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Spiritual Disciplines for Spiritual Directors

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Spiritual Disciplines for Spiritual Directors

Jill Sweet

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Ministry Focus Paper Approval Sheet

This ministry focus paper entitled

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES FOR SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS

Written by

JILL SWEET

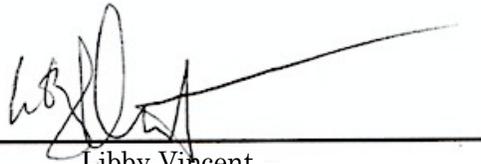
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requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Ministry

has been accepted by the Faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary

upon the recommendation of the undersigned readers:



Libby Vincent



Kurt Fredrickson

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SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES FOR SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS

A DOCTORAL PROJECT
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
FULLER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

JILL SWEET
AUGUST 2019

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ABSTRACT

Spiritual Disciplines for Spiritual Directors

Jill Sweet

Doctor of Ministry

School of Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary

2019

For centuries, Christ followers have sought places of silence and solitude in order to hear God's voice more clearly. They also have sought the spiritual wisdom of those who have spent time in silence and solitude. Today is no different. To face the challenges of ministry, clergy, lay leaders, missionaries, and leaders of non-profit organizations seek places of refuge to prayerfully listen and discern.

Quiet Oaks, the retreat space for Come, Learn, Rest Ministries, is a place where ministry leaders escape the daily rigors of ministry and find rest for their souls in the practice of spiritual direction. More specifically, Quiet Oaks invites directors to come, discuss their unique ministry challenges, and try new spiritual practices.

Time at Quiet Oaks or another retreat space can help spiritual directors become refreshed and renewed for ministry. It is not always feasible to physically go to places of silence and solitude for spiritual renewal. Consequently, this project identifies specific spiritual practices that consecrate spiritual directors in their ministry of spiritual direction.

After specifically defining and reflecting theologically on spiritual direction through the readings on ancient spirituality, Ignatian spirituality, and the thoughts of Dallas Willard, a theology of spiritual direction will be gleaned. With this firmly established, an exploration of spiritual practices for spiritual directors can be made.

To fully implement this project, two small groups of spiritual directors will meet over a period of four months to discuss spiritual practices. The first month's discussions surround spiritual practices in general. In subsequent months, participants will share reflections on a specific spiritual practice identified within the theological construct of the paper. The final assessment of these reflections will identify three specific spiritual practices that Come, Learn, Rest Ministries can encourage spiritual directors to practice as a means that offer a more efficacious spiritual direction experience.

Content Reader: Libby Vincent, PhD

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To my directees, past, present, and future

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Jane Willard, who years ago invited me to share my story with her and even now inspires my call to spiritual direction. Thank you to my husband Ben, who knew this degree needed to be part of our story; my children and their spouses, who wanted this to be part of my story; and, my family and friends, who never doubted this would be part of my story. My thanks to fellow spiritual directors, who contributed their stories, insights, and wisdom over the course of many months. Thank you to Dr. Libby Vincent, who paid careful attention to God's story throughout the process. I acknowledge the blessing of my three granddaughters, whose stories began as I was reading and writing. And I am so very grateful to be part of *all your* stories.

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PART ONE
MINISTRY CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION

The spiritual life and the practice of spiritual direction assume that God acts in the world and can be experienced in the world.¹

Experiencing God's action in the world can be life-altering and transformative.

God's interaction with me in a tangible way occurred after a teaching on Moses and the burning bush. A teacher challenged those present to consider the possibility of God speaking through normal objects and circumstances encountered in daily life just as God spoke to Moses through something as ordinary as a burning bush. Pondering this challenge and desiring to implement it over the next few days, I asked God to speak to me. Believing that if Moses heard God's voice in a crackling fire, I would hear God's still small voice in some form or manner.

While I did not hear God's voice audibly like Moses, I did experience God in a most unusual way. I was doing a calculus problem with one of the many students I tutored at that time. Standing at the whiteboard, I was explaining algebraically how it was possible to "plug" up the hole of a discontinuous function to make it continuous. In the midst of my explanation, stillness enveloped the room, and I just stared at the equation, unable to move. In that moment, I inwardly heard God say, "I am going to heal the holes in your heart." As the silent stillness lifted, I turned toward the student, who was staring back at me with a "what is happening?" look.

What happened was that God acted, and I experienced the fullness of God's presence and communication within the context of my ordinary life. This experience of

¹ William A. Barry, *Spiritual Direction and the Encounter with God* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2004), 7.

God enriched my spiritual life as hope reclaimed the damage in my heart. As time went on, I surrendered my fears, my pride, and my damaged emotions to God. Then, through acts of forgiveness, confession, and thanksgiving, I felt more spiritually and emotionally whole. On this type of reflection, William Barry writes,

Reflection on our experience reveals the mysterious presence of God, who is always acting to draw us into community with the Trinity and thus with one another; this community is the Kingdom of God, and its bond is the Holy Spirit poured out into our hearts. Fear and egocentrism lead us to resist God's action, and spiritual direction is a singularly appropriate ministry to help us to overcome our fears and egocentrism.²

God brought healing and new direction to my days.

The Holy Spirit was reignited in my heart: "With our thorns, you light a fire. The open wound in us is the place where your love comes flowing through. And within the very hurts themselves, you bring to fruition a communion with you."³ Transformation became a reality as I continued to move beyond learning to knowing, beyond knowledge to change, beyond principles to presence, beyond periods of time to moments in time, beyond reading Scripture to experiencing Scripture, beyond prayer to communion, and beyond working to waiting.⁴ This extraordinary encounter with God happens in direction, leading to spiritual stability, and surrendering to God's will.

This teacher not only inspired me with her telling of the story of Moses and the burning bush, she also inspired me, as a spiritual director would, to commence paying attention and expecting God to act in ways that could be readily observed and then

² Ibid., 5.

³ Brother Roger, "Inward/Outward Together," September 19, 2018, <http://www.inwardoutward.org>.

⁴ Terry Wardle, *Healing Care Healing Prayer: Helping the Broken Find Wholeness in Christ* (Abilene, TX: Leafwood Publishers, 2001), 28.

experienced. Spiritual directors are most interested in their directees' experience of God. Moreover, skilled spiritual directors know that paying attention to their own experiences of God makes them more readily able to discern where God is at work in a directee's life. This is important work because if a directee can deepen even one experience of God in his or her daily life, God's Kingdom will be that much more positively impacted.

Moses had his experience in the desert. The apostle Paul had his experience on the road to Damascus, which had a profound impact on the early church and beyond. The "beyond" part of Paul's narrative is found in the letter he wrote to the church in Corinth. At the end of the book of 1 Corinthians and in the first few verses of chapter 15, Paul recounts the people whom Christ appeared to and who thereby encountered Christ: "To Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me" (1 Cor 15:1-8).⁵

In the first verse, Paul delivers a very succinct message of the gospel: Christ has died, Christ was buried, Christ has risen, and Christ will come again.⁶ However, for the gospel to perpetuate itself these appearances of Jesus that translate into experiences with the living Lord and Savior are essential. It might seem that these experiences lead to nothing more than going and telling the story of Christ's appearance. But God actively appearing results in a deepening awareness of God's presence and of the testimony that can be shared with others.

⁵ All Scripture, unless otherwise noted comes from the *New Revised Standard Version*.

⁶ Darrell L. Guder, *The Continuing Conversion of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000), 40.

Because spiritual direction entails noticing God's gracious interactions in directees' lives and because these interactions lead to deepening faith, I see direction as much more evangelistic⁷ than some would. The life of Moses testifies to God's forgiveness and grace. At the center of Moses' retelling Israel's history and sharing the Good News of God is both the experience and the reality of God's love. As a result, God's people may respond to God's actions with their love.⁸ Spiritual direction is a safe place for discussions about and discovery of God's love which naturally increases the intimacy between God and directees. With increased intimacy and maturity, devoted disciples of Christ spontaneously go and tell their accounts of God's great love.

Spiritual directors find themselves in the middle of this interaction between God and their directees. But it is important to note that spiritual directors find themselves in the midst of their own encounters with God. Because directors bring their own narratives into each direction session, it is a standard practice for directors to be in spiritual direction themselves and participate in either individual or peer group supervision. Isaac Asimov said, "Self-education is, I firmly believe, the only kind of education there is."⁹ It is very often the case that spiritual directors learn just as much from their directors and supervision relationships as they do from whatever more formal training they receive.

⁷ I define evangelistic as converting others to faith in God. As directees pay attention to where God is at work, their faith in God is strengthened without even words from another being spoken.

⁸ Guder, *The Continuing Conversion of the Church*, 31-32.

⁹ Five Minute Journal, "July 17, 2018," Intelligent Change, Inc., (Version 1.6.3), [mobile application software] downloaded from <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/five-minute-journal/id1062945251?mt=8>, citation originally appeared in Isaac Asimov, *Science Past, Science Future* (New York: Doubleday, 1975), 208.

Spiritual directors learn to listen both attentively and compassionately while maintaining healthy boundaries. This takes on a heightened importance when a directee is in crisis, as over-identifying with a directee's story causes the director to be less attentive. Spiritual directors are like the wounded healers Henri Nouwen describes. He writes, "Who can save a child from a burning house without taking the risk of being hurt by the flames? Who can listen to a story of loneliness and despair without taking the risk of experiencing similar pains in his own heart and even losing his precious peace of mind? In short: Who can take away suffering without entering it?"¹⁰ In any given session, an array of emotions is experienced by the directee. The director creates space for those feelings to be fully expressed so that ultimately there is new understanding of God's action in the midst of the directee's unfolding life story. Session by session, spiritual directors courageously enter into the joys and sorrows, the delight and despair, the optimism and doubt, the victories and defeats of their directees' lives.

Over time, directors hope their directees develop the confidence to share their experience of God's active presence in the Kingdom that is both already here and still to come. To that end, there are spiritual disciplines that can help directors hone their art and practice of direction, which will in turn help directees have a more efficacious spiritual direction session. This paper will address, within the context of Come, Learn, Rest Ministries, a practice of spiritual direction and use of spiritual disciplines for the refreshment and renewal of ministry leaders and specifically, to spiritual directors.

¹⁰ Henri J.M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society* (New York: Image Doubleday, 1979), 78.

Chapter 1 explores many definitions of spiritual direction and the history of direction in order to clearly define what spiritual direction is and is not. Programs for training spiritual directors will be considered in order to understand the formation process spiritual directors undergo to become caregivers. Chapter 2 highlights the need spiritual directors have for places and practices to care for their own souls so they can care for the souls of others. The desire of Come, Learn, Rest Ministries to provide soul care for ministry leaders is outlined and illustrated through story. Moreover, a vision of spiritual directors, practicing specific spiritual disciplines to hone their art and practice of spiritual directions, will be explained.

Chapter 3 will include the review of and reflection on spiritual direction from the standpoint of ancient spirituality, Ignatian spirituality, and the thoughts of Dallas Willard. Each of these areas of study offers significant insights that deepen the understanding of spiritual direction. This is vital in the development of a theology of spiritual direction as well as in a discovery of how spiritual disciplines enable spiritual directors to offer a beneficial spiritual direction experience for their directees.

Within chapter 4, a theological framework for the ministry of spiritual direction will be developed based on insights from the literature review. Solitude, prayer, and listening are emphasized in all three areas of thought that are reviewed, so it is only natural to look at these three aspects of spiritual direction in light of Scripture. By reflecting on the lives of God's people, it is possible to see spiritual direction from God's vantage point. Retreating into solitude, learning to pray, and listening to God are three powerful movements in spiritual direction and the spiritual life that deserve attention.

In chapter 5 there is continued development of the literature review and theological reflection for the purpose of attaining a deeper understanding of a rhythm of life and ministry at Come, Learn, Rest Ministries. Matthew 11:28-30 reveals the invitation to come to Jesus, to learn from Jesus, and to find rest in Jesus. As each of these movements is explored through the use of story, a specific spiritual discipline is revealed. When practiced regularly, these spiritual disciplines can impact a spiritual director's life and ministry. In this manner, the challenges of ministry are faced by a soul that finds rest with God alone.

The purpose of chapter 6 will be to create a ministry plan in which I lead two groups of three to five spiritual directors. Participants will reflect on how spiritual disciplines impact the ministry of spiritual direction they offer to their directees. Moreover, they will be introduced to new spiritual practices in order to evaluate their effectiveness in spiritual direction sessions and then process their reflections in group spiritual direction. These reflections will be informed by Scripture and processed in four group spiritual direction sessions in order to provide the added benefit of mutual support and encouragement. The express purpose for all of this is to determine whether directors are offering a valuable spiritual direction experience.

The implementation plan for this doctoral project is revealed in chapter 7. The directors will be divided into groups by the length of time they have been practicing spiritual direction. This will provide well-informed feedback from directors with discernment skills. Moreover, with groups of no more than five I ensure that I will listen to verbal feedback from each participant as well as reading written reflections. Assessment of the project will occur unconventionally through my perceptions of

participants' oral reflections during small group direction sessions and conventionally through feedback questionnaires.

As fellow spiritual directors, the participants will undoubtedly find themselves rallying around the insightfulness of William Barry's quote above: "The spiritual life and the practice of spiritual direction assume that God acts in the world and can be experienced in the world." In my spiritual life and practice of spiritual direction, I do not merely assume that God acts in the world and can be experienced in the world. I firmly believe God can and will be encountered in the ordinary of one's life because I have seen that God acts and can be experienced in my world. I believe it for directees as well, especially in those times when they have doubts.

When directees are at their lowest, spiritual directors remain hopeful. As a spiritual director, I have no greater joy than to hear my directees walking in the truth (3 Jn 4) that God can and will be encountered in their spiritual life and experienced in spiritual direction. To that end, may this project inspire spiritual directors to practice spiritual disciplines for the sake of celebrating God at work in the lives of their directees.

CHAPTER 1

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

The Encyclopedia of Christianity says that spiritual direction is a historic, practical and classic ministry of the Christian church: “It is tied to the church’s sacramental¹ life, especially to practices of confession and absolution, but practitioners (known variously as, e.g., *starets* in the Slavic tradition, *geron* among Greeks, ‘counselor’ or ‘director’ in the West) are not identical to confessors. The practice originated in the monastic movement.”² The key word above is “but” and the words that follow. It is true that spiritual directors are not identical to confessors, and yet directors often do hear the confessions of their directees. Likewise, a spiritual director is not identical to a life coach, a therapist, or a mentor, and yet because spiritual directors are interested in the whole person, they do pay attention to how the physical, emotional, and social aspects of a directee’s daily life interfaces with his or her spiritual life with God.

¹ Historically, spiritual directors have been respectful of the faith backgrounds of their directees. By listening for the holy within the ordinary parts of the directee’s life, directors embrace the challenge of connecting the sacred with the secular, the mystery of God with sureness of self.

² Erwin Fahlbusch et al, *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 153.

Ultimately, the aim of spiritual direction has been to foster union with God and, therefore, has had to do with a directee's individual relationship with God.³

This difficulty in adequately describing the phenomenon of spiritual direction, occurs both inside and outside of the church. There is a tendency to want to reduce the definition down to something as simple as two people praying together. But it is so much more. When each person desires an experience of God, spiritual direction becomes a ministry of three: directee, director, and God. Thus, spiritual direction's focus is on a directee's primary experience and awareness of God's presence in formal and informal times of prayer.⁴ However, the director's experience and awareness of God during the session indirectly inform the session. Notwithstanding the above, this chapter will seek to further define what spiritual direction is and describe who the spiritual director is.

What Is Spiritual Direction?

We define spiritual direction, then, as help given by one Christian to another which enables that person to pay attention to God's personal communication to him or her, to respond to this personally communicating God, to grow in intimacy with this God, and to live out the consequences of the relationship.⁵

The definition above is often used in spiritual direction certification programs because it takes into account the relationship between the director, the directee and God in a fairly concise manner. However, another the way to define something is by providing a visual image of it. The following story, adapted from Francis Dorff's account of a disciple and master walking together, illustrates what a relationship can look like when

³ William A. Barry and William J. Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2009), 9.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

two people are intentional about being on a journey together as spiritual director and directee:

A young woman named Sita once approached an old woman named Sono, who was known for her wisdom and holiness. "Teach me the way to wisdom," Sita said. "If you like, you may accompany me on my way," Sono replied. "Oh, thank you!" Sita exclaimed.

They set out, walking together in silence. Before long, they entered a very dense forest. They walked on and on without saying a word. As time went by, young Sita began to lose her patience. "This old woman is walking so slowly, we will never get anywhere," she thought to herself. "Besides, she promised to teach me the way to wisdom. It has been days now, and she has not said one word to me! What kind of teacher is she?"

Just then Sono stopped. She turned to Sita and asked, "What do you hear?" "I don't hear anything at all in this miserable forest!" Sita shouted. The old woman nodded and continued on her way. They walked on and on without saying another word.

Then Sono stopped again. "What do you hear now?" she asked. "I hear the songs of a thousand birds and the wind making music in the trees!" Sita exclaimed. "This forest is full of life! Thank you for bringing me to this beautiful place. Let us stay here." The old woman nodded and continued on her way. Together they walked farther and farther into the forest without saying a word. Then Sono stopped and said, "What do you hear now?" "I hear the thunder in the distance. It frightens me to death," Sita replied. Sono nodded and continued on her way.

They walked together in silence for a very long time. At length the old woman stopped. "What do you hear now?" she asked. "I hear the babbling of the brook. It comforts me," Sita replied. Sono nodded and continued on her way. Together they walked in silence, on and on, deeper and deeper into the forest. Then Sono paused again. "What do you hear now?" she asked. "I hear the silence at the center of the forest. All is peace," Sita whispered. The old woman nodded and continued on her way.

They walked on and on in the silence together for what may have been many years. Then, one day, Sono stopped. She turned to Sita and asked, "What do you hear now?" Sita turned and smiled gently. She bowed to Sono without saying a word. Then Sono bowed to Sita. "I will no longer have to accompany you on your way," Sono said. Sita nodded and continued on her way. Alone.

One day a young woman approached Sita and said, "Teach me the way to wisdom." "If you would like," Sita replied, "you may accompany me on my way."⁶

⁶ Francis Dorff, *The Art of Passingover: An Invitation to Living Creatively* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1988), 13-14.

Listening and Learning

The spiritual direction relationship begins with interest and invitation, and cannot be forced. It is at its best when the directee sees something in the spiritual director's life with God and shares an interest in learning from the spiritual director. The spiritual director invites the directee to follow along. There is no agenda except to believe that God is at work in both of their lives and will make himself known to each of them as their journey continues.

The relationship between the director and the directee is not static. It possesses the interesting dynamic of two people walking and wondering together. Directees bring their spiritual questions and curiosity about God as well as wondering about what God is doing in the sessions. The director considers what the directee is noticing and asks probing questions, making the directee feel uncomfortable and wonder if persevering is worth the effort.

Paying attention and praying are the work of spiritual direction. Ultimately, the questions the director asks are to help the directee catch a glimpse of God's presence. This requires that both the director and the directee are attentive to their physical, emotional, and spiritual surroundings. The spiritual director prayerfully waits in silence, knowing the directee's experience takes precedent and trusting that God is awakening in the directee a deeper understanding of life with the Trinity. In time there will be a response.

Silently and in their own way director and directee reflect on the journey they have experienced with God. This time of reflection alerts them to the reality that it has not been two people on this journey but three. God has been the primary spiritual

director, lovingly leading and graciously guiding them. Life with God is filled with opportunities to respond in kind to others. Both directee and director can choose whether to share their experience of God with others or not. The sacred moments of their journey are to be treasured.

Spiritual direction consists of listening and learning. The spiritual director continues to learn the importance of listening for what God is personally saying and for what God might possibly want the directee to hear. Moreover, the director once again recognizes that spiritual direction is not about performance but rather is about God's presence and the directee's recognition of God's presence. The directee listens for what God is saying and for what response God might want. For both director and directee, learning takes place as the horizon of God's loving presence is expanded, making room for them to part ways so that each can accompany another on their journey.

Soul Care

An unseen aspect of spiritual direction is the inner healing, restoration, and strengthening of the soul that occurs as experiences of God deepen faith and build trust. Thus, spiritual direction is a spiritual practice Christ-followers engage in as means of caring for their souls.

The English phrase "care of souls" has its origins in the Latin *cura animarum*. While *cura* is most commonly translated "care," it actually contains the idea of both care and cure. *Care* refers to actions designed to restore well-being of something or someone. *Cure* refers to actions designed to restore well-being that has been lost. The Christian church has historically embraced both meanings of

cura and has understood soul care to involve nurture and support as well as healing and restoration.⁷

As directees' souls are tended to by the director with the Holy Spirit's help, their lives are transformed and wholeness reemerges.

Eventually, the inner dynamics of transformation become evident to others as wise choices are made and a prayerful posture is maintained, and union with Christ becomes the definitive desire. But the transformation of the spiritual life that incorporates true worship is slow. The apostle Paul concludes that the process entails not choosing conformity to the world but renewing the mind to align with God's will through discernment of what is good, acceptable, and perfect (Rom 12:1-2). Moreover, Kenneth Leech, author and theologian, writes: "It is with the mystery of the renewal of human souls that all true theology and all spiritual direction is concerned."⁸

The ongoing relationship between director, directee, and God fosters the process of transformation and reinforces the reality that human effort cannot accomplish this kind of spiritual growth. Ultimately, the outcome of the process is to be renewed by God's grace or, in Gregory Palamas' words: "To become by grace what he (God) is by nature."⁹ The desert mothers and fathers would describe transformation as the movement from a life dominated by vices to a life brimming with virtue.

⁷ Gary W. Moon and David G. Benner. *Spiritual Direction and Care of Souls: A Guide to Christian Approaches and Practices* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 11. Emphasis in the original text.

⁸ Kenneth Leech, *Soul Friend: Spiritual Direction in the Modern World* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2001), 34.

⁹ Moon and Benner, *Spiritual Direction and the Care of Souls*, 40.

St. John Climacus, who wrote *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* as a spiritual manual for monks, describes the ascent to spiritual wholeness as being accomplished by desiring to reach toward the fundamental virtues of obedience, repentance, remembrance of death, mourning, and meekness/loss of anger as well as the higher virtues of simplicity, prayer, dispassion, and faith, hope, and love. This kind of life requires steering clear of passions, otherwise known as vices, such as malice, slander, talkativeness, falsehood, despondency, gluttony, lust, avarice, poverty, insensitivity, fear, vainglory, and pride.¹⁰

When Christ followers adopt spiritual direction as a regular spiritual practice, the spiritual director is able to encourage directees to continue up the ladder of divine ascent. For instance, Paul exhorts believers in Corinth to “destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised up against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Cor 10:5). In spiritual direction a directee can openly share arguments, lofty opinions, and thoughts with the director and then step back to listen and reflect on what has been said. The director has to say very little in these moments because the Holy Spirit is helping the directee destroy and take captive what is not pleasing to God. The Holy Spirit may be reminding the directee of Jesus’ words: “For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned” (Mt 12:34-37). The director may

¹⁰ Vassilios Papavassiliou, *Thirty Steps to Heaven: The Ladder of Divine Ascent for All Walks of Life* (Chesterton, IN: Ancient Faith Publishing, 2013), 5-6, 11-12.

observe the directee take on a posture of repentance for careless words, but also of gratitude for having gained control of thoughts and opinions sooner rather than later.¹¹

Gaining control over any of the vices or passions leads to a new measure of freedom from self-deception happens within spiritual direction sessions and outside of them. The ultimate goal of all spiritual disciplines, including direction, is freedom from self-deception, which leads to love of God above all else. Søren Kierkegaard writes: “The ignorant man can gradually acquire wisdom and knowledge, but the self-deluded one if he won ‘the one thing needful’ would have won purity of heart.”¹²

This freedom and purity of heart are what directors long to personally experience and witness as they care for their directees’ souls. To that end directors practice soul care through their own practices of direction that bring them to a place of freedom and purity of heart to love themselves, God, and others well. Roberta Bondi clarifies this poignantly: “Only as we learn to love God and others do we gain real freedom and autonomy in a society in which most people live in a state of slavery to their own needs and desires.”¹³

Hearts that are free automatically minister to others with the same mercy extended to them by the Lord. Desert father Sir Isaac of Nineveh described a merciful heart:

What is a merciful heart? It is a heart, which is burning with love for the Whole of creation: for human beings, for birds, for beasts, for demons—for all God’s creatures. When such persons recall or regard these creatures, their eyes are filled with tears. An overwhelming compassion makes their heart grow small and weak, and they cannot endure to hear or see any kind of suffering, even the smallest pain, inflicted upon any creature. Therefore, these persons never cease

¹¹ Moon and Benner, *Spiritual Direction and the Care of Souls*, 40.

¹² Søren Kierkegaard, *Purity of Heart Is to Will One Thing*, trans. Douglas V. Steere (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1938), 52.

¹³ Roberta C. Bondi, *To Love as God Loves* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1987), 10.

to pray with tears even for the irrational animals, for the enemies of truth, as well as for those who do them evil, asking that these may be protected and receive God's mercy.¹⁴

Spiritual directors are persons who love well and never cease to pray and, often do so with tears. Kenneth Leech writes that the ministry of spiritual direction grows from and is defined by a life of prayer, discipleship, and the struggle with holiness.¹⁵

Characteristics of a Spiritual Director

First and foremost, spiritual directors are people who pray outside of direction sessions so they are prepared to pray during direction sessions. And from that life of prayer characteristics unique to directors take shape. The director is a person possessed by the Spirit seeking a life of holiness and closeness to God that radiates inner peace. She is a person of experience who has wrestled like Jacob through the darkness of her inner conflicts until God's blessing brings light. The spiritual director is a person who places a high value on learning from experiences but also learning by being immersed in Scripture and the wisdom of the desert dwellers. When engaged in tandem a new level of spiritual maturity is evident; the director becomes a person of discernment who is perceptive, insightful, and visionary. She pays attention to current culture and the cultivation taking place within the soul. Finally, the spiritual director is a person who gives way to the Holy Spirit and yields to the grace that flows freely from life with Christ in order to help others recognize the inspirations of grace ushering freedom into their lives.¹⁶

¹⁴ Papavassiliou, *Thirty Steps to Heaven*, 244.

