

“TRI & TRY AGAIN”

"I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought." 1 Corinthians 1:10

My wife and I met many years ago. We didn't start dating right away. As time went on, we grew fond of each other and started dating, eventually getting married. The first few years were some of the happiest times of our lives. We went on a few vacations together and started having children. Things were tough but we managed to get through it. Then things started to change. The DRIFT started. Financial problems were building. My wife's close friend passed away. We stopped talking with each other and turned inward. Our communication was next to nothing. Later friends would tell us that we didn't seem the same. We were more like friends than husband and wife.

I didn't see it coming or maybe I did, I just didn't want to admit it to myself. My wife saw it however. She'd ask me if we were OK. I would say yes and leave it at that. We were going down hill and picking up speed. Then it happened. A third person was brought into our marriage and not for the right reasons. The pain of betrayal was brutal. We hit rock bottom. The next weeks were fueled by anger and sadness. We were on the edge of divorce.

Then it happened again. A third person was introduced to our marriage again. This time for all the right reasons. My wife suggested we start going to church, and it was the best decision we ever made. With God's help, we were given the power to start forgiving each other, loving each other, and encouraging each other once again. With our new faith in Christ, our future looks much brighter now with Him leading us. It's amazing how he talks to you. You can hear Him if you just listen.

My wife and I found this amazing healing exercise in a book. You write down all your angers and frustrations then read them to one another. After you are done, you agree together to burn them. And that's exactly what we did. We "filed our grievances" against one another in the burn pile, and God is bringing us together like never before. He is just that good.

Do you see division you can be a part of bringing to agreement?

On Belay

Devotional—Week #3



“MY NEXT STEP”

"Encourage one another daily" – Hebrews 3:13

The book of 1 Thessalonians 5:11 says, “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.” Fortunately for me, I found that encouragement from the people at Levant.

Life has never been easy for me. I made one poor decision after another and things were just not going the way I wanted them to. I was trying to live life on my own terms. No wonder it wasn't working out! That is when I turned to my Levant family.

I realized that I couldn't do this on my own, so I reached out for help. Surprisingly, what I found was an abundance of people who were more than willing to welcome me with open arms. From the meetings in the pastors' offices to the friendly golf outings, small group sessions, casual invitations for dinner, and singing with the worship team... I was being encouraged and built up. I realized, when I made God the foundation of my life, what it all meant. God was surrounding me with people who I needed in my life. He was pointing me in the right direction. I feel closer to Him now than I ever have before, and I owe the credit to my Levant family.

Now I am in a much better place in my life. The best part of all is that now I am able to better pass that encouragement on to my own children, to share the power that God has with them. We are doing things together that we have never done before. We're praying before meals, praying together before bed, and listening to Christian music at home and in the car. It's the simple little things that are making a world of difference. It's amazing to see that my young children are “getting it.” They have reached out to their mother and step-father and invited them to come to church with us. You can literally see God's power reaching out through community.

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~ "Next Step" continued ~

The people at Levant reached out to me and built me up, and in turn, I have been able to reach out and build up my own children and foster a better relationship between all of us and God. What a difference He makes in our lives! What a difference we can make in each other's lives.

**Where can you take a next step to connect?
Where can you take a step to belong?**

"MEETING TOGETHER"

"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 10:25

My husband and I have been married 21 years. We've made it through many turbulent times and trials. I know we never would have made it without the strength and guidance of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We have attended a few churches, but never felt comfortable. It's hard to explain, but we never felt happy or content. Not that we were giving up on our faith, but we stopped looking for a place to worship.

Friends of our invited us to Levant one Sunday in April of 2008. That Sunday was the turning point for us. Again, we can't explain the feeling we had after that first Sunday. The only words that come to mind are joy, comfort, hope & love. The people were very friendly and so encouraging.

We are joyous that our prayers were answered, that we would find a place we feel comfortable to praise and worship, and hope filled that we will live our lives the way God has planned. Now we can learn to encourage others to feel the love in our hearts God has put there.

How could you encourage someone else today?

"IN THE MIDDLE OF A STORM?"

He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm. "Where is your faith?" he asked his disciples. In fear and amazement they asked one another, "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him."
Luke 8:25

One hot summer Friday evening sometime in the mid-1980's my mom, dad, sisters and brothers came out to visit our family. They traveled over from central New York to see the grand children and to see me play on the Levant Church softball team against one of the real competitive teams in the area. What an exciting game we had and I am not sure who won but for the sake of the story, I think we won.

After the game we went to our home in Kennedy and began to observe a tremendous thunderstorm building in the west. It was a storm that my dad called "A Hay burner". Lighting flashed every few seconds as the storm approached, the sound of thunder and the constant flash of lightning was frightening to the whole family. It was severe enough that the family all prayed for protection for one another as the storm arrived.

My sister Julie was the most frightened, she was just shuddering. At the height of the storm, lightning struck the TV antenna and vaporized the wiring, burned up the stereo and TV, knocked out the power, blew fuses, and caused the wiring in the electrical outlets to come out of their connections. As fast as the storm arrived it went away.

In the silence after the storm from the loss of electrical power, we sat by candlelight reflecting as a family on the fact that our prayer was answered in spite of the minor damage to our home. We all marveled at the power of the storm and how God was always in control. The next time you are in the middle of a storm reach for God as he has control of the "winds and the water and they obey him"

How can you find God's presence in the middle of your storm?

