



What did we learn last week?

When we pursue community, things get PERSONAL and MESSY.

Making community happen is a DIFFICULT process.

Acts 2:43-47, 4:32-35.

Christianity at its core is RELATIONAL.

It is about how we connect to GOD and OTHERS.

The early Christians lived for OTHERS.

Community COSTS us something.

We need to do more than KNOW we need it, we need to MAKE IT HAPPEN

My thoughts:

Weekly Devotional:

I have one friend from college who at the mere mention of her name makes me crack up. Any voice mail, e-mail or letter, literally makes me laugh out loud. Starting our senior year of college, we were cohorts in crime. Following graduation, we moved to Tennessee and worked and lived together for a year. Then we both ventured out west to try our hand at being cowgirls . . . kind of. She worked in Colorado and I worked in Wyoming. She was more of an actual cowgirl. I cleaned cabins and waited on tables. While out there, she met the man of her dreams and asked me to be in her wedding one year later. Eight months later she was in my wedding and now she and her husband are preparing to move to China to be missionaries.

She is a true friend. One time on a trip to a Hard Rock Café, we noticed a sign by our table that said Iron Maiden. (Only recently did I learn this was a band, which explains its place in Hard Rock Café, and more recently than that I learned it was also the name of a torture device first used in the 1500s.) We knew neither of these things at the time and took the phrase, adopting it as a name for ourselves. We wanted to be the Iron Maidens, because, "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another."

This was the kind of friendship we desired. All craziness aside, what we craved was a friendship that pursued the betterment of each other, accountability to one another and a deeper knowledge of Christ. And this did not necessarily look like a weekly Bible study, or a scheduled time for prayer, or a twice a week chapel attendance that was required at our college. What it looked like was a sharpening of each other, an intentional smoothing of our rough edges by being friends who cared more about every facet of our friendship than just having a good time and sharing secrets.

I heard someone say once, "When iron sharpens iron, there are sparks." A lot of times getting our rough edges smoothed out hurts. It is hard to let people in close and with something as sharp as iron, and giving them the access to your heart. But the sparks, the friction, the heat is not a bad thing. It means we are enduring the flames from the fire and being made into a more moldable and enduring vessel for Christ.

This friend made me a better follower of Christ. I did not always like her in the process. Sparks can burn. But she, along with God, made me what I needed to be. In her friendship, she gave me the permission to dialogue about tough issues, hard questions and nagging sins. That was hard. But we did it. I needed an iron maiden in her, and she needed one in me, and the result was two people who better understood what it meant to be at the mercy of the heat in order that we might come out better believers and followers of Jesus.

She still makes me laugh. She still brightens my life. But her real gift to me is not laughter or silly memories. Her gift is her persisting and enduring ability to shape me into who God wants me to be. I love her for that.

Something to Think About:

- What makes the friends you are closest too, the friends that you are closest too?
- Do you have someone who sharpens you like iron in your life?
- What do you do, or could you do, to help sharpen you and your friends?