¹⁵ Leech, *Soul Friend*, xviii.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 84-85.

Friar Reginald Ward, a full-time spiritual director who traveled around England for almost fifty years (beginning in 1915) offering spiritual direction in half-hour intervals to as many as a dozen people a day, compared a spiritual director to a physician. Ward offers the insight that the role of a good spiritual director “is not that he should be a judge or a dictator issuing commands, but that he should be a physician of the soul whose main work is to diagnose the ills of the soul and the hindrances to its contact with God and to find, as far as he is given grace, a cure for them.”¹⁷

In terms of characteristics, perhaps spiritual directors can best be described as similar to doctors who possess good bedside manners and are also good diagnosticians. They are unhurried and listen well because they trust that the patient’s input will help them uncover what is really happening in the patient’s life, not only physically, but also emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. Spiritual director and author Susan S. Phillips described how she listens to directees and what she listens for in her book *Candlelight: Illuminating the Art of Spiritual Direction*:

I listen for prayer. Some of prayer’s manifestations were expressed by seventeenth-century poet George as “God’s breath” in us, “the soul in paraphrase,” the “heart in pilgrimage,” “a kind of tune,” and “Heaven in ordinary.” I have witnessed such prayers in my office. My listening is different from that of many professional listeners, in that I listen for how the holy penetrates lives. I am there to help people discover the ways their lives are imbued with spirituality. This is spiritual direction.¹⁸

Ultimately, spiritual directors themselves go to direction because as they discover how their lives are saturated with spirituality, they are able to help others.

¹⁷ Sue Pickering, *Spiritual Direction: A Practical Introduction* (London: Canterbury Press, 2016), 7, 34.

¹⁸ Susan S. Phillips, *Candlelight: Illuminating the Art of Spiritual Direction* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2008), 1.

Mature directors spend time with God and hone their skills of conversing with God because they are humbly aware of their reliance on God in making the proper diagnosis of what ails the soul. Dallas Willard writes, “Hearing God cannot be a reliable and intelligible fact of life except when we see his speaking as one aspect of his presence with us, of his life in us. Only our communion with God provides the appropriate context for communications between us and him.”¹⁹ In direction one’s communion with God is important because it provides the appropriate context for communications between the directee, God and the director, who is listening to God’s voice on behalf of the directee.

Often the cure for what ails the directee is prayerful confession of sin within the safe space of the directee/director relationship. St. Macarius the Great offered this wisdom: “Let us pray, therefore, to God that he gives us ‘the wings of a dove (Ps 55:7) of the Holy Spirit so we may fly to him and find rest. Let us pray that he may take away from our soul and body the evil wind: sin itself, inhabiting the member of our soul and body. For this he alone is able to do.”²⁰

The emphasis on “us” in Macarius’ quote is a reminder that prayerfulness is yet another characteristic of directors. For a spiritual director, the confession of a directee becomes a window into the directee’s soul and provides the raw material to form a prayer for the directee. Thus, the director often takes on the role of intercessor, praying and trusting in God’s work in the directee’s life. From Ignatian spirituality the director realizes that it is “in turning to God who ‘is greater than our hearts’ (1 Jn 3:20) that our

¹⁹ Dallas Willard, *Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 39.

²⁰ Matthew The Poor, *Orthodox Prayer Life: The Interior Way* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2003), 130.

hearts are set free from self-accusation and that a spiritual road to growth in love opens before us.”²¹ Consequently, the director prays that through the directee’s deeper surrender of self, the soul is healed and free to experience God’s grace and mercy. This is the freedom for which Christ has set his people free and that God invites them to stand firm in through ongoing spiritual direction (Gal 5:1).

Another vital characteristic for spiritual directors to cultivate into their souls is inner freedom. Matthew the Poor’s description of the freeing of the soul is a description of what a spiritual director’s soul strives to look like:

It has a strong desire to abide with him and cleave to him. It has the freedom to soar up high. It also has a loving disposition toward its own kind, that is, toward every other human soul. It is open to the feeling of others without reserve. It is thus extremely loving and openhearted by nature. But such nature it can form one perfect entity of love and intimacy and live in harmony with God and man.²²

Directors, like others, often have many external pressures to wrestle with; however, their souls are not consumed with wrestling with God because they value the wisdom of waiting on God and seeking to make it the habit of their lives.

Mature spiritual directors freely live in light of God’s love, seeking to love God, themselves, and others well. The importance of loving others well is seen in the three features of spiritual fathers in the Eastern Orthodox tradition:

Their insight and discernment, as a result of a prayer and ascetic struggle, enable them to see into the heart of others. Second was their ability to love others and to make the suffering of others their own by sincerely taking responsibility for everything and everyone. Last was the power to transform the order of things in the world by loving with great humility and not by force.²³

²¹ Timothy M. Gallagher, *The Examen Prayer: Ignatian Wisdom for our Lives* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2006), 92.

²² Matthew The Poor, *Orthodox Prayer Life*, 121.

²³ Leech, *Soul Friend*, 44.

To that end, the familiar words of the Apostle Paul's verses on love were never far from their hearts or minds and ruled their will and gave them strength:

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned but have not love, I gain nothing.....Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love (1 Cor 13).

Spiritual directors live by these words.

They know the cost of not speaking from a place of love and thereby choose not to be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal or spiritual expert. Spiritual directors are wise enough to know that more is gained by loving well during a session than by spending more time with the directee. They are happy to patiently wait for their directees to speak and to respond with kindness. Directors are aware of the envy, boasting, arrogance, rudeness, irritability, and resentment they are harboring in their hearts and practice repentance in order to remain spiritually available to the directee. Directors rejoice as directees realize the truth of how much they are loved by God. They bear with, believe in, hope with, and endure alongside directees because they trust God's love for the directee.

It is a love that never ends. Over time, the prophecies, opinions, and agendas about the directee will cease to be important. Directors know that they only know in part but God understands the circumstances of a directee's life so perfectly that their partial knowledge is no longer relevant. Mature directors notice their irrelevance and give up their childish ways because they want to be transparent before God and their directees. They do not settle for seeing in a dim mirror. They wholeheartedly desire seeing God

face to face so that they might be fully known by God and so that they might help their directees be fully known by God.

Directors abide with God and their directees by faith, with hope, and in love, yet they know by heart that the greatest of these three is love as described in these words from William Blake's poem "The Clod and the Pebble:"

Love seeketh not itself to please,
Nor for itself hath any care,
But for another gives its ease,
And builds a Heaven in Hell's despair.²⁴

It is a love so confident and creative that directors naturally create safe spaces so others are able to experience the love of Christ both inside and outside of formal direction.

History of Spiritual Direction

Spiritual direction is rooted in the prophetic tradition of Judaism in the sense that the prophet was recognized as the mediator between human beings and God, who is ultimately the guide and director of one's life (Ps 73:24). These prophets noticed when God's people strayed and encouraged them to return to their covenant relationship. After Christ's resurrection, this tradition changed as early Christians sought to live in the light of God's love. Moreover, they sought discernment with the help of the Holy Spirit.²⁵

This Christian approach to spiritual direction began in the Egyptian and Sinai deserts where men and women went to live in prayer and solitude in order to offer a word to those who came by the thousands seeking guidance for their souls. These early elders were men and women who sought the silence of the desert as their way to love others by

²⁴ William Blake, *Sons of Innocence and of Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 144.

²⁵ Fahlbusch, *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, 154.

offering to meet the spiritual needs of those who were compelled to come to them. A person who came for direction trusted that the elder was being guided by the Holy Spirit to know his or her own limits and boundaries. Moreover, a person who came to the desert for direction trusted the elder and the Holy Spirit to such an extent that their relationship was based on freedom rather than legalism. This freedom within obedience to the elder and to God is at the heart of mystery for both spiritual direction and Christianity.²⁶

Sue Pickering describes how the fourth and fifth century desert mothers and fathers lived: “Attention to God, having a place of security (the cell), meditation on the scriptures, and wrestling with one’s inner darkness, were at the centre of the spiritual of the time, with rare words offered to seekers as a sacrament by the spiritual Father or Mother, who lived prayer rather than taught it.”²⁷ Followers of Christ sought the wisdom these desert dwellers offered. However, their holiness and purity of heart was more valued than their teaching, creating a role of spiritual fatherhood [and motherhood].²⁸

The unusual lifestyle of the desert fathers and mothers meant at times they experienced encounters with one another. The story of Zossima, a monk, and Mary of Egypt, a reformed prostitute, who wandered around the desert recounts such a moment:

By your holy prayers, mother, Christ has given lasting peace everywhere. But hear the request of an unworthy monk and pray to the Lord for the whole world and for me, a sinner, that my wandering through the desert should not be without fruit.” She answered him, “It is only right Father Zossima, that you who have the office of a priest should pray for me and for all; but we must be obedient so I shall willingly do what you bid me. With these words, she turned to the East and raising her eyes to heaven and stretching up her

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Pickering, *Spiritual Direction*, 5.

²⁸ Leech, *Soul Friend*, 37.

hands she began to pray moving her lips in silence, so that almost nothing intelligible could be heard.²⁹

Mary's words of prayer of blessing upon Zossima were: "Blessed is God who cares for the salvation of souls."³⁰ This interaction illustrates the belief in the desert that grace is based not on one's ordination on the gifts of the Spirit. Further, it clarifies the maternal and paternal spiritual equality of life in the desert.³¹

Two influential writers from the desert tradition are Evagrius Ponticus (345-399) and John Cassian (ca. 360-after 430). Upon moving to the desert, Evagrius visited an old desert father, perhaps Macarius of Egypt, and asked him, "Tell me some piece of advice by which I might be able to save my soul." The reply was, "If you wish to save your soul, do not speak before you are asked a question."³² This experience taught Evagrius how foundational solitude and silence are to desert spirituality. Evagrius was the first to write about prayer from the desert tradition; he categorized the eight evil thoughts that are known today as the seven deadly sins.

John Cassian traveled to Egypt and learned from those who practiced monasticism around Alexandria. This equipped him to take this desert tradition and formalize it in such a manner that ascetic traditions produced models of pastoral ministry. Specifically, at his monastery at Marseilles, there emerged a way life based on the Eucharist, the Divine Office, and confession with direction. As was the norm within the

²⁹ Mary Forman, *Praying with the Desert Mothers* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005), 4.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

³² *Ibid.*, 39.

history of spiritual direction, Cassian impacted the lives of both Benedict of Nursia (ca. 480-ca. 547) and Gregory the Great (590-604).³³

In the sixth century, Benedict established a form of Western monasticism that included his *Rule* for daily life. The *Rule* created a daily rhythm of work, rest, prayer, study, spiritual reading known as *lectio divina*, and simple accountability among those living in community. This form of monasticism is still in practice.³⁴

Also, in the West during his reign as pope, Gregory the Great wrote his *Pastoral Rule* that was used for hundreds of years to establish practices for pastoral ministry and spiritual direction. His insights about clergy proved to be applicable to spiritual directors as well. Gregory famously observed that “the art of ruling souls is the art of arts” and went further in asserting that the inner life of pastors and spiritual guides should be marked by zeal for right conduct, discipline, love, learning, patience, pity, adaptability, condescension, and humility and the insistence on pure motives. Gregory affirmed for priests what the desert dwellers had emphasized earlier about what the attitude of the heart should be: a heart attached to the search for God, to the good of the neighbor, and to discretion consisting of discernment, moderation, and confession.³⁵

What was learned in the desert was passed on and has provided spiritual insight for centuries. During the medieval period, Eastern Orthodox monks added a substantive amount to the practice of spiritual direction. In the seventh century the Jesus Prayer was established on Mount Sinai and spread along with the spiritual direction associated with

³³ Fahlbusch, *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, 154.

³⁴ Pickering, *Spiritual Direction*, 5.

³⁵ Leech, *Soul Friend*, 45.

it. By the fifteenth century when it was found in Russia, there was an emphasis that the Jesus Prayer as well as all prayer be practiced under the guidance of a director and not alone to avoid the dangers of self-deception. Macarius, the second great *staretz* in Russia reiterated what other guides before him had emphasized about the importance of following “the guidance of a wise man experienced in the fight.”³⁶

In the Celtic tradition, soul friends (*anmchara*) provided care and counsel in penitential practices because travel especially in Ireland was tedious, and priests were few. However, the sacramental practices of confession and absolution were still handled by the priests.³⁷ This emphasis on penitential practices was a significant aspect of direction in the Celtic tradition. Like the desert fathers and mothers, they valued discretion as a means to enlightened discernment.

No history of spiritual direction would be complete without noting the work of St. Ignatius, especially in the area of discernment and spiritual direction. *The Spiritual Exercises*, based on his own spiritual formation and life with God, led to the development of spiritual direction as both art and practice. They provided a detailed understanding of the role of the director and laid a foundation for the training of spiritual directors. Ignatius instructed directors and those giving the exercises to wait and watch in the background as God, who is found in all things, worked within the life of the directee retreatant.

In Ignatian spirituality, directors were viewed as discerners along with directees. Together they sought to discern how God was at work using the “*Rules for the Discernment of Spirits*” and the “various movements excited in the soul.” Collectively,

³⁶ Ibid., 41-43.

³⁷ Fahlbusch, *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, 154.

these have proven to be a valuable tool for spiritual directors. These rules equip directors to distinguish the difference between God-inspired thoughts and self-deceptive thoughts. Two other tools that Ignatius offered in his exercises are imaginative prayer and the prayer of *examen*. These types of prayer equip both directees and directors to notice and discern where God is at work and how to respond. For Ignatius the goal of the Exercises was to emphasize the reality that God can be found in all things and to empower directees to faithfully and lovingly serve as contemplatives in action along with their directors.

The established Celtic proverb: “Anyone without a soul-friend is a body without a head”³⁸ rings as true today as it has throughout the history of spiritual direction. Men and women who long for “a more of God life” search for soul-friends and typically find them among those who are further along on the journey than they are. Today’s directors are indebted to the desert mothers and fathers who courageously emulated the times Christ himself withdrew in order to understand the will of the Father. Their wisdom inspired others through the years such as Bernard of Clairvaux, Francis of Assisi, Clare, Aeldred of Rievaulx, Catherine of Siena, Saint Teresa of Avila, Saint John of the Cross, Martin Luther, Thomas Cranmer, George Herbert, Richard Baxter, Jeremy Taylor, and John Wesley.³⁹ This is a great cloud of witnesses available today, who help navigate disciples through the cloud of unknowing.⁴⁰ These men and women from various theological backgrounds were encouraged to examine interior movements of their spiritual lives and encourage spiritual directors today to do the same.

³⁸ Leech, *Soul Friend*, 45-46.

³⁹ Pickering, *Spiritual Direction*, 6-7.

⁴⁰ Also, the title of a fourteenth century book by an unidentified author who reflects on the call to a contemplative life.

Training for Spiritual Directors

In his book *Spiritual Director, Spiritual Guide*, Tilden Edwards quotes Thomas Merton as he writes about spiritual directors: “The director, if not essential for the spiritual life, is considered in practice to have had a decisive part to play in the lives of saints and mystics, with a few notable exceptions. [Great directors] have clearly exercised a providential function in the lives not only of individuals but also of religious congregations and of certain social milieux, [*sic*]indeed of the church itself.”⁴¹ The ministry of spiritual direction is helping churches today navigate the social milieu of the twenty-first century. Training programs are being established to meet the need for more directors, who will meet directees, questioning their faith, choices, relationships, prayers, and ongoing discernment of life with God.

The desert mothers and fathers were the trainers for the spiritual companions that came after them. In that same tradition, training programs today are run and staffed by contemplative spiritual directors. The curriculum for these training programs emphasizes spiritual formation rather than information. To be as present to others as Jesus is, it is necessary for the spiritual director to be oriented toward love. In his book *The Art of Christian Listening*, Thomas N. Hart wrote from his own experience that the best directors he had were not the oldest or holiest or most schooled, but the ones who loved him most. He writes, “They enabled me to believe in myself, to rejoice in my own being and gifts, to accept the mystery of my life in hope, and to make the most of it.”⁴²

⁴¹ Tilden Edwards, *Spiritual Director, Spiritual Companion: Guide to Tending the Soul* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2001), 18.

⁴² Thomas N. Hart, *The Art of Christian Listening* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1980), 18.

Books such as Thomas Keating's *Invitation to Love: The Way of Christian Contemplation* and Gerald G. May's *The Awakened Heart: Opening Yourself to the Love You Need* provide a framework for the interior work each director-in-training is encouraged to do in order to inspire others to love themselves. Moreover, they also provide insight into what might or might not be helpful ways of loving directees. May cautioned, "Authentic loving responsiveness calls for a kind of fasting from being helpful. Real helpfulness requires a relinquishment of our caretaking reflexes. It demands not only that we stay present with the unanesthetized pain of the person or situation, but that we also risk appearing to be uncaring."⁴³

In terms of learning the ins and outs of doing spiritual direction, books such as *Holy Listening: The Art of Spiritual Direction* by Margaret Guenther, *The Art of Spiritual Guidance* by Carolyn Gratton, and *Spiritual Direction: Beyond Beginnings* by Janet K. Ruffing offer wisdom into what it looks like to sit in the spiritual director's seat.

Guenther writes,

The gospels offer precedents: Jesus had a way of taking over at the dinner table. So too in the ministry of spiritual direction—when all is said and done, the Holy Spirit is the true director. I find this reassuring when I am overcome by performance anxiety..... But if I am ready to relinquish my role to the true Host, the burden of responsibility drops away and the space I have prepared becomes gracious and holy.⁴⁴

The importance of discernment in spiritual direction is instilled in the training of spiritual directors. Ignatian spirituality's valuable insights are discovered in books such as

⁴³ Gerald May, *The Awakened Heart: Opening Yourself to the Love You Need* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991), 240.

⁴⁴ Margaret Guenther, *The Art of Spiritual Direction* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1992), 39.

Spiritual Consolations: An Ignatian Guide for the Greater Discernment of Spirits by Timothy M. Gallagher, and *Landmarks: An Ignatian Journey* by Margaret Silf.

Therese of Lisieux is quoted as saying: “I’ve always said to God: O my God, I really want to listen to You; I beg You to answer me when I say humbly: What is truth? Make me see things as they really are.”⁴⁵ Authors like Gallagher and Silf equip directors to help directees see things as they really are as Ignatius once did. Ignatius was convinced that to be discerning, people had to “become aware of spiritual movements of their hearts, seek to understand the origin of these movements of good spirit and the enemy, and take action accordingly, accepting what is of the good spirit and rejecting what is of the enemy.”⁴⁶ Prayer is always the first step toward spiritual awareness and the life source of spiritual direction.

Theophan the Recluse is quoted as saying “Prayer is the test of everything; prayer is also the source of everything; prayer is the driving source of everything; prayer is also the director of everything. If prayer is right, everything is right. For prayer will not allow anything to go wrong.”⁴⁷ The beginning and ending of dialogue between the directee and director is prayer. As the content of the directee’s prayers are shared the director notices places where God might be at work based on the director’s prayer life. Training programs practice this in groups of three to four people, in which one person agrees to be the director, another person agrees to be the directee, and the other(s) is/are the prayerful observer/s. After approximately fifteen minutes of direction, there is a time of silence

⁴⁵ Timothy A Gallagher, *Spiritual Consolation: An Ignatian Guide for the Greater Discernment of Spirits* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2007), 11.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁴⁷ Moon and Benner, *Spiritual Direction and the Care of Souls*, 31.

before each person shares what was noticed during the session. In this manner the director is prayerfully formed, which is necessary because ultimately the director must know when to get out of the real Director's way. That only happens through prayerful practice. In this contemplative stance the director is watching for the Holy Spirit's invitation to directees to move in prayer as they are freed to experience more of God in a way that is fluid and to be responsive to both God and the directee's situation.⁴⁸

Prayer is also the means through which the directors, no matter how long they have been trained, maintain perspective about spiritual direction and their role. Times of silence and solitude can quickly reveal any prideful thoughts such as the notion that one is more needed by one's directee than is actually the case. Moreover, times of confession and wrestling with God in prayer lead to a deeper knowledge that God is the One true director. From these times of wrestling, the director freely creates a space for the directee to encounter God, and then has the joy and privilege of watching the encounter unfold. In time, directors committed to a life of prayer realize the truth in what Leech wisely wrote: "The ministry of spiritual direction grows from a life of prayer, discipleship and the struggle for holiness. It is the by-product of that life and only makes sense with it."⁴⁹

Definitions of Spiritual Direction

A director's life of prayer, discipleship, and struggle for holiness is understood with the help of her own spiritual director. Leech's description of the ministry of spiritual direction is a lens to use when looking at other definitions of spiritual direction.

⁴⁸ Pickering, *Spiritual Direction*, 94.

⁴⁹ Leech, *Soul Friend*, xviii.

Pickering writes succinctly that spiritual direction is designed to help directees listen and respond to God—who desires relationship, and who longs for people to express the truth of who they are as they share their gifts, experience, and personhood with others.⁵⁰ Ann Kline and the Shalem Institute Senior Staff offer this understanding on behalf of their Institute:

Spiritual direction is not about knowing ourselves better, living our lives more creatively, or engaging in life more fully, although all of these may be the fruits of the relationship. Ultimately, spiritual direction is not about us at all. It is about God. It is about turning to God and claiming our relatedness. It is about orienting ourselves to a desire in us beyond needs—to live the whole of our lives as a radically-involved dialogue with the Holy.⁵¹

Margaret Guenther relays her definitive description found in the Introduction of her book on the art of spiritual direction:

Spiritual direction is not psychotherapy nor is it an inexpensive substitute. . . . Spiritual direction is not pastoral counseling, nor is it to be confused with the mutuality of deep friendships, for it is unashamedly hierarchical. Not because the director is somehow “better” or “holier” than the directee, but because, in this covenanted relationship the director has agreed to put himself aside so that his total attention can be focused on the person sitting in the other chair. What a gift to bring to another, the gift of disinterested, loving attention!⁵²

Guenther sheds light on the relationship between spiritual direction and deep friendships.

Perhaps the most often referred-to definition of spiritual direction comes from Barry and Connolly’s book *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*. These two men define spiritual direction as “help given by one Christian to another which enables that person to pay attention to God’s personal communication to him or her, to respond to this

⁵⁰ Pickering, *Spiritual Direction*, 4.

⁵¹ Ann Kline and Shalem Senior Staff, "What is "Spiritual Direction?" *Shalem News* (Winter/Spring 2005): 1.

⁵² Margaret Guenther, *The Art of Spiritual Direction* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1992), 3.

personally communicating God, to grow in intimacy with this God, and to live out the consequences of the relationship.”⁵³

The definition for spiritual direction used in Come, Learn, Rest Ministries for spiritual directors will be fleshed out in the pages that follow and encapsulated at the end. In the next chapter, the story of Come, Learn, Rest Ministries will be shared as well as insights about spiritual direction.

⁵³ Barry and Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, 8.

CHAPTER 2

COME, LEARN, REST MINISTRIES

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

~Matthew 11:28-30

Each summer I wait for the fawns to come. For the past eight years, white dotted twins have come with their mother who helps them learn to graze on our hillside while they wait for the acorns from the oaks to start falling. And I have learned they like the sweetness of these acorns best. From their mother they also learn to be wary of me and bound down the hill to safety when I approach too quickly. And I have learned that if I want to enjoy being in their presence a little longer, I must slow down my entire being; I must calm my heart, soul, mind, and strength. With their mother, the fawns find a space to rest just below my house in the middle of three valley oak trees that provide shade from the afternoon sun. And for my part, I have found the safest space to rest is surrounded by the love of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Jesus invited those who followed him to a safer space in their religious life. They no longer had to learn about religion from the scribes and Pharisees. They could learn

from him, who knew the burden of the laws being placed upon them. They could learn from Jesus how to truly love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love their neighbor as themselves. Moreover, they would find out that trying to keep this one law that summed up the law and the prophets was a much easier yoke than trying to keep all the other laws of the day. Because Jesus carried the burden of all those laws, spiritually speaking, those who come to Jesus and learn from him will experience the freedom of a much lighter yoke and a new kind of rest for their souls.

At first glance, it might seem that Mt 11:28-30, is about finding rest. But these three verses invite followers of Jesus, to participate in coming, taking, learning, and finding. Jesus, with his gentle-and-lowly-of-heart yoke, balances out the weightiness of the load by removing any extra rules or judgments. At a deeper level, these verses introduce the notion that Jesus models a way of being, making it possible to know how to be gentle-and-lowly-of-heart with oneself and with others. This desire to not intentionally heap burdens on myself and others is pure rest and peace for the soul as witnessed each time I see the fawns lying between the valley oak trees.

Come, Learn, Rest Ministries seeks to be such a canopy for the souls of ministry leaders and their spouses. I have learned both from spiritual direction training and from the visits of the deer what Parker Palmer describes so well: “But the soul will show up only if we approach each other with no other motive than the desire to welcome it. When we ‘protect and border and salute’ each other’s solitude, we break our manipulative habits and make it safe for the soul to emerge.”¹ Come, Learn, Rest Ministries strives to

¹ Parker J. Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 64.

make Quiet Oaks a safe place of retreat for the souls of those who come to emerge just as the fawns emerge each summer.

Mission and Vision of Ministry

Ministries have histories from which their mission and vision are born. The mission and vision of Come, Learn, Rest Ministries dates back to my husband's first meeting as a brand-new deacon with the other elders and deacons of the church. At that meeting, the elders had made the first agenda item the firing of the pastor. This was a pastor who had discipled my husband and ministered to our family. Though we were considered by many to be young Christians, we knew enough to know that too much humor in a sermon and being a little overweight were not grounds for firing. We observed that in the aftermath of this hasty decision, the pastor's soul was trampled, the pastor's family was troubled, and the congregation was torn apart.

It was a chaotic time in our personal lives, and we wanted the stability of a healthier congregation. However, it was important to stay, reconcile, and heal with this body of believers. We did not want to take our discouragement into a new church family. We stayed and endured the sobering process of having conversations that should have happened before that fateful consistory meeting. It was an enlightening process of reconciliation and hearing the hearts of others. In the end we did leave simply because we realized there was misalignment in our views of the "call of clergy." We tended to believe the pastor would discern with God and the church leaders when it was time to stay or go. The elders contended they were equipped to discern that without the pastor's input.

