

Refreshing Friendship

Series: Flourish

Sara Oh and Senior Pastor Andrew Gardener | 14 March 2021

Today Ps. Andrew had an interview with Sara about cultivating spiritual friends in life that you can each be vulnerable, refreshed and spurred on towards love.

- When you hear about spiritual friendship, what comes to your mind?
- Do you long for such friendship?

Part One | Relationship and Love

Sara shared about the fundamental thing about friendship, “***spiritual friendships and mentoring are about relationship – two people who turn their hearts toward one another with intention to love and serve. This may sound obvious, but it’s possible to over-complicate things and overlook the fundamental thing.***”

- How do you think COVID has impacted our relationships?
- What have you learnt about yourself and others during this time?

Sara shared her experience in this isolated season, “*I have felt isolated at times. But I have also been able to **show up and be more vulnerable and present with people in their joys and sorrows**, and see that we are all image-bearers of God struggling to find our way home.*”

Part Two | The practice of Live Giving Relationship | Read John 13:1-15 & 14:6

Sara said, “*God did not primarily give us salvation—God gave us Jesus, and Jesus gave himself. When we face difficulty, we often want to be saved from our situation—but Jesus gives himself—and salvation is found in him. Salvation, instructions—these things become available to us as we walk in life-giving relationship with Jesus.*”

- How are you inspired by Jesus’s life-giving relationship in your own life?

Sara said “*practicing life-giving relationships with one another flows out of practicing life-giving relationship with Jesus. In keeping the greatest commandment, the action is love; we are the main actors, the ones doing the action of loving—first we love God, and then we love others as we love ourselves.*”

- What does a life-giving relationship with Jesus look like in your mind?
- How do you think we can live out that life-giving relationship?

She also shared some practical ways to give ourselves away, *“I invited a friend to truthfully and courageously mirror back to me what she sees in me as I walk out my healing. I offered her greater access to my heart and my commitment to be her mirror in return. My healing will help me to be a better lover, and loving others will help me toward deeper healing. **Our healing helps us love others better.** This is the relational rhythm Jesus invites us into when he loves us and tells us to love others in the same way.”*

- How do you think inviting a friend to your healing journey can help you with loving people?
- Do you find it hard to invite a friend to do similar thing as Sara did? Why?

Ps Andrew said, *“there were moments where you were able to be strong for another, and moments where you needed to be strong for them. I think this collaborative environment of support and love is what Spiritual Friendships are all about – they are a help as much as they are an opportunity for us to help.”*

- Read Mark 2:1-12, how are you inspired by the friendship of the paralyzed man and his friends?
- Have you experienced the help from your friends that helped you through a difficult time? Please share your experience.

Part Three | Growing in Love

Sara shared some tips with us, *“The most important tip I could give is to show up and begin. Begin with yourself, begin where you are, and begin today. Every one of us has the power to cultivate deeper friendships instead of waiting for them to happen. And think about how you can be the kind of friend you would like to receive.”*

- What kind of friend would you like to receive or to share your life with?
- Reflect on the questions Sara asked: Can you arrange to meet regularly?
- Can you agree to share openly without judging or giving advice?

Sara encouraged us that, *“Whatever you do, make intentional time for friendship and take courage. You may need to take some risks, but the rewards are great!”*

Ps. Andrew has shared an exercise for us to do, *“go for a one hour walk with someone. For the first 30 mins one of you shares their life story and the other just listens. Then for the next 30 mins the roles swap. After the hour, grab a coffee and share what you have learnt about each other.”*

Spiritual Formation Toolkit

Visit <https://vinechurch.life/resources/toolkit/> for some practical ways to start cultivating spiritual friendship!