

Fall 2022 – Building Spiritual Friendships

1) Vision: Ephesians 2, Built together into a spiritual dwelling-place.

Spiritual Blessings in Christ.

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. 4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will-- 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace 8 that he lavished on us (Eph 1:3-8 NIV)

Belonging to God.

8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Eph 2:8-10 NIV)

Built together as a spiritual dwelling place.

18 For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. 19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. (Eph 2:18-22 NIV)

Friendship

Name and describe a Best Friend you had when you were a little kid. What made it great between the two of you?

Describe what you think makes *adult friendship* truly great – beyond the acquaintance level. What would make a “best friend” for you at this stage of life?

“Friendship is that virtue by which spirits are bound by ties of love and sweetness, and out of many are made one. Even the philosophers of this world have ranked friendship not with things casual or transitory but with the virtues which are eternal.” *Aelred of Rievaulx*

Spiritual Friendship

“Ordinary friendships are generally characterized by intimacy, trust and mutual enjoyment. Spiritual friends share those qualities but are also characterized by another element: spiritual friends actively help us pay attention to God. Soul friends help us sit with God - they have the capacity to help us restore life to the soul.” *Mindy Caliquire*

“Spiritual Friendship is not primarily a matter of doing certain things. ... Spiritual Friendship is a *gift* of hospitality, presence and dialogue. While there is an element of *doing* in these three, they are more grounded in ways of *being*.” *David Benner*

“We have probably wondered in our many lonesome moments if there is one corner in the competitive, demanding world where it is safe to be relaxed, to expose ourselves to someone else, and to give unconditionally. It might be very small and hidden. But if this corner exists, it calls for a search through the complexities of our human relationships in order to find it.” *Henri Nouwen*

Summarize: Someone put it in a sentence. What is Spiritual Friendship?

Can you think of examples of this kind of friendship in scripture (read between the lines if we need to)?

2) Praxis: SYNTREK – a pattern for exploring spiritual friendship with another.

Syntreko – *gk: to run together.* Mark 6:33

Getting started: Find a running-mate. Find your corner. Find your rhythm.



Corner-time (30-45 min max)

- Meet, greet, eat (hospitality, 5 minutes to get a beverage and find a spot to sit)
- 10 minutes - one person talk, the other listen (catching up, where have I seen God, what do I need from him these days).
- 10 minutes - switch roles, the other person gets to talk, you get to listen.
- 5-10 minutes, spiritual input, what might God be saying? Pray for one another.
- Agree on next week's time/place OR make an adjustment if a conflict pops up.

Three things to avoid:

1. Avoid giving your corner away or having it stolen. Protect the time. It's short, but precious. The rhythm you establish after meeting consecutively just a few times is what makes Syntrek work!
2. Keep the reciprocity factor high! Don't allow one person to dominate the time. Be equally transparent while respecting boundaries. Share your minutes evenly.
3. Avoid talking the whole time away. After you've heard from each other, together listen to God as you encourage and pray for one another. Ask God for the specific things you need.

Resources

- Coming soon: The Syntrek Blog: Spiritual Friendship perspectives, adventures and resources. Find it at this link <https://syntrek.blog/>
- Spiritual Friendship by Mindy Caliguire (study and discussion guide for individuals or groups).
- Sacred Companions by David Benner
- Sacred Rhythms by Ruth Haley Barton. And Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership (book and pod-cast)

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