as not to get caught up in waging war against people. At one point in a Bible study I was doing, God made me so acutely aware of this spiritual warfare, I actually felt stings on my skin from all directions. No people were around me at the time. I am thankful He doesn't make me live like that daily, but it always helps me to think back to that experience and remember who my real enemy is.

Remember: 1) God does not command us to stand guard against each other. He wants us to stand guard against our own sinful nature and the spiritual warfare that may be going on around us. 2) He wants us to take refuge in Him when it comes to our relationships- trusting Him to protect us, grow us, and heal us when it becomes necessary.

How have you relied on your own ability to protect yourself in relationships?

Give an example of a time God asked you to be vulnerable and brought glory to Himself through a hurtful or painful circumstance.

*Write a prayer of thanksgiving for the circumstance you identified. Ask for forgiveness for the times when you felt a need to protect yourself. Ask God to increase His shield around you and to show you how to take refuge in Him when vulnerability leaves you feeling weak and scared.*

# DAY 6- IN THE THORNS

## READ MATTHEW 8: 1-21 & JAMES 1: 2-5

Goathead thorns are fairly common in Colorado. On multiple occasions I have been walking through lush, green grass with my bare feet, only to step on a thorn that drives deep into my foot. Man, does it hurt! What happens when we do get into a sticker patch when we practice intentionality and vulnerability in our friendships? No matter how hard we try, it's going to happen. Do we avoid relationships because of this? We may have in the past, but we aren't there anymore! We know that isn't what God is calling us to do. In the scripture reading for today, Jesus had just done a great miracle by turning seven loaves of bread into enough to feed thousands. After the crowd disbursed, the Pharisees asked Jesus for a sign from Heaven, I believe in regards to He was who He said He is. He had just given a huge sign but he still said, "No sign will be given." The disciples discussed Jesus warning, "Be careful. Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod." They thought Jesus was talking about them forgetting the bread back on shore. They were missing something Jesus wanted them to understand by focusing on what they thought He meant. We miss what God is doing when we rely on our own ability to understand. We let the yeast of our own ideas leaven the bread that pours out of the bowl resulting in undesirable actions.

Amber, Lauren, and Areena talked about the assumptions of the heart. We often use our past experiences and what we think we know about a person to assume their motives.

What are some practices we can put into place during times of struggle in friendships to help us get God's clarity?

1. Read Acts 1:14. What does God tell us to do?

## DAY 6- CONTINUED

We can ask that person to stop and pray with us. We don't want to be a stumbling block in the life of anyone. If we don't offer opportunities to come together in Spirit, we are not coming along side one another with gentle restoration.

2. Read James 1: 19-20 and Philippians 2:4  
What does God tell us to do?

We can ask some clarifying questions if we are still struggling with circumstances. When we ask those clarifying questions, we have to be willing to let go of our assumptions. As much as we are told to let our yes be yes and our no be no, we need to extend that same grace to others by letting go of our assumptions of the heart. We don't have any authority to judge the heart of another. We can't truly see their motives. Only God can. We have to trust that God is the revealer and will convict both of us. We don't need to do that to each other.

In 1 Peter 3, we're reminded to "Be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing."

*Write a prayer thanking God for your relationship challenges, knowing that these will increase your faith. Ask for forgiveness in any areas of conviction. Write your requests as He shows you how to act out of faith and not out of offense.*



# DAY 7- CONFRONTING SIN HEAD ON

Read Matthew 7:1-5, Matthew 18: 15-20  
& Galatians 6:1

Confronting in love is a caring act. As much as God wants us to avoid conflict, He never wants us to miss opportunities to come along side and walk each other away from sin. Unfortunately, if we don't do it God's way, we are fooling ourselves into thinking we are doing anything other than sinning ourselves. God's order is so crucial when we are working to remove the imbedded thorns of disagreement and conflict. Before you ever go talk to someone, before you even hope for them to repent, forgive them for the offense. That is a crucial part of removing that plank. God works through forgiveness of sins. That is the definition of salvation. And He does it through grace- undeserved favor. Consider these verses:

Colossians 3:13-14 "Forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity."

Matthew 18: 21-22- When Peter asked Jesus, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times"

Proverbs 17:9- Whoever would foster love covers over an offense, but whoever repeats the matter, separates close friends.

Proverbs 19:11- A person's wisdom yields patience; it is to one's glory to overlook an offense.

What offenses have you been holding on to against a friend that God wants you to forgive? Ask Him for a forgiving heart.

How is God asking you to bless them?

Consider if God is asking you to go that person to help them be restored in fellowship with Him. Write out a specific plan of action as you seek to join Him in their life.

*Write out a prayer specifically regarding the situations He revealed to you. Pray all that He has placed on your heart regarding this circumstance.*

## FINAL THOUGHTS...

We hope God has blessed you through this examination of what friendship with God as the center looks like. We want you to know how precious you are to Him and how precious you are to us! You are one we call "friend" and we are so blessed because of that! Our prayer for you is that you find ways to be intentional as God calls you into relationships with others. That you trust in Him as you seek to be vulnerable and that you remember He is your shield and your refuge. That as you go forward, you will be cloaked in the Armor of God. And finally, that as you find yourself in a patch of thorns, you will allow Him to gently remove them from your feet, as you seek to join Him in removing them from the feet of others. In the precious name of Jesus, may you be covered in His love.



*Lauren, Areeana & Amber*