

A
SHORT INTRODUCTION
TO
Spiritual Direction

Each of us has been created with a desire to know God—to find rest, peace, and direction in him. On many days, our experience of getting to know God can be what C.S. Lewis described as “farther up and farther in.” We joyfully press onward and deeper into the heart of Divine reality.

Yet sometimes our journey to knowing God feels more like the wrestling match between Jacob and the Angel of the Lord in Genesis 32. In that story, Jacob learns that knowledge of God and his absolute goodness, and knowledge of himself in relation to God, comes only as Jacob is willing to contend with God for what Chris E.W. Green calls “the blessing that is, by God’s decision, rightfully his.” The same is true of us.

Scripture reminds us over and over that this journey is not taken alone. “For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them” (Matthew 18:20). Spiritual direction fits nicely into that picture as a practice of sitting with another person, praying, and listening to what the Holy Spirit is doing in the everyday events of one’s life. A trained spiritual director does not tell the directee what to do. Instead, the director prayerfully seeks to create conversational and reflective space in which the directee can recognize the ways in which they are already experiencing God.

IT MAY BE HELPFUL TO UNDERSTAND WHAT SPIRITUAL DIRECTION IS NOT:

1. It is not authoritarian. The true spiritual director is the Holy Spirit.
2. It is not some new, or “new-age” idea. It has roots in early Christianity.
3. It is not advice. Spiritual directors offer suggestions, not direct advice. Instead, the director seeks to help the directee notice and respond to God’s presence and action in their life.
4. It is not discipleship. It’s less structured and less directive than conventional discipleship relationships.
5. It is not moral guidance. While moral and ethical questions may arise, the primary focus is deepening one’s relationship with God and helping the directee find the resolution to those questions from the Lord, not the director.
6. It is not counseling: Spiritual direction is Spirit-centered, not problem-centered. A spiritual director does not offer solutions to an individual’s problems, but does attempt to facilitate the directee’s effort to hear from God.
7. It is not teaching. There is no set curriculum or focus on imparting knowledge, although there will be times when concepts or terminology will need to be clarified.

A TYPICAL SPIRITUAL DIRECTION SESSION MAY FOLLOW AN ORDER SIMILAR TO THIS:

1. The session usually begins with prayer, recognizing God's presence and seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In one sense, the entire session is prayer.
2. The directee may briefly share their current state of mind and spirit.
3. The directee shares recent experiences, thoughts, or feelings related to their spiritual life. This might include discussing prayer experiences, challenges, insights, or questions about their relationship with God.
4. The spiritual director listens attentively and may ask clarifying questions to help the directee explore their experiences more deeply.
5. The director may offer observations or insights, always aimed at helping the directee recognize God's work in their life, perhaps suggesting spiritual practices, readings, or prayer methods that could be helpful.
6. Silence: Periods of silence are often incorporated, allowing space for reflection and listening to God.
7. The director may pose questions for the directee to ponder between sessions.
8. The session typically ends with prayer, often led by the director but sometimes by the directee.

In essence, spiritual direction helps Christians deepen their relationship with God through increasing attentiveness to his presence in daily life, facilitated by a companioning relationship with a spiritual director. It's about cultivating a deeper awareness of and surrender to God's love and will in one's life.

Crossings Community Church offers spiritual direction under its ministry of Spiritual Formation. To set up a conversation to discern if the process of spiritual direction would be appropriate for you, please call (405) 302-1249.

