

- Share immediate concerns.
- Evaluate your time together periodically.
- Encourage, encourage, and encourage: “come alongside.”

¹ Adapted from “Habits of the Heart,” a spiritual formation retreat developed by the Evangelical Covenant Church.

² David G. Benner, *Sacred Companions*, (Downers Grove IL, 2002).

³ Paul D. Stanley and J. Robert Clinton, *Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life*, (Colorado Springs, 1992).

⁴ Benner, *Sacred Companions*.



So you’ve made the decision to follow Jesus. Whether that was long ago or just today, you have entered a lifelong process of growth. Spiritual growth needs to be nurtured through regular spiritual practices, sometimes called disciplines. There are many from which you can choose.

Becoming Spiritual Companions is a practice in which we offer encouragement and support for one another. Whether you call this relationship spiritual direction, discipling, mentoring, or spiritual friendship, the goal is to be formed into the likeness of Christ.

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MAY YOU, THROUGH THE TRANSFORMING WORK
OF THE SPIRIT, GROW EVER DEEPER IN CHRIST...
AND FURTHER IN HIS KINGDOM MISSION.

This spiritual growth tool is part of a series. To learn more about these resources, contact the Covenant Resource Center by email at resource.center@covchurch.org or phone at 800.338.IDEA (4332).

Seeking a deeper relationship with Christ? Then you will need the support, encouragement and accountability that a soul friend can offer. Being formed into the likeness of Christ requires companions for the journey to help guide and nurture our faith, and to help us discern God's movement in our lives. Spiritual companions, or "soul friends," are found throughout scripture – Moses and Joshua, Ruth and Naomi, David and Jonathan, Paul and Timothy, to name a few. Soul friends provide soul care for others.

There are several variations of spiritual companionship¹.

Spiritual Direction

A relationship of holy listening, discernment, and prayer, providing encouragement and accountability. This is a "prayer process in which a person seeking help in cultivating a deeper personal relationship with God meets with another for prayer and conversation that is focused on increasing awareness of God in the midst of life experiences and facilitating surrender to God's will."²

- How do you discern the movement of God in your life?

Spiritual Friendship

A relationship for mutual accountability and encouragement with the express purpose of spiritual growth. Spiritual friends can mutually help one another take notice of God's presence and our response to that presence.

- Who is holding you accountable to grow spiritually?

Discipling

A relationship of encouragement and guidance between a more mature disciple and a (spiritually) younger believer for the purpose of moving the disciplined toward

spiritual maturity.

- Who might benefit from your spiritual wisdom? And who has the potential for helping you move toward maturity?

Christian Mentoring

Is a relationship in which one person empowers another by sharing their God-given resources.³ This process of guiding one to his or her maximum potential in Jesus Christ is generally done through personal modeling, guidance and encouragement.

- Who in your faith community models wisdom and active growth in Christ?

"As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another."—Proverbs 27:17

"We were never intended to make the life pilgrimage alone. . . We want companions for the journey, companions with whom we can share our soul and our journey."⁴

A Process for Spiritual Companionship:

1. Prayerfully begin with yourself and your own needs.
2. Prayerfully seek another with the same mutual spiritual needs.
3. In continuing the relationship, here is a possible agenda:
 - Define the "covenant" between you (a mutual agreement, basic and practical decisions, confidentiality, etc.).
 - Share your spiritual pilgrimages.
 - Develop a "personal vision" or "rule of life" (spiritual and relational growth goals that can become a focus for your conversations).
 - Decide on specific disciplines or relationships that need encouragement and accountability.
 - Pray together in silent and spoken times.