

# Building a **relationship with God** through spiritual direction

**M**any people misunderstand the intention of spiritual direction. Some assume it is academic, others may think it is simply about holding people accountable for sins, sort of like confession.

Spiritual direction is about helping Christians develop a loving, personal relationship with God. If you've ever thought about seeking spiritual direction, there are some things you should know.

**It is not apostolic service reporting:** It is important for your director to focus on your spiritual life, not the problems and joys of ministries. Issues with your job or ministry should not be the primary focus.

**There should be a coaching relationship:** The spiritual director is more of a coach than a boss. It is not his or her job to assign punishment to you for not following through with suggested work.

**It is not a class on prayer:** While you may learn more about different styles of prayer in spiritual direction, you should be discussing prayer life, not just various methods of prayer.

**It is about relationships:** Good spiritual directions will require you to speak about relationships with others. This is, after all, the second part of the greatest commandment: to "love you neighbor as you love yourself." (Matthew 22:39).

**It should be challenging:** When working with a spiritual director, God will ask you to face your sinful side. Being challenged by your spiritual director is important to formation.

**It is not a pastoral counseling session:** Spiritual direction is learning more about what God wants you to do about situations than it is about solving the situation.

**It is about integration of faith:** Spiritual direction judges one's relationship with God not only by looking at one's prayer life, but by also looking at the directee's behaviors.

**It is not the sacrament of reconciliation:** Spiritual direction is not the same as the sacrament of reconciliation.

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Spiritual direction focuses on more than our sins. Be sure to go to confession regularly, in addition to your direction.

**It is not a Catholic self-help program:** Spiritual direction is about allowing God's grace to work in us. We can never achieve things in the spiritual life on our own.

**Focus is important:** It is important for the spiritual director to keep his or her focus on your spiritual life so that sessions don't become just two people sitting around and talking about God.

**It is not a story matching club:** It is important that your prayer life remain the focus and that sessions don't become a contest of trying to outdo each other with stories of different experiences.

## Questions to ask a potential spiritual director

1. How would you describe your approach to spiritual direction? What is your style?
2. What would a typical spiritual direction look like?
3. What do you expect from your spiritual directee?
4. What sort of training/experience do you have in the area of spiritual direction?
5. What type of supervision do you have for your spiritual direction ministry?
6. How do you handle Church teachings that you find difficult?

## The responsibilities of directees

1. To contain a consistent prayer life, including Sunday Mass, formal prayers and meditative prayer.
2. To schedule appointments with the spiritual director. One meeting every four to six weeks is good. The spiritual director is not responsible for scheduling meetings.
3. To be ready to have something to say at the spiritual direction meeting, reflect and journal on the following:
  - >> The general state of your spiritual life since the last spiritual direction.
  - >> Areas of difficulty and sin in your moral life since the last spiritual direction.
  - >> Progress on any concrete actions chosen after your last spiritual direction session.
  - >> Effectiveness of any concrete actions chosen after your last spiritual direction session.

**>> To learn more about spiritual direction, see [www.spiritualdirection.com](http://www.spiritualdirection.com)**