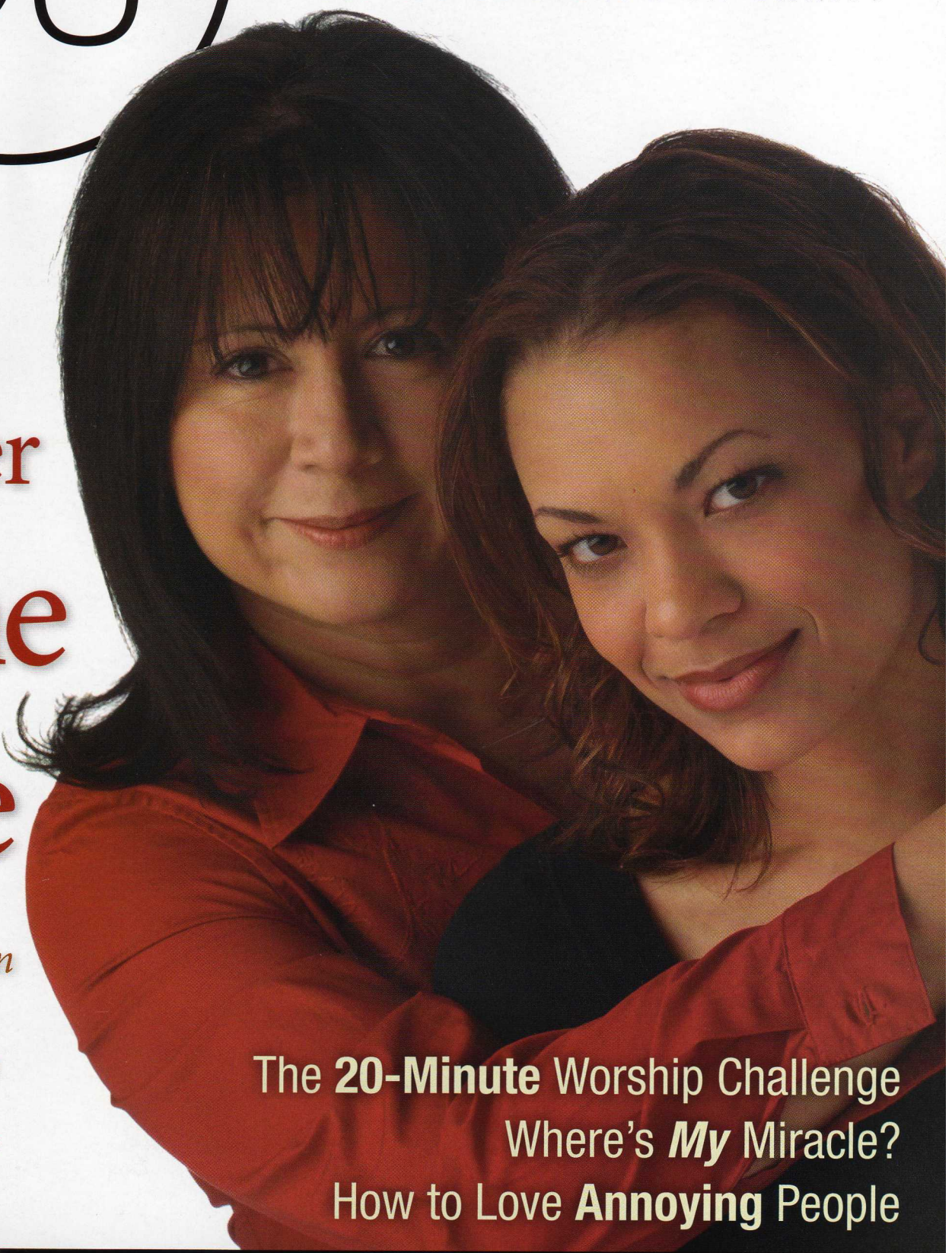


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When can we meet?



by Nathan Miller

BUSY SCHEDULES can make it a challenge to get together with those you disciple. Here are some ways I've found to spend time with the men building relationships with.

Grab the fishing rod (or basketball or...). This summer I tried for weeks to meet with a particular guy. He was working long hours and didn't have the energy to get together during the week. So when he called one night to see if he wanted to go fly-fishing the next day, I jumped at the opportunity. Soon it became a regular thing. Fishing was his way to relax, and doing it together provided great opportunities to share our faith and grow spiritually.

Tackle the project. Does the person you're discipling need to paint a room, reorganize the garage, or move in new furniture? Offer to give him a hand. Completing tasks together bonds people, and taking time to help (especially with a boring or unpleasant job) communicates, "You're important to me, and I value your friendship."

Run errands. Combine your errand lists, jump in the car together, and start checking off tasks. As you go you'll encounter things that spark conversations—and you can help each other look for bargains.

Meet in the morning. Hit a coffee shop for a bagel or morning latte. Everyone needs to eat (or caffeinate), and for most people, altering their morning routine once a week is easier than finding a free evening. Plus, the relaxed atmosphere will encourage conversation. ⊕



Encouraging the chronically ill

by Mary J. Yerkes

IN ADDITION TO ONGOING PHYSICAL DISABILITY, those with chronic illness often experience isolation, loneliness, and discouragement. If members of your small group suffer from chronic illness, these tips can help others in the group know what to say and do to encourage them.

Don't say:

- **"But you look so good!"** after a member shares about her illness. This implies, "If you were *really* sick, it would show." Most individuals with chronic illness display no visible symptoms.
- **"I understand."** People experience pain differently, so you probably don't understand.
- **"All things work together for good"** or similar sentiments. Avoid offering what can sound like pat answers for a complex situation.
- **"It could be worse."** This implies, "Buck up. It's not as bad as it seems."

Do say:

- **"Know that you're not alone.** We are here to support you."
- **"I admire your strength and courage."**
- **"Can you tell me more** about your illness and how it affects you? I want to understand what you're experiencing." However, let them know it's OK if they prefer not to talk about it.

Don't:

- **Assume they can no longer serve in ministry.** Focus on what they *can* do, and create opportunities for them to serve. Allow them to define their limitations, recognizing that those limitations may change daily.
- **Pity them.** God can and will redeem their suffering and use it for His glory.
- **Chastise them** if they question God's goodness. Instead, reassure them of God's love, grace, and mercy.

Do:

- **Be flexible.** Chronic illness is often unpredictable. Canceling an activity at the last minute may be unavoidable.
- **Watch for depression.** The emotional challenges that accompany chronic illness can take a greater toll than the physical symptoms. Suggest professional counseling if necessary.
- **Support their marriage.** The divorce rate for the chronically ill exceeds 75 percent. If the couple has children, offer to watch them so the couple can spend time together.
- **Value their experience.** Those living with chronic illness often have unique spiritual insights. Invite them to share their stories with others. ⊕

