



Friendship – A spiritual practice

I haven't always been, or known how, to be a good friend. I love my friends and I truly deeply care for them. But at times I have failed at showing that. For reasons like: fear of being vulnerable, not wanting to be a burden, fear of inadequacy, a fear too much time passed, or fear that they didn't like me. Some of it was also my immaturity, personality, or selfishness.

Over the last 11 years, prayer has been a consistent Spiritual Practice in my life that has helped me grow. I have come to realize that every part of my life needs to be formed/transformed by the Spirit. There was a time I thought about my spirituality and connection to God as being one thing to work on, and the rest of me as something else, separate somehow. I have discovered over the last decade the power of the 'inward and outward journey' through this with prayer, my friendships have evolved.

The Author Henry Nowen shares: "Only out of the prayerful place of solitude and introspection can we hope for community and ministry. The journey inward precedes the journey outward, and the chronology is important. Spiritually, we need to know our selves and God in order to know other people. We need to love our selves and God in order to love each other. Communion with God precedes community with others and ministry in the world. Once the inward journey has begun, we can move outwardly from solitude to community and ministry." (Nouwen, *Spiritual Formation: Following the Movements of the Spirit*)

The 'inward journey' is about seeking a deeper knowledge of ourselves and God. And, having 'authentic honesty'-honesty to ourselves and to God. I have found strength, authenticity, and growth by using consistent daily or weekly spiritual practices of: reflection, meditation, prayer, journal writing and times of retreat.

The 'outward journey' starts with listening to the invitation from Spirit, and then it is a movement toward action on that invitation.

The 'inward and outward journey' is not just a one and done thing. It is something I have had to consistently keep going back to throughout my life and discipleship.

Life obstacles and distractions often interfere with the routine of spiritual practices, and frequently I have to remember to take time for spiritual formation again and again.

The following is a Spiritual practice of prayer and journaling, focussed on friendship.

Take some time and create Sacred Space in your home.

Sacred Space:

A simple definition is any space that allows us to more easily connect with God.

The most beautiful space in the world will not be sacred if my mind is distracted, and the reverse- a tremendously ordinary location can be a place of deep spiritual meaning if I am in the right mindset.

Create Sacred Space:

Find a space at your home to sit quietly and intentionally to be with God. This could be a corner of a room not used, or a cupboard or somewhere outside. You may choose to light a candle and/or have meditation music playing in your space.

Journaling: The Inward journey—Spend some time to journal your thoughts:

- What distractions or resistances are keeping you from seeing the light that resides within you?

Centering moment: Allow Gods light to fill you. Linger and rest surrounded by the light.

Prayer: (You may choose to say your own prayer, or read the one below)

Dear God,

Open my heart to see the full glory of how friendship enriches my life. May I vision each friendship as a gift from your most loving heavenly spirit.

As I explore the journey of friendship, navigating each one differently, may I seek to know your spirit that uniquely dwells within each friend. God, in each unique connection, create energy toward building each other up to be our most highest selves.

Especially in this time of more physical separations, allow my focus to shift from inward to outward so I may seek to think of another's needs today. Reaching out to share my love for another.

In my friendships help me delve deeper into the spirit of who I am, unearthing new discoveries of my soul. Open me to examine the calling set on my life in each special friendship.

Today, draw my attention to the supporters, cheerleader, friends in my life, that have always been there. The friends that have seen me, loved me with my light burning bright and with it dim. Friends, that have brought me joy, love, laughter. Provoke an action of gratitude in my friendships, and allow that loving energy to manifest into praise and thanksgiving that outwardly pours from me today.

God, strengthen me to walk in the direction of love and not of fear. Encourage me to be authentic and vulnerable with the souls already in my life, and those that are yet to enter. Allow me drop the flawless ideal of friendship and embrace the imperfect perfectness of friendship. May I see each friendship as a whole, and

observe the gift that each friendship brings in each season of life.

I ask your Spirit to help me put aside petty disagreements and focus on the gift of soul connection and vulnerability that true friendship brings. Forgiveness is Spirits gift to myself first and then to others. God, allow any unnecessary blockages to melt away. Enlightening me to focus on the true meaning and depth of the friendships I hold.

Friendships fill the hole that exists within, allowing me to get a glimpse of the eternal spirits thoughts, voice, touch. Within each true friendship exists a space for your spirit to touch each of our lives. Enter in me today and energize my soul. Let the full beauty of friendship wash over my soul.

Thank you for your Spirit that whispers through the land, the same ceaseless Spirit nudging me closer in relationship with you, your loving Spirit, ever present in my life.

Amen

Prayer phrase for the day: I hold my Friendships in the Loving Light of God.



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