



Four Cups

**Four Meetings for Developing
Intentional Friendships**



Willowdale
CHAPEL

Loving God, Loving Others

Cup # 4

“...But encourage one another daily...”

Hebrews 3:13

“Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another-- and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

Hebrews 10:23-25

We forget. We all forget. We forget how good the Living God is to us. We forget how to walk in his ways. We forget that he is with us and we forget to celebrate, and remember that all things he created are “very good.”

Forgetfulness can become a habit. Once we forget, we begin developing habits of trying *to make it on our own*.

This can't be. Life is too important for us to wander through it. We have limited days. It is not worth it to spend those days discouraged and alone. That is why we must encourage one another. We must spur one another on to love. We must spur one another on towards doing greater deeds that none of us thought possible before.

We need to catch each other doing right things. We need to show one another our progress. We need to remind each other EVERY DAY what is good, right and awesome about life. Why? Because we forget—We try to go it alone.

We must encourage each other. We must spur one another on—and this can only happen in a friendship.

The Wide Angle

Take a few moments to speak about the things that “are good” that you have seen God do or is still doing in each other.

Today's Vantage Point

What does holding unswervingly to the hope you profess look like in your life situation? How do you need encouragement for others in this situation? What is a good next step for this friendship you have begun?

Prayer

Praise God for the work of the Spirit in each of your lives through this season. Ask God to empower one another to reach the goals that you have set out during your time together

Introduction

“You don't have to go it alone...”

...Sometimes, you can't make it on your own...”

Maybe its just that I like the song or the style of music, but the words to this popular song strike a haunting chord in me. See, I would rather go it alone. I would rather try to make in on my own. It is more efficient. It is neater that way. I don't have to drag others through my stuff. I don't really even have to look at my stuff. If I can keep my stuff from hurting anybody else, I may never need to deal with it? I don't want to need others because it strikes at my self-identity as a self-reliant individual. I ought to be able to just handle things on my own.

There is something right about my desire to go it alone. Personal responsibility is an important value. However, the words of that song haunt me, because I know that they are true. We cannot make it on our own.

The haunt that comes behind the words to this song, doesn't has a deeper source. It comes from another song. In fact, it comes from the first song. The song of creation.

When we read the story of how God created the world in Genesis one and two, we see a rhythm. There is a rhythm to how God created the world. He creates light, looks back and says 'it is good'. He creates animals, looks back and says 'it is good'. After six days, he looks back, taking full delight in all that he has done and says, 'very good'. And he rests. Yet, when we take a closer look at how he created man, we hear the first haunting words of the song of creation, “it is not good for the man to be alone.” In the perfect world that God created, the only thing that wasn't good, was aloneness. From the beginning, *we were never meant to go it alone*.

How do we go together?

We all know many people. Research tells us that the average person can remember 150 names—they rotate through our active and long-term memory based upon frequency of use. In our world today, each of us can build many acquaintances. However, in the company of many acquaintances, we can still find ourselves alone.

“A man of many companions may come to ruin,
But there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother”

Proverbs 18:24

We can be a mile wide but only an inch thick in friendships. How do we get pas a sea of names and faces to the deep reservoir of real friendship. There is only one way—Intentionality. If you want to build friendship, you have an uphill climb. Everybody is pulled and spread very thin in all directions—with our time, our money, our relationships....

So, if we are going to have depth as well as breadth in our friendships, we are going to need to be intentional.

What is this booklet?

The booklet you are holding is simply a catalyst to move friendships forward. It is to help answer the question, “how can I be intentional in building friendships.” The intention for this book is for it to be used over the course of four meetings by two, three or four people who are building a friendship or accountability relationship. Some friendships will continue a regular pace and follow a new course together. Some friendships will be established but not continue down the road with the same intensity. Either of these are fine.

I expect that you will find that four intentional meetings with one, two or three other people can be a life transforming experience. It is important not to weigh these meetings down with unrealistic expectations. It is foolish to hope that a friendship will solve all of your problems or that it will last forever. God’s intention is that you do not go it alone. Begin by choosing friendship over the solo journey and allow God to show you how good it can be when we go it together.

How do I use this booklet?

This booklet is meant to catalyze intentional friendship. Often this can be a mentor experience where one person who has seen more of life in investing his/her wisdom in a younger person. For some, this is a peer mentorship, where two to four people at similar stages of life invest mutually in one another.

There are four sections to the book each with the purpose of setting up an appointment or meeting with the people whom you are choosing to build a friendship. Each section starts with a meditation from the Bible on God’s vision for friendship. Then, each section has two types of questions that you can discuss--Questions that take you wide and questions that takes you deep.

The best way to learn how to build a friendship is to observe how God has built a relationship with us. We know from Psalm 19 that all creation reveals the glory of God and as we read scripture we read the story of how God relates to his people. Knowing the breadth of who God is through his acts as well as

Cup #3

“We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers.... Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with action and in truth. This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in His presence whenever our hearts condemn us.”

1 John 3:14, 18-20

“We love because he first loved us.”

1 John 4:19

The identifying mark of a Christian is that they love other Christians (Jn 17:23). When we come before Him, he will ask us how we obeyed his commandment, “to love each other as I have loved you” (Jn 13:33). The way Christians treat each other is supreme in his mind. How will we ever be able to love the world around us if we cannot love one another? Yet, real friendship can be very challenging and even frustrating. It is at these points where those outside of the faith often give up on a friendship. The rewards begin to outweigh the costs. That isn’t true for us who follow Christ.