As we left, we began dreaming about starting a ministry for ministry leaders who were in need of healing and renewal. We went on to serve in various capacities as lay leaders within our denomination and as church planters, but always with a protective eye on ministry leaders. From that time on we searched for a property that might work for such a ministry. Looking back, I notice that we took turns taking the lead in the shared vision for this ministry. Just when it seemed we had forgotten about it, something would stir in one of us, and we would reawaken to the vision. One of those stirrings happened in my husband in 2010 at the tail end of the downturn in the real estate market. He was looking at the real estate section and noticed a home with land for sale in the midst of oak trees and a beautiful view of the Sierra Mountains. It had been in foreclosure and bought by investors who were trying to sell it for a greater profit. It had been in escrow several times and each time it fell out of escrow we offered what we could afford. Finally, they accepted our offer and we moved into what has become Quiet Oaks, the small retreat space for Come, Learn, Rest Ministries. We, along with those who come, are the ones who continue to profit.

In recent years, as I have reflected on my own life and call to this ministry of spiritual direction and retreat, I have unearthed a deeper desire to refresh and renew the souls of those carrying out the tough assignments to which the Lord has called them. This desire is woven into my childhood memories of my mother's call to social justice while commencing her faith journey with God.

I am told our pastor, like other ministers in the 1960s, used the pulpit to challenge congregants to consider deeper theological issues surrounding the Civil Rights

Movement. It was a time when God's people reflected on what it meant to love one's neighbor as oneself and what the prophet Isaiah asked concerning what God chooses:

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard (Is 58:6-8).

These verses struck a chord in the hearts of my parents, and sermons on passages such as this called my mother into action.

During the summer of 1966, my mother along with our pastor and others from our congregation joined Martin Luther King, Jr. on James Meredith's "March against Fear" from Memphis, Tennessee, to Jackson, Mississippi. Ironically, when my mother talks about the march, she shares from her heart not just the passion she had for the cause but also the fear of finding herself in the middle of such racial turmoil. It was a march against the anxiety concerning the outcome of the march and the fear of violence against one another especially since Meredith himself had been shot earlier in the march.²

Beyond the march, the words of Martin Luther King, Jr. continued to inspire my mother. He wrote,

Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. Hate multiplies hate, violence multiplies violence, and toughness multiplies toughness in a descending spiral of destruction. So when Jesus says, "Love your enemies," he is setting forth a profound and ultimately inescapable admonition. Have we not come to such an impasse in the modern world that we must love our enemies—or else?³

² History.com Editors, *This Day in History*, February 9, 2010, <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/james-meredith-shot>.

³ Martin Luther King Jr., *Strength to Love* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 47.

It was probably the “or else” that called my mother into action. In the fall of 1968, as a family, we went to the inner city of Chicago’s west side and joined others who were part of the Ecumenical Institute’s Fifth City Community Project. We lived communally with other families in a big housing complex but went outside the walls for everyday life. My father, who was a schoolteacher, started a preschool program. My mother did secretarial work. My sister and I went to the neighborhood school where we were in the minority. Life was hard. Racial tension was high in the aftermath of Martin Luther King’s assassination. Moreover, amenities such as good health care were scarce for everyone in our neighborhood.

We faced the horror of this scarcity when my mother became sicker after going to the neighborhood doctor for a simple cold. A trip to the emergency room in downtown Chicago revealed that she had been prescribed medicine that caused her to demonstrate schizophrenic-like behavior. Such was the practice of this physician in the ghetto, who dispensed his own prescriptions and kept patients coming back for drugs. My mother had to wean herself off of the medication, but how? Communal living did not foster the physical, emotional, and spiritual healing she needed. Not only was my mother mentally, physically, and emotionally exhausted, she was also spiritually depleted. Her dream of loving her neighbor as herself was so much harder than she had imagined.

But something else she had never imagined happened. In the suburbs of Chicago lived a doctor and his wife who had a beautiful home that they opened up to my mother. She went and lived with them for many weeks and found rest for her soul. When it was time to get her, my father borrowed a car, and we drove out of the bleak inner city and into the suburb with expansive green lawns. The doctor’s wife enfolded us with warmth

and a distinct hospitality. She had made space for my mother to heal and she was making space for us to reunite as a family. She also gave us a look of unspoken gratitude for our sacrifice for the sake of racial equality. Perhaps we were doing something she and her family never would be able to and so she happily contributed in the way she was best able, by helping my mother.

While my husband tended to the details of Come, Learn, Rest Ministries gaining nonprofit status as a 501C3, I contemplated whether or not I could be as hospitable as this doctor's wife had been to my mother and our entire family. I also wrestled with God and prayed over the wording for the mission and vision statements. I settled on simple wording for the mission of the ministry as stated in our bylaws: "To provide a secure and inviting space for those who come in need of rest." And instead of vision per se, I decided to highlight the three ways we are committed to ministering: "Helping others learn about prayer; offering spiritual direction and quiet retreat experiences; extending hospitality for an hour, a day or even overnight." But what was missing from these words was the sustaining realization that Come, Learn, Rest Ministries would exist for a purpose beyond what I could see in front of me.

Exactly who the doctor's wife really was or what she meant to me is hard to describe. But I have found within myself the desire to be like this unnamed woman who offered space for my mom to heal and introduced me to what hospitality looks like when caring for the soul of another. My mother's soul had suffered a severe blow, and she was realizing the truth of King's words about the nonviolent approach: "So the nonviolent approach does not immediately change the heart of the oppressor. It first does something to the heart and souls of those committed to it. It gives them new self-respect; it calls up

resources of strength and courage that they did not know they had. Finally, it reaches the opponent and so stirs his conscience that reconciliation becomes a reality.”⁴ Her desire to bring about change through nonviolence required more strength and courage than she knew she had. Using what was left of her strength and courage, my mother admitted it was time for us to leave the inner city. We departed with few possessions because we had committed to live at the same economic level as our neighbors. However, we did take with us changed hearts and souls as well as the hope that our short time in Chicago’s inner city would help make racial reconciliation a reality.

I am discovering that reconciliation is a necessity and is the unwritten commitment of Come, Learn, Rest Ministries. The doctor’s wife offered a space where my mother’s soul could begin to reconcile with God and with all she had experienced. Ministry leaders and missionaries who come for spiritual direction and retreat are also seeking to reconcile their souls with their desires, their daily lives, and God’s call. Regularly, ministry leaders bring to direction the question of whether or not they are even called to their ministries anymore. I notice that this comes up when the soul is weary and wondering like the writer of Ecclesiastes, “What gain has the worker from his toil?” (Eccl 3:9). I also notice how the expectations of others can easily hijack a ministry leader’s desires and sense of call.

Spiritual Disciplines

Ministry leaders, like all Christ followers, live by God’s expectations and commandments. Ministry leaders respond to God’s unique call. Moreover, ministry

⁴ Martin Luther King, Jr., *Testament of Hope*, ed. James M Washington (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2003), 39.

leaders and their families carry the burden of another layer of expectations to be above reproach that is placed on them by their congregations, the current Christian culture, and even themselves. It requires strength and courage to become unyoked from these false expectations and from the false self. Gratton writes,

The false self steers us toward a preference for living in illusion, denying the split between what we are (a unique mixture of authentic spiritual presence and inauthenticity, or refusal of grace) and the ideal self of our own making. It is this denial of our actual self that prevents us from living a spiritual life. Because of it we can deny what we most deeply long for in terms of our divine life call, and we can render unconscious what we wish to ignore about ourselves. That makes for captivity of the energies of the soul that could be flowing freely in tune with the larger whole.⁵

For ministry leaders to lead well, it is imperative that they notice when splits between their true and false selves happen. It is the awareness of these splits that can initiate letting go of expectations, embracing their longings and desires, and moving toward authenticity in their personal and ministerial lives.

Spiritual directors are the ministry leaders, especially equipped to help their directees become aware of their bondage to sin and the isolation that ensues when conversations with the false self are more dominant than conversations with God:

True spiritual life begins in awareness of our weakness, of the inner and outer chaos that situates us in that early Christian writers called “the land of unlikeness.” Although our personal dialogue with reality is unceasing, it often fails to be an honest, open dialogue. Thus it can tend to be a deformative dialogue with reality, a process of self-deception, most of which happens outside our conscious awareness. That is why we sometimes need another person, an objective outsider, to help raise these tensions within our divided self to focal consciousness. Only then are we free to choose an alternative course.⁶

⁵ Gratton, *The Art of Spiritual Direction*, 67.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 68.

Only then is the soul able to heal. Spiritual direction offers the space where the deformative dialogue with reality is dismantled and the transformative renewal of the mind takes place. In those instances where the soul has been disfigured by religious rules, directors led by the Holy Spirit cast a vision of hope and wholeness.

Thus, spiritual directors often find they are leaders of a unique spiritual worship experience which Paul knew the church in Rome needed and which is still needed today. According to God's mercy, spiritual directors appeal to directees to join in spiritual worship acceptable to God, and not be conformed to the world, but to be transformed by renewing their minds in order to test and discern what is the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God (Rom 12:1-2). In this manner a unique worship unfolds, and spiritual directors find themselves both grateful for the privilege of being called to this holy work and also in need of their own soul care.

Because every act of ministry teaches something about God,⁷ it is imperative that directors have their own spiritual direction sessions to make sense of what God wants to teach them about their experience with a directee. And because all ministry is God's ministry from the very beginning,⁸ directors often find themselves needing to delve into deeper theological understanding of their own relationship with God before helping those coming for direction. Finally, even though direction has the distinct dynamic of prayer and the presence of God as the focus, the director can still feel the weight of carrying what the directee brings to direction. Consequently, directors need rest to become unyoked from their directee's burdens.

⁷ Ray S. Anderson, *The Soul of Ministry: Forming Leaders for God's People* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 8.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

Spiritual direction is one of the many spiritual disciplines that bring rest to the soul. There seems to be an over-arching vision for spiritual disciplines that provides soul care for spiritual directors that can be passed on to directees and then others:

The secret of the easy yoke, then, is to learn from Christ how to live our total lives, how to invest all our time and our energies of mind and body as he did. We must learn how to follow his preparation, the disciplines for life in God's rule that enabled him to receive his Father's constant and effective support while doing his will. We have to discover how to enter into his disciplines from where we stand today—and no doubt, how to extend and amplify them to suit our needy cases. This attitude, this action is our necessary preparation for taking the yoke of Christ . . . the intelligent, informed, unyielding resolve to live as Jesus lived in all aspects of his life, not just in the moment of specific choice or action.⁹

Willard offers a compelling vision for putting on the easy yoke.

But this description also lends itself to questioning what spiritual disciplines can help directors have the intelligent, informed, and unyielding resolve needed to rest in their identity as spiritual directors and minister effectively to directees. Willard offers this wisdom: "Full participation in the life of God's Kingdom and in the vivid companionship of Christ comes to us only through appropriate exercise in the disciplines for life in the spirit."¹⁰ A more pointed question arises: What exercises can directors, who desire an experience of life in the Spirit while accompanying Christ and directees, practice?

Like the desert mothers and fathers before them, spiritual directors practice the disciplines of silence and solitude. Nouwen wrote what silence teaches those who practice it:

Silence teaches us when and how to speak a word of truth or wisdom to another. A powerful word is a word that emerges from silence, bears fruit, and returns to silence. It is a word that reminds us and others of the silence from which it comes

⁹ Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1988), 9.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 26.

and leads us back to that eternal silence. A word that is not rooted in silence is a weak, powerless word that sounds like a “clanging cymbal or a booming gong” (1 Cor 13:1).¹¹

And without silence, the spiritual discipline of solitude does not bring restorative rest to the soul. From times of silence, spiritual directors are more equipped to speak to directees from God’s heart and not their own.

In *Life Together*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer shares his wisdom about the connection between community and solitude. He writes,

Let him who cannot be alone beware of community. He will only do harm to himself and to the community. Alone you stood before God when he called you; alone you had to answer that call; alone you had to struggle to pray; and alone you will die and give an account to God. You cannot escape from yourself; for God has singled you out. If you refuse to be alone you are rejecting Christ’s call to you, and you can have no part in the community of those who are called . . . the reverse is also true: Let him who is not in community beware of being alone.¹²

It is the times of silence and solitude that prepare the director to sit in community with a directee and to know when it is time to keep silent and when it is time to speak (Eccl 3:7).

In Ignatian spirituality, the prayer of *examen* is “nothing more than a focusing of that style of prayer used for making a general examination of conscience, whether practiced daily or adapted to the time of confession.”¹³ In his *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius outlined five points to his method of prayer: thanksgiving and gratitude to God; petition

¹¹ Henri Nouwen, *Spiritual Direction: Wisdom for the Long Walk of Faith* (New York: HarperOne, 2006), 96.

¹² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community* (New York: HarperOne, 1954), 77.

¹³ David L. Fleming, *Draw Me into Your Friendship: The Spiritual Exercises* (Saint Louis, MO: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2002), 33.

for insight into God's graces; review of God's action during a particular time period; forgiveness in light of God's grace; and asking for God's help in what lies ahead.¹⁴

A regular rhythm of praying the *examen* increases one's availability to God and spiritual growth. Moreover, true to Ignatian spirituality, the *examen*, when prayed faithfully, leads to finding God in all things. Spiritual directors who pray the *examen* and are able to find God in the daily happenings of their own lives will be able to help their directees discern where God can be found in their lives as well. Moreover, praying the *examen* is the means of becoming more aware of the longings and desires for God that originate from God's desire for a relationship with God's people. Spiritual directors, who recognize their desires for communion with God, find freedom in God's Kingdom and can direct others toward a life of freedom in God's Kingdom.

In *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, Willard points out that Jesus was the master of life in the spirit and that "the aim and substance of spiritual life is the effective and full enjoyment of active love of God and humankind in all the daily rounds of normal existence where we are placed."¹⁵ In this kind of spiritual life, practicing a discipline for its own sake is of no value, and spiritually mature people are not the ones practicing a multitude of disciplines.

Spiritual maturity is evident in disciplined persons who understand the voluntary nature of religious asceticism. More precisely, "the spiritual disciplines are a matter of taking appropriate measures" and include "activities of mind and body done to bring our whole selves into cooperation with the divine order so we can experience more and more

¹⁴ Ibid., 33. The prayer of *examen* is included in the First Week of the exercises so that it might be utilized throughout the Exercises.

¹⁵ Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 138.

a vision and power beyond ourselves.”¹⁶ Because this is what spiritual directors want for their own lives, they have experience practicing many disciplines and are able to help their directees discover the disciplines appropriate for their spiritual life at any given season.

There is one discipline that should never be out of season in our spiritual lives and that is celebration. As spiritual disciplines are practiced, greater intimacy with God is encountered and recognized. The spiritual discipline of celebration fosters paying attention to where God is at work so that what God does is acknowledged with joy. But the discipline of celebration as spiritual practice is often ignored and misconstrued.

Richard Foster brings clarity to the spiritual discipline of celebration:

The decision to set the mind on the higher things of life is an act of the will. That is why celebration is a discipline. It is not something that falls on our heads. It is the result of a consciously chosen way of thinking and living. When we choose this way, the healing and redemption in Christ will break into the inner recesses of our lives and relationships, and the inevitable result will be joy.¹⁷

Willard writes that we “engage in celebration when we enjoy ourselves, our life, our world in conjunction with our faith and confidence in God’s greatness, beauty, and goodness.”¹⁸

Moreover, celebration is a spiritual discipline practiced in community where life with God is shared freely and without judgment. Spiritual direction relationships form unique communities made up of the director, the directee, and the Trinity and thus lend themselves to spontaneous celebration with mutual awareness of God’s activity and

¹⁶ Ibid., 153.

¹⁷ Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Disciplines: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), 195.

¹⁸ Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 179.

presence in the directee's life. Nouwen described celebrating as lifting up, affirming, confirming, and rejoicing in another person's gifts and graces as reflections of God's unlimited gift of love and grace.¹⁹

Spiritual directors can practice celebration within spiritual direction sessions with prayers of thanksgiving for the way God is at work in the directee's journey. Gratitude unyokes the director from the burden of "performance" during a session and invites a greater ease in noticing both God's presence and the directee's response to God's faithfulness. Janet Ruffing writes,

In spiritual direction sessions, I hear stories of the most uncommon fidelity and generosity in loving other people. Yet these directees often feel they're barely getting by. The challenges in their lives, which make these choices difficult to sustain, rob them of the awareness of their constancy. Yet they get up every day and love the same people, considering it simply the human thing to do. It is important for us as directors to reflect back to our directees how we see them incarnating Jesus for us. We need to name for them the Jesus kind of behavior they may not recognize in themselves.²⁰

These moments of incarnating Jesus are certainly to be acknowledged and celebrated.

Moreover, as these acts of generosity are acknowledged and celebrated, the directee learns to notice God's presence without the help of the director. Even though there is a more prayerful, reverent stance to spiritual direction, there is always room for joy.

Willard writes, "Holy delight and joy is the great antidote to despair and is a wellspring of genuine gratitude—the kind that starts at our toes and blasts off from our loins and diaphragm through the top of our head, flinging our arms and our eyes and our voice

¹⁹Nouwen, *Spiritual Direction*, 124.

²⁰Janet K. Ruffing, *Spiritual Direction: Beyond the Beginnings* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2000), 70.

upward toward our good God.”²¹ Perhaps spiritual direction sessions should end in “hallelujah” rather than “Amen” from time to time as a means of saying thank you for this spiritual practice.

A theological perspective of spiritual direction and spiritual practices will be addressed in the next part of this paper. Specifically, in the next chapter, literature written about spiritual direction will be reviewed.

²¹ Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 179.

PART TWO
THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

At its heart most theology, like most fiction, is essentially autobiography. Aquinas, Calvin, Barth, Tillich, working out their systems in their own ways and in their own language, are all telling us the stories of their lives, and if you press them far enough, even at their most cerebral and forbidding, you find an experience of flesh and blood, a human face smiling or frowning or weeping or covering its eyes before something that happened once.¹

At its heart, most spiritual direction is autobiographical. Spiritual directors have the privilege of hearing the ordinary and extraordinary, the spiritual and unspiritual, the light-hearted and heavy-hearted details of people's lives. Each direction session is essentially another chapter in directees' life-with-God stories. Spiritual directors play a unique part in helping directees discern where God is at work in their stories.²

When direction facilitates honest Christ-centered reflection, spiritual directors witness directees' theological work. Just as prayer is inseparable from spiritual direction, attaining freedom, wisdom, and courage are inseparable from the theological work done in spiritual direction. The freedom, wisdom, and courage to acknowledge failures and

¹ Frederick Buechner, *The Alphabet of Grace* (New York: HarperCollins), 1989.

² In a sense the directee is verbally sharing their autobiography with the director, but as the director listens and interprets what the directee shares becomes biographical.

begin again are the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, making prayer the “inseparable companion of theological inquiry.”³

Just as good theologians ask the same questions over and over, so do spiritual directors, who want to offer meaningful direction for their directees. In one form or another, spiritual directors continually ask such as “How are you praying?” or “How is God at work in this situation of your life at this time?” Because these open-ended questions can be redundant and vague, the questions theologians ask might inform the inquiries directors make during spiritual direction.

Daniel Migliore’s book *Faith Seeking Understanding* outlines four systematic theological questions that inform questions spiritual directors might ask themselves in discerning how to deepen a directee’s experience of God. These are: How is the directee identifying with the revelation of God as found in Scripture? How is the directee’s life expressing the whole truth of the revelation of God? How is God a living reality in the directee’s story? How is transformation happening in the directee’s spiritual and social practices?⁴ These questions can also provide a lens for the theological reflection that will be done in this portion of the paper.

Christ-centered spiritual direction affirms that God is always at work in a directee’s life and will be revealed to the directee in God’s time, not the director’s time.

³ Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 15.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 10-15. The four questions are as follows: 1. Are the proclamation and practice of the community of faith true to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ as attested in Scripture? 2. Do the proclamation and practice of the community of faith give adequate expression to the whole of truth of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ? 3. Do the proclamation and practice of community of faith represent the God of Jesus Christ as a living reality in the present context? 4. Does the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ by the community of faith lead to transforming practice in personal and social life?

Directors do not assume that every directee will attest to faith in God and proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord; yet for the director, Christ is the center of each session and the source of theological inspiration. Daniel Migliore writes,

When theology thinks that the edifice that it builds is complete and permanent and will, like the Word of God, abide forever, it becomes a “system” devoid of faith. It is not the task of theology to build “systems” of thought in any of these senses Nevertheless, the effort of theology to be “systematic” should be affirmed insofar as it expresses trust in the unity and faithfulness of God in all of God’s works. Because God is faithful, there are patterns and continuities in the acts of God attested in Scripture that give shape and coherence to theological reflection.⁵

As soon as directors try to impose their agendas and opinions about God’s interaction, the directee’s story is hijacked and faith left by the wayside. However, when the director affirms the directee’s faith in God’s faithfulness, God’s activity becomes the constant in the theological reflection occurring within each session.

This chapter contains a review of literature that will clarify the role of disciplines in offering directees a more effective direction session. This clarity evolves from reading and reflection on three sources: ancient spirituality, Ignatian spirituality, and the thoughts of Dallas Willard. Moreover, this chapter also develops a theology of spiritual direction that invites the directee to relate his or her story in light of God’s ongoing story.

The first two books on ancient spirituality are Roberta Bondi’s *To Pray and to Love: Conversations on Prayer with the Early Church* and Matthew the Poor’s *Orthodox Prayer Life: The Interior Way*. Because prayer is the backbone of spiritual direction, it is only natural to glean wisdom from the desert mothers and fathers who devoted their lives

⁵ Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 12.

to praying and hearing from God. Although both books include the sayings of the desert mothers and fathers, each interacts with the sayings in different ways.

The next group of books delves into Ignatian Spirituality and include: *A Pilgrim's Journey: The Autobiography of Ignatius of Loyola*, with Introduction, Translation and Commentary by Joseph N. Tylenda, *The Prayer of Examen: Ignatian Wisdom for Our Lives Today* by Timothy M. Gallagher, and *The Practice of Spiritual Direction* by William A. Barry and William J. Connolly. Reflection on the Ignatian prayer of *examen* deepens the theological understanding of prayer in conjunction with spiritual direction. Because the life of St. Ignatius continues to inform and transform the lives of men and women, who desire to become spiritual directors, a theological overview of his ministry is warranted. No theological review on spiritual direction would be complete without reflection of the Barry and Connolly's book, which is standard reading in many spiritual direction training programs.

The last two books to be reviewed are *Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God* and *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* by Dallas Willard. These books provide insight into practicing disciplines for the purpose of arriving at a "lived" theology rather than an academic theology. Ultimately, an understanding of their own "lived" theology will inform the disciplines directors practice for their directee's benefit.

***To Pray and to Love* by Roberta Bondi**

Bondi's hope is that reading her book will result in discovering a cohesive life of praying and loving from the "teachers of the Egyptian desert who understood in a

particular way that prayer, our everyday lives, and Christian reflection are all of one piece.”⁶ She writes,

The starting point and the ending point of this book is the early monastic conviction that love of God and of neighbor is the goal of the Christian life. For our Christian forebears, only a person who loves is a fully functioning human being. Yet, because of the presence of sin in the world, loving as God intends for us does not come easily. Learning to love is, in fact, what the Christian life is about, and it is a lifetime’s enterprise. Prayer is a profoundly integral part of this enterprise of learning to love.⁷

One can almost hear the early mothers and fathers saying that praying and loving are woven together of the same cloth and should never be cut apart. If and when sin should separate it, the two must be carefully sown back together.

Bondi contends that when seeds of love and prayer are sown, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are slowly uprooted. Love for the early monastics was “a disposition that involves whole patterns and habits of acting, seeing, and listening to other people on a day-to-day basis,” and “taking on these concrete, particular daily patterns and habits of love, which they call virtues is a fundamental part of learning how to love.”⁸

In monastic life, a virtue encompasses a whole way of being, seeing, feeling, thinking, and acting; therefore, prayer was the first and most important virtue to be taught: “Prayer is the place where in a special way we make ourselves vulnerable to God’s grace, which helps us understand the virtues, choose them for ourselves, think them through, mull over what in us stands in their way, and gives us the courage to try to

⁶ Bondi, *To Pray and to Love*, 10.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 98.

live them out in concrete ways.”⁹ As directors deepen their own prayer lives, they find themselves not only more prayerful during sessions but also more loving.

Bondi’s contribution to spiritual direction comes in this connection between prayer and love. By specifically quoting the desert mothers and fathers, Bondi reinforces the simple monastic truth that “prayer is shared life with God over an entire lifetime.”¹⁰ Over an entire lifetime, prayer is not just for one’s self. When practiced for the sake of others, prayer becomes a way of love and deeper connection with self, God, and others. “Paradoxically, what follows from learning to say, ‘In the world there is only myself and God,’ is the deep knowledge that the self does not exist from itself alone.”¹¹ If self does not exist for itself alone, it exists for others as well. When directors surrender to their role of praying for and loving directees, sessions become Christ-centered.

The writings of the desert mothers and fathers are filled with paradoxical statements that need to be interpreted properly in order to be applicable to the life and ministry of spiritual directors. Bondi does a thorough job of explaining the vital connection between a praying life with a life of loving well: “All prayer, all life, all love finally are the gifts of God’s generous grace that waters the world like the rivers of Paradise. In prayer we ask God for grace to enter the kingdom of love for which we were created. Prayer prepares us for the kingdom, yet paradoxically, whatever we do, it is always unexpected.”¹² For the purposes of this ministry challenge, it might have been

⁹ Ibid., 100.

¹⁰ Ibid., 72.

¹¹ Ibid., 94.

¹² Ibid., 138.

helpful to hear what the desert mothers and fathers had to say about the unexpected that is stirred up in direction. Spiritual directors enter into each direction session expecting the unexpected. Encouragement, to faithfully love and pray “out of the hope and knowledge that all things, within us and without, are finally reconciled and healed in God,”¹³ is always welcomed. Matthew the Poor offers just such encouragement from his own desire for a rich interior life of prayer.

