

## ***Finding a Spiritual Director***

Ardath L. Smith

Novo SentWell

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**Finding a spiritual director is a matter of prayer and gift.** Gift, in that the match between you and your director is from God. This person has the potential to deeply influence your journey with God, and so you want the man or woman God has in mind for you. I encourage you to begin praying *now* for the Lord to guide you in your search – you need the Lord to put the two of you together.

**Here are some thoughts on how to go about exploring whether someone is a good spiritual director for you:**

In one respect, finding a good spiritual director is like finding a good counselor. What I mean by this is that a person can be a fine spiritual director, helpful to many others, but not a good match for *you*. Therefore, you may have to do some exploration with several people before you find a match. It may be *you* who does not feel it is a match – or it may be the prospective *spiritual director*. (I was actually turned down three times before I found my first spiritual director! Persevere in your search.)

- You are looking for someone who is mature in the faith.
- You are looking for someone with whom you are comfortable sharing easily and without pretense (at the least you need to feel the *potential* of sharing in this way).
- You need to feel like the other person hears you with respect and a helpful measure of understanding.
- You want to look for someone who asks questions that inspire you to pondering and seeking and wonderment with God in *helpful* and *challenging* ways.

### **Man or Woman?**

Some feel it is important to choose a spiritual director of their own sex – I certainly did when I began. But eventually I got to the point where I was open to having a man as my spiritual director, and the Lord provided a wonderful male spiritual director for me. Direction with him was a blessed experience. The point is simply that this is also good for you to consider as you begin your search.

### **Setting Up a Working Relationship**

When you contact a spiritual director by phone to ask about their availability, you will want to be prepared for an initial discussion on what you are looking for. (See *Preparing for Your Initial Discussion* below.)

If you contact a potential spiritual director via email, I would expect them, if they are well-trained and have availability, to schedule an initial discussion you.

At the end of that initial discussion, if each of you feels that it is a good idea to continue exploring whether the Lord has put you together, I would guess that you would make two, perhaps three more appointments before coming to a firm consensus that the Lord has brought you together for longer term work.

In general, spiritual direction takes place once a month. There can be exceptions to this; a time of rapid spiritual growth or personal crisis would be examples.

At the end of your first three or four discussions, I would expect your spiritual director to ask whether the sessions are proving to be helpful for you. If you both feel the Lord is confirming the fruitfulness of your work together, you may continue indefinitely or for the length of time that you determine together.

Please be aware that *at any point* you are welcome to tell your spiritual director that things are not working out for you, or that you do not feel that you are getting what you are looking for, etc. The spiritual director will then be happy to give you referrals to other possible spiritual directors.

Many spiritual directors will not take payment. Many do. You can expect to discuss the length and frequency of your spiritual direction sessions, and what the payment should be, in your initial discussion.

Setting up a working relationship in this way is fairly standard practice for well-trained spiritual directors. Whether this is the exact protocol or not, the spiritual directors you contact should make their process clear to you. You are welcome to step out of the process at any time.

### **Preparing for your Initial Discussion**

- 1) As you prepare for your initial discussion, give yourself time to ponder. *What has brought you to this point of seeking for a spiritual director?* Jesus asked a number of those who came to him, "What do you want?" This is a great question to reflect upon and talk with God about as you prepare to enter spiritual direction.
- 2) Secondly, consider what will be most helpful and important to share about yourself.

### **Working Together**

Once you have begun a relationship with a spiritual director, remember that you are working *together* with the Holy Spirit. This means that sometimes it may be helpful for you to ask the director to help you to explore something in your relationship with God (for example, to better understand your "spiritual temperament"), or to inquire whether your spiritual director could help you focus in on a specific aspect of your relationship with God. Or perhaps you feel it would be helpful for your director to give you specific follow-up assignments or areas of focus for your prayers. Please ask!

### **Where to Find a Spiritual Director**

There are several spiritual directors within NOVO. They are often associated with SentWell, Imago Christi, and ReNew. If you are a member of NOVO, you can ask your team leader, your Collective Director or anyone else in NOVO for a referral.

The Evangelical Spiritual Directors Association (ESDA) is a great world-wide resource for evangelical spiritual directors. See: <http://graftedlife.org/esda/search/>

If you are going back to your home country for some reason, you can also look in your local area. Spiritual direction in person is a very good thing! Churches where you are most likely to find trained spiritual directors include Anglican, Episcopal, Methodist, and Presbyterian. Jesuit and other Roman Catholic retreat centers often provide spiritual direction. You may be able to find Orthodox spiritual direction as well. You can check with churches, monasteries and retreat centers for possible resources.

### **In person or via video technology?**

Doing spiritual direction in person is ideal. However, spiritual direction via the internet works well for many people, and in the present dynamics of pandemic, even people who live geographically close to each other often meet via the internet. If you do spiritual direction via the internet, consider ways to set

aside your physical space for your direction sessions. You will definitely want to be in a place that is quiet and free from interruptions. Perhaps it will be enough to close the door to the room you are using. However, you might want to light a candle or set up a cross or icon for that time. If at all possible, do not schedule your session back-to-back with another appointment, to give yourself time to ponder, pray, and journal afterward, capturing the insights and questions that have arisen.

**How long will you be in spiritual direction?**

Some people continue for years. I have been in spiritual direction almost constantly since 2004, and have had seven spiritual directors, each quite different from the others. This being said, there is also such a thing as "short term spiritual direction." This can last anywhere from one meeting to a few months and fulfill its purpose fruitfully.

**I hope that these thoughts are helpful to you.** If you have any further questions, don't hesitate to contact me.

Ardath L. Smith, SentWell and Hineni House  
*ardath.smith@novo.org*  
*sentwell.org*