



SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIP

We are all richer for understanding not only what we have to offer the people in our lives, but understanding what they have to offer, as well.

Spiritual friendship is different from mentoring. There isn't any kind of hierarchy in a spiritual friendship—it's not one person as the "expert" and the other as the "learner." Spiritual friendship is learning to see the worth God has placed in each person and appreciating the gifts individuals have to offer. It's being willing to share when you need to share and learn when you need to learn. It's caring for the well-being of the other person and letting them care for you as well. Giving and receiving. Walking side by side through different seasons of life.


Spiritual friendships are not a one-way path of growth. As we allow people to build into us, we are enabled and strengthened to build into others.

 **Caring:** In healthy friendships, we care deeply for our friends, seeking to hold them up in their weak places.

 **Accepting:** We learn to lovingly accept each person's heart and gifts.

 **Serving:** We develop the desire to serve those around us.

 **Offering Hospitality:** We reach out in hospitality, providing a safe and warm space for our friends to be with us.

 **Encouraging:** And above all, we learn to live in the rhythm of encouragement, speaking life and hope often.

These five elements of spiritual friendship—caring, accepting, serving, offering hospitality, and encouraging others—are woven throughout life and relationships. Each of these things overlaps and flows through the others, creating a strong cord of friendship that cannot be broken.

Consider how you can engage in spiritual friendships:

- What do you think about the difference between a mentor and a spiritual friend?
- Who has been a spiritual friend to you?
- What barriers do you face to building rich spiritual friendships?
- What are you currently wrestling with that would benefit from someone speaking into your life? Who do you know (even if you don't know them well!) who could provide insight and help?
- Who in your life can you reach out to and invest in?
- There are five elements of spiritual friendship: caring, accepting, serving, offering hospitality, and encouraging others. Which of these is hardest for you? Which of these comes easily to you?