



How to Find a Spiritual Director

“Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked with us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?” Lk 24.32

The Practice of Spiritual Direction

As early as the 4th Century, the practice of spiritual direction began to manifest in the life of the early Church. City dwellers, searching for a ‘word of wisdom’ to guide their journeys, sought out desert abbas and ammas (*spiritual mothers and spiritual fathers*) living in remote solitary places. Their few words of ‘spiritual direction’ seemed to awaken an inner truth that brought them into a fuller consciousness of living in the fullness of Spirit.

Throughout the centuries, many persons have experienced their listening to God in daily prayer as enough to guide them through the joys and struggles of the human journey. However, when they encounter certain life/faith struggles or find themselves undergoing a dark night experience, many of these same seekers feel the need for the accompaniment of a spiritual director.

How Does One Find a Spiritual Director Today?

Once you realize that you need a spiritual director, pray to be guided by the Spirit. You might call the Diocesan Office, speak with your pastor, a retired priest, a chaplain, or contact a local retreat house, asking them to suggest a spiritual director for you. Most find their spiritual director through the recommendation of a trusted friend who is already seeing a spiritual director. Once you find someone (it may take some time), ask that person if they would be willing to be your spiritual director. Then, together, set up a date and time and location for your first visit.

The Spiritual Director

A good spiritual director needs to be prudent well-balanced, knowledgeable about the faith and the spiritual life, and have a mature, deep personal relationship with God. Qualities most evident in good spiritual directors are their listening skills, compassion, and ability to both challenge and encourage. Most importantly, your director needs to be someone you can trust—either someone you already trust, or someone who easily and naturally wins your trust during your first few visits.

The ‘spiritual direction gift’ usually emerges after several years of spiritual practice and contemplative experience. Spiritual directors may be lay persons, clergy, or members of a

religious community. They should, first and foremost, be called, and gifted, and then trained in the knowledge and skills to wholeheartedly respond to God's call. All our Upper Room spiritual directors have completed a two year Emmaus Program for the facilitation of their 'gift' for this ministry. They are involved in on-going enrichment programs, the practice and supervision of spiritual direction and are pursuing their own ever-deepening relationship with God.

What Happens in a Spiritual Direction Visit?

You usually meet with your spiritual director for an hour, once a month. The visit takes place in a space set apart from the busyness of daily life - at the director's office/home, at a retreat center or home of prayer. The seeker enters a safe and caring environment in which the sharing is confidential. You the seeker, your director, and the Holy Spirit meet in holy conversation so *'you may have life and have it more abundantly.'* (John 10:10)

The director encourages your sharing from the heart in all simplicity and candour: *"How has your month been?"* or *"How has God been working in your life these last weeks?"* or *"How would you like to begin?"* The content of the spiritual direction session is simply your life- whatever aspect, story or experience you feel moved to bring to prayer and reflection. The director listens, witnesses, helps to clarify, at times challenges, and draws out the awareness of the purifying/transforming work of God in your particular life situation.

As the session draws to a close, you or your spiritual director may summarize what 'spiritual direction' has been received and both rejoice in the graced insight the Spirit has brought forth. The director may recommend prayer forms, scripture/spiritual readings, or spiritual practices that support your ongoing inner work. A next appointment date is agreed upon. Usually there is a suggested fee per visit. Your spiritual director accompanies and supports God's work of transformation within you. Praying for you daily, they desire only your fidelity to grace and *"becoming the person God wants you to be in nature, grace and glory."* (J.P. Medaille, M.P. 10:6)

We spiritual directors at The Upper Room Home of Prayer have drawn our inspiration for this ministry from the Gospel story of Jesus on the road to Emmaus. (Lk. 24:13-35). At some point in the visit, today's weary pilgrims on life's journey experience some sense of the presence of God enkindled ...and they move forward with renewed hope and encouragement.

Do you experience the need to sit with a spiritual director awaiting God's wisdom and direction?

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