

GPS WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY
THE BONDS OF SISTERHOOD
Real Relationships for Real Life

March 6, 2012 Week 7 – Sharing Life Together

Review Scripture Memory – Proverbs 17:17, 1 Corinthians 12:25-27, Romans 15:13, Joshua 1:9, Psalm 126:6, 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, Psalm 91:1, Ephesians 6:13, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, Psalm 143:8, Jeremiah 29:11-13, Isaiah 26:3-4

Review Homework – Questions on Sharing Life, Strong Life Test, Spiritual Gifts

It's hard to share life in our culture. In other cultures, families live together in multi-generational houses or compounds. Women work together in community. They share the responsibilities of raising children. And the expectations of normal daily life are that women are side-by-side with other women talking, encouraging, singing, praying, mourning, rejoicing. Helping with everything. Sharing life. Like sisters.

We no longer see such strong bonds of family and sisterhood in most of Western culture. So for us, what does it mean to share life with someone? We know that we share our life with family that we live with and see every day. We know that we share a part of life with friends and people we work with and see every day. The common thread: we see them every day. But sometimes life gets incredibly busy and we can't see our family and friends every day. And sometimes we're geographically removed from our closest family and friends.

In the busyness and isolation of life, how do we learn to share life with other people? How do we learn to share life with our sisters in Christ? The first thing is to understand our need for sisters in Christ.

As God's daughters, we were not created to do life alone. Because of that, we have a built-in need for community that is based on our desire for love.

Barb Rosberg, a counselor who with her husband founded America's Family Coaches, indicates that a woman's top 5 love needs are:

1. Unconditional Love
2. Emotional Intimacy
3. Spiritual Intimacy
4. Encouragement
5. Friendship

We all have the same desires to be loved, accepted, and connected. Although some of these desires may be fulfilled in marriage, we still need other women in our life to walk the journey together as sisters. As women, we are created to encourage and support each other in close-knit community. We're energized by the camaraderie that comes from sisters working together to promote family-like love and devotion. Even for those of us who blaze a trail in our career or those of us who feel like we don't fit in with mainstream American families, we have an intrinsic need for connection with others. We may try to fill that need with many things. But in the end,

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nothing can truly fill our longings except connection with God and connection within the body of Christ.

Sharing life starts with getting to know each other. How? By building trust as we share our stories about where we've been, where we are, and where we want to go. Our willingness and desire to share life together grow as we see that we're not only accepted for who we are, we're loved and cherished because of who we are. Embracing our differences and loving unconditionally (as best as we know how) are foundational to sharing life together as sisters in Christ. "Friends are for now. Sisters are forever." True sisters in Christ will rejoice as we rejoice, mourn as we mourn, and walk the journey with us no matter how difficult the path may become.

Sharing life together entails being the sister we want to have. This is where understanding our spiritual gifting and our strengths come in. We can encourage and support our sisters through our gifting and strengths as we show our love for Christ by loving and serving others. Maybe it's a weekly call or email. Maybe it's regular time of talking and praying. Maybe it's having a friend over for coffee or lunch. Building connections takes many forms. And although we may not be able to see our sisters in Christ every day, we can include them in our life through consistent contact. Even seeing our sisters weekly helps us stay connected as we get caught up on the praises and prayer requests we each have.

Sharing life together also means accepting the hand of sisterhood offered from others. Sometimes God brings unlikely women together in some of the most beautiful bonds of sisterhood. The sisters God brings into our life may be like little sisters we help mentor. They may be like big sisters we look to for guidance and wisdom. Or they may be the "best friend" sister we never had growing up. Sisters are a blessing from God. May we love, honor and cherish them as the gifts they are.

Like all relationships, sharing life together in sisterhood takes intentional effort. But the rewards multiply in return. Ask anyone who has experienced the blessing of life shared in sisterhood, and she will tell you that nothing compares to the love, support, friendship and prayer of a devoted sister in Christ.

May we continue together on our journey, hand-in-hand, sharing life with our sisters in Christ!

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Share stories from our Sisterhood Journey

Scripture Memory:

1. Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 – *Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.*
2. 1 Corinthians 15:33 – *Do not be misled: Bad company corrupts good character.*

Book Review: Same Kind of Different as Me by Ron Hall & Denver Moore

Each week's lesson will also be posted on the Rising Above Real Life website www.RisingAboveRealLife.com – go to the Freebies page

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PRAYER REQUESTS:

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Homework: Our Journey of Sisterhood

This week's homework is a review of our journey of sisterhood.

1. Week 1: Sisterhood

- a. In our first meeting, we asked this question: What does sisterhood mean to you? Without looking at what you wrote back then, answer that question again.
- b. Now go back to your handout from Week 1 and compare what you wrote six weeks ago to what you wrote today. Are there any significant changes? If so, what?
- c. What did you hope to gain from our sisterhood class based on your answer to Week 1's question 4? Did you?

2. Week 2: Our Story and the Body of Christ

- a. Why is it important to accept and honor all of our sisters as an integral part of the body of Christ (reference 1 Corinthians 12:14-27)?
- b. How is your life story significant to the body of Christ, and how can it help others as you grow new bonds of sisterhood?
- c. Have there been any permanent markers that you've put down since the beginning of our sisterhood journey? If so, what are they and what is the significance?

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3. Week 3: Walking Together: Compassion and Grief

- a. In thinking about sisterhood, what one thing stands out the most from the story of Job and his friends (reference Job 1:1-2:13)?

- b. Have you been able to practice the Ministry of Presence since we studied Job's story? If so, how? How did the other person react?

4. Week 4: The Armor of God

- a. Review the six parts of the Armor of God (reference Ephesians 6:10-18)
 - i.
 - ii.
 - iii.
 - iv.
 - v.
 - vi.

- b. What is the additional secret weapon, and why is it so important?

- c. Are you finding it easier to wield your weapons each day? Why or why not?

- d. What is the hardest part of the armor for you to put on each day? Why?

- e. Have any of your battles been helped over the last few weeks by putting on the Armor of God and knowing that your sisters have been praying for you? If so, which ones and how?

5. Week 5: Prayer and Praise

- a. How has praying for the women in our sisterhood group affected you as we've continued on our weekly journey?

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- b. Did you learn anything new or were there any new revelations from our study of the Lord's Prayer (reference Matthew 6:9-15)?
- c. How can we incorporate prayer and praise into our daily life, and into our sisterhood journey?

6. Week 6: Forgiveness

- a. How can forgiveness be viewed as love in action (reference Romans 12:9-21)?
- b. Often when we do a study on forgiveness, the Holy Spirit prompts us and there are thoughts or emotions that stay with us after the study. These may be about a person or a situation. Are there any lingering thoughts or emotions about forgiveness, unforgiveness, or a specific situation that you continue to think about and pray about since our study?
- c. What stood out to you the most from our study of forgiveness?

7. Week 7: Sharing Life Together

- a. What is the greatest hindrance that keeps you from sharing life together in sisterhood?
- b. What have you, or can you, start doing to overcome this hindrance and promote sharing life with new sisters in Christ?
- c. How can you foster your strengths and spiritual gifts in daily and weekly life (i.e. make more time for them or give more focus to developing them)?

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d. How will you use your strengths and spiritual gifts to connect with others?

8. Summary

a. What is your favorite Scripture verse from the sisterhood study, and why?

b. What is one thing you can start doing each week to encourage and support a sister in Christ?

c. What are highlights from your sisterhood journey:

i. Praise reports –

ii. How you've grown and/or changed –

iii. How you've developed new bonds of sisterhood –

d. What are some ideas for continuing in sisterhood with our group and with others?