

What is Spiritual Direction and Do I need a Spiritual Director?

Spiritual direction, or the cure of souls (*cura animarum*), is a seeking after the leading of the Holy Spirit in a given psychological and spiritual situation. In the process, the spiritual director guides us through contemplative prayer, reading and praying with the scripture to help the Christian attend to the workings of the Holy Spirit in the individual.

Spiritual direction has a long history within Christianity. The earliest practitioners of spiritual direction were the reclusive monastic monks and nuns of Syrian and Egyptian deserts of the third to fifth centuries. They fled the known world and its corruption to seek God. Christians sought them out and went to their monasteries to seek the guidance and teachings of these spiritual masters.

Spiritual direction seeks to invite the directee to enter the castle of their own souls and there to find God. This ancient practice incorporates *lectio divina* - reflecting on readings from scripture and the Fathers of the Church to guide one in the ways of contemplation.

Centuries before the arrival of the psychological counselling, spiritual direction was the way to go and is still the best way to go for many presenting problems today. Even though spiritual direction has an ancient history and is burgeoning in the church today, most Christians still have never heard of it or have never used it. Many of us need to talk to a spiritual director about some of our experiences.

Spiritual direction offers a way to attend to God's presence in one's life in the context of a trusted relationship. Spiritual direction is not confession or counselling and is also not about what we do, but about who we are. It helps us see how we've been operating falsely and puts us on a journey to begin to move us to the center. It is tailored to the specific needs of the one individual. The director, and he who is being directed, are both seekers; they are both seeking God together, thus making the spiritual direction a divine-human process of relationship. There is powerful solution that comes from meditating on the scriptures together and listening together for God's voice, leading us from fear to calm. I recommend that all of us to find a spiritual director to help us on our journey; preferably, your pastor or a trained spiritual director.