

Spiritual direction is not appropriate for every person. While you may feel the nudge of something needing attention around human / spiritual growth, direction may not be what is called for now. Or, something in addition to direction may be called for. You might test out your need through the following questions and suggestions:

Am I looking for some "how to's" in developing a prayer life? Or a group with whom I can pray and share? Or support for my practice of intentional prayer and meditation?

Consider:
Spiritual formation groups
Local church prayer groups

Are there areas of my life calling for focused healing prayer that might be supported and directed in a group setting?

Consider:
Local church healing services
Local church prayer groups

Do I want moral, biblical, or theological guidance for my life? Some person or group to explore questions around life issues?

Consider:
Local church leadership and groups

Are there specific problem areas of my life or troubling emotions siphoning off energy? Serious blockage issues that I

want to talk about with another in hopes that I can find some ways of overcoming the difficulties?

Consider:
Counseling or therapy
12 Step Groups

Do I feel the need for a "spiritual friend" with whom I can have an informal mutual relationship of prayer, sharing and support for one another in our spiritual journeys?

Consider:
Looking at the groups you are in and take the risk of asking someone to whom you feel drawn and feel you can trust.

The Evangelization Station
Hudson, Florida, USA
E-mail: evangelization@earthlink.net
www.evangelizationstation.com

Pamphlet 608

Spiritual Direction Frequently Asked Questions

What *IS* Spiritual Direction?

Spiritual direction, sometimes referred to as spiritual guidance or spiritual friendship, is an on-going relationship in which one person (the directee), desirous of being attentive to their spiritual life, meets with another person (the director) on a regular basis (approximately once a month) to become more attuned to God's Presence, in order to respond more fully to that Presence in all of life.

The primary focus of the session is the directee's relationship with God as it is reflected and challenged by all aspects of their life.

The directee assumes responsibility for their life with God. This means that the person coming for direction is trying to be serious about some form of intentional prayer and reflection on the God-currents of one's everyday life and prayer. During the meeting of about one hour, director and directee seek to enter a prayerful atmosphere where together they can be attentive to the Holy Spirit who is in fact the Real Director.

The director may question, challenge, suggest, support, as seems called for by the Spirit, but ultimately the directee must own whatever insights are uncovered, or course of action that is to be taken. It is assumed that the directee has begun a journey with God long before they come into direction. Also this intentional journey will continue

long after leaving a particular director. The director is only a facilitator in the process. The directee must claim the journey.

What's the difference between Direction & Therapy?

Therapy and counseling deal primarily with problem areas of one's life and attempt to bring healthy resolution to issues.

Spiritual direction is concerned with finding and responding to God (in the midst of pain or disorder as well as in the rest of life). Problem/issue solving is not the primary focus of direction.

How do I find a Director?

It seems important to pray about finding a spiritual director, asking God to guide your search and to open your eyes to the possibilities available to you.

Accompanying this prayer should be the exploration of avenues already known to you for persons whose spirituality speaks to you though they may not name themselves or be recognized as "qualified" spiritual directors. Such persons may be found among parish staff, persons with whom you have shared small groups, or others who seem to attract you for reasons unclear to you. If no one rises from these more natural settings, then you might check out nearby retreat centers, religious communities, or centers, which offer programs for spiritual directors.

It will probably take some time to find the right person for you. If God is in the felt need for a director, however, then it is safe

to assume that the Spirit will eventually provide the resources you need. The key is to remain patient yet diligent in the waiting, to trust God in the process, remaining attentive to the direction of the Spirit in all of life.

How do I choose a Director?

In a direction relationship, it is important for there to be a mutual sense of the rightness of the relationship and a concern for open, honest, clear communication and a reverence for the unique way God is working in the individuals involved. Coupled with this is a mutual dependence upon the Spirit at work in the relationship. Human specifics of age, sex, denomination and so forth, may assume more importance at one time in a person's life than at another. Basically, however, it is only necessary that the two persons experience the kind of "fitness" that allows them to be free for their common purpose together without undue attention to their relationship. It is helpful to set up five or six meetings and then evaluate how things are going. After that, periodic evaluations are encouraged so that what was begun as a right thing does not continue past its time.

Who are these 'Directors'?

Spiritual directors may be found among persons of varied walks of life, laity, clergy and persons in religious communities. They may be married or single and may seek their livelihood in a variety of occupations. What is paramount is that the director is

responding to an invitation from God to participate in this ministry; that the gift of direction has been called forth by others; and that the director has sought to enhance the gift and sharpen skills through means appropriate to her or his particular needs.

The primary responsibilities of the director are prayer for the directee and openness to God for what is truly called for during the sessions. This assumes that the director is taking their relationship with God seriously through intentional prayer, attention to solitude time and regular spiritual direction.

Further, as a means of accountability in this ministry, and growth as a director, directors should avail themselves of supervision in a one-to-one or group setting with other directors. Whatever way this supervision happens, confidentiality must be observed and anonymity of directee's must be preserved.

How do Directors get paid?

Usually there is no set "fee for service" for direction. However, some directors need financial support in order to be able to offer this ministry. It is best to check this out at the beginning. You may find it appropriate to give a material gift from time to time (e.g., a plant, candle, food, or something else) expressive of appreciation. Also, you may be drawn to contribute to a charitable cause. Again, this should be discussed with the director.

If Not Direction, then What?