***Orthodox Prayer Life* by Matthew the Poor**

Matthew the Poor was given a manuscript of sayings on prayer before he began his solitary life in a monastery. During his time alone, he read and prayed these sayings. As he became more acquainted with their words, he developed a friendship with the ancient and modern Russian saints, and his prayer life and his heart for God were being refashioned. As a result, he translated the sayings for others to interact with the hope that the prayers and lives of others would be transformed. He writes, “The purpose behind the quotes and all that is written on prayer in this book is not for reading but for prayer. The mystery of this book lies in turning the sayings on prayer into prayer. This is why the words ‘prayer life’ are included in the title.”¹⁴

Matthew the Poor contends that for there to be a life of prayer, there must be a meeting with Christ: “So many books tell about Christ; so many preachers speak about Christ; but so few people live and speak with Christ.”¹⁵ Christ calls believers to pray persistently and passionately, knowing full well that prayer provides the spiritual contact

¹³ Ibid., 136.

¹⁴ Matthew the Poor, *Orthodox Prayer Life*, 12.

¹⁵ Ibid., 13.

with God the soul needs for conversion, renewal, and growth. Ultimately, prayer prepares the soul for the “hidden action of the Holy Spirit in one’s soul and such action qualifies the soul for eternal life.”¹⁶ Moreover, “when the soul ascends to the world of true light, which is within its own self, it begins to feel in harmony with God through constant prayer.”¹⁷ But prayer is not just for the sake of one’s own soul. Prayer dispels darkness and actually becomes the light that shines before all people and testifies to God’s presence in the world (Mt 5:16).

Through faith-filled lives, people of prayer offer new vision to those in need of hope. Matthew the Poor offers directors such a vision for personal prayer that ultimately informs direction sessions and directees’ prayer lives. The spoken and unspoken question of direction sessions is some variation of the question, “How are you praying about this?” The how includes how is the directee praying about the circumstance swirling within the session and how the director is praying for the directee who is swirling. Matthew the Poor’s sections on the The Nature of Prayer, Aspects of the Interior Activity of Prayer, The Impediments to Prayer, and Fruits of the Prayer Life can help the director understand what directees are experiencing in their prayer lives. The how that is not answered specifically is how the director can help the directee pray.

This is not a “how to” book nor a step by step book on prayer. Again, this book offers a vision of what a life of prayer can look like, not a method instructing its readers to follow these rules and they will have a deeper prayer life. There is only one thing to do, and that is to pray, which is how Matthew the Poor deepened his own prayer life.

¹⁶ Ibid., 14.

¹⁷ Ibid., 15.

With great joy over these sayings on prayer, he read of experiences that “most strongly told of his own.”¹⁸ Consequently, what is helpful in this book is the insight that it is more important to ask “why pray?” rather than “how can one pray?”

The chapter on “The Efficacy of Prayer” highlights that prayer is the means for effective connection and communication with God:

The transcendent gifts of the Christian are manifold. Some are general, like the new second birth, redemption for the forgiveness of sins, justification by grace, sanctification by the blood of Christ. Others are personal, like the gift of love, humility, piety, the glowing of spirit in constant intimacy with the Lord and so forth. The strength and efficacy of all these gifts, however, can never be manifested except by prayer.¹⁹

From a theological standpoint, prayer connects the dots between the general and personal transcendent gifts of the Christian life. Prayer weaves together the heady interpretations of the theological concepts such as rebirth, redemption, forgiveness, justification, and sanctification with the heart’s experience of these concepts.

The prayers of head and heart inform the spiritual autobiography essential to an authentic life with Christ. St. Macarius writes,

For this reason we must first beg of God with struggle in the heart through faith that he grants us to discover his riches, the true treasure of Christ in our hearts, in the power and energy of the Spirit. In such a way, first, by finding the Lord to be our help within us and our salvation and eternal life, we may be of help and profit to others also, insofar as it is possible and attainable, by drawing upon Christ, the treasure within, for all goodness of spiritual discourses and in teaching the heavenly mysteries.²⁰

¹⁸ Ibid., 10.

¹⁹ Ibid., 33.

²⁰ Ibid., 37.

Macarius offers a reminder that together the head and the heart come to a better understanding of the mystery of God. The interior work that the directee does with the help of the director provides freedom to offer life and light to the world.

Understanding this freedom is another reason why this book is a valuable resource for prayer and the spiritual life. Matthew the Poor continues:

The human soul is created light and pure. It is quickly responsive to the call of God. It has a strong desire to abide with him and cleave to him. It has the freedom to soar up high. It also has a loving disposition toward It is thus extremely loving and openhearted by nature. By such nature it can form one perfect entity of love and intimacy and live in harmony with God and man.²¹

The formation of this perfect entity of love and intimacy comes through the practice of spiritual disciplines and living in submission to God. The prayerful practice of any spiritual discipline brings freedom and an unbinding of the heart, soul, mind, and strength from the things of this world. With this freedom comes the peace of God that Paul wrote about to the church at Philippi about not being anxious but through prayer being at peace with God (Phil 4:6-7).

According to St. Antony, with peace comes greater freedom: “Whoever wishes to become perfect in the ascetic way should not be enslaved to any of the evils. For he who worships one form of evil is far away from the border of perfection. As it was said, I have freed myself from everything.”²² St. Antony’s words had impact because he was seeking to free himself from everything through his ascetic lifestyle. Today directors offer the peace of God and wisdom through their practice of disciplines in order to free themselves from everything.

²¹ Matthew the Poor, *Orthodox Prayer Life*, 121.

²² *Ibid.*, 131.

Matthew the Poor's writings and the sayings of others from the desert communicate the importance and the wisdom of prayer in finding freedom and rest for the soul. The gift of Matthew's book is the encouragement directors glean concerning prayer. Directors, who consistently pray, consistently grow, which benefits their directees. The life of St. Ignatius expands this understanding of the importance of prayer.

***A Pilgrim's Journey* by Joseph N. Tylenda**

Joseph N. Tylenda, as both a theologian and historian, provides an inspiring introduction, an accessible translation, and an insightful commentary to an academic reading of the life of St. Ignatius. Because there have been other translations of St. Ignatius' brief autobiography, Tylenda's goal was to write an insightful commentary for today's reader informed by his own interaction with and translation of the Spanish-Italian work: "Furthermore, a commentary is needed to explain various allusions in the text, to clarify some of its ambiguities, and, in general, to give the reader a fuller-flowing biographical sketch of the Founder of the Jesuits and thus serve as a complement to the text."²³

In naming the book, *The Pilgrim's Journey*, Tylenda provided a fuller-flowing glimpse into Ignatius's perception of himself, after encountering Christ, on a pilgrimage seeking after God. He writes,

The journey he made during those years was not merely a land and sea journey to the Holy Land and through Europe; more importantly, it was a spiritual journey that he had embarked upon. After his conversion, Ignatius sought God and God alone. He left Loyola in order to seek God in the Holy Land, and he

²³ Joseph N. Tylenda, *A Pilgrim's Journey: The Autobiography of Ignatius of Loyola* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press), 12.

ends his narration saying, “At whatever time or hour he wanted to find God, he found Him” (no 99).²⁴

The contribution of this autobiography and Tylenda’s commentary is the extraction of a theological framework for Ignatius’ desire to find God and ultimately God being found.

Ignatius chose to begin this account of his life when he was twenty-six years old, perhaps because it marked the year his desires shifted. It was a year of profound change for Ignatius, who wanted nothing more than to indulge his fantasy of taking up arms and engaging in a worldly lifestyle until his leg was injured in battle at Pamplona. While convalescing, rather than reading his preferred sixteen century best-sellers such as *Amadis de Gaula*,²⁵ he read *The Life of Christ* and a book on the lives of the saints in Spanish because that was what was available. Ignatius’ desires shifted as he spent time reading, rereading, and reflecting on the life of Christ and his own life.

Eventually, there was less thought of being *Amadis* and more thought about God’s presence in his life. Tylenda writes,

The reading that Ignatius did during his convalescence was, up to that time, the most important he had ever done, for it was through that reading that God began to act on his soul and draw him to a conversion of life . . . it is not surprising, then that Ignatius should want to dwell on the lives of Saint Dominic and Saint Francis, but what is noteworthy is that he did not merely conclude that their lives were imitable but that he saw himself obliged to imitate them—that he, too, had to accomplish for God what they had accomplished.²⁶

Tylenda’s commentary of Ignatius’ conversion while convalescing reinforces God’s way of uniquely wooing each of God’s children. Just as Ignatius’ body needed convalescence, so did his soul. Ignatius’ soul needed rest from his worldly lifestyle.

²⁴ Ibid., 13.

²⁵ Ibid., 43. See footnote 5.

²⁶ Ibid., 47. See footnote 7.

Ignatius endeavored to hear God correctly and faithfully follow the Lord's leading, but sometimes rerouting was necessary in order to stay the course of his pilgrimage. Tylenda includes understanding of Ignatius's experiences with God.

When Ignatius relates his mystical experience at La Storta, he merely gives the basic facts and omits all detail and embellishment. But from those who were with him we learn that as soon as he entered the chapel he felt a sudden change come over him, and while he was praying he had a remarkable vision. He saw God the Father together with Jesus, who was carrying His cross. Both Father and Son were looking most kindly upon him, and he heard the Father say to the Son: "I wish you to take him as your servant." Jesus then directed His words to the kneeling pilgrim and said: "I wish you to be our servant." This was exactly what Ignatius had always wanted.²⁷

This encounter highlights God's presence in Ignatius' and other's theological and spiritual formation.

A strength of Tylenda's commentary is the deeper understanding of Ignatius' desire to be a pilgrim for the Lord and to willingly go where sent. "Thus says the LORD: 'Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls. But they said, 'We will not walk in it (Jer 6:16).'" Those, who like Ignatius, consider themselves pilgrims standing at a crossroads, seeking and asking for God's way, find God's call for their lives. While this book inspires spiritual directors to continue in their own pilgrimage of finding God, it does not address the reality that some people do not choose to walk in the good way.

Spiritual directors grapple with the reality that people who come to direction are on their own pilgrimages and on their own faith trajectories. In other words, not everyone who comes for direction is ready to experience God being found in the same ways Ignatius did. Because Ignatius had such profound spiritual experiences while a pilgrim, it

²⁷ Ibid., 177-178. See footnote 96.

is tempting to believe pilgrimage is a formula for Christian discipleship. But quite the contrary, Ignatius' life as a pilgrim is what formulated the spiritual exercises, which include tools for prayer, contemplation on the Gospels, discernment of spirits, and understanding spiritual consolation and desolation. Ignatius knew that the spiritual life entailed companionship with Jesus; therefore, his goal was to help people discover and deepen their own unique relationship with Christ and not mimic his life.

Ignatius' close companionship with Jesus was evident to many; therefore, at the end of narrating his autobiography, Ignatius was asked about the Exercises, which were written over a period of time and were based on his own experiences in prayer.²⁸ After being prodded for four years by Father Nadal and other fathers as well, Ignatius narrated this autobiography to Father Luis Goncalves da Camara. They were certain that how the Lord formed Father Ignatius from the beginning of his conversion would be beneficial to others. Father Nadal's convincing argument was the following: "If you grant the request we so earnestly desire, we will put it to our best use, and if you do not grant it, our spirits will not be thereby dejected, but we will have the same confidence in the Lord as if you had written everything down."²⁹

True to his desire to find God and be found by God, Ignatius was convinced that his life story could help others. The Ignatian spiritual exercises and autobiography of Ignatius are interrelated because what one believes informs what one does. Moreover, Ignatius' life and exercises are a reminder that prayer transforms one's biography and theology. Consequently, this paper turns to the prayer of *examen*, which is a way of

²⁸ Ibid., 186. See footnote 99.

²⁹ Ibid., 191.

praying that Ignatius taught throughout his lifetime and left for others to learn from as well.

***The Prayer of Examen* by Timothy M. Gallagher**

The importance of prayer for those undertaking the spiritual exercises of Ignatius cannot be understated. The importance of prayer for those engaging in theological reflection cannot be undervalued. The importance of prayer for spiritual directors hoping to offer constructive direction to their directees cannot be underestimated. Consequently, Timothy Gallagher's book reveals the possibilities, the practice, the practicality, the purpose, and the progression of the prayer of *examen*.

Through Ignatius' experience with the prayer of *examen*, Gallagher introduces the possibilities that arise in praying the *examen* and outlines the practice of praying it as well. Through the modern-day experiences of people praying the *examen*, Gallagher illustrates the practicality, purposes, and progression of praying the *examen*. A more reflective spiritual life and a richer theological understanding of God's activity in all aspects of life are advantages of praying the *examen*. Gallagher succinctly writes, "The God whom we seek and for whom our souls thirst calls us through that door and awaits us there with the gift of spiritual awareness and the embrace of divine love."³⁰

Ignatius recorded in his diary everyday encounters with desolation and doubt along with consolation and confirmation. Reflection upon these movements highlights the very real possibility of receiving spiritual awareness and divine love. Gallagher writes,

³⁰ Timothy M. Gallagher, *The Examen Prayer: Ignatian Wisdom for Our lives Today* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing, 2006) 41.

Ignatius's eyes are opened to the whole pattern of the enemy's efforts in these days to remove his peace and undo his decision, and of the consolations that God has given to confirm him in his decision. His Spiritual Diary for March 12 ends in light, firmness of decision, and a warm sense of God's loving closeness. Ignatius's spiritual struggles of this day, his close attention to them, the insight to which this attentiveness has led, and his consequent striving to conform his heart to God's desire have borne great fruit. He is ready in a new way to love and serve the Lord.³¹

The possibility of such an embrace of God's divine love is the catalyst for praying the prayer of *examen*.

As Ignatius seeks to conform his heart to God's desire, he becomes more aware of his own desires for more of God's love. This desire and awareness of God's love and presence is foundational and serves as the orientation for the *examen*. Moreover, this desire is "enkindled within us when we wish to respond daily, moment by moment, to God's love, and a desire that is finally, a gift to be sought in humble and trusting prayer to the God who promises that searching hearts will find their desire (Luke 11:9)."³²

The prayer of *examen* includes practicing praying through five movements: gratitude, petition, review, forgiveness, and renewal. Praying them in succession is not necessary; however, a flow from one to the next increases ease and freedom while praying. For instance, gratitude for God's provision can lead to petitions intentionally focused on desires for more of God's love. A review of how those petitions have been manifested can usher in an awareness of forgiveness for transgressions as well as an awareness of needing God's renewal, mercy, and assistance in the time to come.

³¹ Ibid., 50-51.

³² Ibid., 52.

Because the goal of praying the *examen* is to grow in awareness of and response to God's presence, it is advantageous to consider how God can be recognized in all of life but especially in times of intentional prayer: "The *examen* is most transforming when prayed with attentiveness to the call of the Spirit within anxiety to move forward until my heart is satisfied."³³ God is recognized in the invitation to move from anxiety toward freedom, which offers peace and rest through the three persons of the Trinity.

God's nearness and invitation to enter into communion with the Trinity is the gift of both the Spiritual Exercises and the prayer of *examen*. Attentiveness to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit increases flexibility in praying the *examen*. The freedom to linger in any one step makes the prayer more practical and tailored to God's purposes for spiritual growth. As the *examen* is prayed according to the Spirit, deeper desires for more of God unfold and are clarified over time. However, even a little progress over the course of days, weeks, or months encourages continued commitment to prayer.³⁴

The *examen* is a gift to the ministry of spiritual direction because of its reflective nature. Bringing to direction what God is revealing during times of *examen* offers the director a glimpse at a possible beginning for the session. At the same time, the director is aware that even if God seemingly reveals nothing, God is always actively pursuing the directee. Thus, the *examen* is useful in uncovering directees' desires and God's purposes.

As much as the prayer of *examen* is a means to recognizing and clarifying God's presence and purposes it is not the only way. It is prayer, not the prayer of *examen* specifically, that needs to be encouraged as a spiritual practice. Spiritual directors, who

³³ Ibid., 105.

³⁴ Ibid., 173.

are aware of the *examen*'s benefits and limitations, acknowledge as Gallagher does that the *examen* is a process. When the *examen* is prayed with perseverance, it becomes both simpler and more profound. It takes on form and substance within the soul and becomes a prayer of deep gratitude, joy, and desire for more of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Near the end of the book, Gallagher shares this poem by poet Jessica Powers:

Deep in the soul the acres lie
of virgin lands, of sacred wood
where waits the Spirit.³⁵

And then he offers this insight: "The prayer of examen introduces us into those depths of the soul, into that sacred space 'where waits the Spirit.' . . . and will bless us every day on our spiritual journey."³⁶ Spiritual direction is a sacred space where the Spirit and the spiritual director companion directees in their ever-unfolding relationship with God.

***The Practice of Spiritual Direction* by William A. Barry and William J. Connolly**

In 1971, the authors and four other Jesuit colleagues founded the Center for Religious Development in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The purposes for the Center included: "1) To do research that contributes to the development of a modern spirituality, 2) To train experienced men and women for a more effective ministry of spiritual direction, and 3) To provide spiritual direction to the people of God."³⁷

³⁵ Regina Siegfried and Robert Morneau, eds., *The Selected Poetry of Jessica Powers* (Washington DC: ICS Publishers, 1999), 6.

³⁶ Gallagher, *The Examen Prayer*, 176.

³⁷ Barry and Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, xii.

And as a result of staying faithful to these ministry purposes, Barry and Connolly acknowledge that for them spiritual direction had become more and more focused on helping people develop their relationship with God.³⁸

Consequently, the authors' purpose in writing this book was not to answer vague questions about spiritual formation but rather more definitive questions, concerning what a person's spiritual life actually is and what has helped form them spiritually. Their hope was that this book would both contribute to and continue the discussion of spirituality and spiritual direction in the Church. One way they have accomplished this is by providing a definition of spiritual direction that can be reflected on and used in training programs.

Within reading the first few pages of the book, it is evident that Barry and Connolly have endeavored to clearly and definitively understand spiritual direction. They make an astute analogy before and after their definition in order to clarify what their focus is in spiritual direction:

For us, therefore, religious experience is to spiritual direction what foodstuff is to cooking. Without foodstuff there can be no cooking. Without religious experience there can be no spiritual direction. We define Christian spiritual direction, then, as help given by one Christian to another, which enables that person to pay attention to God's personal communication to him or her, to respond to this personal communication God, to grow in intimacy with this God, and to live out the consequences of the relationship. The focus of this type of spiritual direction is on experience, not ideas, and specifically on religious experience, i.e., any experience of the mysterious Other whom we call God.³⁹

The analogy and the clarification enhance the definition and invite directors to consider what disciplines a director might engage in to effectively minister to directees.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., 8.

The chapters of this book include aspects of the analogy and definition with a focus on God's role in spiritual direction. Within these chapters are examples from direction experiences that further illustrate the definition and reinforce the centrality of God and the directee in each direction session. Thus, the director witnesses the directee's relationship with God unfold spiritually, emotionally, and theologically.

As Jesuits, the authors draw upon their experience with the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, which encourage the use of images, concepts, and reason in prayer to deepen a directee's experience with God. However, they are also clear that this is not the only way of prayerfully engaging in direction. They write,

The kind of direction we espouse, however is not tied to any particular kind of prayer or way. The only prerequisite for engaging in the type of direction we describe is that the person being directed have affective experiences of God which he notices and which he can talk about with a director At the same time we gratefully acknowledge our Ignatian roots and wish to thank our Jesuit brothers who have helped us to appropriate this spirituality.⁴⁰

This affirmation of a prayer-filled life being more important than a certain method of prayer, reflects the wisdom found within this book. In fact, there is so much wisdom about prayer and spiritual direction that rereading or reviewing the main points could enhance a director's effectiveness with directees.

In the chapter entitled "Becoming a Spiritual Director," the authors cast a vision of what being a director entails from an experience-based, contemplative approach:

Spiritual directors will also need a deep faith in the desire and ability of God to communicate with his people, not only as a community, but as individuals too. This faith, if it is to be firm enough to sustain them in their work, must spring from their own experience of God. Such experience-based faith will be the ground for their working assumption that there is no one with whom God does not desire to communicate.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Ibid., xiv-xv.

Just as Barry and Connolly placed God at the center of their definition of spiritual direction, God is at the center of the director's life and ministry. Barry and Connolly's vision for becoming a director is laid out well, but it is only one chapter. A section in this chapter or a separate chapter about discerning the call to become a director and counting the costs of such a ministry could be helpful.

Directors seek a theologically-informed relationship with God in order to enhance their directees' understanding of God: "Theology and personal experience point to an even greater God, and so spiritual directors can expect to be continually called to further growth. Their experience of other people in relationship with God will challenge them to prayer, deeper reflection, and a fresh look at what they have studied, and further study."⁴² Over time, directors learn to expect the unexpected.

Those who are called to the ministry of spiritual direction do not shy away from the unexpected nature of spiritual transformation. Predicting what can be expected is beyond the scope of this book, or any book, because it is God's mystery to be revealed in God's timing. Spiritual directors, who pay attention to the mystery of God in their own lives, can help directees pay attention and fully embrace the mystery of God in their lives.

Moreover, spiritual directors, who practice spiritual disciplines, are more adept at catching a glimpse of God at work in their own lives and more able to help their directees do likewise. In this manner, directors are life-long learners and place a high value on spiritual maturity. The authors could have expounded on this concept by incorporating their own understanding of how the practice of spiritual disciplines impacts the ministry

⁴¹ Ibid., 130-131.

⁴² Ibid., 141.

of spiritual direction and helps directors grow personally and professionally. Realizing this is beyond the scope of Barry and Connolly's vision for their book, this review turns to Dallas Willard for theological answers and insights on the importance of prayer and practicing spiritual disciplines for directors and directees, who desire hearing from God.

***Hearing God* by Dallas Willard**

Directing people toward God is most faithfully done through prayer and considering how God is being experienced as their spiritual lives unfold. Prayer is the avenue for becoming more aware of God's presence and talking to God. In his book *Hearing God*, Willard discusses prayer and "hearing God" as it relates to living within the will of God, to being whom God wants people to be, and to doing what God wants them to do. Wisely, Willard imparts "a clear sense of how to live confidently in a personal walk that is complemented by an ongoing conversational relationship with God."⁴³

Spiritual direction is a place for directees to explore who God wants them to be and what God wants them to do. Like Willard, directors expect directees will develop a conversational relationship with God as a result of their time in spiritual direction. To that end, directors are obliged to consider their own conversational relationship with God and to make intentionally seeking God the habit of their lives. He writes,

It is when we seek God earnestly, prepared to go out of our way to examine anything that might be his overture toward us—including the most obvious things like Bible verses or our own thoughts—that he promises to be found

⁴³ Dallas Willard, *Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999) 12-13.

(Jer. 29:13). But we will be able to seek him only if we honestly believe that he might explicitly address us in ways suitable to his purposes in our lives.⁴⁴

A director's belief that God can be heard in direction sessions creates a space for directees to experiment with discerning God's voice and to wrestle with hearing God.

Directors, who are in the habit of listening to God, invite directees into a similar reality during direction. Directors can help directees hear God:

With assistance from those who understand the divine voice from their own experience and with an openness and will to learn on our part, we can come to recognize the voice of God without great difficulty Without qualified help which works alongside our own desire to learn and readiness to cooperate, God's direct word will most likely remain a riddle or at best a game of theological charades.⁴⁵

Because spiritual directors value hearing God's voice and treasure God's direct word, they are qualified to help others recognize God's voice.

Like Willard, spiritual directors grasp the interconnectedness between hearing God and experiencing the presence of God. Spiritual direction is a place of communion between God and directees. Willard writes, "Surely one of the most damaging things we can do to people's spiritual prospects is to suggest that God will not deal with them specifically, personally, intelligibly and consciously or that they cannot count on him to do so as he knows best."⁴⁶ Directors, who are hopeful that a connection between God and the directee will transpire, are more able to invite directees into a new and deeper relationship with God. This new reality is evident in the "simple fact that God comes to

⁴⁴ Ibid., 91.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 168.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 104.

us precisely in and through our thoughts, perceptions and experiences and that he can approach our conscious life only through them, for they are the substance of our lives.”⁴⁷

In *Hearing God* Willard teaches, validates, challenges, and warns readers. Each sentence, paragraph, and page contain so much thought that it is advantageous to reread his words. For instance, his thoughts on Biblical Deism are worthy of consideration:

Today something that could aptly be called “Biblical deism” . . . held that God created his world complete and perfect and then went away, leaving humanity to its own devise. There was not individualized intervention in the lives of human beings, no miracles. Bible deism similarly holds that God gave us the Bible and then went away, leaving us to make what we could of it, with no individualized communication either through the Bible or otherwise.⁴⁸

Spiritual directors might find it helpful to reread this section in light of their directees’ relationship with God and the Bible. New insights assist directors in deepening their directees’ understanding of how God is speaking.

It requires mental energy to read and digest the writings of Willard. However, the wisdom gleaned to help directees joyfully communicate with God is worth the effort: “Our aim in such a life is to identify all that we are and all that we do with God’s purposes in creating us and our world. Thus, we learn how to do all things to the glory of God (1Cor 10:31; Col 3:17). That is we come in all things to think and act so that his goodness, greatness and beauty will be as obvious as possible—not just to ourselves, but to all around us.”⁴⁹ Spiritual directors perform various disciplines so that God’s goodness, greatness, and beauty become obvious to directees and others around them. Willard’s *The Spirit of the Disciplines* offers wisdom concerning various disciplines.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 102.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 107.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 211.

The Spirit of the Disciplines by Dallas Willard

It is fitting to end this literary reflection section with a book that explores “what is spiritual” and “what it means to live a spiritual life.” In continuing to discover which spiritual disciplines will help directors offer a genuine direction session for directees Willard’s central claim for this book is helpful:

We can become like Christ by doing one thing—by following him in the overall style of life he chose for himself. If we have faith in Christ, we must believe that he knew how to live. We can, through faith and grace, become like Christ by practicing the types of activities he engaged in, by arranging our whole lives around the activities he engaged in, by arranging our whole lives around the activities he himself practiced in order to remain constantly at home in the fellowship of his Father.⁵⁰

Directors can become like Christ by following him in the overall style of life he chose for himself. Theologically, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as the Trinity are in constant fellowship with one another. When directors practice disciplines to become more Christ-like, they too find ourselves at home with the Father. From the abundance of such rich fellowship, directors create space for directees to join in the fellowship.

