

How to Walk Side-by-Side

by Dean Ridings

Do you have a friend you can trust and share openly with? A friend who brings out your best, prods you in your Christian life, and holds you accountable? Are you this kind of friend to at least one person? Would you like to be?

“Side-by-Side” is a way to make that happen—man to man, woman to woman. It’s two people who make a commitment to meet regularly for *mutual growth, mutual support, and mutual accountability*. More than merely going through the Bible study of their choice, Side-by-Side partners help each other “contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (see Jude 3) in the midst of 21st century reality.

Side-by-Side partners may be traditional discipleship or mentoring relationships between “mature” and their protégé “young” disciples, such as Paul and Timothy or Elijah and Elisha. Or they may be “mutual discipleship” or co-mentoring relationships between any two believers—no matter where they are along the discipleship journey—such as David and Jonathan or Paul and Barnabas.



God’s Word paints a powerful picture of what happens when two people meet Side-by-Side. After Jesus’ crucifixion but before His followers grasped that He had risen from the dead, two down-in-the-dumps disciples walked together on the road to Emmaus (see Luke 24:13–36).

Though they didn’t recognize Him at first, suddenly walking right alongside them was their Master Jesus, the one who had promised them the Holy Spirit and said their works would even exceed His (see Acts 1:8; John 14:12).

They talked of the day’s sad events and examined them in light of the Scriptures—Jesus traveling with them—and *everything changed*. Their hearts burned within them as Jesus opened their eyes to the truth of His Word and to Himself. Their lives would never be the same!

When you commit to meet with a Side-by-Side partner, be assured that Jesus is in your midst. “For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them,” He promises (Matthew 18:20). He will use you in your Side-by-Side partner’s life, and vice versa.

Here is a quick look at what happens when believers walk Side-by-Side.

Side-by-Side partners commit to:

- ⊕ Meet weekly or regularly.
- ⊕ Prepare for meetings by completing each lesson in the selected study.
- ⊕ Be honest with and accountable to each other.
- ⊕ Pray for and encourage one another.
- ⊕ Repeat the process with another individual, as God leads.

Here is what you and your Side-by-Side partner can expect between and during your meetings.

Between meetings:

- ⊕ Complete the lesson—again, using the Bible study of your choice.
- ⊕ Continue to pray for one another and needs that have surfaced along the way.
- ⊕ Give a call; drop a note or e-mail, Facebook, or Twitter message; or stop by simply to “check in.”

During meetings:

- ⊕ “Touch base”: Ask, “What are the best and worst things that happened to you since we last got together?”
- ⊕ Ask God to bless your meeting. Go through the lesson.
- ⊕ In an environment of grace and trust, watch for application and life evaluation in light of Scripture.
- ⊕ Hold one another accountable to mutually agreed-upon goals that emerge from your conversations, committing to God and each other to make head knowledge heart knowledge.
- ⊕ Close in prayer. Entrust to God commitments you’ve made along the way and prayer needs you’ve shared.

As the three of you journey together, Jesus will grow the two of you toward greater godliness (see Romans 8:28,29; Philippians 1:6; 2 Corinthians 3:18). Along the way, you and your Side-by-Side partner will have a friend you can trust and share openly with, bringing out one another’s best and in fact living out the “one another” exhortations sprinkled throughout Scripture. Go for it!

Used with permission from Dean Ridings. Find more information on Side-by-Side and how Dean helps churches grow intentional discipling cultures at www.navstaff.org/ridings.