

**PURSING GOD TOGETHER**  
A Simple Model for Practicing Spiritual Friendships



Two Key Passages to Set the Vision

1. Jesus' Vision: Matthew 28:18-20

*Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

2. Paul's Approach & Model: 2 Timothy 2:1-2

*You, Timothy, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.*

- there are 4 "generations" of Jesus followers represented here: you → witnesses → reliable people → others

- The goal is to "focus on a few," to invest time and life-experience in a core group of spiritual friends, practicing together how to actually live the life of Jesus in our time, who then will pass that on to others.

One Simple, Flexible Model for Carrying This Vision Out

Key Verses: **Mark 3:14; Mark 12:30**

*Jesus appointed twelve, that they might be with him and that he might send them out . . .*

*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.*

This model is about simply sharing two main things: (1) *time*—meet *regularly* (weekly, or every other week) for an hour or hour and a half to experience God and life together and (2) *life*—just share spiritual friendship together in all the ways we typically do: eat together, learn together, play together, serve together, etc.

To accomplish this, we seek to balance giving all three aspects of our lives to God:

1. Head: in some way, expose our minds to God's story, ways and words—like exploring some book of the Bible, spiritual or discipleship study material, or other Christian book
  2. Heart: begin to practice sharing victories, questions, struggles, and encouragement by talking about what's going on in your life and praying *authentically* with each other
  3. Hands: *practice* together living like Jesus, using the classic spiritual disciplines, engaging in some service or mission together in the church or community, or some simple way of living out God's story
- From the beginning, the long-term goal of this time together is to *pass this practice of spiritual friendship on* to a few other people who also want to learn to live like Christ. Don't let it end just with the first group.
  - An important principle to keep in mind is that each person, life-stage & group is *unique*: be willing to experiment with different practices, approaches, and rhythms that work for you. Avoid the "ditches" on both sides of the street—legalism on one side and complacency/unintentionality on the other.

## SOME POSSIBLE IDEAS AND RESOURCES FOR THE BALANCING TIME TOGETHER

### Head: Resources & Ideas for Engaging the Mind

- \* Any Bible Book/Passage: try a Gospel, Acts, a Psalm, or some Bible reading plan (see *YouVersion* app) \*  
~3 questions: who is God from this text; who am I; how might I respond in life right now?  
~Or “Sacred Reading (*Lectio*): Read, Reflect (repeat word or phrase), Respond (pray), Rest (quiet)

1. *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Formation*, Ruth Haley Barton  
- one of the best single books to begin with for spiritual growth, balances depth & readability
2. Series: *The Good & Beautiful God; The Good & Beautiful Life; The Good & Beautiful Community*  
- one of the best series you can find on spiritual growth & formation, by James Bryan Smith
3. *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life*, Marjorie Thompson  
- fantastic overview of living the life of Jesus, a little deeper & broader, but still very readable
4. *Living God’s Love: An Invitation to Christian Spirituality*, Gary Holloway & Earl Lavender  
- wonderful, easy to read introduction to living God’s life, especially accessible to the beginner
5. *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation*, Robert Mulholland (or *The Deeper Journey*)  
- an excellent overview of the vision and process of discipleship (now expanded by Ruth Haley Barton)
6. *Apprenticeship with Jesus: Learning to Live Like the Master*, Gary Moon  
- a simple, fun approach to the life of Jesus: tracks a 30 day experience together
7. *The Me I Want to Be: Becoming God’s Best Version of You*, John Ortberg (or *The Life I’ve Always Wanted*)  
- simple reads, but great approaches to pursuing the life of Jesus
8. *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God*, Henry Blackaby & Claude King  
- a “contemporary classic” that lays out in practical ways how to experience life with God
9. *Devotional Classics*, Richard Foster (or the companion book to this called *Spiritual Classics*)  
- both give a great “buffet” of brief sections taken from Christian classics throughout history
10. *The Way of the Heart*, Henri Nouwen (or really any book by Nouwen)  
- a ‘delightfully short’ book on solitude, silence, and prayer
11. *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, Richard Foster  
- the contemporary classic introduction to the spiritual disciplines, gives good ‘how to’s’
12. *Spirit of the Disciplines*, Dallas Willard (or *Divine Conspiracy*, or *Renovation of the Heart*)  
- inspires the vision of authentic discipleship; harder reads, but rich depth on why to pursue this

### Heart & Hands: Resources & Ideas for Engaging the Heart and Physical Life

1. To jumpstart Sharing: here are a few questions can be helpful to get started each week  
- what has been most life-giving to you recently; what has been most life-draining?  
- how have you seen or experienced God working in your life or in those around you?  
- how’s your walk: where are you being attacked/struggling & how’ve you experienced victory?  
- how can we get your back: how can we support, pray for and help you this week?
2. Prayer Resources: you might try varying the way you pray, method, posture, etc..  
- ACTS prayer: adoration (praise), confession, thanks, supplication (requests)  
- Scripture prayer: pick out a Psalm or brief passage & pray off of those words (or Sacred Reading above)  
- Name prayers: allow a time in prayer where you just bring names before God  
- Silent prayer/Centering prayer/Meditation: use a scripture or word to center, then simply be with God  
- Written prayers: take a minute and write your own prayer or ‘psalm’ & share it  
- Classic Historical Prayers: using the *Book of Common Prayer* or other form of “daily office” prayer
3. Hands  
- Try practicing a different spiritual discipline each month or for a period of time  
- Give some money or time together to a meaningful cause, ministry, or needy person (“Matthew 25 people”)  
- Do a prayer walk together through an important or needy part of the city, neighborhood, etc.  
- Fast together and break the fast together in a joint prayer time and meal  
- Pray for different countries, missionaries, or community ministries/organizations