

Friends such as these help me to ask the questions “what is the Voice saying to me?” and “do I care enough to listen?”

Encourage One Another (1 Thessalonians 5:11; Hebrews 3:13)

We have basically three groups of friends. There are those we have known a long time, and with whom we share a backlog of experiences and battles we have fought together. We started our careers, established our families, and forged our faith lives together. They encourage me by their confident faithfulness and the way they care about me, my wife, my children, and now my grand kids.

We also have companions who are too old to be our children but have entered our reciprocal circle of care over the years. We rely upon them for their energy, their emerging passion, and their respect for our experience. They encourage us by their active embrace of Kingdom spirituality as they try to do their best to build God-honoring homes.


We are also grow increasingly excited about our younger friends. As they sift through various philosophies and make their own decisions of faith, they encourage us by their openness and their willingness to submit to God’s hand upon their lives. Their energy for life and God spur us on. Each of these generations of friends encourage us to ask the questions: How do I help someone to continue moving forward? What words will help spur others on? How can I learn to speak words of life?

There have been so many stories which have come to mind as I have written *Curious Journey* and put together *Fourthstream.com*. These are just a few of the people who have shaped our souls. There are many others. Each of your gifts has touched us in deep ways. From you (and many others like you) we have learned the basics of giving and receiving words of life. Our friends and companions have incrementally

drawn us toward fusion with my Creator.

What relationships do you consider to be substantive ones in your journey? Who would be your top 5 best friends? Why are they? What kinds of companionship can humans experience?

SNAPSHOT



Sarah and Alex are learning to have a Kingdom home. They have started to build their life together with a common foundation of submission to their King, Jesus Christ. Their faith is very organic in that they try to understand what Jesus wants and then let His desires begin to take over the foundation of their hearts. They have chosen the hard path of oneness in marriage, growing in character, and pleasing God. They have decided to roll up their sleeves and engage the arduous work of building a Kingdom life.

Some of their free time is invested understanding the scriptures, praying for their friends-family-neighbors, and enjoying activities that put them into close proximity with people who know the King - as well as people who do not. Like us they work on their home, pursue their interests, keep in touch with their families, argue, burn meals, and on occasion get sick of work and life. At the end of each week they sit down and talk about what worked and what didn’t and they make plans for another week.

While Christianity and “church” is a touchstone in their lives - pleasing their King has captured their imaginations. They believe every dollar they earn, every hour they live, and every circumstance they encounter is an opportunity for God’s

glory to unfold in their lives. As they pursue vocational goals, set their standard of living, and determine the extent of what they will choose to give to God's Kingdom. Alex and Sarah see their faith as a compass - sifting decisions to have children, change jobs, open their home to others - all through the grid of "what will most honor our King?"

Brad and Alisha come to Sarah and Alex's home every Friday night. They play cards, cook out in the summer, and play with Brad and Alisha's 10 month old, Jessica. The baby is comfortable going to sleep in a pack-and-play crib that Sarah and Alex have set up in their extra bedroom. After dinner and when the baby is asleep, sometimes they will all sit and talk about their week, read passages from the scriptures, and pray for each other. Some of their mutual friends stop in. Bob is a widower from next door. He feels comfortable in Sarah and Alex's home because they have included him over a period of many months. Occasional spur-of-the-moment invitations to lunch or dinner, a helping hand pulling out the overgrown bushes in Bob's back yard; everyday things where Alex has included Bob have begun to build a trusting relationship.

Alex and Brad get together for breakfast each week to talk about what Jesus wants from them as spiritual men. They also invite friends from work and the neighborhood with whom they are engaging in discussions about being husbands. On Saturday afternoons Brad and Alisha get a sitter and go to the Starbucks down the street, inviting friends and neighbors to participate as they talk. They have gotten to know the people who work at the shop and have carved out their little corner to laugh, talk, and experience life with their friends. They are also getting to know each other's families as the years unfold, and include one another in birthdays and celebrations with their respective families whenever it is appropriate.

While this story sounds pretty common-place and unspectacular, it is exactly the kind of life Jesus encourages His

followers to pursue. By working together with others (Alex and Sarah/Brad and Alisha) these "neighbors" are contemplating the world God has set up for them - and trying to find the connections He has appointed through the process of living life. They may end up being long time friends together or this may be only for a time in their lives, but they are grateful to have mutual encouragement in listening to the Voice of their King - and a practical partnership as they do the "work" of the harvest.

Imagine if each of these couples were a part of another five or ten people coming to know Christ during their lifetimes and taught the same paradigm of Kingdom spirituality to these Christ-followers as well!? Like the servant Jesus praised for being faithful in little things, they could reap a huge harvest at the end of the age.

Kingdom spirituality is one of engagement. It is often not flashy or "big" - but intentional, grateful, and connected. It is a mustard seed full-grown to a plant with shelter-providing branches! It happens in the ordinary day-to-day lives of people like Alex and Sarah - like yours and mine!

What does your Kingdom life look like? Where do you see your own life bisecting what you know of the Kingdom? What do you think could be in the future, and what would make those things occur?