



INTENTIONAL SPIRITUAL RELATIONSHIPS



What are they?

Intentional spiritual relationships (ISRs) are relationships that are committed to increasing support and accountability in your desire to follow Jesus wholeheartedly. These are the people that we go deep with and share our lives with. Many of us may already have ISRs but not call them that, but many people don't. ISRs focus on how I live my everyday life as a disciple; they are designed to provide accountability and support and are marked by vulnerability and honesty. ISRs commit to meeting regularly and sharing honestly. ISRs work best when we plan to catch up around once a month and take the time to ask specific discipleship questions.

Why do I need them?

God intended for us to follow and become like Jesus in the context of community. Accountability is a missing discipleship component for many followers of Jesus. Who is watching out for your soul? Who can you be open, honest, and vulnerable with? Accountability is not a 'dirty' word, it provides an environment for spiritual growth because it allows for a safe place for us to be honest, confess our sins, celebrate our victories, pray for one another, and share what we are learning. Together we process what God is doing in our lives. We wrestle with Scripture and how to live it out in our ordinary everyday lives. We are reminded that we are not alone on the journey.

Who can I form an ISR with?

There are no hard and fast rules about who can and cannot be an ISR in your life. It can be someone you are already close with or someone you barely know, as long as you are both committed to the purpose of the relationship. In general, what you are most looking for in an ISR is someone who is committed to helping you become more like Jesus.

- An ISR can be a mentor – but it is also best to have 2-3 ISRs in the long run.
- An ISR can be a partner or spouse – but again, it is also best to have 2-3 ISRs in the long run.
- An ISR is someone who doesn't need to give you answers, but does need to keep you pointed to Jesus and ask good questions - so an ISR who is a different age, different stage of life, or different point in the journey is perfectly normal.


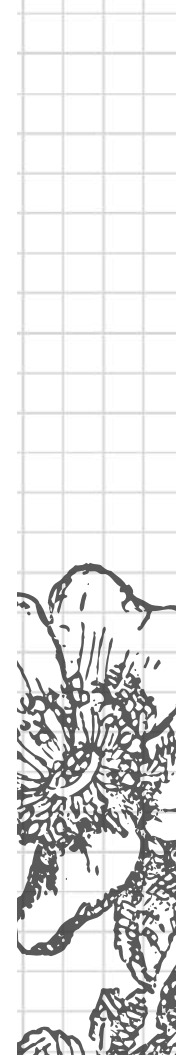
So, how do I find / start an Intentional Spiritual Relationship?


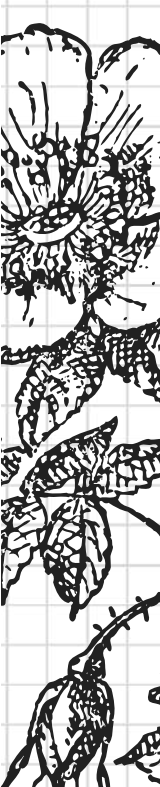
- Pray and ask God to lead you to a trusted person and ask them to form an Intentional Spiritual Relationship.
- Decide on a time, place, and how often you will meet. It doesn't always have to be in person.
- Discuss how you both want to grow spiritually. (Think all of life)
- Decide on a set of goals to accomplish or questions you will ask.
- Commit to praying for one another.

ISR's are an intentional practice that we engage in to support our desire to follow Jesus. ISR's take time and are developed over time. They are not about guilt or shame. As trust grows, connection deepens and provides a tool for spiritual growth. Take it slow and keep the focus on inspiring one another towards becoming more like Jesus.

How does it actually work?

ISRs commit to meeting regularly and sharing honestly. ISRs work best when we plan to catch up once a month and take the time to ask specific discipleship questions, such as:

1. Are you finding consistency in your daily time with God?
 2. What are you learning about God? And yourself?
 3. What steps of faith are you taking in obedience to Jesus?
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4. Are there areas of your life that are hindering spiritual growth?
 5. How are you making your family a priority in your life?
 6. What temptations are you facing?
 7. Are you enjoying time with God in prayer?
 8. What area of your life do you feel is not yielding to Jesus as King?
 9. Have your words and attitude reflected Christ this week?
 10. Are you honouring God with how you handle your finances?
 11. Is there someone in your life that you are finding hard to forgive?
 12. How are you showing love and care for your family?
 13. Where are you giving your time, talents, and treasure to serve the Lord?
 14. Is there an area of your life in which you are fighting discouragement?
 15. Is there someone you are praying for, that they would come to know and follow Jesus?
 16. What things are you grateful for?
 17. Next time we meet, what are you hoping to have grown in?
 18. Have you been honest in your answers?

These questions are not intended to be a run sheet or list to work through, but rather tools to support your ISR.

How do I know if it's an ISR?

An ISR is different to a buddy. Here are some signs it is an ISR:

- They lead you to Jesus. This is the heart of an ISR. They don't just empathise or give you advice. They ask you questions like, Where is Jesus in this? What would Jesus say about this?
- You go deep. You regularly get beyond the surface and share deeply. You talk about the real joys and struggles of daily life. You tell them things you wouldn't tell others.
- You tell each other what you don't want to hear. An ISR is someone who will challenge you and tell you what you need to hear not just what you want to hear.
- You're committed and intentional. This is someone that I know is committed to me. I know they want the best for me and are there for me if I need it. I see them routinely and make it a priority.




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Kids and Teens

ISRs are equally important for kids and teenagers in their discipleship. Studies show that kids and teens need around 5 intentional discipleship relationships in their life. From parents, to friends, to youth leaders, to aunts and uncles and grandparents.

A key way for a parent to be intentional for their child or teen's discipleship is to find, facilitate and foster ISR for them. A Christian parent is the primary discipler. The church family finds the place as leaders, spiritual aunts and uncles and a community who prioritises the next generation. How to start?

- Find out who's in your child's pod and create other ways to increase their time together. (playdate, bike rides, movies)
 - Are there kids they connect with in your Small Group? How can you foster those relationships?
 - Connect with other pod kids' parents; How can you foster those relationships?
 - Who is your child's pod leader; How can you invite them further into your family's life and invite them to further partner in your child's discipleship?
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GEORGES RIVER
LIFE CHURCH