

Spiritual Practices for Thriving Life

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Inspire Intimately

How did someone you admire take you under their wing and *intimately* train you?

In what ways are you the person you aspire to be when surrounded with your various circles of influence?

What are two ways you can bring out the most Christlike version of others as you spend time with them?

Acts 2:43-47 – ⁴³Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. ⁴⁴All who believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

I) Learning Street Smarts...

People are weird. We tend to segment parts of our lives, even using terms like *work-life balance* to describe the parts. Yet, most of us are drawn to socializing with coworkers, other parents, those with whom we share those parts. We intrinsically want to break the barriers, at least with some. This attraction is not coincidental; God made us to share life with Him and each other. Not narrow segments, but all of it. It is only through *intimacy* we are truly restored back into His image.

◆ **Look the part:** What *attracts* you to others? Often, it is a sense of rightness, being near the ideal we have for what another ought to be. “Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles (Acts 2:43).” Jesus drew attention to Himself and *inspired* believers because people sensed He was the ideal human. Now we see His apostles do the same. This point is repeated because of its importance to our mission. We will not

become *intimate* with people who are not *attracted* to us in the first place. And as we will see, we need these *intimate* bonds.

◆ **Know the unwritten rules:** Some are more than *attracted*, they are *inspired*. They want to excel, make meaningful contribution to their community, however this is defined. These are worthy of our time and attention. Not just working together on a project. Time together to talk about why we do what we do, how we think, telling stories of our experiences that inform. It is by these *intimate* moments we transform ourselves “by the renewing of your minds (Rom 12:2).” The “wonders and signs (Acts 2:43),” stimulated belief and *inspired* some to pursue new life. It is for this pursuit that “All who believed were together and had all things in common (v44).” The church organized life to create time and space for “the unity of the Spirit (Eph 4:3)” to bond, teach, and train. Serving the mission overrode the selfish desire for control.

II) Stronger Together...

When we are the *attractive* ones, it is tempting to think the benefit is to the other. We coach them how to excel at something, promote their ideal. Our benefit is intangible, feeling good about ourselves...and we should, but not in a prideful way. There are two key reasons it is valuable – no, necessary – to our wellbeing that we *intimately* train others in the ways of Jesus.

◆ **Rise to the challenge:** Few worthy pursuits are completely individual. Work teams, group research projects, even the arts require many working *intimately* to do amazing. Great writers are made excellent by insightful editors. Musicians produce legendary work with talented producers. We are our best selves as we love selflessly. Jesus identifies with “the least of these who are members of my family (Mt 25:40).” When Jesus followers “sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need (Acts 2:45),” we are producing our masterpiece of faith, hope, and love. We are living on faith that God provides, experiencing hope for a future of peace and unity, loving Jesus by glorifying Him, and loving others by treating them as worthy. The emphasis should be on the drive and desire to satisfy needs, which provides the opportunity for us to “lay down one’s life for one’s friends (John 15:13).”

◆ **The devil is in the details:** The cliché *pride comes before the fall* is usually true. When we glory in our *attractiveness*, we start to see ourselves through the lens of myth. Feeling immune to common danger, we take unnecessary and unwise risks. Skipping preparation, underestimating competition, ignoring our wellbeing. Moments

training others remind us of the foundations of being our best. They also create a sense of accountability, knowing our trainees watch what we do as much as hear what we say. “Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple (Acts 2:46),” demonstrating a healthy way of life in society. Rather than fall prey to griping about what they experienced in society, “they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of the people (v46-47).” We renew our resolve to be excellent as we show and tell others how to do it, particularly when recentering on the source of and reason for our being.

III) Run With the Pack...

Individualism limits our potential and increases our danger. Worse than the risk of complacency is the threat of being targeted. In competition, underdogs seem to come from nowhere when they win. No one was paying them attention. That changes after victory. Jesus knows He is “sending [us] out like sheep into the midst of wolves (Mt 10:16),” and that “like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour (1 Pet 5:8).” How do wolves and lions hunt...?

◆ **Strength in numbers:** Bonds of *intimacy* increase dedication to one another. Many soldiers who served together profess greater loyalty to one another than their siblings. Enduring opposition together, protecting one another, vulnerably revealing fears and desires, these cause us to close ranks to repel threats. The health of the church *attracted* others who likewise wanted to live freely in the safe confines of community. Wolves, lions, and Satan prefer to attack through isolation. They create fear, causing herds to flee in panic, dispersing and leaving some behind. Cut off from the pack, individual prey are lost. “And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved (Acts 2:47).” Jesus saves us not only from separation from God, but from the attacks of Satan. He does so by joining us with His pack that does not run.

◆ **May we be our best:** Jesus left His followers with a mission that fulfills itself as we pursue it. As we invite those outside the church to join us, we make disciples. New disciples increase our resolve and security in the faith to be our best selves. As we seek the will of God in this local church, pray over how He will prosper you through the *intimate* relationships you build in this faith community.