The treasure of that rich fellowship that can be passed on in direction is the reality that faith actually does or can make a difference.⁵¹ Faith is more than praying a sinner’s prayer. Faith is connected to an everyday theology and psychology saturated with God’s grace, mercy, forgiveness, and love that leads to repentance and awakens desires and longings to truly know God. Willard writes:

What we need is a deeper insight into our practical relationship with God in redemption. We need an understanding that can guide us into constant interaction with the Kingdom of God as a real part of our daily lives, an ongoing

⁵⁰ Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, ix.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, x.

spiritual presence that is at the same time a psychological reality. In other words, we must develop a psychologically sound theology of the spiritual life and of its disciplines to guide us.⁵²

With a healthy understanding of faith, directors strive to practice disciplines that create space for directees to verbally process their faith within the context of everyday life and to experience spiritual freedom within the reality of God's Kingdom.

If a spiritual discipline is an "activity undertaken to bring us into more effective cooperation with Christ and his Kingdom,"⁵³ then what activities can a director undertake to bring about more effective cooperation with Christ and his Kingdom for the sake of the directee? Willard responds:

When through spiritual disciplines I become able heartily to bless those who curse me, pray without ceasing, to be a peace when not given credit for good deeds I've done, or to master the evil that comes my way, it is because my disciplinary activities have inwardly poised me for more and more interaction with the powers of the living God and his Kingdom.⁵⁴

From this inwardly poised stance, directors are empowered to invite directees to interact with God regardless of their beliefs about God. Practiced consistently, the disciplines work faith, hope, and love into the heart, soul, mind, and strength until what comes out is an even greater love for God and others.

Any activity that brings one closer to God or brings more freedom can be considered a spiritual discipline. Therefore, what might be a helpful discipline for one director might not be helpful for another, and a discipline that has been practiced for

⁵² Ibid., xi.

⁵³ Ibid., 156.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 157.

several years might not be life-giving anymore. Regardless, when prayerfully considered, the Holy Spirit will make known which disciplines need to be practiced.

It is helpful that Willard categorizes the disciplines that lead to spiritual growth as either disciplines of abstinence or disciplines of engagement. The disciplines of abstinence include: solitude, silence, fasting, frugality, chastity, secrecy, and sacrifice. Of these Willard writes the following: “An adequate course of spiritual disciplines will single out those tendencies that may harm our walk with God. By the carefully adapted arrangement of our circumstances and behavior, the spiritual disciplines will bring these basic desires into their proper coordination and subordination within the economy of life in his Kingdom.”⁵⁵

The disciplines of engagement include: study, worship, celebration, service, prayer, fellowship, confession, and submission. Willard points out that a life of action and engagement is a life of growth and development. He writes, “A proper abstinence actually breaks the hold of improper engagements so that the soul can be properly engaged in and by God.”⁵⁶ Actively abstaining from what is not life-giving leads to life-giving engagement.

Willard lists disciplines as foundational for spiritual life and gives a detailed explanation of each. It is beyond the scope of this paper to do likewise. However, it is necessary to point out what Willard writes about disciplines that might be added to our list. He writes:

⁵⁵ Ibid., 159-160.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 176.

The walk with Christ certainly is one that leaves room for and even calls for individual creativity and an experimental attitude in such matters. Yet the range or extension of the disciplines is largely determined by our own established tendencies to sin that must be resisted as well as by the possible avenues of loving service to God and humankind that offer themselves to such creatures as we are.⁵⁷

Thus, directors, who seriously consider their own spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental health, will determine disciplines that will maintain balance and wholeness.

The challenge of reading *Spirit of the Disciplines* is the application of Willard's wisdom and insights as they pertain to the context and thesis of this paper. As Willard writes about the need for spiritual practices, he refers to the Church's theological and historical relationship along with its lack of discipleship.

The American Church has overestimated the good that comes from:

Mere scientific progress or doctrinal correctness, or from social progress, missionary work, and evangelism..... And as a result, the church at present has lost any realistic and specific sense of what it means for the individual believer to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," as 2 Peter 3:18 expresses it. In fact, it has lost sight of the type of life in which such growth would be a realistic and predictable possibility.⁵⁸

It is difficult to discern how statements such as these directly pertain to the ministry of direction and spiritual disciplines for directors. However, spiritual direction is a means of growth and possibility for individuals and thus for the American Church.

As Willard goes on to make the case that practicing disciplines is not an option for those who want to follow Christ, perhaps there is a connection between the Church and direction that is not obvious at first. Direction is often overlooked as a discipline because it has a monthly not a daily or weekly rhythm. By making provision for directees

⁵⁷ Ibid., 190.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 16.

to reflect out loud, discern over time, and receive soul care, could it be spiritual direction is a discipline that can help the Church turn away from legalistic and programmatic thinking and turn freely toward the revelation of God's infinite mercy?

Theologian Helmut Thielicke wrote, that "The Christian stands, not under the dictatorship of a legalistic 'You ought,' but in the magnetic field of Christian freedom, under the empowering of the 'You may.'"⁵⁹ Spiritual direction offers a space to leave behind a "you ought" theology and invites a powerful grace-filled "you may" way of entering into relationship with God. As this project continues in theological reflection, it now confers with passages of Scripture in consideration of theology for spiritual direction.

⁵⁹Ibid.,16.

CHAPTER 4

A THEOLOGY OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

To respond in faith to the revelation of the living God mediated through Scripture and the witness of the church is to become a free and joyful witness of the truth of the good news one has received and to share responsibility for interpreting it and living it out.¹

Spiritual direction is a place for both directors and directees to arrive at a more informed revelation of God and thus respond with faith-filled transformation. As director and directees interpret and live out this transformation, a free and joyful witness of the good news found in Scripture is evident. Even though there is mutuality within the direction session, the director, who relies on God, creates the space for this deeper theological work.

A biblical framework for the theology of direction can assist the director seeking to offer a more informed direction session for the directee. Migliore's book outlines principles for the interpretation of Scripture that will guide the discussion within this chapter. Scripture should be interpreted with historical and literary sensitivity and must

¹ Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 43.

be interpreted theocentrically, ecclesially, and contextually.² When directors listen to the directees' stories with an ear toward what or how God has already spoken in Scripture, the deeper theological meanings of the story can be explored with directees. It stands to reason directors, who have explored the deeper theological meanings of their own story, will be more astute witnesses to God's faithful interaction with directees.

Building on this thought, this chapter will review the biblical narratives of men and women in the Scriptures who interacted with God and others and demonstrated characteristics that seem appropriate for spiritual directors who desire to offer a more efficacious direction experience for their directees. Introducing these men and women and reflecting on their lives makes it possible to see spiritual direction from God's vantage point. Undoubtedly, learning from the lives of Moses, Deborah, the Shunamite woman, David, Philip and of course Jesus, will enrich what is understood about spiritual direction and advance the goal of developing a theological construct of spiritual practices for directors.

Moses: Conversant with God

Moses can be viewed as someone conversant in many cultures. Having been nursed by his mother but raised by Pharaoh's daughter, Moses was familiar with both Hebrew and Egyptian culture. Perhaps confusion about what world he was called to be

² Ibid., 53-61. Scripture should be interpreted with historical and literary sensitivity; yet Scripture's unique witness to the living God resists its imprisonment in the past or its reduction to pious fiction. Second, Scripture must be interpreted theocentrically; however, the identity of God is radically redescribed in the overarching narrative of Scripture as the triune God, i.e., the God of Israel who comes in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. Scripture must be interpreted ecclesially, i.e., in the context of the life and witness of the Church; however, an ecclesial reading of Scripture differs not only from an individualistic reading, but also from the control of Scripture by church doctrine or hierarchy. Finally, Scripture must be interpreted contextually, however, the context of interpretation must be confined to one's personal history or to that of her immediate locality.

most conversant played a part in Moses's murder of the Egyptian and escape from Pharaoh: "When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh and stayed in the land of Midian. And he sat down by a well" (Ex 2:15).

Not only did Moses flee from Pharaoh, he also stayed in Midian and more specifically sat down by a well. The original sense of the word conversant is to "habitually spend time in a particular place or with a particular person."³ Staying and sitting down as Moses did are the beginning of building a habit of spending time in a particular place or with a particular person. Moses was content to practice staying and sitting for many years while keeping the flocks for his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian. While Moses was becoming conversant in Midianite culture, God was listening to the cries and groans of the Hebrew people as the leadership of Egypt changed from one Pharaoh to another.

As he stayed and sat in Midian, contentment with his life as a foreigner became a reality: "And Moses was content to dwell with the man, and he gave Moses his daughter Zipporah. She gave birth to a son, and he called his name Gershom, for he said, 'I have been a sojourner in a foreign land'" (Ex 2:21-22). No doubt, Moses was becoming conversant with life as a shepherd for his father-in-law Jethro the priest of Midian when the angel of the Lord appeared and spoke to him. His account continues:

And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned." . . . And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God (Ex 3:2-6).

³ *New Oxford American Dictionary*, electronic edition, s.v. "conversant."

However, God had another plan for his life that included being familiar with burning bushes, taking off sandals, standing on holy ground, and being afraid to look at God.

But God was not going to let fear keep Moses from being conversant. God kept talking and giving Moses updates on what was happening back in Egypt:

Then the Lord said, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings . . . the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt” (Ex 3:7-10).

God ended by telling Moses to go back to Egypt, a place he had no desire to go.

Moses was not so sure of God’s plan and had something to say in response. God and Moses continued their dialogue. In Exodus 3:11-14, it is written,

But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?” He said, “But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.”

Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

In this same manner, through the rest of Exodus, all of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy Moses and God are conversant. They communicate about the people and the twelve tribes, the Ten Commandments and other laws, the right and wrong way to worship and the move into and living in the Promised Land. Their relationship becomes so conversant that Moses asks God to show him more of God’s ways:

Moses said to the LORD, “See, you say to me, ‘Bring up this people,’ but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, ‘I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight.’ Now therefore, if I have found favor in your sight, please show me now your ways, that I may know

you in order to find favor in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people” (Ex 33:12-13).

And God responded to Moses, “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”

To which Moses said, “If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here. For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth” (Ex 33:14-16)?

Then the Lord said to Moses, “This very thing that you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name.” Moses said, “Please show me your glory” (Ex 33:17-18). And the Lord said, “I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name ‘The Lord.’ . . . I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen” (Ex 33:19-23).

Sometime later, the Lord continued talking, telling Moses what he is required to do next: “The Lord said to Moses, ‘Cut for yourself two tablets of stone like the first . . . and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself there to me on the top of the mountain. No one shall come up with you” (Ex 34:1-3).

Moses cut the two tablets of stone like the first ones and carried them up Mount Sinai early one morning just as the Lord requested. And the Lord came down in the cloud and stood with Moses there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord while passing by:

The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation (Ex 34:4-7).

In response, Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth and worshiped the Lord, and on behalf of the people the Lord had called him to lead he asked God, “If now I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, please let the Lord go in the midst of us, for it is a stiff-necked people, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance” (Ex 34:8-9).

This is just one of many conversations between the Lord and Moses as he led the people out of Egypt to the land God had promised them. The sum of their conversations grew into a conversant relationship in which Moses was not afraid to ask to see more of God’s glory; God was confident Moses could handle seeing it. As Moses and God spoke face-to-face, Moses became more and more familiar with God’s ways.

Faith and trust became both an ordinary and an extraordinary part of their relationship, as the habit of Moses’ life became conversing and spending time with God. Nothing deepens intimacy between two people like communication. The extent of their intimacy fully comes to light at the end of Moses’ life. Deuteronomy 34:1-6:

Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho. And the Lord showed him all the land, . . . “This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, ‘I will give it to your offspring.’ I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there.” So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord, and he buried him in the valley in the land of Moab opposite Beth-peor; but no one knows the place of his burial to this day.

Moses was not able to take Israel into the Promised Land because Moses broke faith with God at the waters of Meribah-kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin, and because Moses did not treat God as holy in the midst of the people of Israel (Dt 32:51).

Because God is just, Moses could not enter the land with the tribes of Israel, but because God is merciful God did let Moses see the destination of his second-half-of-life journey. Moreover, with tender mercy God orchestrates Moses' death in such a way that it is just between the two of them. Like all of God's people, Moses dies in God's presence. However, in one final act of tenderness Moses, the Lord's servant and conversant friend, is buried by God in an undisclosed location.

Like Moses, directors who are conversant with God are more familiar and knowledgeable about the ways of God. Spiritual directors, who are in the habit of spending extended time with God, are better equipped to boldly speak of God's ways.

Deborah: Daring Greatly for God

Deborah, wife of Lappidoth, prophetess, and judge of Israel was a daring woman. Deborah challenged the patriarchal society of the day by being the only female of the twelve judges who ruled in Israel between Joshua and Samuel. She was bold and unconventional⁴ at a time when God's people were oppressed by Jabin, king of Canaan, and Sisera, the commander of his army. Sisera's army and arsenal of 900 chariots stormed through Israel, immobilizing and eliciting fear among God's people.

It was not just fear of Sisera that immobilized the people of Israel; they also feared that God had totally abandoned them. In times of peace and prosperity, the people of Israel were in the unhealthy habit of thinking they no longer needed the Lord and made their own idols to worship. The people were double minded. Even though they distanced themselves from God, they did not want God to be distant from them. Whenever God's

⁴ *New Oxford American Dictionary*, electronic edition, s.v. "daring."

peace seemed to disappear from their land, Israel cried out to God. This happened over and over in the time of the Judges.

For twenty years, Sisera brutally terrorized Israel. Only in the hills of Israel was there protection from Sisera because his chariots could not traverse the high elevations. On the road between Bethel and Ramah, Deborah sat under a palm tree judging the people of Israel and offering direction for their lives. As she sat with God, Deborah grew more familiar with God and his ways. Like Moses, she was conversant with God and thereby able to mediate amongst the people of Israel who came to her. As a prophetess with fine-tuned spiritual insight, Deborah was also able to mediate between God and the people of Israel and to proclaim God's word to the people. As a woman of great faith, Deborah never doubted God's desire or ability to deliver Israel from oppression; however, she did discern she was not called to go into battle. The basis of her leadership was inspiration and encouragement as the Lord instructed.

Understanding her role as a woman and spiritual leader in Israel, Deborah wisely dared Barak, the son of Abinoam from Kedesh-naphtali, to be Israel's military leader: "Has not the Lord, the God of Israel, commanded you, 'Go, gather your men at Mount Tabor, taking 10,000 from the people of Naphtali and the people of Zebulun. And I will draw out Sisera, the general of Jabin's army, to meet you by the river Kishon with his chariots and his troops, and I will give him into your hand?'" (Jgs 4:6-7). But Barak was more cautious and did not rise to the occasion. Instead he dared her to go with him: "If you will go with me, I will go, but if you will not go with me, I will not go" (Jgs 4:8). Motivated by God's desire for Israel to be free, Deborah took the dare but with a caveat. She replied, "I will surely go with you. Nevertheless, the road on which you are going

will not lead to your glory, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman” (Jgs 4:9).

Even though Barak and Deborah went into battle with 10,000 men from the tribes of Zebulun, Naphtali, Ephraim, Benjamin, Manasseh, and Issachar (Jgs 4:6) the Lord was still in control. God subdued Jabin, the king of Canaan and Sisera was killed not by Barak or a man from Israel, but by Jael, the wife of Heber (Jgs 4:17-23). Under the leadership of Deborah and Barak, “the hand of the people of Israel pressed harder and harder against Jabin the king of Canaan, until they destroyed Jabin king of Canaan” (Jgs 4:24).

In the song of victory that Deborah and Barak sang, Deborah described herself as “mother in Israel.” Like a mother who nurtures and desires freedom from any kind of oppression for her children, Deborah desired that for Israel. Therefore, she dared to sit and wait for the Lord’s leading and then defiantly stood against Israel’s enemy.

In the days of Shamgar, son of Anath,
in the days of Jael, the highways were abandoned,
and travelers kept to the byways.
The villagers ceased in Israel;
they ceased to be until I arose;
I, Deborah, arose as a mother in Israel. . . .
My heart goes out to the commanders of Israel
who offered themselves willingly among the people.
Bless the Lord (Jgs 5:6-9).

As her heart went out to Barak, Deborah dared to go where he could not go alone. God was calling Deborah to accompany the commander into battle.

As their hearts go out to their directees, directors prayerfully dare to go where their directees cannot go alone. There are situations in a directees’ life that require greater wisdom and audacity. As directors accompany directees into uncharted territories of the soul, God’s inspiration and encouragement are wielded to help directees see how God is

truly at work. Directors accommodate what God and directees bring to the session by daring to pray for deliverance and transformation in the directees' life.

The Shunamite Woman: Accommodating the Holy Man of God

A quick reading of the story of the Shunamite woman, a wealthy woman from Shunem, would lead to a conclusion that she is a hospitable woman. She noticed Elisha's comings and goings, welcomed his presence in her home and provided him with meals:

One day Elisha went on to Shunem, where a wealthy woman lived, who urged him to eat some food. So whenever he passed that way, he would turn in there to eat food. And she said to her husband, "Behold now, I know that this is a holy man of God who is continually passing our way. Let us make a small room on the roof with walls and put there for him a bed, a table, a chair, and a lamp, so that whenever he comes to us, he can go in there" (2 Kgs 4:8-10).

However, a second reading renders her worthy of further description. If she was aware of Elisha who was continually passing by her home, she must have been aware of others. She was observant, so observant that she knew Elisha was not just a man of God, but also a "holy" man of God. And something within her knew it is always fitting and proper to make room for God's holiness.

This Shunamite woman was accommodating. She took an active, above and beyond, interest in meeting this holy man of God's needs. After a time, she convinced her husband that they had the means to provide more than just food for Elisha. They could accommodate and provide his need for rest and shelter as he traveled along the road.⁵ The Shunamite woman and her husband renovated their roof by erecting the walls that created a room. She then furnished it with a bed, table, chair and a lamp. It was one thing for her

⁵ *New Oxford American Dictionary*, electronic edition, s.v. "accommodate."

to welcome a weary traveler into her home with a simple meal. It is another thing altogether, to be so aware of another's needs and thereby accommodate those needs.

As the Shunamite woman made room for the holy man of God to dwell in her home, she was making room for the holiness of God to dwell in her heart:

One day he came there, and he turned into the chamber and rested there. And he said to Gehazi his servant, "Call this Shunamite." When he had called her, she stood before him And he said, "At this season, about this time next year, you shall embrace a son." And she said, "No, my lord, O man of God; do not lie to your servant." But the woman conceived, and she bore a son about that time the following spring, as Elisha had said to her (2 Kgs 4:11-17).

Elisha too was a man who paid attention. He noticed the condition of hearts. And so just as she accommodated their needs, he wanted to accommodate her need. Her response was not self-deprecating but a modest assessment that because she dwelt among her own people her needs were being met. As appreciative guests Elisha and Gehazi were determined to do something in return for the trouble she had taken on their behalf. Moreover, Elisha knew desires lay deep within the soul so he waited while Gehazi considered that she probably had no greater desire than for a child, more specifically, a son to care for her in her old age.

The Shunamite woman wondered out loud whether or not it would be true. Elisha had not lied to her; she conceived and gave birth to a son who grew strong enough to help in the fields which he did until the day his head hurt so much he could no longer work. The son died with his head on his mother's lap and was taken to the accommodations his parents had provided for Elisha.

When the child had grown, he went out one day to his father among the reapers. And he said to his father, "Oh, my head, my head!" The father said to his servant, "Carry him to his mother." And when he had lifted him and brought him to his mother, the child sat on her lap till noon,

and then he died.So she set out and came to the man of God at Mount Carmel (2 Kgs 4:18-25).

Perhaps, the Shunamite woman hoped that if her son was laid on the bed where the holy man of God slept, the son would wake from his sleep.

She desperately needed to find Elisha and find out why God would give her a son and then take the son away. The story continues:

When the man of God saw her coming, he said to Gehazi his servant, “Look, there is the Shunammite..... And when she came to the mountain to the man of God, she caught hold of his feet. And Gehazi came to push her away. But the man of God said, “Leave her alone, for she is in bitter distress, and the Lord has hidden it from me and has not told me.”..... When Elisha came into the house, he saw the child lying dead on his bed. So he went in and shut the door behind the two of them and prayed to the Lord..... The child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. Then he summoned Gehazi and said, “Call this Shunammite.” So he called her. And when she came to him, he said, “Pick up your son” (2 Kgs 4:25-36).

Even from far away, Elisha and Gehazi felt the full force of a mother’s misery and pleading for truth and peace in her inward being. They attempted to comfort her by first having Gehazi go ahead and lay Elisha’s staff on the son’s face. Gehazi reported back to Elisha that the son still slept. Ultimately, it was Elisha being physically and spiritually attentive to the boy and to the Lord that the Shunamite experiences her son being brought to life for a second time. God accommodated the needs of the Shunamite woman by creating room in her heart to receive again God’s goodness in order to extend goodness and mercy to herself and others.

Like the Shunamite woman, directors are accommodating. They too create space in their homes and in their lives for people to spend time tending to the holy work that God is doing within them. Also, like the Shunamite woman, directors must create room in their hearts and learn to receive the accommodations God and others make for them.

Elisha and the Shunamite woman were both sustained by God's provision and the same is true for directors and their directees. God's miraculous provision can be received by all with anticipation and gratitude.

David: God's Staunch Supporter

David's leadership could easily be described as resolute devotion and limitless loyalty to the Lord. Through the prophet Samuel, God handpicked David with the requirement to "not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature because the LORD sees not as man sees; man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart" (1 Sm 16:7). David had a dutiful disposition as well as a loyal and committed attitude.⁶ Whether acting as the shepherd for the family sheep, a slayer of giants, a servant to Saul, the commander in battle, a friend to Jonathon, a musician playing the harp, the king and leader of Judah and Israel, or one grieved by his own sins, David was a staunch supporter of God. Chapters from 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, and 1 Chronicles tell the life story of a man who lead well and seemed to naturally believe that God's goodness and mercy would follow him all the days of his life and he would dwell in the house of the Lord forever (Ps 23:7).

The psalms tell the story of a man, who fought on the battle fields and the spiritual plains of his soul. In giving voice to his wide range of emotions through his writing, David worked out his own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil 2:12). Being emotionally honest before God in prayer was the catalyst for David remaining a staunch supporter of God throughout his life. The following excerpts from psalms reveal the raw

⁶ *New Oxford American Dictionary*, electronic edition, s.v. "staunch."

emotions David shared with God during various times of his life. When Saul pursued

David:

Contend, O Lord, with those who contend with me;
fight against those who fight against me!
Take hold of shield and buckler
and rise for my help!
Draw the spear and javelin
against my pursuers!
Say to my soul, "I am your salvation" (Ps 35:1-3)!

When David was hiding from Saul in a cave:

My soul is in the midst of lions;
I lie down amid fiery beasts—
the children of man, whose teeth are spears and arrows,
whose tongues are sharp swords.
Be exalted, O God, above the heavens!
Let your glory be over all the earth (57:4-5)!

When Saul betrayed David:

But I call to God,
and the Lord will save me.
Evening and morning and at noon
I utter my complaint and moan,
and he hears my voice.
He redeems my soul in safety
from the battle that I wage,
for many are arrayed against me (Ps 55:16-18).

When David was rescued from Saul:

He sent from on high, he took me;
he drew me out of many waters.
He rescued me from my strong enemy
and from those who hated me,
for they were too mighty for me.
They confronted me in the day of my calamity,
but the Lord was my support.
He brought me out into a broad place;
he rescued me, because he delighted in me (Ps 18:16-19).

When David confessed his guilt over sin against Bathsheba and her husband:

For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.
Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you may be justified in your words
and blameless in your judgment (Ps 51:3-4).

When David received forgiveness for his sin:

For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. *Selah*
I acknowledged my sin to you,
and I did not cover my iniquity;
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,"
and you forgave the iniquity of my sin (Ps 32:4-5).

When David dedicated the Temple Site:

Sing praises to the Lord, O you his saints,
and give thanks to his holy name.
For his anger is but for a moment,
and his favor is for a lifetime.
Weeping may tarry for the night,
but joy comes with the morning (Ps 30:4-5).

The psalms are the best vantage point from which to view the relationship between God and David. There is little doubt that whether asking for deliverance, forgiveness, or restorations, David trusts the Lord to provide. Between the lines of David's psalms are the Holy Spirit's inspirations that shape and shift his attitudes and trust in God. The psalms survey the life of David in such a way that a panorama of the mutuality between God and David can be seen by all who read them. Just as David is God's staunch supporter, so God is a staunch supporter of David.

While Psalm 23 is David's most famous for describing the soul's need for comfort and restoration, Psalm 131 likewise describes the soul's humble need for rest.

O LORD, my heart is not lifted up;
my eyes are not raised too high;
I do not occupy myself with things
too great and too marvelous for me.
But I have calmed and quieted my soul,
like a weaned child with its mother;
like a weaned child is my soul within me.
O Israel, hope in the Lord
from this time forth and forevermore (Ps 131).

This was one of the last psalms of ascent (Psalms 120 -137), which were the liturgy used by the people of Israel as they made their pilgrimage to Jerusalem each year.

The psalms of ascent reminded the people of Israel of their physical and spiritual distance, their need to shorten that distance and ends with a praise to God. In Psalm 131 there is spiritual distance as a result of a heart lifted up, eyes raised too high and preoccupation with things too great and marvelous. A proud and lofty attitude gives rise to a chasm between creature and Creator. The way back to God is by prayerfully taking on a childlike attitude of humility. Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 18:3-4).

Through the practice of spiritual disciplines childlike faith replaces childish ways; hope and confidence in God replaces pride and haughtiness. When the soul, like a child, is weaned from all distractions and is able to look into loving eyes, there is contentment.

When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a *man/woman*, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love (1 Cor 13:11-13).⁷

⁷ The italics and addition of woman are mine in order to emphasize the adult self of each reader.

When childish ways are given up, there is not only the hope of being seen; there is also hope in being more fully known and loved by God eternally.

Upon his death, King David's triumphs and tribulations as well as his joys and sorrows were known by God and he was fully known. The following are the last words the Spirit of the Lord spoke through David, who was exalted by the God Most High, anointed by the God of Jacob, and known as the hero of Israel's songs (2 Sam 23:1-2).

When one rules justly over men,
ruling in the fear of God,
he dawns on them like the morning light,
like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning,
like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth.
For does not my house stand so with God?
For he has made with me an everlasting covenant,
ordered in all things and secure.
For will he not cause to prosper
all my help and my desire (2 Sam 23:3-5)?

