



Developing Spiritual Friendships

Building Christ-Centered Friendships With The People Around You

*We all desire to be in relationship with other people, but often that is much easier said than done. The following is an excerpt from *The Pursuit of God in the Company of Friends* by Richard Lamb.*

In all of our culture's mad dash toward whatever is next, I believe God is what you and I are actually looking for. Not just ideas about God, not just the truth about God, but God Himself. Whether we fully acknowledge it or not, we seek His presence and His power. We long to see the reality of His life and work available to us. But we want (and need) to find Him with our friends. This journey is worth undertaking, and we want to share it with others.

If what you want is friendship—deep, satisfying, purposeful, long-lasting friendship—I believe the only way to find it is to pursue God. If what you want is God—the certainty of His work in your life, the sense of His empowerment and blessing on your activity and pursuits—I believe that desire will bring you into contact and deeper relationship with a community of friends shaped by the same pursuit. We desire involvement in something larger than we are, connected to others and fused to the heart of God.

Jesus gathered a group of people together, some good friends and brothers, some complete strangers and natural enemies, and eventually He told them that by their love for one another people would know that they had been touched and changed by God. He told His disciples that their friendships would either make or break the mission of the church, His mission in the world.

Spiritual Friendship Helps Us Move:

- *From individualism to community*
- *From privacy to openness*
- *From superficiality to authenticity*
- *From concepts to transformation*

What would it be like to pursue—and find—God in the company of friends? What would those friendships look like? Spiritual friendship is built upon a willingness to talk of our hopes and doubts the way the first disciples, and disciples down through the centuries, have done. Yet too often we leave out of our conversation our deepest longings and fears about life and about God.

By contrast, spiritual friendship for almost all of us involves movement or growth of some kind. It means making choices to embrace values we may not have prized previously or to consciously work against the broader culture's assumptions and beliefs.

For some of us, friendship itself is difficult; for others, making friendship spiritual is the hard part; for still others, making spiritual relationships authentic has been a stumbling block.

Jesus brought together a group of friends who were to become better friends. These friendships came to have Jesus in the center and life with God as their focus. Why did Jesus bring together this group? Because (among other things) people need each other in order to find God.

Jesus invites us into a company of diverse friends because we need each other. He invites us to join this company that is together in their pursuit of God, to learn from and grow to love each other in that pursuit.

- 1) Discuss this excerpt. Are there any statements that appeal to you or cause you to think differently about friendship?
- 2) In what ways might it be beneficial for you to be in a Life Group with people who are not your closest friends?
- 3) Re-read the sixth paragraph. In what ways is purposeful, spiritual friendship most challenging for you?
- 4) Though spiritual friendship is less spontaneous & more organized than "organic" friendship, in what ways might spiritual friendship actually become *more* authentic than spontaneous, random friendship?
- 5) Read Acts 2:42-47. What does this look like for you? Where are you finding it? How are you practicing what we push in Life Groups personally?
- 6) What would you personally hope for in a Life Group?

