

## **My Family and I Are Entitled to be Alone**

I've heard the verse John 14:2-2-4 and I've always just thought about the return of Christ. Well, when I learned the relevance of this passage, I had a whole new understanding. In Biblical times, when a man asks a woman to marry him, the woman goes back to her family and...waits, and waits and waits. The man returns to his family's home and begins to prepare a place for the two of them. Their home is just a room attached to other rooms, where several generations of family live. Only the man's father can say when the room the man is building is sufficient. Neither the man nor the woman knows when he will receive the blessing to officially take her as his wife.

So, really, no one knows what the wedding date will be. (Could you imagine that in this day and age...deposits, photographers...I would have needed him to build for at least 9 months). Once the father gives his approval, the man is free to go to the woman, marry her and bring her to their new home. So in Biblical times, newly married and those married for decades were never on their own. Families, mothers, fathers, children all had the support of the community. These families were in daily fellowship.

When I really began to examine this concept, a whole new revelation opened up to me. Let's now look at how we live today. My family lives in a small subdivision in a fairly small town. This is an average day in my subdivision during the winter time:

5:08 am

Leave for the gym (really, no one is up and on the street at that time)

7:20 am

Drive my son to school and politely wave at the other six neighbors taking their kids to kindergarten too.

9:00 am

Drive my daughter to pre-school, and say hi to all the other parents and respectfully answer the questions: "How are you" with "Good...you"? as we all hustle to our cars.

9:00 am – 3 pm

Work, pick up kids and go home (oh, because I'm so neighborly, I wave at all the other mom's in their cars while I'm in the car rider line).

3 pm – 8 pm

Unless we have plans to go somewhere (small group, play date, family activity or dinner guests), we typically go home, close the garage door and stay inside (because it is so cold 49 degrees and under).

8 pm – 9 pm

We put kids to bed and typically fall asleep before 9:30.

We live a life of isolation and we think we are entitled to this lifestyle. What we fail to realize is that what we demand and feel we are entitled to is actually destroying us and our families. We have schedules that are demanding (which we often complete alone). We watch TV because it is an escape from the reminder of how unhappy and alone we are with our lives. We replace social media, which turns into us creating a false identity, because we want everyone to see how “perfect” our lives and families are...I could go on and on, but you get the picture. We were never meant to live in isolation. We were created for community...and deep inside, we all desire it.

In Acts 2:44-47, it talks about how the believers lived. They lived in community; they shared everything that they had; no one was in need; and God added to their numbers daily those who were being saved. Hmm...that sounds exactly like the opposite of how we are living now.

For four years of my life, I lived in community - how it is described in Acts (well, pretty close). I grew as a believer in ways I've never dreamed, built friendships that I still have today, and saw Jesus transform lives. Let's just say, I had a very unique and blessed college experience. Over the past, let's not put a number here and just say, several years, I often found myself longing for the lifestyle I had in college. When I began to look deeper, it had nothing to do with being younger, free time, sand volleyball or less responsibility. It did have everything to do with missing community; knowing others so deep and being known on that level; sharing each other's burden without feeling you are a burden; accountability; sharing your experience during your quiet times; sharing Jesus with the lost in the community and serving with believers. I realized that is what I was and am missing in my life.

I recently have been thinking about how my life would be if I could live in real community with those around me. Though I really want it, I often find myself having entitlement thoughts, and talking myself out of trying to create this community, because I and everyone around me are just “too busy”.

But, what if we made a lifestyle change? What if we invested in those around us? What if it was acceptable to really answer the question, “How are you?” and someone would “really” listen? What if you had couples who were willing to walk beside you, love you, pray for you and encourage your marriage? What if you did not have to parent alone? What if you did not feel that you had to keep your inner most feeling to yourself? What if you did not long for friends or family that really cares about you?

Life would be different. Marriage would be different. Parenting would be different. Your children would be different. Though this sounds good, it would be work. Relationships are messy. Your life would be interrupted...but the outcome would be worth it 100 times over for you, your marriage, and your family. It would set an example for generations to come.

Could you find this community in a small group, a church, at the gym, a club, a play date, your extended family or literally right next door to your house? So, what's your plan to move toward this community that could not only change your life, but could change eternity to those around you...and possible your children? Or do you just want to continue feeling you and your family are entitled to live in isolation?

Final thought: If Jesus was God in the flesh, and he needed 12 friends and 3 really close friends, what does that say about us?

*Respectfully submitted by: Chandra Heath*