These verses expose David as a staunch supporter of God and as someone who feels staunchly supported by God.

Like David, spiritual directors are staunch supporters of God who trust God to provide for their spiritual, emotional, and physically needs. Directors display their trust during direction sessions through their belief that God, as a staunch supporter of both director and directee, is ultimately doing the directing. Also, like David directors, who trust God and spend time praying, notice their blindspots, their pride, and their souls' need for quiet reflection and confession. In this manner, they are more able to alter their childish attitudes and move toward a contented and hopeful stance that will translate into spiritual direction sessions that are rooted and grounded in love.

Philip: Collaborating with the Lord

This Philip was not one of Jesus' twelve disciples, rather he was one of "the seven" chosen by Jesus' twelve disciples, who could not minister to the widows and faithfully carry out the ministry of the word. These seven men were chosen because they were wise, full of the Spirit, and able to help distribute food to those in need daily. The twelve could focus on prayer and sharing the Word of God as they had been commanded. The twelve who had been with Jesus laid their hands on and prayed over Philip along with Stephen, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas. In this way the Word of God spread and the number of disciples in Jerusalem increased as well as the number of priests who became obedient to the faith (Acts 6:1-7).

In the laying on of hands, the power of the Holy Spirit is unleashed and servants of the Lord begin collaborating, or working jointly,⁸ for the creation of new ministries. As Philip and the other leaders of the church were scattered and faced persecution, they relied on the Spirit's boldness:

Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip, when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. So there was much joy in that city (Acts 8:4-8).

Philip even moved beyond his role as servant leader to evangelist, who proclaimed Christ and brought joy to Samaria. People paid attention to his words as well as the signs and healings he did in collaboration with the Holy Spirit to free people of unclean spirits.

⁸ *New Oxford American Dictionary*, electronic edition, s.v. "collaborate."

Philip willingly collaborated with God as he shared the good news wherever he was sent and to whomever needed to hear: “Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, ‘Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.’ This is a desert place. And he rose and went” (Acts 8:26-27). On the road, Philip met an Ethiopian eunuch who had been on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. He was on his way home to resume his duties as finance minister for the queen of the Ethiopians, Candace. As he traveled in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah: “And the Spirit said to Philip, ‘Go over and join this chariot.’ So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, ‘Do you understand what you are reading?’” (Acts 8:29-30)? The Ethiopian invited Philip to ride in the chariot because he said could not understand this passage from Isaiah 53:7-8:

Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter
and like a lamb before its shearer is silent,
so he opens not his mouth.
In his humiliation justice was denied him.
Who can describe his generation?
For his life is taken away from the earth (Acts 8:32-33).

Since the eunuch questioned whether the prophet was speaking of himself or someone else, Philip began with this passage of Scripture and told him about the Lamb of God whose life was slain. While continuing down the road together, they came to a body of water and the eunuch wondered if there was any reason why he could not be baptized. He had the chariot driver stop so he and Philip could go down to the water. Acts 8:39-40 recount this experience: “And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way

rejoicing. But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the Gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea” (Acts 8:39-40).

This whole interaction was a collaboration between Philip and God, manifested as the angel of the Lord and the Holy Spirit. Philip willingly worked jointly with the Lord so that the eunuch would come to the place of believing what Peter had taught: And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12). One has to wonder about the intensity of their collaboration given that Philip was carried away by the Spirit of the Lord to a different geographical location.

Like Philip, directors seek to collaborate with God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Directors wait to be invited by directees into their “chariots.” Directors listen to directees and pay attention to the promptings of the Lord. Directors notice directees’ nonverbal cues and pray for insight from the Lord. Directors ask questions that point directees to God and silently anticipate a response. Finally, directors trust that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are moving directees to a place of greater understanding, freedom, and hope.

Jesus: Pilgrims with Us

There is no better picture in Scripture of a spiritual direction session than Jesus walking with the two men on the road to Emmaus. As Jesus drew near to them about seven miles outside of Jerusalem, the men were encompassed by Jesus’ presence even though they are not fully aware of how near the Lord was to them. From the very beginning of each direction session, directors and directees walk together, encompassed by Jesus’ presence even though they may not fully grasp just how near the Lord is to

them. Jesus creates space for them to tell him everything they have seen concerning “the prophet might in deed and word” and everything they have heard from the women who came back from the empty tomb. Moreover, Jesus heard how they hoped “he was the one to redeem Israel” (Acts 24:13-24).

How slow their hearts were to process and believe all that had been said through the prophets and spoken by Jesus concerning his suffering. Often directors notice the truth about their directees’ circumstances before they do. Like Jesus, directors know it is directees who sets the pace of each session. Consequently, directors are prepared to either go onward or to stay within the directees’ current spiritual surroundings. Together directors and directees wait for Jesus’ coming to bless and break bread with them. With deep gratitude, directors bear witness to Jesus opening directees’ eyes. A directee’s recognition of Jesus floods the heart and soul with hope. Jesus can truly be known in the simplest of ways such as serving wine and breaking of bread (Acts 24:25-35) .

Spiritual directors have the privilege of being fellow pilgrims with directees who travel with Jesus. A directee’s life can be viewed as a pilgrimage in which being in the Kingdom of God is a daily goal with no travel involved except the constant journey to find God in all avenues of life.⁹ While directees share the current events of their lives, directors listen for the circumstances in which Jesus may have gone unnoticed. More importantly, directors, who identify as pilgrims sharing the journey¹⁰ with directees during direction sessions, are free to focus specifically on what is happening in the present session and in the pertinent details of Jesus ongoing work in directees’ lives.

⁹ Forest, *The Road to Emmaus*, 55-56.

¹⁰ *New Oxford American Dictionary*, electronic edition, s.v. “pilgrim.”

The good news is Jesus makes himself known to both director and directee within the current context of each direction session. Characteristics such as being conversant with God, being more daring in direction sessions, being accommodating with directees, being a staunch supporter of God and directee, collaborating with God, and pilgrimaging with Jesus have an impact on directees' experience of spiritual direction. Directors, who labor to offer a more effective direction session for directees, inadvertently gain confidence and remain committed to the ministry of spiritual direction and to the cause of helping directees feel safe, especially during emotionally intense sessions.

This confidence naturally accrues as time is spent seeking to understand God's revelation of God as one who is gentle and humble of heart. Once upon a time, Jesus invited his immediate disciples to come experience his gentleness.

At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children.....Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light (Mt 11:25-30).

How directors can respond to this invitation is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

A THEOLOGICAL CONSTRUCT OF SPIRITUAL PRACTICES FOR SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

~Matthew 11:28-30

As a culmination of the literature review and theological reflection, this chapter introduces and explains a rhythm of life and ministry for spiritual directors through Come, Learn, Rest Ministries. The verses of Matthew 11:28-30 are most relevant as an invitation to come to Jesus, to learn from Jesus, and to find rest in Jesus. While this is an invitation that directors must respond to in their own way, specific spiritual disciplines can be a catalyst for the soul finding rest in God alone and the director offering the directee a more beneficial spiritual direction experience.

John Wesley once said: “The soul and the body make a person; the spirit and discipline make a Christian.”¹ What follows is a presumption about spiritual directors: “the soul and the body make a person; the spirit and discipline make a director.”

¹ Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines*, 18. I substituted person for man.

Directors do not practice specific disciplines for the sole purpose of becoming better directors. Rather, the purpose of practicing disciplines is so directors experience more freedom while directing. This freedom affirms for the director that the best direction experience has been offered to directees at that particular point in their spiritual journey. Willard writes that “a successful performance at a moment of crisis rests largely and essentially upon the depths of a self wisely and rigorously prepared in the totality of its being—mind and body.”² Come, Learn, Rest Ministries exists to help directors wisely and rigorously prepare for ministry by engaging in practices of coming, learning and finding rest in God as defined in Matthew 11:28-30.

Come to Me, All who Labor and Are Heavy Laden, and I Will Give You Rest

This first verse is a simple invitation. Jesus invites all whose souls are overloaded with legalism at the expense of grace to come and receive rest. The rest Jesus offers is freedom from the law’s guilt and shame, which burdens and isolates. The prophet Jeremiah describes what coming to Jesus entails: “Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls” (Jr 6:16). Both Jesus and Jeremiah knew that some would come and some would not. It takes courage to look at a burden and choose to no longer carry it alone.

It is widely acknowledged amongst directors that it can take someone who is invited to come to direction six months to a year to finally make an appointment. Even though spiritual direction is a positive way forward, the “heavy laden” way of life is difficult to leave behind simply because it is so familiar. However, once the initial

² Ibid., 4.

appointment is made, the hope of rest Jesus so generously promised begins to seep into the soul. At some point, not coming to spiritual direction is no longer an option.

Just as a senior pastor was sitting down to begin direction, he commented on what a busy week it was for him with preaching, staff transitions, a funeral, and coaching his son's baseball team. He continued to share how tempted he was to call and cancel because there was so much on his calendar, but realistically this was the one appointment he knew he needed to keep. If this directee was going to have peace, he knew he needed to maintain the practice of monthly spiritual direction. By the end of the session, he appeared less haggard and hard-pressed.

Jesus's invitation to "come" is really an invitation to "commit to the kind of life that will produce the action we know to be right and the condition we want to enjoy."³ Coming to spiritual direction in times of retreat translates into committing to slowing down and silencing thoughts in order to prayerfully consider the good and right way to live so rest is a present reality. Silence, prayer, and the soul are all interconnected: "‘Silence,’ wrote St. John of the Ladder, ‘is the mother of prayer . . . a continuous ascension to heaven.’ ‘Love silence diligently for in it your soul finds life,’ said St. Isaac the Syrian."⁴

Recently, I extended an invitation to a denominational leader, thinking I would just provide housing while she visited churches in the area. When I greeted her at the front door, I instinctively recognized her need for more. At dinner, the conversation revealed her need for "white space" to process her recent promotion and her next steps as

³ Ibid., 6.

⁴ Anthony M. Coniaris, *A Beginner's Introduction to the Philokalia* (Minneapolis: Light & Life Publishing Company, 2014), 30.

a leader. After a Sunday afternoon of silence and prayer, she shared how nature helped to reorder her soul. The red-tail fox, who lives in the “green space” of Quiet Oaks, walked back and forth in front of her several times, giving her a needed perspective on her new role in the denomination.

Quiet Oaks is a space to come and intentionally slow down for an hour of direction or for an extended time of silent retreat and direction. Max Picard writes:

Yet there is more help and healing in silence than in all the “useful things”. Purposeless, unexploitable silence suddenly appears at the side of the all-too-purposeful, and frightens us by its very purposelessness. It interferes with the regular flow of the purposeful. It strengthens the untouchable, it lessens the damage inflicted by exploitation. It makes things whole again, by taking them back from the world of dissipation into the world of wholeness. It gives things something of its own holy uselessness, for that is what silence itself is: holy uselessness.⁵

Directors respond to Jesus’ invitation to come by committing to a life that entails slowing down in some way. Because it is the norm to try to fix others’ problems, sitting in silence with another seems counter-cultural and can make directors feel useless. However, time in prayerful solitude and silence prepares directors for the silences within direction sessions.

I felt utterly useless with this denominational leader. I thought I should at least offer to do spiritual direction with her, but she was not asking for it. I was forced to confront my own need to be needed by directees and leaders, who come to Come, Learn, Rest Ministries for rest. Ironically, in times of silence and solitude, I see so clearly how useful my holy uselessness is in creating space for the Spirit to speak to people coming for direction or retreat. This denominational leader did not need me to even sit with her.

⁵ Max Picard, *The World of Silence* (Wichita, KS: Eighth Day Press, 2002), 19.

From afar, I prayed and held space for God to speak through creation just what her soul needed to hear and learn from Jesus.

Take My Yoke Upon You, and Learn from Me, for I Am Gentle and Lowly in Heart, and You Will Find Rest for Your Souls

Extended time with Jesus in stillness, silence, and solitude eases the burden the soul is yoked to and provides freedom to take on Jesus' yoke instead. Jesus invited people to come and become his students and learn from him by yoking themselves to him—"that is, letting him show them how he would pull their load."⁶ Willard writes:

Being in his yoke is not a matter of taking on additional labor to crush us all the more, but a matter of learning how to use his strength and ours together to bear our load and his. We will find his yoke an easy one and his burden a light one because, in learning from him, we have found rest for our soul. What we have learned is primarily, to rest our soul in God. Rest to our soul is rest in God. My soul is at peace only when it is with God, as a child with its mother.⁷

It is not easy to rest the soul in God. It can feel like falling backward into someone's arms and trusting them to catch us. Moreover, when battling doubts about whether God will remain and share the load, the soul can feel more restless than rested.

A ministry coordinator for a church came to Quiet Oaks for direction. She shared how much had happened in her life during the past month: her grandmother nearly dying, her in-law's moving away, her husband's job demands, her expanded ministry responsibilities, her guilt over not spending enough time with her children, and her need to set appropriate boundaries. She described these as things she felt she had lived through but had not really processed. However, when she began reflecting on them, it was not any

⁶ Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 209.

⁷ Ibid.

of these that mattered to her. She was most concerned that she had not sat down and finished her small group lesson for the week.

The unfinished small group lesson seemed to be her heaviest burden. She needed that burden lifted. Listening to her question whether or not she should go because she had not finished, I sensed the weight of failure and shame she was carrying. I wondered to myself how Jesus would carry this load for her if she did not get her lesson done. I also wondered if this would be a good learning moment. I asked what it would be like for her to go to the small group study with empty pages. I asked how Jesus might want to be with her in those moments when she felt shame and failure. As tears welled up in her eyes and fell down her cheeks, a new awareness washed over her soul; and the lie, demanding she had to get the lesson done on her own strength, fell away.

I encouraged her to view this as a spiritual growth moment, graciously orchestrated by God just for her. In the midst of listening to her, I had prayerfully discerned God's loving presence leading her towards freedom from fear of failure. I also noticed that the more she shared her struggle with completing the study the less shame she carried. Her burden lifted and her soul seemed lighter. This recalls Willard, who wrote, "Efforts in spiritual formation in Christlikeness obviously must reverse this process of distancing the soul from God and bring it back to union with him."⁸

It is humbling to admit that during and after this session, I could not stop carrying the burden of all the items she needed to process. I was concerned and convinced we should have processed the details of her month rather than her small group lesson, which from my perspective was not a failure, just the consequence of a very full week. Even

⁸ Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 211.

though, I managed to stay focused on God's formation of this ministry coordinator, after the session I was worrying about her story more than holding it with her. I needed to practice what I preached to spiritual directors who turn to Come, Learn, Rest Ministries for soul care.

Many directors are familiar with the prayer of *examen*, which is used in Ignatian spirituality during the Exercises by the "one giving the exercises" or the spiritual director.⁹ The prayer of *examen* can help the director assess listening skills, balance, and proper levels of support during a session, and it can help the director in the course of daily life. However, the prayer of *examen* is "a prayer in the presence of God, not just a psychological self-evaluation of listening skills."¹⁰

I did need to come to God in prayer with this directee's burden in order to truly recognize what was happening within me and why I was carrying her burden. As I prayed in the presence of God, I discerned that I needed to reflect on a phrase she said about what good is being valued which translated into this question: "Do I value the good God does or the good I do more?" With that simple question, I humbly released the directee's burden and found rest in God's presence. Again, Willard writes, "Humility is a great secret of rest of soul because it does not presume to secure outcomes..... We simply have to rest in his life as he gives it to us. Knowledge, from Christ, that he is good and great

⁹"The *examen* exercise not explicitly identified by Ignatius is the one that the director of the retreat prays. The evidence for this *examen* is found in the practice of directors from Ignatius' time up until our own day. This *examen* is rooted in the annotations, especially those dealing with "the one who is giving the Exercises," especially in the Fourteenth, Fifteenth, and Seventeenth Annotations. In the Fourteenth, Ignatius suggests that the director needs to be reflective about the way in which he supports the retreatant experiencing consolation. In the Fifteenth, the director is to examine whether he or she is, in fact, serving as a balance in the retreatant's decision-making process. In the Seventeenth Annotation, the director is to stay awake while responding in helpful ways." David L. Fleming, *Like the Lightning: The Dynamics of the Ignatian Exercises* (St. Louis, MO: The Institute of Jesuit Sources), 53.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

enables us to cast outcomes on him. We find this knowledge in the yoke of Christ. Resting in God, we can be free from all anxiety, which means deep soul rest.”¹¹ It was humility that helped me to not take up the directee’s burdens again. Ironically, taking up Jesus’ yoke meant admitting that I value the good God does, more than the good I can do for this or any directee.

To recognize that I can do no good for any directee apart from Christ is sobering and divulges my soul’s need to be like Christ. The beauty of Christ’s soul is seen in his gentleness and lowliness of heart and is equal to none other:

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (Phil 2:5-8).

In serving, healing, teaching, and praying, Christ was empowered to love to the bitter end of his life and die “a death unsurpassed for its intrinsic beauty and historical effect.”¹²

Directors are not Jesus; but when they clothe themselves with humility and realize that God’s good is of far greater value to their directee’s than theirs, then God supplies the grace and wisdom to minister well (1 Pt 5:5). It continues to be evident that this happens as directors humbly practice spiritual disciplines that equip them for service. The prayer of *examen* can be used before and after sessions, but a life of prayer that translates into Spirit-led intercession during sessions is of benefit to director and directee.

¹¹ Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 210.

¹² Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 5.

In a life of prayer there is no room for prideful, lofty thinking. The words of Psalm 131 are a reminder that the soul has no quiet or peace unless there is a turning away from haughtiness and toward humility:

O Lord, my heart is not lifted up;
my eyes are not raised too high;
I do not occupy myself with things
too great and too marvelous for me.
But I have calmed and quieted my soul,
like a weaned child with its mother;
like a weaned child is my soul within me.
O Israel, hope in the Lord
from this time forth and forevermore.

The first two verses invite confession or reflecting on what yoke is being carried.

Directors can easily take on the yoke of being occupied with what is too great and marvelous in directees' stories rather than the yoke of entrusting the directee to Jesus.

Within a given session, it serves directors well to calm and quiet their souls by practicing being gentle and lowly of heart like Jesus and hopeful. Ultimately, hope is discovered in the reality that Jesus' yoke is easy and Jesus' burden is light.

For My Yoke Is Easy, and My Burden Is light

In verse 29 of Matthew, Jesus succinctly describes himself as being gentle and lowly of heart and his yoke as being easy and his burden light. If the load being carried starts to get heavy, it is probably because the load is not being carried with the same humility Jesus would graciously carry it. Recognizing this creates a desire within the soul to come and learn about rest and recovery in the Lord's gentle yoke. Willard writes of this:

And one must not underestimate the powers of recovery of the soul under grace. Robert Wise observes, "Reconnected to the Spirit of God, lost souls

discover they have power and capacity beyond anything they could have dreamed. The restoration of the soul is more than a recovery of connectedness. Significant strength, ability to achieve, guidance, and awareness are imparted.”¹³

In a rhythm of coming and learning and finding rest, transformation and recovery of the soul under grace takes place. Moreover, the fact that Jesus’ yoke is easy and burden is light strengthens the soul for its spiritual journey.

The soul’s spiritual journey or pilgrimage can be described as “a patient willingness to find God through the journeying and to risk a process of trial and error, of successes and failures, of some triumphs but also many humiliating defeats.”¹⁴ Both directors and directees come to direction in the midst of their trials and errors, successes and failures, triumphs and defeats. Therefore, directors, who are aware of their own unfolding journey, trust the Spirit to keep them focused, at least during the session, on the directee’s pilgrimage and not their own. In this manner, directors wisely observe their directees’ pilgrimages knowing “the potential is there for the greatest of adventures: a journey not only toward Christ but with him.”¹⁵

The pilgrim’s journey is a quest that begins with answering Jesus’ initial invitation to come. Frederick Buechner writes,

The most precious words from his lips—and to me I think the most precious of all—are, “Come unto me all ye who labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.” Those words are addressed not only to the people who are obviously laboring and heavy laden—the people in nursing homes, the poor, the dispossessed, the starving—they are addressed to everybody Jesus sees that all of us labor and are heavy laden and are in need of rest or are in need of him or in need of peace. So we are to see each other like that, as Jesus sees us, framed as if each one of our faces is seen by him. And the frame he sees

¹³ Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 201-202.

¹⁴ George W. Traub, ed., *An Ignatian Spirituality Reader* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2008), 63.

¹⁵ Forest, *The Road to Emmaus*, xvii.

us in, if you have to have it a word, is the frame of love. He sees us because he loves us; he loves us because he sees us.¹⁶

Directors hear these precious words, choose to journey toward Jesus, and minister to directees with Jesus. Moreover, they learn to see directees in the frame of Christ's love and to rest in the reality that Jesus sees because he loves and loves because he sees.

A young woman came to spiritual direction as a last-ditch effort to save her marriage. Her husband's alcoholism was a heavy burden she could no longer carry on her own. Living with the reality that her husband might drive with their two sons under the influence of alcohol was making her physically, emotionally, and spiritually weary. Her exhaustion was real and loving her husband difficult at best because she was yoked to resentment rather than Jesus. I asked how she was praying for him. She indicated praying in general was difficult for her and praying for her husband impossible. Despite this she was eager to learn how to pray. She was eager for an easier yoke and lighter burden.

I asked about her earliest memories of God and/or prayer. Though she had not always attended church, as a child she was drawn to spiritual things. When her friends talked about summer camp, she wished she could go. One year she had the opportunity to go, so she went. During a campfire time, a counselor asked her to come up and pray in front of everyone. She recalled feeling drawn to go up, having a desire to pray, and feeling ill-equipped. Ultimately, she prayed before the group but since that time prayer

¹⁶ Frederick Buechner, *The Remarkable Ordinary: How to Stop, Look, and Listen to Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 42.

had been difficult. As she recounted these and other details of her story, I sensed we were on a “quest for her soul.”¹⁷

When she wondered out loud why that counselor had asked her to pray in front of all the youth who seemed much more spiritual than she perceived herself to be, I deflected the question back to her. I had my thoughts about why a counselor would do something like this, but I also knew that hearing the answer from God could be a defining moment in her theological development. Holy moments occur when past and present realities meet and ponder what is really going on within the soul. Her soul reminded me of young deer who do not wait long before scampering off to hide in the brush at the first sight of the unfamiliar. She too was scared but still present in the session. There seemed to be within her a desire for more of God.

Knowing this would not come unless she was yoked with Christ, I asked if she had ever come to Jesus in prayer, declared her faith in Christ, and professed Christ as Lord of her life and marriage. When she said she had not, together we prayed; and she surrendered her life, her husband, and her marriage to the Lord. She emerged from that time of prayer with a softer countenance. She had humbled herself before the Lord and faced her own shortcomings and her inability to live her life apart from Jesus. She emerged from our time as one, having been seen through a frame of love, and as a pilgrim coming, learning and finding rest in Jesus.

As we ended, I returned to the deflected question. What had the counselor who called her up front to pray seen in her? She replied, “She must have seen Jesus in me. . . .

¹⁷ Robert L. Wise, *Quest for the Soul: Our Search for Deeper Meaning* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1996). I found the phrase “quest for her soul” in this book and recognized a connection between quest and pilgrimage. Wise also expounds on the idea that there is an inner journey backward that is part of the going forward of new pilgrimage.

I just couldn't see him until now." Richard Wise describes beautifully what happens when the soul finds itself: "Finding yourself is not an inward trek like peeling away the section of an onion until you hit some secret inner essence. Rather, you are looking for the fingerprint of God in your life. The task is to follow the direction and advice of those who already know the inner way well."¹⁸

This chapter includes theological reflection on a rhythm of coming, learning, and resting as outlined in Matthew 11:28-30 and the practice of spiritual disciplines. The reflection leads to an awareness that something shifts within a session when directors decrease and God increases. Directees then experience a holy moment with God simply because God is more present than the director ever could be. Witnessing these holy moments causes directors to be more inclined to practice the spiritual disciplines that will help them offer a more sacred direction session for their directees.

In the next section, a spiritual direction ministry plan will be outlined, and its implementation process will be detailed. It should be noted that this process is not about making better spiritual directors. Because spiritual direction is both art and practice, every director has a unique way of practicing direction that evolves over time. The art of direction is fine-tuned by willingly offering a profitable direction experience for directees who come at a specific time, with specific desires to learn from Jesus and find rest.

¹⁸ Ibid., 7.

PART THREE

MINISTRY OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

CHAPTER SIX

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES FOR SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS

In the beginning there are a great many battles and a good deal of suffering for those who are advancing towards God and afterwards, ineffable joy. It is like those who wish to light a fire; at first they are choked by the smoke and cry, and by this means obtain what they seek (as it is said: “Our God is a consuming fire” [Heb 12:24]); so we also must kindle the divine fire in ourselves through tears and hard work.¹

In the previous theological reflection section, it was evident in the lives of Moses, Deborah, the Shunamite woman, David, Philip and Jesus that “advancing towards” God was their only option if their spiritual lives were to be sustained. Moreover, the readings of the desert mothers and fathers, Ignatius and Willard reveal that spiritual formation is the on-going pursuit of God that requires the courage to face the shadow-self. As directees bring their battles and suffering to spiritual direction, directors have the privilege of observing directees advance toward God. Prayer and other spiritual practices cause the divine fire to blaze during spiritual direction.

This chapter will reflect further upon the theological implications of prayer and spiritual practices in the lives of spiritual directors. Further, a ministry plan for spiritual

¹ Laura Swan, *The Forgotten Desert Mothers* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2001), 43.

directors in which spiritual practices are proposed, practiced, reflected upon, and evaluated will be outlined. The ministry plan promotes consideration of whether normal spiritual practices are deepening director's lives and ministries. Through small group interaction, the participants will supply information about whether or not practicing specific spiritual disciplines has been beneficial for their directees.

Theological Implications of Spiritual Direction

Because spiritual directors prayerfully support directees as they “advance towards” God during direction sessions, it is only natural that they kindle the divine fire within themselves by embracing a contemplative spiritual life.

In the broadest spiritual sense, a contemplative orientation refers to a direct, immediate, intentional relationship with the divine Mystery at the heart of reality. It involves a givenness to God in the moment..... It is a simple, open presence to what is, a presence that can accommodate all that is, a presence that is dedicated to the ultimate loving Source that pervades what is.²

This contemplative life is not easily attained. Directors must battle their own darkness and demons before helping others battle theirs. However, as directors do the interior work needed to successfully journey with another, joy serves as confirmation that God truly is a consuming fire bringing light and love into their own lives.

