

TOOL: Pursue Connection

One hour of significant friendship • Weekly



A significant friendship requires a certain depth to grow. It takes time, consistency, and connection in order to bear the fruit we hope for.

You've probably had seasons in life where there was time and consistency with a large group of people. We could select from that pool who we connected with and pursue deeper friendships. We could let connection determine the friendships we pursued. For example, we had 25 classmates and we could notice who we connected with and then pursue deeper relationships. We have coworkers we see each day, and we can notice our connections and then invite them to go deeper.

Things might feel different now. First of all, maybe we have a family. Maybe our relational capacity is spent pursuing those relationships. We don't even feel like we have the desire to pursue connection with anyone else. Or, maybe, in a post-COVID world, our families are the only people we see organically on a day to day basis. Maybe, if we are single, our lives don't organically intersect with any people on a consistent basis.

More and more as we grow in this world, natural connections are something that happen less and less without **intentionality**. If we want time, consistency, and connection we have to work at it.

Practice

This week we're going to practice pursuing time and consistency and connection.

TIME

Take a look at your week.

- Just off the top of your head, what do you have in your schedule that includes time with people? It doesn't have to be intentional or friend time, just start with a list of people you're going to spend time with this week.

- Now, look at that list. Are there people on that list you might want to pursue a more significant friendship with?
- Pick one person this week, and consider being more intentional with adding more “time” with them this week. Maybe this is coffee after work, or inviting them to stay for dinner.

CONSISTENCY

It’s hard to see people consistently who don’t organically intersect with your life, but if we want to pursue significant friendship, we might have to shift our lives so that those interactions happen more consistently.

Consider the person you are spending time with this week. What would it look like to add a consistent rhythm in which you see that person? For example:

- If they are a coworker, could you set a standard weekly appointment? Could you begin a rhythm of grabbing coffee in the morning together once a week? Could you do a happy hour on Fridays (even if it is virtual!) to recap your week?
- If the person is an old friend, could you start a “marco polo” account where you “polo” them on your way to work? Or set an alarm to check in with them via text a few times a week? Could you call them on your way home on Fridays or when you’re on a walk?

The goal of this is to have more consistency, so that your lives are more naturally intertwined.

CONNECTION

Connection is a hard thing to pursue. It is a little bit miracle and a little bit intention, but usually in life, we’re used to letting the miracle of connection come first, before we pursue someone intentionally.

Part of pursuing significant friendships requires faith that there is a kind of connection that emerges when we share our lives with each other – even if we have different hobbies, personalities, and/or life stages.

Most of the time we ask ourselves, who do we feel connected to, and how do we pursue time and consistency with them? And this is a great question. But we also have to ask ourselves: who are the people God has brought into your life with time and consistency already? Now, what does it look like to pursue and cultivate connection with them?

This might be your family, your coworkers, your Praxis group. Pick one of those people this week, and practice cultivating connection. Connection can be cultivated with:

- **Curiosity.** Get a blank page and think about that person. What do you know about them? About their upbringing, their family, their health, their relationship with God? How are they truly doing? When were they last happy? When did they last cry? What are they afraid of? These aren't questions you may be ready to ask them, but just spend some time cultivating curiosity by writing down every question you can think of that you have about this person.
- **Be present.** When life offers you time with this person, be present with them. Cultivate connection by putting your phone away, listening to what they're saying, and listening to how they're saying it. Notice their body language, their interactions, their words. Ask follow-up questions.
- **Be vulnerable.** This is hard, and you need to do it in a way that feels safe and proportionate in the relationship, but as you're with this person, one way to cultivate connection is to share something true that's going on with you. This may be as simple as taking a pause when they ask 'how is your day?' to really consider and answer honestly to the degree you're comfortable with (e.g. "I'm not up for talking about it, but I'll tell you, it was really hard.")

Take some time this week and see how you can pursue time, consistency, and/or connection with a friend you want to grow deeper with.

Debrief your experience

After practicing with this tool, debrief your experience with your Praxis Group. Below are some questions to process together:

- Check in on life. (Where are you experiencing Christ's presence this week? What burdens are you carrying?)
- What did you learn from this practice?
- Describe your experience with this practice. (What feelings came up, what went well, what got in the way? How has it impacted your relationship with God?)
- What is the next step for you?