

TOOL: Spiritual Direction

Lift others in prayer • Daily



Introduction

Spiritual direction is an ancient practice in the Christian faith, having a rich history from the monks and nuns in early Christianity to modern day spiritual directors meeting with fellow believers. Yet many Christians today are unfamiliar with this spiritual practice.

So what is spiritual direction? Simply put, it is fellow travelers on the spiritual journey of Christian faith setting aside time to listen prayerfully to one another share about their experiences of the journey. In one-on-one direction, a believer will meet with a spiritual director for a session. In the session, the director will acknowledge the Third Person in the conversation, the Holy Spirit, and invite both the directee and director to listen to the Spirit throughout the session. The directee will share about whatever the Spirit leads them to share about their journey. The director will listen prayerfully, asking questions to the directee to point them toward seeing the Spirit's activity in the situation shared.

But spiritual direction is not solely limited to one-on-one interactions. Groups of believers can gather together to engage in spiritual direction in a group setting. In this setting, a group will designate a time to listen to one (or more) of its members share their journey with God. The group will listen prayerfully while the person shares, as well as while other members ask God-pointing questions to that person. A detailed explanation of what group spiritual direction can look like in a session is listed below. The main goal of spiritual direction, whether in one-on-one or group settings, is spiritual formation. The goal is for the directee and director to see God's activity more clearly in their own life and grow in spiritual maturity for the sake of others.

Practice

Prior to the group session, the group leader should ask for one to two members to volunteer to be directed by the group. (Only one directee for a session lasting an hour. two directees for session lasting 1.5 hours.)

During the session, the group leader (or other designated member) will monitor the time and move the group along through each of the steps below.

1. Gathering of everyone, setting the group's focus on the Spirit's presence (5 minutes): The facilitator of the group's time will bring the group together in prayer before the Spirit of God. Acknowledging the Spirit in some way and reminding everyone of the Spirit's presence with the group is helpful. Ways to do this include—lighting a candle or placing an empty chair in the circle to visually remind everyone of the Spirit's presence. Prayerfully invite the Spirit to be present in each member, and to speak for the group is listening.

2. Opening time of quiet reflection (10 minutes): Options for this time include silent prayer, silence while listening to quiet music, guided meditations on scripture, or any other contemplative prayer practices chosen by the group. The facilitator opens this time of prayer and guides the group through whatever practice is chosen beforehand. The purpose of this time is to allow each member to prayerfully connect with the Spirit in their minds, bodies, souls and spirits.

3. Brief check in time for each member (10 minutes, a couple minutes for each member): Each member is invited to share with the group about their spiritual journey since the last meeting. They may discuss events that have happened, how they are experiencing God during this time, or the emotions they have felt lately.

4. Group spiritual direction (30 minutes)

- a. **Directee, designated beforehand, presents (10 minutes)** It is helpful to have this person not share in the brief check in time and save their sharing for now. If the directee is uncertain what to share, great places to start include: How are you truly? How have you seen God in your life lately? How would you describe your prayer life right now? Has the Lord shown you anything significant in your life lately?
- b. **Time of silent prayer of group (2 minutes)** The group takes the information the directee has shared before the Spirit, asking the Spirit to guide the group in speaking the Spirit's Truth and Presence to the directee.
- c. **Group responds and interacts with directee (15 minutes)** During this portion, group members take turns prayerfully listening to the Spirit and asking the directee God-pointing questions. Great examples of God-pointing questions are:
 - i. "You mentioned God seemed far away right now. Can you tell us about a time God felt close?"
 - ii. "Do you sense an invitation from God in what you shared?"

- iii. "Where did you see fruits of the Spirit in what you shared?"
- iv. "How would you describe your relationship with God right now?"
- v. "What would you like God to say to you right now?"

The point of this time is not for the group to share their own experiences, or advice for how they handled a similar situation the directee experienced. The goal of this time is to listen to the Spirit's promptings and ask the directee questions that get them to see the Spirit's activity in their life/situation.

- d. **Time of prayer for the directee (2 minutes)** The group will pray, either out loud or silently, for the directee and what they shared.
- e. **Time for the directee to debrief on session experience (1-2 minutes)** *If the group is meeting longer than 1 hour, a second directee can present. The facilitator at this point will repeat step 4 with the second directee.

5. The group can reflect on their experience of the Spirit during session (5 minutes): Close in prayer

Debrief your experience

After practicing with this tool, debrief your experience with your Praxis Group. Below are some questions to process together:

- Check in on life. (Where are you experiencing Christ's presence this week? What burdens are you carrying?)
- What did you learn from this practice?
- Describe your experience with this practice. (What feelings came up, what went well, what got in the way? How has it impacted your relationship with God?)
- What is the next step for you?