

- What is helping or hindering me in my relationship with God at this time?
- Where have I felt sad, depressed, adrift, or distant from the Lord?
- What have I learned or been reminded of about my deeper self this past month?

**The Session**—we usually meet for an hour in a quiet place where we will not be distracted. (e.g. Fuller Seminary, Descanso Gardens) At the beginning we may take a few minutes to quiet ourselves and ask the Lord to be present with us. You may then want to summarize your preparation and identify the subjects that you would like to explore further. Or you can start by sharing what is most important or interesting to you. After you have shared a while, we may pause to reflect, ask questions, discuss, or comment.



The goal of the session is for you to tell your story so that you might gain a better sense

of how the Lord has been present and speaking into your life. My job is to listen both to you and to my own heart to notice how your words affect me. I am not there to give advice or solve your problems. I will try to listen, honor your words, ask questions that may expand your perspective, and explore with you what it might all mean. Towards the end of the session we may summarize what has been said, identify the next step, set a date for the next session, and conclude in prayer.

**Review**—Immediately after the session, plan to take 15-30 minutes to journal about the experience. Note not only what was said but how you felt at various points during the time. Spiritual Direction is a form of prayer so pay attention to how the session affected you. When did you feel energized, bored, tired, or distracted? Tell the Lord what you notice.

<sup>1</sup> Smith, Gordon T. *Spiritual Direction—A Guide to Giving and Receiving Direction*, Downers Grove, IL, InterVarsity Press, 2014, page 10, 19

## For Further Reading

Barry, William A. and William J. Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1982

Smith, Gordon T. *Spiritual Direction—A Guide to Giving and Receiving Direction*, Downers Grove, IL, InterVarsity Press, 2014

Smith, Gordon T., *The Voice of Jesus: Discernment, Prayer, and Witness of the Spirit*, Downers Grove, IL, InterVarsity Press, 2001

## Retreat Resources

Can be found at [www.stevenstuckey.com](http://www.stevenstuckey.com)

Or

<http://learningandtalent.intervarsity.org/spiritual-formation-prayer>

# Spiritual Direction



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# The Ministry of Spiritual Direction

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For the person who takes their faith in the God of the Bible seriously, life is hard enough without having to go it alone. We face struggles within and without which the Scriptures describe in various ways as: sheep among wolves, the narrow, less traveled road, and the valley where who-knows-what lurks in the foreboding dark shadows. Added to that, the One in whom we rest our faith is anything but easy to comprehend. He is omniscient, invisible, often seems to be silent, and claims to be friends with characters only a mother could love. No wonder that one of his followers described the experience of relating to him as like a wrestling match.



The good news is that we don't have to go it alone. The more we mature, the more we will sense that faith in God is meant to be a team sport. Friends, companions, mentors,

pastors, and spiritual directors can be a gift of the Spirit for our journey.

## Definition and Assumptions

A Spiritual Director offers spiritual guidance and companionship to help us make sense of our faith journey, interpret with us the significant markers on the road, and encourage us, particularly through the more difficult transitions and valleys of our pilgrimage. Most of all, a spiritual director helps us make sense of the witness of the Spirit—

assisting us to respond well to the questions: "How is God present to me and how is God, through the ministry of the Spirit, at work in my life?"

This ministry is based upon the following assumptions:

God the Father is good and fundamentally benevolent towards all that he has made. Spiritual direction is a ministry that helps us grow in awareness of the goodness of God and his initiative and presence with us.

A Christian disciple is one who embraces the love of God the Father, seeks to follow in the footsteps of Jesus as Lord and Savior, and gives their life away to others through the leading of the Spirit.

The Bible teaches that each Christian has the capacity for an encounter and relationship with the living resurrected Christ. That relationship affects the ways we think and feel. As a result, the expressions of both mind and heart are to be taken seriously.

Each person is unique and each relationship with Jesus is unique. A lifelong process of discernment will help us discover our true self, our name, and God's call upon us. Spiritual direction helps us take individual responsibility for God's voice and guidance in our lives.

A spiritual director is a person gifted by God to serve the church. She is also a sister or brother in Christ, a fellow pilgrim on the journey, a fellow sinner, and member of the community of faith with us.<sup>1</sup>

## Meeting Together—Three Phases

Spiritual direction is an intentional relationship and most find it helpful to establish some order at the beginning. Issues to discuss together include: how often to meet, length of each session, location and setting, preparation, review, and payment (if appropriate). If a person is new to spiritual direction, I usually recommend meeting three times to see if the chemistry is right between us. I also recommend a yearly review to evaluate whether the relationship is still helpful for the directee. If not, I can recommend others. Our meetings include three phases:

**Preparation**—I will email you the day before our meeting to confirm the time and location. You can also do the same with me. Preparation for our session is important. Without it, our conversations together tend to be superficial. I ask individuals to schedule some reflection time prior to our meeting. For example, you may want to make the day we meet together a retreat day for yourself. During the reflection time, review your calendar to see the places, people, and projects you have been focused upon. Review your journal to see the thoughts, feelings, prayers, and dreams that have occupied your attention. Ask yourself these types of questions:

- Where have I experienced the Lord's work and presence in my life?
- What am I grateful for this past month?