Investing in a friendship is not a matter of immediate payback. Investing in friendship is practice at being like Jesus. Jesus is known as the friend of sinners. To persevere in a difficult friendship is practice in becoming like Jesus. In fact, when we love each other as he has loved us—with radical grace, long-suffering, perseverance, in action and in truth—it gives us recognition of his influence in our lives. We know that we have been touched by his grace when we can show grace towards others. When we show unconditional love towards others we experience the grace of being like Christ and knowing Him better in the way he loves us.

The Wide Angle

What do you think God is most concerned with in your life? When you look back at the end of your life, what do you think will be the most significant aspects of who you were and what you did in your life?

Today’s Vantage Point

Who has God brought into your life that he has called you to show unconditional love towards? How is that going?

Prayer

When praying, thank God for specific ways you know that God has shown love to you. Pray for one another so that each of you can practice being like Jesus and grow more like him in the way you love one another.

offer from this friendship? If you are a mentor, remember that you should be looking to learn from your mentee. Some call this reverse mentoring.

- Are there things that you need to take action on in your life that the other can pray for and ask you about the next time you are together?

Pray

- Thank God for the people who have influenced each of your lives. Pray for one another regarding specifics that each of you have shared. Ask God to bless your friendship and to use it to make each of you more like Him.

through his story is crucial to understanding any particular aspect of who he is. That is true of our friendships. In order to build a friendship, we need to “get their story.” We need to see them through a wide angle lens. None of us can separate ourselves from our history. Though our future is not bound to our past, our personality has been shaped by our past. So if you are going to be able understand somebody, you need to learn their story. You need to “wide” in your knowledge of them.

Yet, as we look at scripture, we can’t understand the story unless we go deep into the aspects of the story. This gives us a vantage point into understanding the story. In Hebrews 1:3, Jesus is described as “the exact representation of his (God’s) being.” So, if we are going to understand who God is through his story, we must understand him in light of who Jesus is. The same is true of relationships. If we are going to understand another person in their story, we need to understand their particular vantage point on their story. What are they experiencing now? What are they most thankful for now? What are they hoping for in the future?

So, each section will have questions that take you both wide and deep in your knowledge of each other. You will see through the wide angle lens and also from today’s vantage point. As you reflect on these questions, be sure to address the question, ‘Where is God in our stories?’ Ultimately, Jesus is the one can truly “stick closer than a brother.” He is the one who promises to ‘never leave us or forsake us.’ He is the one who has demonstrated what real friendship is:

“Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.”
John 15:13

It brings Jesus great joy to see us build friendships with each other. His promise is to be with us and we will know him better as we follow his lead in loving each other as he loved us. This is a double win. Not only do we gain a friendship here and now through intentionality, but we grow closer to the author of friendship himself.

Enjoy the journey...

they currently face.

Cup #1

“Remember the day you stood before the Lord...” Deuteronomy 4:10

They stood at the edge of the Jordan River. After forty years of wandering through desert, they were going to enter into the land of their destiny. Yet, they would need to go without Moses, their leader. So Moses steps back and takes one last opportunity to give them the vision of who they will be and what they will do as they turn the page and enter into a new chapter of their life.

So as Moses looks forward, he declares, “Remember.” Why does he look back in order to look forward? Why does he spend so much time retelling the story of what God has done? Why retell the story. Why? We must be clear on our story because our story sets our trajectory. If we see our story as how things were great in high school and has gone down hill ever since, how do you think that will affect the way we think and act in regards to our future? We will expect things to get worse. Or, if we see our story as having an upward trajectory because of the work of God in our lives, how will that affect the way we think and act about our future? We will act and expect God to show up and make a difference in our lives. There are no promises in this. Sometimes God takes us upward and sometimes he takes us downward. The only promises are that God will be with us whatever direction our story takes us and that if he is the central person in our stories, they will end on the highest trajectory possible.

The Wide Angle

- So what is your story? Prepare to tell the five to ten minute story of your life. As you tell it, remember to think through how God has been involved in it? Where did you know he was real? When were you distant? How did your thoughts about him change? Was there a time when you did not know him and now you do? What happened? How has your relationship with him grown over time?

Today's Vantage Point

- Share with each other what you are most thankful for in your life right now.
- Share with each other some of the challenges you are facing right now in your life.

Pray

- Pray with each other briefly. Thank God for what you have seen in each other's life. Ask God to meet the each other in the particular challenges

Cup #2

“And the things that you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.”

2 Timothy 2:2

In this passage we see intentionality affect four generations of people with the things that are true. Passing truth and wisdom from one generation to the next (Dt 6:1-10, Pr 1:8) is the secret that has kept the people of God together across the centuries of time and through the difficulties of life.

But it is not just a hierarchal thing. In the Old Testament, kings had prophets and the people had priests. In the New Testament, Jesus called a group of disciples *together* to follow him. These disciples would remind each of the truths and the wisdom of God for life. Paul, who wrote 2 Timothy had a mentor relationship to Timothy and had been a mentee to Gamaliel. Yet, it was Barnabas that believed him, encouraged him and sponsored his welcome into the company of apostles.

Paul Stanley and Robert Clinton say it this way

“A growing leader needs a *relational network* that embraces mentors, peer, and emerging leaders in order to ensure development and a healthy perspective on his or her life and ministry.”¹

Each of us have matured among a network of relationships. And it is a network of intentionally developed relationships that will ensure ongoing growth, passion and energy for life.

The Wide Angle

- Share with each other who the people are in your life that have made a difference. Include in this, your parental figures as well as key mentors or friends that have influenced you.

Today's Vantage Point

- It has been said that a person needs three kinds of mentorship/friendships. A mentor or friend can offer up to two, but not usually all three of the following: A) A listening ear, B) A brain to pick, C) A kick in the pants. Each of us needs all three of these in our lives. Who plays these roles in your life?
- Each of you share what things you hope you might be able to gain and