



SOUL SISTERS

Cultivating spiritual friendships

Since 2016 we have been asking ourselves:

- *How can we create a culture in Baptist Women where it feels natural to talk about spiritual life?*

We wanted a new model. Existing models for mentoring, disciple-making and spiritual accompaniment are generally hierarchical. There are models for spiritual direction but they require trained directors and generally cost money. We wondered:

- *How can we pass on spiritual life in a non-hierarchical way? Between peers and without cost?*
- *How can we make it relational rather than content-based?*

Soul Sisters is our attempt to answer those questions.

How this program will work

We encourage you to find at least one other person you can talk to or meet with regularly. You can meet in pairs or in small groups.

You decide how often, and whether in person, by phone or by Skype.

To get you started, we've created a series of questions you may use. However, if you feel more comfortable just sharing and praying together, disregard those prompts and go for it.

Of course, it is essential that we each be committed to confidentiality. Be someone your Soul Sister can count on.

We will gradually publish resources at baptistwomen.com to help this process along. However, the most important thing is to begin sharing with each other.

We hope that as time goes by you will be able to say with the apostle, "Dear friend I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, just as it is well with your soul" 3 John 1:2 (NET).

Instructions for when you meet

OUR CULTURE DOES NOT TEACH US how to be good listeners. We interrupt; we pre-plan our answers while others are still talking; then once they pause, we give advice, try to fix people, perhaps even judge them. The following steps are designed to help us get beyond those habits, but let's give each other grace while we learn.

1 If you have more than two or three women, choose a facilitator. You can keep the same one for all the sessions or rotate. The facilitator asks the questions, invites people to respond, and also gently brings the session to an end when time is up. (You may want to agree on a signal that means, *Time to say your last sentence or two.*)

2 Pray and invite the presence of Christ. Remember He promises that where two or three are gathered in His name He will be in the midst of them (Matthew 18:20).

3 Be silent. Start with one to two minutes. Don't pray or think over things—just rest with God. Sometimes we need to be quiet and slow down in order to listen well (both to God and to others). Whoever you've chosen to keep time can briefly pray or simply say *Amen* when time is up.

4 Read the first question aloud. Let one person answer while others listen without interruption. Remember to speak for only two to three minutes at a time. (This will get harder as you get more comfortable with each other.) Remember to speak of your personal experience.

5 Have a brief silence to receive their words.

6 Let the next person answer.

7 Repeat the process with the rest of the questions.

8 Pray for each other.

VIRTUAL TABLE

Let's connect

You and your group are invited to meet with executive director Diane McBeth.

Arrange a visit or a web conference and tell her about your group—your history and your hopes.

To get started, e-mail Diane at dmcbeth@baptist.ca or phone our office: 416-620-2953 and leave a message.



Overview of Questions for Soul Sisters

For complete session outlines, visit baptistwomen.com/resources. We will offer online practice sessions to make it easy to lead a Soul Sisters group. Contact Diane at dmcbeth@baptist.ca.

SESSION ONE: Who am I?

1. Share with the others the story of how you came to Christ.
2. Share a favourite Bible verse. What stands out to you about it?
3. Pray for each other
Decide when we will talk next.

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

Praying Scripture can broaden your prayers and it can give you confidence that you are praying the will of God. It's easy to do.

Read a few verses. (If a number of people will pray, you can choose to each read one verse before you pray, or you can read a short passage and then each pray as you are led.)

You can choose verses of praise or petition. Some possibilities include:

- 1 Chronicles 29:10-13
- 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17
- Philippians 1:9-11
- Colossians 1:9-13

Here is an example of how to pray Ephesians 1:16-20:

"Lord, I thank you for ---. Please reveal Yourself to her so that she can know You more and more deeply. Help her to have ever deeper assurance that You have called her to good things. Let her have great faith and experience Your great power. Thank You that You compare the power we can have, to Your power when You raised Christ from the dead. Thank You for Jesus."

SESSION TWO: What is in my soul?

1. Check in: Let's each share one high point and one low point since we last spoke.
2. Where would you like to grow in your relationship with God?
3. Describe a time in your life when you felt especially close to God.
4. Pray for each other.
Set a date and time to talk again.

SESSION THREE: Am I growing spiritually?

1. Check-in: Let's each share one high point and one low point since we last spoke.
2. Where do you see spiritual fruit in your life?
Where are the growing edges where God is inviting you to stretch?
3. Choose parts of Ephesians 1:16-20 to pray for each other.

SESSION FOUR: What is in my way?

1. Check-in: What has been happening in areas you have been praying about?
2. What barriers are there in your life with God?
3. Pray for each other. Pray that you may experience growing peace and freedom. Pray for the people/situations you are angry about—pray they would receive as many blessings as you can think of.
When can you share again? Mark a date and time.

SESSION FIVE: Lord, increase my faith.

1. Check-in: How are you, really?
2. Think about the most formative spiritual experiences in your life (other than when you first met Christ). Take turns sharing the first one, for two to three minutes each. Repeat with one or two more experiences each. (Watch that times do not grow longer than your original agreement.)
3. Pray for each other and for God's anointing and fruitfulness.
Set the next date.

SESSION SIX: I appreciate you, my friend.

1. Check in: Share one high and one low.
 2. How has God been transforming you?
 3. Describe a time when God seemed to be using you.
What spiritual gift might you have?
 4. Pray through Ephesians 3:16-19 for each other.
- Confirm your next meeting.

SESSION SEVEN: Aiming for transformation

1. Imagine yourself and your life if you had never accepted Christ.
 2. How are you different from what you were five years ago?
 3. In what ways would you like to be different five years from now?
 4. Pray through Philippians 1:9-11.
- Don't forget to set your next meeting.

SESSION EIGHT: Spiritual formation

1. Let's try something different this time. The ancient practice of examen is one way to facilitate personal reflection. People often follow it just before they go to sleep. Take turns reading one step of the examen at a time.
2. After each instruction, leave one minute of silence for contemplation.
3. After completing the examen, let each person share something they noticed.
3. Close by praying out loud for each other.

EXAMEN

1. Invite God

Ask God to reveal Himself to you. Then sit quietly.

2. Be thankful

Recall the day and give thanks for the people and events it contained. Give a sacrifice of praise for anything that was difficult.

3. Notice emotions

Pay attention to what you felt during the day. What might God want to reveal to you through those emotions? Ask God to help you untangle your experiences.

4. Notice God

What were your God-moments today? When were you aware of Him? What do you think He was doing?

5. Bless tomorrow

Give tomorrow to God, who is absolutely trustworthy. Offer yourself to Him in love.
Rest.

Note: Try doing this at night for the next few weeks. You can try an audio version of examen at <http://pray-as-you-go.org/prayer-resources/the-examen/>