



Spiritual Direction: A Guide to Giving and Receiving Direction
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This is the gift of spiritual direction.

Even if we have been Christians and maturing in our faith for many years, we still need the encouragement and guidance that might come through spiritual direction. Only pride would lead us to think we could go it alone. Genuine humility is evident in our realization that we need a companion, a fellow pilgrim and Christian, who can help us discern and foster an attentiveness to God's presence in our lives. This is the gift of spiritual direction.

Spiritual direction has a very clear agenda: *directing our attention to the presence of God in our lives*. The language of direction recalls for us the legitimate place of spiritual authority and accountability in our lives. But first and foremost, spiritual direction is the ministry of directing our thoughts and the movements of our hearts toward God and the presence of God in our lives.

A spiritual director urges us to focus our thoughts—to direct our heart and mind—to God. This is typically and rightly done gently and perhaps by way of either question or suggestion. As a rule, we will not feel the force of the director's presence or intentions as much as the gracious nudging, the gentle urging that calls our attention back to God. A director might ask, "Where do you sense the presence of God in your life at this time?" or perhaps offer a suggestion: "As I listen to you, I wonder if it might not be good to consider the following course of action." In either instance, the intent is the same: through question or suggestion this companion is *directing* our attention to the presence of God in our lives.

We need this. Perhaps it is too much to say that the ministry of spiritual direction is indispensable in our lives. And yet, for many of us it is *invaluable*. It is a vital dimension of the way in which pastoral care and formation equip us for our lives and our work, fostering our capacity for prayer and the deepening of our faith. And many are coming to see direction as an essential element of pastoral ministry. Both ordained and lay leaders in the church will find that many members of the congregation would benefit from this ministry if and as it is available.

— Adapted from chapter one, "The Ministry of Spiritual Direction"

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