While spiritual directors do not overtly share their personal spiritual journey with directees, they do covertly share their theology and their spiritual practices with them. What a director thinks, feels, believes, and does outside of a direction session, impacts what happens within a session. Consequently, the prayer, the exercise of spiritual disciplines, the study of God's Word and the experience of everyday life through God's

² Edwards, *Spiritual Director*, 4.

eyes determine how the director comes to a direction session. Practices of prayer, study, and intentionally experiencing life with God are vital for a spiritual director's personal life and ministry. Susan S. Phillips writes: "Practice shapes us. People seek professional helpers hoping for salutary change in their lives. And we ourselves are shaped by the practices in which we engage as practitioners."³

Practice paired with the intention of learning from Jesus results in being spiritually formed into Christlikeness:

Again, it doesn't mean perfection, but it does mean we have here a person whose soul is whole; a person who, through the internalized integrity of the law of God and the administrations of the gospel and the Spirit, has a restored soul. Such a soul effectively interfaces God and the full person and enables every aspect of the self to function as God intended.⁴

Spiritual directors, who long for wholeness and healing, will inevitably become the directors God intended them to be for directees. The longing for a restored soul leads to a process of discerning what disciplines will reorient the soul toward finding true rest.

Spiritual directors, whose souls are at rest, are humbled by gentle reminders that God is much more faithful toward directees than they ever could be. Pickering writes, "As a fellow pilgrim, the spiritual director accompanies the directee on this journey of faith. The real 'director' is God the Holy Spirit, who initiates and inspires the directee's deepening relationship with the Trinity, with his or her own self, with other people, and with the realities of life in the global village of the twenty-first-century."⁵ Spiritually

³ Phillips, *Candlelight*, 3.

⁴ Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 220.

⁵ Pickering, *Spiritual Direction*, 3.

healthy directors grasp the theological implication that God is the real “director” and truly want God to take the lead in each direction session.

Spiritual practices can render the director confident and able to intuit when to figuratively step aside and let God, the real “director,” direct. The praxis of spiritual disciplines can heighten the director’s capacity to prayerfully hold the difficulty and anxiety in a directee’s story instead of jumping into problem solve. Because God is the real “director” in any given session, a direction session that is valuable to the directee will occur when God’s presence is perceptible either during the session or upon further reflection. When directors literally practice the presence of God through spiritual disciplines, they naturally usher their directees into the presence of God.

Ministry Plan: Spiritual Practices for Spiritual Directors

Goals

The overarching goals of the ministry plan for spiritual directors, who participate, are three-fold. First, participants will gain a biblical understanding of the need to practice spiritual disciplines through theological reflection. Participants also will be encouraged to evaluate their current practice of spiritual disciplines and remain open to new practices. Finally, participants will practice new spiritual disciplines in order to discern whether spiritual disciplines create a more productive direction session. While these goals explicitly pertain to gleaning of information for this project, the nature of this project allows space for participants through small group discussions to glean new insights about direction in general and about themselves as directors.

Content

Target Population

Knowing it can take time to become established as a spiritual director, I needed some participants who had been directors for more than seven years. But I also wanted to see how practicing certain disciplines might be beneficial to those who had not been practicing direction for as long. Consequently, I formed two groups of directors: one group had been directing more than seven years and the other less than seven years.

My initial thought was keeping groups limited to no more than five participants since a major portion of data would be gleaned during group discussions. It was presumed smaller groups would facilitate impromptu discussions and more insights for the project. There was also an expectation that smaller groups would offer mutual support and encouragement to one another. For the sake of mutuality, the participants would need to live within driving distance of one another. The directors who participated were all from Sacramento and the Central Valley of California and acquainted with one another.

I was able to enlist the assistance of directors whom I respect for their commitment to their personal practice of spiritual direction as well as offering spiritual direction to others. In the more than seven years group, the participants were of retirement age. The average age of the seven year or less group was 53 years old, and were at various stages of life. The common denominator between the two groups was their eagerness to deepen their own understanding of spiritual direction. Though it was challenging to schedule times that would accommodate everyone's schedule, no one was too busy to be part of this project.

Group Guidelines and Formation

Authentic group discussion demands a certain level of trust but also “a bonding that goes beyond human expectations.”⁶ Since the participants are spiritual directors, the assumption is that the ministry of spiritual direction is the common bond. The participants are divided into those who have been directors for seven years or less, and those who have been directing more than seven years. Moreover, the number of people in each group is intentionally small to guarantee all voices are heard.

While the participants are all spiritual directors, who are trained listeners, it is imperative to remind them of the need to listen well to one another. The listening specified in these small group discussions encompasses listening for God’s Spirit as spiritual direction experiences are shared. Of this type of experience Rose Mary Dougherty writes, “Filled with expectancy, this listening is an act of faith in God’s promise to us, ‘When you seek me you will find me. When you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me.’”⁷

For positive group interaction participants naturally accept that each person is celebrated and loved by God and humbly expect that God is present and active in each person’s life and ministry of spiritual direction. It is advantageous to group discussion that participants come believing that there is always something more to learn about

⁶ Rose Mary Dougherty, *Group Spiritual Direction: Community for Discernment* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1995) 13.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 79.

spiritual direction and that God often teaches us through sharing and supportive fellowship of others.⁸

Overviews of Monthly Sessions

Following are overviews for four consecutive monthly sessions in which spiritual directors can discuss their experiences with various spiritual practices. First, is the introduction. For spiritual directors, there is a vital connection between the spiritual life and spiritual direction. In the months to come the groups will explore this connection with the intention of discovering spiritual disciplines that Come, Learn, Rest Ministries can recommend to spiritual directors, who seek to provide a beneficial spiritual direction experience for their directees.

The second month is silence and solitude. The disciplines of silence and solitude cultivate a prayerful life. Prayer, first and foremost, is the spiritual discipline that connects the spiritual director's life with God to the ministry of spiritual direction. At Come, Learn, Rest Ministries we value times of retreat with silence and solitude and strive to remember that "what we say is not as important as what we pray."

The next month focuses on the prayer of *examen*. The prayer of *examen* is not so much a method as it is an attitude evolving from time spent in thankful reflection on where God is at work in the ordinary. At Come, Learn, Rest Ministries we consider the ministry of spiritual direction a privilege and seek a posture of gratitude when interacting with directees. Moreover, we choose to prayerfully notice God's presence in a directee's life.

⁸ Ibid., 79.

The fourth month is about pilgrimage. Pilgrims do not stay in the same place. In the physical realm, they journey from one destination to another. However, in the spiritual realm, their journey involves interior shifts between head, heart and soul. Regardless, being a pilgrim requires trust. Embracing the unknowns along the way is not an option, but receiving God's Kingdom is the great reward. At Come, Learn, Rest Ministries we believe pilgrimage encompasses an intentional way of living, listening, and discerning while accompanying directees on their spiritual journey.

Overview of Monthly Handouts

From the above overviews the handouts for the participants were derived. The monthly handouts include reflection questions about spiritual practices and Scripture, an introduction to a new spiritual practice and a prompt for the beginning of the small group discussion. Exact copies of these can be found in the Appendix but what follows are the highlights of each handout.

The introductory handout invited the directors to reflect on their call to the ministry of spiritual direction and experiences they have had as a director. How their ministry of spiritual direction has been influenced by their practice of spiritual disciplines was important to consider. Since the definition and description of spiritual direction is different for each director, it was important to know how these participants would define spiritual direction within the context of their ministry experiences. Finally, it was suggested that the directors reflect on the following line from an Emily Dickinson poem: "The soul should always stand ajar, ready to welcome the ecstatic experience."

The second handout was informed by ancient spirituality. Theophan the Recluse said, “Prayer is the test of everything; prayer is also the source of everything; prayer is the driving source of everything; prayer is also the director of everything. If prayer is right, everything is right. For prayer will not allow anything to go wrong.”⁹ With the help of Theophan’s definitions of what prayer is, participants were invited to reflect on what prayer is and Elijah’s experience of silence and solitude with God in 1Kings 19:9-18. It was hoped that those, who practiced silence and solitude, would be able to articulate the before and after differences in direction sessions. Moreover, there was curiosity if the directors agreed with the idea that “prayer is the director of everything”

The third handout explored the use of Saint Ignatius’ prayer of *examen* as an individual discipline as well as a means of self-supervision during a spiritual direction session. This seemed plausible since “the *examen* make us aware of moments that at first we might easily pass by as insignificant, moments that ultimately can give direction for our lives.”¹⁰ Praying Psalm 131 was encouraged as preparation for the honest dialogue with God that takes place in the prayer of *examen*. Participants were asked to pray the *examen* daily for a month and during that month taking time after two direction sessions to pray the *examen* for just that session. There was interest in knowing whether praying the *examen* helped directors to pay attention to their directees’ experience of God as well as their own. The expectation was discussing application of the *examen* of two sessions.

Early in this project, silence, solitude, and the *examen* surfaced as disciplines to

⁹ Moon and Benner, eds., *Spiritual Direction and the Care of Souls*, 31.

¹⁰ Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 52. Quote by Dennis Linn.

practice. However, the final one was chosen while reading by Dallas Willard: “Historically, ‘ascetic’ spiritual practices have included solitude, silence, fasting and deprivations of various, certain types of prayer, frugality, simplicity or plainness, certain acts of service or submission to others, pilgrimage, ‘watching’ (going without sleep), submission to a director, and meditation.”¹¹ Pilgrimage stood out for several reasons. Ignatius described himself as a pilgrim and there was wonder if that was one way to identify spiritual directors. Spiritual journey is often used synonymously with pilgrimage, this study delved into the nuances as it pertains to spiritual direction.

The central focus of the fourth handout was the following quote by Jim Forest: “Pilgrimage is a conscious act of seeking a more vital awareness of God’s living presence.”¹² To that end, pilgrimage can be viewed as a compilation of other spiritual disciplines such as prayer, silence, solitude, and simplicity, but with the specific purpose of navigating to a new destination or a new way of being. One ascetic aspect of being on a pilgrimage is to seek out places that inspire quietness and contemplative listening, such as spiritual direction. Spiritual directors can be fellow pilgrims with their directees for whatever time and in whatever way the Spirit dictates.

The account in Luke 24:13-35 of two disciples leaving Jerusalem and being joined by Jesus on the road to Emmaus is an account of pilgrimage. Participants were invited to read and reflect on this passage then discern and describe their current pilgrimage. From that perspective, the project asked if participants viewed themselves as directors on pilgrimage with their directees. And if so, where were they going with their

¹¹ Willard, *Renewing the Christian Mind*, 117.

¹² Forest, *The Road to Emmaus*, 13.

directees? Were director and directee more aware of God's loving presence?

The last section of the fourth handout named the reality that the last four months have been a pilgrimage of sorts. I was set on getting answers to questions such as: what was noticed? what was appreciated? what was challenging? what changes would have made the journey/pilgrimage more impactful? The directors who participated are devoted to the ministry of spiritual direction and valued the opportunity to be part of this project. Their commitment to practicing the disciplines and reflecting on their experiences added depth to the discoveries of this project. In the next chapter, the insights that were gleaned from the eight small group sessions over the course of four months will be analyzed.

CHAPTER SEVEN

IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPLICATIONS

My directees bring life and their experiences and I have the privilege of holding them in trust. I'm always surprised at how often what they bring is where God is active in my own journey with him.

~Spiritual Director Participant

In transitioning into this final chapter, the above quote highlights the dynamic relationship between the director and the directee. Directors and directees each have their own spiritual journeys, yet during direction, their journeys intersect because God is the common denominator. The director is simply a little further ahead of the directee and remains so by practicing spiritual disciplines. What follows is the implementation and implications of the eight small group sessions with engaged participants.

Implementation

While writing the beginning chapters of this project, I formulated reflection questions and a specific spiritual discipline for each of three consecutive months. That information is compiled into four handouts that are included in the Appendix. During the initial writing of the project and compiling handouts, participants, who were willing and

able to start immediately, were recruited. They were emailed the first handout in August, and the first meetings were held in September.

At the September meeting with each group, meetings were scheduled for October, November, and December when every one could meet. Participants of one group were able to meet at Come, Learn, Rest Ministries for all four of the sessions. Since participants of the other group lived further away, an equidistant meeting place was determined. As noted earlier, one group included participants who had been directing for more than seven years and the other included participants who had been directing seven years or less.

Having less than five participants in each group guaranteed I was able to facilitate a conversation and take pertinent notes during each session. This was significant since assessment of the project included perceptions of the participants' oral reflections along with the written notes the participants kept. Because the composition of the groups varied, the execution of the project was not consistent between the two small groups. In general, the group, who had been directors more than seven years, documented more of their reflections and experiences with the disciplines. The group, who had been directors seven years or less, were verbal processors and relied on the group interaction to bring to mind what to share from their process and practice with the disciplines. In reviewing the monthly implementation of each small group, the following will spotlight some of these differences as well as similarities.

Month One - Introduction

In the first sessions, time was earmarked to build a rapport within each group; but it proved unnecessary because the participants had interacted in other settings as peers. The discussion in each group was so congenial that trust was inherent. Since they were all spiritual directors, they listened well and kept cross-talking to a minimum. Facilitation amounted to little more than asking questions that would deepen my own understanding of their reflections.

The group, who had been directors longer, were eager to begin and end on time. As the facilitator, I recognized the high value they placed on time and needed to keep the conversation moving along. The group, who had been directors less than seven years, was excited about retelling the story of their call to the ministry of spiritual direction which translated into being less concerned with time and more concerned with hearing others tell their stories. Moving forward, the two-hour time period would be stewarded more judiciously to create space for everyone to share their experiences.

Before the session ended the handout for the next session was distributed. Because of the maturity of the participants and their commitment to a prayerful life, there was very little explanation or teaching of the handout. I was confident each participant would consider Elijah's story, the definitions, the prompts, and engage the practice of silence and solitude. Moreover, I was excited to hear what each of them would glean from their time with Elijah's story and practice of silence and solitude.

Month Two - Practice of Silence and Solitude

In the second sessions, time was allocated for a theological discussion of Elijah's experience with silence and solitude as written about in 1 Kings 19:9-18 and Adele Ahlberg Calhoun's definitions of solitude and silence:

The practice of solitude involves scheduling enough uninterrupted time in a distraction-free environment that you experience isolation and are alone with God. Solitude is a "container discipline" for the practice of other spiritual disciplines.¹

Silence is a regenerative practice of attending and listening to God in quiet, without the interruption and noise. Silence provides freedom from speaking as well as from listening to words or music. (Reading is also listening to words.)²

The discussion led to a conversation of silence and solitude and its connection to prayer.

Both groups were eager to share their experiences with silence and solitude as well as hear from one another. The group who had been directors the longest read their comments from the handouts. They seemed more tied to what they had written than the group, who been directors a shorter period of time. I noted that perhaps the older directors have more time to spend throughout the month in reflecting and recording those reflections. Regardless, all comments were astute and required my further reflection.

Care was given to the timing of this session so clarification of my understanding of the prayer of *examen* would be included. Each participant was given a copy of Jim Manney's short book *A Simple Life-Changing Prayer*, both as a gift and as a reference for these following elements in the prayer of *examen*:

1. Ask God for light.

I want to look at my day with God's eyes, not merely my own.

¹ Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 111.

² *Ibid.*, 107.

2. Give thanks.

The day I have just lived is a gift from God. Be grateful for it.

3. Review the day.

I carefully look back on the day just completed, being guided by the Holy Spirit.

4. Face your shortcomings.

I face up to what is wrong—in my life and in me.

5. Look toward the day to come.

I ask where I need God in the day to come.³

During the next month, participants were invited to incorporate the prayer of *examen* into their regular spiritual practice and to pray the *examen* for the specific time frame of two direction sessions. Included with the handout were two samples of prayers of *examen* I had written out after direction sessions. This practice of praying the *examen* after direction was helpful for me and I wanted to see if the same would be true for others.

Month Three - Practice of Prayer of *Examen*

Essentially, the third sessions began where the previous discussion ended concerning the prayer of *examen*. There was little discussion about the personal practice of the *examen* as all participants had been required to pray the *examen* during their training to become directors. In addition, two-thirds of the participants were exposed to the prayer of *examen* when they went through the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius.

Consequently, each group had a vibrant discussion about the *examen* being a tool for self-supervision. Barry and Connolly hold that “supervision of spiritual directors aims at helping them to become more helpful in promoting other people’s relationship with God—in other words, to help them become more able spiritual directors.”⁴ Half of the

³ Jim Manney, *A Simple Life-Changing Prayer* (Chicago: Loyola Press), 1.

⁴ Barry and Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, 186. I appreciate Barry and Connolly saying “more able” because I do likewise when I say more efficacious spiritual direction session. It is not

participants were supervisors of directors, who affirmed it as a tool for transformation. During the discussion, I realized I was remiss in not putting the Barry and Connolly description of supervision in my handout because it would have deepened our conversation of this discipline and its value in a director's life.

While each participant affirmed the value of praying the *examen* in a direction session, it is interesting that only a third of them actually wrote out their *examen*. Another third shared their notes, and the last third shared simply from their memory of praying the *examen* after a direction session. Regardless, each participant provided their feedback in a manner that was most appropriate for them which reinforces the importance of giving directors space to approach spiritual practices in a way that is most relevant for them.

Then, the last discipline was introduced with the caveat to practice it in a manner most relevant to each small group member. A "working" definition was established, which was: Pilgrimage is a conscious act of seeking a more vital awareness of God's living presence.⁵ Other than these two things, little was said about pilgrimage because I wanted to hear what each participant discovered the following month with the information from the handout.

Month Four - Practice of Pilgrimage

These were the most challenging small groups to facilitate because it took time to determine that we were discussing pilgrimage metaphorically rather than physically. The

about becoming better directors but about offering directees a better experience with God. Each director/directee/God relationship is dynamic. Directors do their best on any given day with any given directee as God guides. Sometimes the director will see no movement of God during a session but upon returning will hear all that God has done through prayerful engagement.

⁵ Forest, *The Road to Emmaus*, 13.

group that had been directing the longest had difficulty not thinking of pilgrimage in terms of a *Camino de Santiago* experience even though the handouts encouraged ascetically practicing pilgrimage while walking through daily life. Navigating the conversation within this group was challenging. I noticed myself interjecting my thoughts and opinions rather than listening to learn from these directors who had been directing much longer than I had. The group that had been directors seven years or less than naturally gravitated to a metaphorical connection between direction and pilgrimage.

As one would expect when dealing in metaphor, participants had their own trope for describing the pilgrimage the director makes with the directee. It is my tendency while facilitating discussions to seek out either commonality or diversity of thought as a means of asking clarifying questions. In this case, I had to let each person's metaphor stand alone because each was significant in its own right. I walked away from both groups with the gift of new perceptions of pilgrimage and spiritual direction.

I spent time at the end of these final sessions listening as each person shared his or her experience or our journey together and offered the following as a prompt: "The last four months have been a pilgrimage of sorts. What have you noticed? What have you appreciated? What has challenged you? What would you have changed about the journey?" I also availed myself of this opportunity to let each participant know of my deep gratitude for their participation in this project. In the next section, my appreciation will be expressed as I share implications based on the highlights from the small group discussions and the practice specific of disciplines in the past four months of this project.

Implications

In an effort to assess the project, I allotted time to review the discussions after we met as a small group. With the conclusion of all eight sessions, I compared, contrasted, and compiled individual answers and experiences as well as and group interactions in order to discern what highlights from the project deserved further reflection. In this manner, implications on how the spiritual disciplines directors practice impact a directee's experience during a direction session were revealed.

Disciplines and Definitions

Initially, I compiled a list of spiritual disciplines the directors were currently practicing. I was surprised by how extensive the list was: centering prayer, quieting prayer, Ignatian exercises, gratitude, journaling, imaginative prayer, *lectio divina*, art/creative expression, retreats, welcoming prayer, spiritual direction, and contemplative prayer. Each of them practiced prayer in one way or another and were invested in their own spiritual health and growth.

Secondly, I compiled the definitions the participants used in describing spiritual direction. During the process, I noticed how most definitions were connected to the spiritual disciplines the directors practiced. Below, I have included both the definition and the spiritual practices that form the definition.

One director wrote, "Spiritual direction is a listening ministry in which I listen to the other in the midst of our mutual relationship with God." This definition is formed out of the practice of art and creative expression, which led to a deeper theological understanding of the mutuality and co-creation with God in life and ministry. A second

director reflected, “Spiritual direction is listening prayerfully to another’s story within the context of their everyday life and helping that person respond to God’s activity/invitation/voice within that story.” This definition is influenced by the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius’ imaginative prayer which relies heavily on the Gospel stories and the humanity of Jesus for content.

Another director wrote, “Spiritual direction is simply a helping relationship in that it helps directees ‘follow Jesus back’ into the context of their lives and see God there.” This definition is conceived through the practice of contemplative prayer. A fourth director communicated, “Spiritual direction is a road map on how to ‘love God, yourself and others.’” This definition is directly related to pilgrimage.

A fifth director reflected, “Spiritual direction is about companioning directees into more profound experience of wholeness, prayer and freedom.” This definition is based practices of centering prayer, welcoming prayer and gratitude. One last director shared, “Spiritual direction is discernment, that is discerning the depth of God in the vastness of God.” This interpretation is a result of going on retreats and journaling and the practice of quieting prayer.

During one small group discussion two veteran directors said they have gravitated toward Sue Pickering’s understanding that spiritual direction happens “when one person (the director) prayerfully supports and encourages another person (the directee) to attend and respond to God.”⁶ If spiritual practices influence the definitions directors use, then the practices directors engage in certainly must influence the direction session.

⁶ Pickering, *Spiritual Direction*, 3.

Silence and Solitude

In 1 Kings 19:9-18, Elijah went to a cave, lodged there and had an experience of both solitude and silence. After reading these verses, the participants were invited to reflect on Elijah's practice of solitude and silence as well as their own. They were asked to ponder further Calhoun's definitions of solitude and silence, specifically, "solitude is a 'container discipline' for the practice of other spiritual disciplines,"⁷ and "silence is a regenerative practice of attending and listening to God in quiet, without the interruption and noise."⁸

While many of the participants already had times of silence and solitude built into the rhythm of their lives, there were, nonetheless, encouraged to intentionally spend time in solitude and silence given Elijah's story and Calhoun's definitions. Because I see spiritual direction as a discipline that can be practiced within solitude, I was hoping for honest agreement or disagreement of the following statement from the handout: "As spiritual directors practice solitude and silence, they are better able to prayerfully create a 'container' for the reflection and prayer their directees bring to spiritual direction. Do you agree or disagree? Why?"

The participants agreed with this statement and shared their insights. One wrote, "Yes! This is a great way to describe how I see myself as the vessel for facilitating the practice of spiritual direction with others;" another, "Solitude and silence are reflective and lead to prayerfulness and attentiveness to the directee and God." A third reflected, "Solitude/silence slows me down, grounds me, gives me perspective, helps connect the

⁷ Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 111.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 107.

graces in my life . . . which often parallel my directee.” One director communicated complete agreement, saying, “Agreed! The space is everything: quiet, slow, listening, waiting for the ‘intuitive voice’ called in some traditions the Holy Spirit. In the best sense it is where the directee is alone (with God) in their stories without any thought of the director.” One last director wrote, “In solitude and silence, the container takes on whatever form is needed for the sake of the directee, it might be the container holding the words of the session or the space as a whole.”

If solitude is a container discipline for other practices and silence is regenerative, then as directors seek solitude and silence in their own lives they create with God a space for the directee’s prayerful reflection and attentiveness to God’s voice.

Prayer of *Examen* and Self-Supervision

Each of the participants had already been exposed to the prayer of *examen*, so as discussion began in each group, I found myself taking more notes than anticipated. Some of their comments included: “Practicing the *examen* as a way of life becomes a way of ‘being with’ and reflecting on particular moments in the day;” “The prayer of *examen* is self-supervision for me, personally;” “Praying the *examen* is a means of slowing down before practicing other disciplines;” and “In praying the *examen* we learn about ourselves from Jesus with gentleness not judgment.” The prayer of *examen* is also a tool for discernment. One participant shared that praying the *examen* for four months helped her discern her call to become a spiritual director.

Because I had been using the *examen* as a way of reflecting on each direction session for some time and found it to be an effective way of self-supervision for myself

as a spiritual director, I wanted directors to try it to and provide feedback. I proposed praying the *examen* after two direction sessions during the month from the perspective of the director or the directee. From the perspective of the director one might ask: “When in the session did I feel closest to God? or far from God?” Or from the perspective of the directee one might ask: “When did I sense the directee felt closest to God? far from God?”

Not all of the participants wrote out an *examen* for the two sessions, but each one said the prayer was a helpful way of praying after spending time with a directee. One director wrote, “I had to *examen* the guilt a directee felt over a hard job change because I was aware of an inward struggle between my values and the directee’s wants and desires.” Another communicated, “As I prayed the *examen*, I found myself paying attention to what was, metaphorically, stolen from our attention.” A third director said, “With the *examen* I reflected the directee’s many physical expressions: smiles, tears, and then a shift from a heavy countenance to a light countenance. This was a definitive movement of God I noticed.”

One director noted the importance of giving thanks: “The thanksgiving part of the *examen* helped me to notice how much I really liked one particular directee and clarified my desire to just be there for this directee. This brought freedom to my sense of call.” Another noted that the *examen* altered the orientation of the session, “This was a grace-filled look at the session. I felt more prayerful about the session, perhaps more honest since I wanted to see the directee out of God’s heart for her. Not looking for the focus

question⁹ helped me look more at my agenda and how that can shape a session.” Finally, a director specifically mentioned the discipline’s usefulness for self-supervision: “I found this to be a good self-supervision practice. It was more robust than what I previously did.” In the appendix are two *examens* that participants wrote out after sessions.

