**Growing Deeper Together: Becoming an I to WE Disciple**

**Introduction**

Inviting Jesus to live in your daily life is the most fulfilling opportunity you may ever take on. If you are someone re-committing your life to Him after a season away, and you are serious this time, you may be surprised with what He has in store for you in these pages. Either way, discovering God’s purposes for your day-to-day life will find great fulfillment in the pages of ***Growing Deeper Together.*** You have the chance to discover a new level of personal growth as you know Him more and more. You also will understand that He has prepared a life-giving community around you, the place He brings change in every one of our lives. Yes, moving from I to WE as you grow in Christ will take you on a most unusual adventure. In fact, we hope that you actually go through this devotional with two or three others to bring the I to WE realities home immediately in your life.

As you take the initial steps into this devotional, consider these three approaches to using this daily guide to following Jesus with others He has brought alongside.

**Stop. Watch. Wait. Listen**

If you take the time, God will speak to you and your friends again and again through this daily time in His word, the Bible. These words may help you bigtime in learning to listen to the Lord of the Universe.

Sam Abuku and I have partnered together in east Africa for close to 20 years, and we love to take a concept and go deeper together on how we communicate that principle to young leaders. I brought the idea of **Watch, Wait, and Listen** to Sam: let’s give people a simple means to think more deeply about the biblical principles by using these three action words. Sam, ever so gracious, responded simply, “This is a wonderful approach to helping people go deeper. May I suggest, at least for Americans, that you add one more word at the beginning.” My friend, ever so gentle in his demeanor, suddenly yelled out the word:

“STOP! So many Americans simple do not know how to stop. You appear to run from activity to activity, from meal to meal and from relationship to relationship. No, to make this three-step principle real, you must actually do a FULL STOP before you begin!” A more piercing truth spoken so directly I had not heard in many years, and I was speechless. We let the press of EVERYTHING PRESS IN EVERYWHERE. Fast motion apparently means success or forward movement or fulfillment, but so often it creates distraction and lack of focus – the opposite of the fulfilling peace or joy we hope for.

**STOP.** That is, friends, put away your cell phone, stop the checklist, slow down the next steps already prepared for moving forward, and stop. Stop. Ask the Holy Spirit of God to quiet your mind and slow down your pace or your racing thoughts. Then you can…

**Watch for Him** in the scriptures you read; in the devotional thoughts that give you pause; in the comments your friends make when you gather once a week to share what God is giving to each of you. **Watch!**

**Wait for Him.** Ask Jesus to help you to wait for Him, to speak or to grab you through one of the verses or moving devotional thoughts. Pause on purpose before moving forward. Make a note so that you don’t forget. I write such things in my personal journal. Give Him time to affect your thinking, even touch your heart. **Wait!**

You will find that you begin to **Listen to Him**. As you watch and wait, Jesus will meet you and at times surprise you with words or thoughts or action ideas that you know didn’t come from you. “When you abide or live in me,” say Jesus, “I will live in you with my abiding presence in ways that will change your heart.” Take him on – watch, wait and listen – and see what you and your friends find!

**Understanding the Roadmap He has prepared for Your Life**

Because Jesus desire to abide in each of us in our daily lives, He desires to provide clear guidance in our daily lives. He will address issues or opportunities through His day-to-day guidance to you and your community. He may have a new roadmap He wants you to follow to bring the fulfillment you have long hoped for. Maybe there is a need to settle issues in your life that perhaps have been a battle in you for a long time. That is, maybe there is construction needed on the road of your life.

Isaiah the prophet spoke to God’s people about their need to get themselves back on track. In fact, in chapters 57-62, God gives Isaiah specific words that may help you understand why He brought you or a friend to this devotional at this time. God is the architect of your life who desires to help you back on track, stay on track or help others get on track.

What issues might He want to interact with you about, and help you move forward with His daily guidance? Consider these words from Isaiah for the road map of your life going forward in the midst of your relationships He has given.

**Build or prepare the road and remove the obstacles** (Isaiah 57:14). The absolute most fun in the Christian life is that God has a plan for you, and that He will prepare the way for you to go. ***Growing Deeper Together*** actually provides an intentional process to guide your steps through abiding in Him.

In that middle of that process, He will show you obstacles that are blocking your way. They may be cultural values you have bought into, or decisions to conform to the world’s patterns that have had crushing consequences. Or even people who are purposely trying to pull you off the road! Taking steps to remove these obstacles with His strength may be the most important piece of this devotional puzzle for you.

**Repair the broken walls or restore the streets with relationships on** **them** (58:12). So much of our daily existence is lived out in relationships of all kinds, shapes and sizes. Your day to day relationship with God gives you healthy perspective on how to live with others. Yet broken friendships, dishonest patterns in relationships, and disunity of all kinds seem to filter into our lives at work, at school, at home, at church, or even seeping into our closest associations.

Perhaps God has prepared this devotional to give you a chance to discover healthier relationship patterns or to find healing from the wound of a friend. Or maybe you just want to discover how to live out a stronger, more consistent daily friendship with God and with others! Whether He is helping to build or rebuild your life of friendships, sharing this devotional process with others maybe the perfect chance to do so.

**Or Maybe It is just One Thing**

Maybe there is just one thing you will find in ***Growing Deeper Together***, something that you are looking for – or not looking for. I recently read the ten-year old book ***The Shack*** for the first time. It is the story of a broken person who meets God in a cabin and faces his pain a most creative way. The Trinity – God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit – meet him and reveal their grace, love and healing together in their little shack of a cabin. There were things he was looking for that could only be fulfilled by the Lord of the Universe. I found myself weeping at certain points of this read where God showed me with His love and acceptance in areas where I had held Him at a distance for a long, long time. Is there one such thing in your life?

Perhaps ***Growing Deeper Together*** for you is about finding….

**Joy.** Happiness is finding short term relief in money or things or popularity or control. Joy is the deep flowing river in your spirit provided by the Holy Spirit that experiences a deeper peace and contentment regardless of all those short-term desires. Going deeper with Him and with one another will bring joy in some surprising ways.

**Your significance in Him and Him alone.** I have worked actively across 20+ cultures, and found that the number one individual challenge in every culture is the search for significance. That is, trying to prove one’s worth and value through something or someone other than God. A number of the daily devotionals will focus on this issue, giving you and your friends the chance to find peace and resolve in Him in your day to day existence. And, if you need it, you may find freedom from the quest for significance through power or popularity or success.

**Interdependence with others**. Many of us live in a culture where individualism has risen up as the road to freedom. Entitled, self-centered decisions are supposed to make one well-grounded to face a world dominated by the same kind of self-serving people. God designed you in His image to love Him and to understand that love by loving and serving others. We learn how to love Him by caring for those people He brings into each of our lives.

**Daily direction from the Director.** You may be in a season in your life where you are looking for answers or perhaps you have bought into something that now looks like a big mistake. Your master blueprint may no longer be as clear as it once was. We so often look for the what or the how to give clarity to our steps when it is actually the WHO that is key to daily direction.

Use this daily devotional time, including a weekly check-in with others, to allow the great WHO to teach you how to live freely, wisely and fulfilled even amidst challenges that have or will arise. He desires to meet you every day to abide with you will provide clear steps forward.

***Growing Deeper Together: Become an I to WE Disciple.*** Join in this worldwide community that God has drawn together to