

## WORD

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 says, "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. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken." Truly we do need each other. As the writer in Ecclesiastes says, even simple things we do to help each other, like helping each other up when we fall, can have a huge impact on each other's life. It makes both of us better and stronger. It is not just the big things we do but also the simple ones that make a difference.

## APPLICATION

- Realize that through simple acts you can make a huge difference in people's lives. Listening, giving a hug, a word of encouragement, praying for someone or especially sharing that God loves them can make all the difference.
- Don't disqualify yourself from the blessing of making a difference in someone's life because you think they may want more from you than they actually do.
- Make it a habit in the normal, everyday course of your life to connect with others and share the simple things that can mean so much.

**Prayer:** God, help us to truly connect with others in a way that will be a blessing to both of us. Forgive us for passing others by who need us to make a simple yet powerful difference in their life. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

Freedom Groups were created with the belief that we are all on a journey through life and that our heart's desire is to be free to be all that we can be. We all want to find effective ways of living and be successful. Trying to overcome the challenges we face in life by ourselves just does not work. We are all the same, no one is different. We need others to help us successfully walk our journey to effective living.  
Everyone is invited on this freedom journey. Join in!



## Needed Connections

## NOTES

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## WARM-UP

- Social media is such a big thing these days. Facebook, Twitter, and the like are all the rage. They enable people to let a lot of other people know what is going on in their lives all at once. It does not take long to update your Facebook status or to send our a tweet. With Facebook you can also keep tabs on all your friends in one convenient place. With Twitter, in just a few seconds, you can let everyone know what you are thinking at that very moment.
- Have any of you really gotten into social media? If so why? What about it do you like the most?
- What do you dislike most about social media?

When my wife and I lived in California we wanted to make the most of our time there and travel the West. One year between Christmas and New Year's we went on a grand driving tour of southern California, Arizona, Utah and Nevada. Through southern California we were traveling through the cities, but from there on it was out into the country to see the national parks.

As one might expect, visiting national parks the week between Christmas and New Year's meant that there were not very many people there except the park rangers and ourselves. This was the kind of vacation we were looking for. Time together and time away from the busy, crowded city life was our kind of vacation. There were some other visitors to the parks however and obviously not all of them were looking for the same "space" that we were after. One very notable example was when we were at the visitor center overlooking the Grand Canyon.

The canyon view was spectacular. It was so large and so picturesque that it seemed as though you were standing in front of a giant life-size mural. The visitor's center building we were in was relatively large with huge windows overlooking the canyon. In the building there was another couple, my wife and myself. That was it. The other couple was an Asian couple. I was not paying too much attention to them other than I heard them speaking their native language. The other husband and myself were minding our own business meandering around looking at the displays.

Suddenly my wife came up to me and said, "this is ridiculous let's go." I was surprised so when we got in our car I asked what that was all about. Here the whole time we were in there the other woman gave my wife no space at all. Here we were in this very large setting and everywhere my wife went the woman followed her. She did not just follow my wife, she nuzzled right up against her physically touching her, leaning up against her, and literally standing shoulder to shoulder with her. My wife kept moving but the other woman would move right along with her. No matter what my wife did the other lady wanted to be close to and even touching her. Obviously the woman wanted to connect with others on her vacation. We were looking for "space." So we moved on.

## 1 - Different Expectations

Have you ever been in a similar situation where you were looking to relate to people in a much different way than how they wanted to relate to you or they were expecting something from you much different than what you were expecting to do or give? Can you share the experience?

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## 2 - People Need Connections

The reality is we all want and need varying levels of connections with others and we want these connections at different times. As the old saying goes, "No one is an island to themselves." What are some of the types of connections that people need? What are some of the connections you are currently looking for?

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## 3 - People's Expectations of Us

Sometimes we can feel as though people expect too much out of us or that we cannot live up to people's expectations. This can sometimes be true, but more often than not what people are expecting from us is not that complicated. People's expectations are usually based on the role we play in their lives. My wife expects certain things from me, my kids expect different things and my friends expect other things. Some of the expectations people put on us may not be realistic or fair, but most are. A lot of the time that we feel anxiety over the expectations of others is because we assume what those expectations are instead of listening to their true expectations and just seeking to meet those. Have you experienced this "expectation gap" where what you thought someone was expecting from you was different than their actual expectations?

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## 4 - We Have More To Offer

Like my wife and I on our vacation, at times we all need our space. Like the woman at the visitor's center, sometimes people will want to connect with us in ways that are not appropriate or best. More often than not what people are looking for and need are simply people who will listen, be a supporting friend, offer good advice at appropriate times, and who will truly care for them. It is often much more simple than we make it out to be. We fear they will want more than we can give or that we cannot be all that helpful. Sometimes we feel we have to fix or be responsible for others instead of just help them. So we end up just passing people by who truly want a simple, normal, human connection with us. All of us are more than capable of giving them that. In fact, we can listen, be kind, be supportive and care. That can make a huge difference in our lives and theirs.