Ultimately, with the help of the Holy Spirit the prayer of *examen* reveals the depths of the soul’s longings and desires. Knowing that uncovering longings and desires is part of the work of spiritual direction, the participants were positive about continuing to use the *examen* personally and professionally as spiritual directors. One director wrote: “It will affect how I see ‘supervision,’ from not so much where did I take the directee away from God, but how did my time reflect God’s desire and heart for the session. This feels more prayerfully centered on God’s activity and my own desire to see that desire manifested in the session.” During our discussion, a participant shared this wisdom about the value of the prayer of *examen*: “transformation doesn’t happen in experience; transformation happens in reflection on the experience.”¹⁰ If the prayer of *examen* is a means of reflection on experience that leads to self-supervision and transformation, then spiritual directors, who practice the prayer of *examen*, are more attentive to God and the directee.

Pilgrimage and Spiritual Directors

Like solitude, pilgrimage is a container discipline because it can be viewed as a compilation of other spiritual disciplines such as prayer, silence, solitude, and simplicity

⁹ The focus question is what the director asks as part of a verbatim that is taken to supervision.

¹⁰ From the participant’s personal journal with the credit: “said by a supervisor to a young pastor.”

but with the specific purpose of navigating to a new destination or a new way of being. With this in mind, each director had to make the distinction between being a fellow pilgrim and being a companion with his or her directees. Here are some of their insights about pilgrimage: “Like all spiritual disciplines, the practice of pilgrimage produces freedom in spiritual direction where there is constant movement toward freedom;” “Spiritual direction is a detour for the directee. The challenge is to stay long enough to visit but then to return;” “Spiritual direction is a like a way station, a specific stopping point on the journey;” and “In spiritual direction the director pauses with directee at the forks in the road to discern which direction to travel next.” Overall, a vital aspect of pilgrimage is that it fosters the ongoing practice of silence leading to interior stillness.

The participants had various experiences as they considered pilgrimage and its connection to spiritual direction. One of the directors shared this feedback: “It feels more like joining the directee for a bit then leaving her. My words and attention go with her but it is her journey. I may be just part of the wind of the Spirit and encouragement along the way. In many ways this feels more like *peregrinatio*¹¹ which means wandering or seeking your place of resurrection.” This idea of *peregrinatio* is an invitation for both directors and directees to release their agendas and discern where God is leading by faith even if there is not a definitive destination. It affirms the impulse to surrender to God’s direction and place of rest.

Another participant told of walking with five people at various stages on their journey through the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius, who considered himself a pilgrim.

¹¹ The participant spoke from her reading in *The Soul’s Slow Ripening* by Christine Volters Painter.

The director described her directees in the following manner: “One is awakening to the journey and deepening to new discoveries. Another understands the journey and chooses where she will and will not go. The third is all in her head and cannot see not committing to the journey. The fourth is distracted by the journey and just wants to get to the next place. The last spoke right answers but her heart could not move toward what it desired.” Pilgrimage requires embracing and committing to the slow, transformative work of God that transpires on the journey.

The insightful verses of Luke 24:13-35 recount the story of Jesus on the Road to Emmaus with two disciples. These pilgrims did not realize who had joined them until the eyes of their hearts were opened to the mystery of all Jesus had been discussing with them:

Religion as a word points to that area of human experience where in one way or another man comes upon mystery as a summons to pilgrimage; where he senses meanings no less overwhelming because they can be only hinted at in myth and ritual; where he glimpses a destination that he can never know fully until he reaches itThrough some moment of beauty or pain, some sudden turning of our lives, we catch glimmers at least of what the saints are blinded by, only then, unlike the saints we tend to go on as though nothing has happened. To go on as though something has happened, even though we are not sure what it was or just where we are supposed to go with it, is to enter the dimension of life that religion is a word for.¹²

Though solitude, silence, and prayers of *examen* are vital components of pilgrimage, the conversation between Jesus and these disciples is significant. The words exchanged and the questions asked of Jesus while on the journey determine the depth of commitment to come, learn, and find rest apart from the world. Spiritual direction is a place where the mystery of all that Jesus reveals is wrestled with, sorted through, and processed just as

¹² Frederick Buechner, “Summons to Pilgrimage,” in Elizabeth O’Connor, *Search for Silence* (Washington, DC: Potter’s House Bookservice, 2010), 179.

directors support directees, who want to continue on because something has happened.

Like the disciples on the road to Damascus, who went back and told what had happened with Jesus, spiritual directors continue on with directees because each encounter with Jesus awaits the unfolding of God's possibilities in the directee's life. If the director's spiritual practice of pilgrimage fosters life in this spiritual dimension, then the director is more equipped to do likewise as a companion on the directee's pilgrimage.

In a unique way, the participants in these small groups were pilgrims and companions with one another on the journey. They practiced spiritual disciplines in conjunction with doing spiritual direction and then came together to share their experiences. As our time together progressed, I realized that this project was providing community for these directors who are committed to the ongoing learning involved in the art and practice of spiritual direction. They all appreciated the intentionality of doing the disciplines as a group rather than just on their own. Moreover, they delighted in the challenge of thinking through why they did the disciplines they did and in the revelation that their practice of spiritual disciplines positively impacted their lives and ministries.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Revelation

We make ourselves a place apart
Behind light words that tease and flout,
But oh, the agitated heart
Till someone find us really out.

'Tis pity if the case required
(Or so we say) that in the end
We speak the literal to inspire
The understanding of a friend.

But so with all, from babes that play
At hide-and-peek to God afar,
So all who hide too well away
Must speak and tell us where they are.¹

I often tell directees that it can be profitable to look backward before moving forward in order to not miss some revelation of God. I find myself in a similar position as I come to the end of this journey. Have I overlooked a conclusion that could have been drawn? Was I descriptive enough? Is there something more to be revealed? I did not think so until I received the news that the daughter of one of my directees had died suddenly. With the news, came a request to reschedule our next spiritual direction session and meet sooner rather than later.

As I set up a date that worked best for this grieving mother, my heart sank. I had never formally met the young woman who had passed away, but still I felt like I had. I knew the deceased through her mother's eyes and heart so full of dreams, desires, and concerns. And at the funeral I felt engulfed by my desires and concerns for my own daughter, my empathy for my directee, and by my why questions. God, why did you take

¹ Robert Frost, *Early Poems by Robert Frost* (New York: Avenel Books, 1981), 60.

home this 36-year-old woman, who had so much life yet to live, and not the 96-year-old woman, who told me she is ready to depart this world?

In this midst of all this swirling, I wondered, how I was going to put all this into perspective before our next direction session. My mind quickly went to the content of these pages and what I would say to a director, who came to Come, Learn, Rest Ministries for advice about challenging direction sessions.

In general, the practice of disciplines prepares directors for spiritual direction ministry, but there will be times when adjustments are made so that the director is better able to care for the directee. The disciplines in this paper are a way of assessing what adjustments to make. A return to intentional silence and solitude brings with it a reminder that there are no human words to answer questions about why things happened. Holding the silence within the session opens the door for the Spirit to speak and bring healing to the directee. Praying the *examen* can ground the director in gratitude for God and the directee, can elicit reminders of how God's presence has shown up in past sessions and can allow the director to humbly ask for God's help. And recalling that this is the directee's pilgrimage grants the director the freedom to companion more effectively.

Elizabeth O'Connor writes:

We can create the climate and nurture the trust in which a deep giving of ourselves can happen. Much more than the confession of our light or our darkness is involved. What is involved is the recovery of love itself, the communion that is the deepest need of every life, the unlocking of that infinite capacity that each one has to be a friend and to have a friend. If the pilgrim journey is a journey toward freedom, then the liberating work is the freeing of love in me and the freeing of love in you.²

² Elizabeth O'Connor, "Inward/Outward Together," sermon, Church of the Saviour Washington, DC, May 7, 2019. <http://inwardoutward.org/the-liberation-of-love-may-7-2019/>.

Having rehearsed these disciplines in the past, directors are free to love no matter what emotions dominate a directee's heart and are free from any temptation to fix what only the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit can mend.

During the small group sessions with directors, I noticed a tension concerning whether a more efficacious spiritual direction experience translates into becoming a better director. When I played on the tennis team in high school, we played every school twice which meant I had the opportunity to face each opponent more than once. Regardless of whether or not I won the first time, I still had to be at the top of my game the next match. But I did have one advantage the second time around; I was more familiar with my opponent and could adjust my game accordingly. The same is true in spiritual direction. Each time I meet with directees, I prayerfully reevaluate my plan and reorient toward God's plan for the directee. Though I wanted to win each tennis match, I also wanted to play the best match I could against that opponent on that particular day. Likewise, success in spiritual direction is not just about being a better director but about offering the best session possible for that directee on that particular day.

The day I met with my directee, whose grief was so raw she could not cry and wondered if that was wrong, I said very little. Her words filled the space between us, and I was reminded of what time in solitude and silence reinforces for me: "It isn't what I say, it's what I pray that is most important."³ When she wondered out loud again whether or not she should be crying, I reassured her she would cry when the time was right. I was confident in God's movement and her desire to live an authentic life. At the end of the session, I reiterated that I was committed to prayerfully companionship her through her

³ This is a phrase I penned years ago as a result of a season of reading and studying prayer.

grief and intentionally listening as she dares to speak and tell me where she is.

At Come, Learn, Rest Ministries spiritual directors recognize the need to be lifelong learners drawing from the spiritual wisdom of desert mothers and fathers, Ignatius, and modern thinkers such as Willard. Directors strive to be as conversant with God as Moses, as daring as Deborah when God calls, as accommodating of God's people as the Shunamite woman, as staunchly supportive of God as David, as collaborative with the Lord as Philip and as willing to "pilgrim" with others as Jesus.

At Come, Learn, Rest Ministries, directors remember that what is said is not as important as what is prayed. We consider the ministry of spiritual direction a privilege and seek a posture of gratitude when interacting with directees. We are committed to consistently and prayerfully noticing God's presence in our own lives and our directees' lives. Moreover, we believe pilgrimage encompasses an intentional way of living and listening, as well as praying and discerning.

Practicing spiritual disciplines is what empowers spiritual directors to offer directees a spiritual direction experience that is spiritually, emotionally, physically, and mentally beneficial. At Come, Learn, Rest Ministries a life-giving spiritual direction experience is defined as time set apart so that those who long to be heard may use their voices, who want to be found are truly seen, and who seek to respond to God's continual revelation do so freely. To that end, Come, Learn, Rest Ministries invites directors and directees to come, learn how to respond to God's revelation from Jesus, and thereby find rest for their souls. May it be so.

APPENDIX A

SESSION ONE

Spiritual Directors and Their Spiritual Practices

Reflection Questions for 1st Group Session

The spiritual life and the practice of spiritual direction assume that God acts in the world and can be experienced in the world.¹ ~Wm. A. Barry

For spiritual directors, there is a vital connection between the spiritual life and spiritual direction. In the months to come we will explore this connection with the intention of discovering spiritual disciplines that Come, Learn Rest Ministries can recommend to spiritual directors who seek to provide an efficacious spiritual direction experience for their directees.

Ministry as a Spiritual Director

Consider your initial call to the ministry of spiritual direction. What was most significant about God's action in this experience?

What have been the most significant (positive and negative) experiences in your ministry?

As you reflect on these experiences, what was God doing in you and/or in your life? What is God saying to you now about these experiences?

*You are not a human being in search of a spiritual experience.
You are a spiritual being immersed in a human experience.²*

Spiritual Disciplines and Spiritual Direction

Consider the spiritual disciplines you have practiced as a spiritual director. What practices have helped you become a more grounded spiritual director?

¹ Barry, *Spiritual Direction and the Encounter with God*, 7.

² Often credited to Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.

As you reflect on your ministry, did your spiritual practices change as a result of any of these positive and negative experiences? If so, how?

Definition of Spiritual Direction

At Come, Learn, Rest Ministries, we define spiritual direction as: *help given by one Christian to another which enables that person to pay attention to God's personal communication to him or her, to respond to this personally communicating God, to grow in intimacy with this God, and to live out the consequences of the relationship.*³

What is *your* definition of spiritual direction?

How has that definition changed since you became a spiritual director?

Have the spiritual disciplines you practiced through the years influenced your definition? If so, how?

*The soul should always stand ajar,
ready to welcome the ecstatic experience.*⁴ ~Emily Dickinson

Preparing for Small Group

Thank you for reflecting on the questions above. I would ask you to reflect on the above quote by Emily Dickinson. What is keeping your soul ajar at this point in time?

If there is an object that represents what is keeping your soul ajar please bring it to our group time.

³ Barry and Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, 8.

⁴ Emily Dickinson, *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1924), www.bartleby.com/113/ (accessed August 2018).

APPENDIX B

SESSION TWO

Spiritual Directors and Their Spiritual Practices

Reflection Questions for 2nd Group Session

Prayer is the test of everything; prayer is also the source of everything; prayer is the driving source of everything; prayer is also the director of everything. If prayer is right, everything is right. For prayer will not allow anything to go wrong.⁵

~Theophan the Recluse

Prayer, first and foremost, is the spiritual discipline that connects the spiritual director's life with God to the ministry of spiritual direction. At Come, Learn, Rest Ministries we strive to remember *what we say is not as important as what we pray*.

The Spiritual Discipline of Prayer and Spiritual Direction

The quote above has many phrases. Which phrase stands out to you personally? as a spiritual director?

To what degree do you think your personal practice of prayer impacts your ministry as a spiritual director?

Solitude and Silence: A Way to Pray

In 1Kings 19:9-18, Elijah comes to a cave and lodges in it and experiences both solitude and silence. Read these verses and reflect on Elijah's practice of solitude and silence. Notice any familiarity with your practice of solitude and silence.

The practice of solitude involves scheduling enough uninterrupted time in a distraction-free environment that you experience isolation and are alone with God. Solitude is a "container discipline" for the practice of other spiritual disciplines.⁶

~Adele Ahlberg Calhoun

⁵ Moon and Benner, *Spiritual Direction and the Care of Souls*, 31.

⁶ Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 111.

What other references to solitude are in this passage?

Do you look forward to times of prayerful solitude with God or are you resistant to solitude?

Silence is a regenerative practice of attending and listening to God in quiet, without the interruption and noise. Silence provides freedom from speaking as well as from listening to words or music. (Reading is also listening to words.)⁷

~Adele Ahlberg Calhoun

What other references to silence are in this passage?

Is there room for prayerful silence in your life with God?

Practice is participative, prayerful hope, hope to which you are committed, hope for which you have given yourself. You have your own sense of what that hope is for, but it will have something to do with sensing and responding to the gift of love, remembering the divine presence as you move through the activities of your day, realizing—making real—the truth of love’s pervasiveness. ~Gerald May

Practicing Solitude and Silence

This month spend time practicing solitude and silence in the most life-giving way. Then take time to consider Elijah’s experience with God.

One of Elijah’s container was the cave where he lodged. Do you have a container for your times of solitude?

In Elijah’s container there was room for God’s voice to be heard. Did you hear God’s voice? If so, in what way?

⁷ Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 111.

Twice the Lord asks Elijah this question: “What are you doing here Elijah?”
Is God asking you a repetitive question?
In Elijah’s container there was room for a dialogue between Elijah and God.
What conversation are you having with God?

Final Reflection

As spiritual directors practice solitude and silence, they are better able to prayerfully create a “container” for the reflection and prayer their directees bring to spiritual direction. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?

Will you continue practicing solitude and silence as a means of *remembering the divine presence as you move through the activities of your day* including your spiritual direction sessions? Why or why not?

*Love seeketh not itself to please,
Nor for itself hath any care,
But for another gives its ease,
And builds a Heaven in Hell’s despair.⁸*
~William Blake, from *The Clod and the Pebble*

Preparing for Small Group

Thank you for taking the time to practice solitude and silence and reflecting on the questions above. Now reflect on the above verses William Blake wrote.
How is God’s love building a heaven in your life so that prayer becomes *the director of everything*?

If there is an object that represents God’s building “project,” please bring it to our group time.

⁸ Blake, *Sons of Innocence and of Experience*, 144.

APPENDIX C

SESSION THREE

Spiritual Directors and The Prayer of Examen

Reflection Questions for 4th Group Session

In the customary prayer I felt much devotion, and from the midpoint on, there was much of it, clear, lucid, and, as it were warm.

~St. Ignatius of Loyola

The prayer of examen is not so much a method as it is an attitude evolving from time spent in thankful reflection on where God is at work in the ordinary. At Come, Learn, Rest Ministries we consider the ministry of spiritual direction a privilege and seek a posture of gratitude when interacting with directees. Moreover, we choose to *prayerfully notice God's presence in a directee's life*.

The Spiritual Discipline of the Prayer of Examen

The examen is a practice for discerning the voice and activity of God within the flow of the day. It is a vehicle that creates deeper awareness of God-given desires in one's life.⁹

~Adele Ahlberg Calhoun

This prayerful review of the day or a specific portion of the day in the presence of God usually takes 15 to 20 minutes. According to Ignatian Spirituality, the prayer includes the following 5 elements and intentions:

1. Ask God for light.

I want to look at my day with God's eyes, not merely my own.

2. Give thanks.

The day I have just lived is a gift from God. Be grateful for it.

3. Review the day.

I carefully look back on the day just completed, being guided by the Holy Spirit.

4. Face your shortcomings.

I face up to what is wrong—in my life and in me.

5. Look toward the day to come.

I ask where I need God in the day to come.¹⁰

⁹ Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 52.

¹⁰ Jim Manney, *A Simple Life-Changing Prayer* (Chicago, IL: Loyola Press), 1.

During the **Review of the Day** it is common to ask two questions such as:

- For what moment am I most grateful? or least grateful?
- When did I give and receive love? or not give and receive love?
- When did I feel closest to God? Or farthest away from God?

The examen make us aware of moments that at first we might easily pass by as insignificant, moment that ultimately can give direction for our lives.¹¹

~Dennis Linn

Reflecting on these questions makes the prayer of examen indispensable in recognizing God's presence in the world and in the circumstances of our lives.

Practicing the Prayer of Examen

Praying the prayer of examen is a way of being honest with God and opening ourselves up to God. The words of Psalm 131 can help prepare us for the honest dialogue with God that takes place in the prayer of examen.

O LORD, my heart is not lifted up;
my eyes are not raised too high;
I do not occupy myself with things
too great and too marvelous for me.
But I have calmed and quieted my soul,
like a weaned child with its mother;
like a weaned child is my soul within me.
O Israel, hope in the LORD
from this time forth and forevermore. (Ps 131)

Take a few minutes to reflect on Psalm 131. How do the words of this psalm help you to be more present to God? to yourself? to directees?

This month practice the prayer of examen after two or three direction sessions. (Two samples are attached.) You might want to write out your prayer or take notes.

¹¹ Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 52.

Take time to *review* the session asking two specific questions from your perspective as the director or the directee. From your perspective as the director ask:

- When in the session did I feel closest to God?
- When did I feel far from God?

Or from your perspective of the directee ask:

- When did I sense the directee felt closest to God?
- When did I sense the directee felt far from God?

Final Reflection

*I don't know exactly what prayer is.
I do know how to pay attention.*¹² ~Mary Oliver,

What was helpful about praying the prayer of examen after the direction sessions? What was not helpful?

Will you continue practicing the prayer of examen in this way? If so how do you think it will affect the way in which you offer spiritual direction.

*The examen is prayer but a prayer that itself presupposes
another level of prayer in our lives.*¹³

Preparing for Small Group

*Deep in the soul the acres lie
of virgin lands, of sacred wood
where waits the Spirit.*¹⁴
~Jessica Powers

Ultimately the prayer of examen reveals the depths of the soul and the sacred places where longings and desires dwell and wait for the Spirit.

¹² Mary Oliver, *The House of Light* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1990), 60.

¹³ Gallagher, *The Examen Prayer*, 116.

¹⁴ Siegfried and Morneau, eds., *The Selected Poetry of Jessica Powers*, 6.

What longings and desires are you becoming more aware of through prayer and waiting for the Spirit to move you toward? If there is an object that represents this longing or desire please bring it to our group time.

Sample Prayer of Examen #1

Lord, may my heart see what my eyes cannot...as I reflect on this session.

Thank you Lord for Aleah...for her many opportunities to learn and grow...for the way in which she processes them all...for her joy in partaking in all the opportunities...

Lord, I sensed she felt closest to you as I simply repeated the phrase she said "I fell into it" back to her as a question. She seemed to think more deeply about how you are part of what she finds herself "falling into." I sensed her far away from you when she started analyzing and doubting whether God would continue to provide the "fell into it's" in her life. I sensed she was closer to you when she stopped trying to figure out when the things like her house would sell. She seemed to realize that just because her house might not be a "fell into it" thing there would still be another.

Forgive me Lord for getting frustrated with all her doubts and mistrust of You.

Help me Lord to be patient with the repetition in sessions.

Sample Prayer of Examen #2

Lord, may my heart see what my eyes cannot...as I reflect on this session.

Thank you Lord for Ashley...for her new book...for the audio of her new book...for her talking more about her life with you than her new book...for her desire to draw closer to you...for her desire to have deeper connections...for the strength of her marriage...

Lord, I felt far from you when I noticed my thoughts turning into judgments. I felt closest to You as I let go of my judgments concerning her being a Christian author and yet struggling to be fully present to you and more consistent in her relationship with you. I felt closest to You as I remembered she is an enneagram 4 and tends to wallow here a bit each session. I let her wallow for a time but then gently point her back to prayer and you.

I feel close to you now as I consider all the judgments I place on myself and am led to ponder how I can gently point myself back to you after wallowing for a bit.

Forgive me Lord being judgmental.

Help me Lord to be gentle with myself and my directees.

APPENDIX D

SESSION 4

Spiritual Directors and Pilgrimage

Reflection Questions for 4th Group Session

*The geographical pilgrimage is the symbolic acting out of an inner journey.
The inner journey is the interpolation of the meanings and signs of the outer journey.
One can have one without the other.¹⁵ ~Thomas Merton*

Pilgrims do not stay in the same place. In the physical realm, they journey from one destination to another. However, in the spiritual realm, their journey involves interior shifts between head, heart and soul. Regardless, being a pilgrim requires trust. Embracing the unknowns along the way is not an option, but receiving God's kingdom is the great reward. *At Come, Learn, Rest Ministries we believe pilgrimage encompasses an intentional way of living and listening, as well as, prayerful discernment and discipline.*

The Spiritual Discipline of Pilgrimage

Pilgrimage is a conscious act of seeking a more vital awareness of God's living presence.¹⁶

Historically, "ascetic" spiritual practices have included solitude, silence, fasting and deprivations of various, certain types of prayer, frugality, simplicity or plainness, certain acts of service or submission to others, *pilgrimage*, "watching" (going without sleep), submission to a director, and meditation.¹⁷

Pilgrimage can be viewed as a compilation of other spiritual disciplines such as prayer, silence, solitude, and simplicity, but with the specific navigation of a new destination or a new way of being. The practice of pilgrimage includes awareness of the following:

¹⁵ Forest, *The Road to Emmaus*, v.

¹⁶ Forest, *The Road to Emmaus*, 13.

¹⁷ Willard, *Renewing the Christian Mind*, 117.

- **Roads:** *Thus says the Lord, “Stand by the roads, and look and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls. But they said, ‘We will not walk in it (Jer 6:16).”*
- **Walking:** *If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit (Gal 5:25).*
- **Praying:** *And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart (Lk 18:1).*
- **The Other Side of Silence:** *But Jesus remained silent (Mt 26:63).*
- **Maps:** *When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you...(Jn 16:13).*

Practicing Pilgrimage

Spiritual directors are fellow pilgrims with directees for whatever time and in whatever way the Spirit dictates. Regardless, directees are pilgrims seeking the quiet space of rest found in spiritual direction.

One ascetic aspect of being on a pilgrimage is to seek out places that inspire quietness and contemplative listening. *To practice listening is to practice silence.* By actively listening, pilgrims discover silence even in the midst of the most distracting circumstances along the journey.

On their journey, pilgrims encounter various kinds of silence, some constructive, some instructive, and some destructive. Consider the following:

- *Deadly silence:* The refusal to speak
- *Guilty silence:* Choosing to be a silent collaborator
- *Ominous silence:* Intimidating, belittling silence
- *Proud silence:* Communicating with silence that others are insignificant
- *Anxious silence:* The silence of fear
- *Awkward silence:* The silence of strain and embarrassment
- *Graveyard silence:* The silence that ensues after the unspeakable occurs
- *Meek silence:* The silence of reverence and humility
- *Dumbfounded silence:* The silent awe of God’s presence and perfect peace
- *Consoling silence:* Comforting nonverbal (tears) communication in times of grief
- *Enamored silence:* The silence of love, rendered speechless by love for another
- *Prayerful silence:* The silence that participates in divine silence
- *“Evangelical” silence:* The good news of the Gospel and God’s invitation of Trinitarian friendship¹⁸

¹⁸ Forest, *The Road to Emmaus*, 26-28.

The account of two disciples leaving Jerusalem being joined by Jesus on the road to Emmaus is an account of their pilgrimage. Take time to read Luke 24:13-35 in a version different from what is normally used. Consider the following questions:

- What do you notice?
- Where are you on the road with Jesus?
- How are you walking and praying?
- What types of silences are you noticing?
- How are you holding these silences?
- What maps are you using for guidance?
- What is Jesus opening your eyes to on this pilgrimage?

Reflect on your life and describe the pilgrimage do you find yourself on currently. Consider the same questions listed above.

Now reflect on one or two of your directees. Who comes to mind? Describe their pilgrimage and your role on their journey? In light of your most recent spiritual direction session with that directee, consider the same questions listed above. Overall, where are you as the director “going” with this directee?

Final Reflection

*He who possesses in truth the word of Jesus can hear even its silence.*¹⁹ ~Saint Ignatius

A Prayer for Pilgrims

Lord Jesus, you traveled with the two disciples to
Emmaus after the resurrection and set their
hearts on fire with your grace. Travel also with
me and gladden my heart with your presence.
I know, Lord, that I am a pilgrim on earth,
seeking citizenship in heaven.
During my journey surround me with your holy
angels and keep me safe from seen and unseen dangers.

¹⁹ Forest, *The Road to Emmaus*, 29.

Grant that I may carry out my plans and fulfill my expectations according to your will.

Help me to see the beauty of creation and to Comprehend the wonder of your truth in all things.

For you are the way, the truth, and the life, and to you I give thanks, praise, and glory forever. Amen.²⁰

Preparing for Small Group

The last four months have been a pilgrimage of sorts. What have you noticed? What have you appreciated? What has challenged you? What would you have changed about the journey?

²⁰ Forest, *The Road to Emmaus*, 183.

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