

Growing as a Spiritual Friend

Spiritual friendships can be cultivated, starting with ourselves. Being a good spiritual friend is an important first step in having good spiritual friendships. If spiritual friendships have God's Presence woven into them, are you hosting His Presence in your life? Are you practicing ways to make others feel safe and loved? Do you allow others to wrestle with God? Do you seek to know others or do you seek something from them?

We can also be proactive. Spiritual friendships won't happen by chance – we must prioritise and honour them. By showing up vulnerably and trusting friends with our own hearts, we invite others to do the same. And when they do likewise, we love them well by respecting confidentiality and giving space for them to be themselves. Take care, though, that being vulnerable can feel risky, so use wisdom as to when, how, and with whom.

While we do our part in nurturing spiritual friendships, it cannot be forced. Commit to leading yourself, entrust your friendships to God, and allow the Holy Spirit to grow you and your friendships in His way and in His time.

Who You Are – Be a safe person.

Self-Reflection: What makes you feel safe in a friendship? Now think about how you could make your friends feel safe. Commit to growing as a person who makes others feel safe.

Some characteristics of a safe person:

1. Honest & authentic - be yourself, be vulnerable. Invite your friend into your story.
2. Trustworthy - say what you mean and mean what you say. Keep your friend's secrets.
3. Available - make time for your friend, and hold space with them in their story.
4. Encouraging - make room for Jesus to show up. Don't simply give advice or try to fix.
5. Loyal - show acceptance through the ups and downs. Show grace in the conflicts.

What You Do – Listen well.

Self-Reflection: How do you know if someone is listening well, and how does that make you feel? Think about your own listening habits. Commit to growing as a person who is quick to listen, slow to speak.

Three ways to listen better:

1. Listen with your whole self - MIND, BODY, WORDS, HEART, INTUITION.
2. Listen to what your friend is saying.
 - i. Listen to understand their story - leave your own judgments behind.
 - ii. Listen to create connection - without connection, there is no trust. Without trust, there is no true leadership, without leadership, we can bridge the mentee to God through our involvement.
 - iii. Listen to discern the unspoken - listen for what is on their heart, pay attention to body language, feelings, and tone.
3. Listen to what the Holy Spirit is prompting.
 - iv. Listen to discern meaning / God's mission.
 - i. Ask the Holy Spirit for further insight, and listen for clarification about what to share and how to release blessing to your friend.