

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

A few thoughts on Spiritual Direction from Small Group Leadership: As Spiritual Direction by Heather Webb:

"No one can walk without a guide." - Augustine

"Direction is listening with a sense of reverence, respect, and awe at God's work and the individual's story." - M. Guenther

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION WADES THROUGH THE MYSTERY OF GOD

"Emily Dickinson said that mystery is the greatest need in the human soul. So what happens to us—especially those of us whose lives are shaped by belief in God, 'immortal, invisible, God only wise/in light inaccessible hid from our eyes'—when the vocabulary and syntax of mystery have been excised from our language and the only words left to us for conversing about God and our souls have to do with function and information? We ask God to do something (reducing Him to a function) or ask him what he is doing (giving him a job as clerk in an information booth). But not with the happiest of results. Anyone who ventures to ask God for anything at all is soon asking parents or pastors or friends why there is 'no answer.' But there is an answer. Spiritual direction is in the business of discerning the signs of God's work and attending to the way that God answers." Eugene Peterson (9)

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION DEFINED

"Spiritual direction is the ancient art of being with another person in their relationship with God. As the church struggles to be a place in which we develop meaningful and lasting relationships, this spiritual practice has much to offer. It is another way of patiently sitting with another soul as we listen for God's voice and look for God's leading. Answers to life's difficult questions can come in the space direction creates between people who are present to one another in the presence of God." (18)

A SPIRITUALLY THIRSTY CULTURE

"There is large segments of the population that are dissatisfied with the church, wounded by the institution. They are trying to find room in their theology for the questions and doubt that have surfaced in the course of their lives. It is a critical time for the church to honor the seekers, to invite them to God and community in the midst of their wanderings, not once they get it all figured-out. The spiritual hunger of this age presents an opportunity for us to offer a seat at the table and a cup of warm soup to those who know they are in need." (23)

THE ULTIMATE PICTURE OF SMALL GROUPS

"The people (of a small group) come with a desire to learn about themselves and are open to feedback in the group setting. They are willing to risk receiving from and offering to one another despite their uncertainty about how they will be perceived. Tears and laughter are shared and celebrated. There is a delightful sense of freedom about these kinds of groups as people begin to live into their dreams. In some ways, small groups are Outward Bound for the soul. They engage all of our senses and demand that we stay present and open to others." (27)



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STORY: CREATING A LEVEL OF COMFORT

"To help group members develop a level of comfort with the ambiguity of faith, spiritual directors need to create safe spaces for discussing spiritual matters. Story telling, for example, allows the group to talk about faith as it really plays out rather than in idealistic, abstract terms. In time, the group becomes comfortable with the idea that they are in the midst of their own stories, stories that are far from over." (62)

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION CONNECTS US INWARD, OUTWARD, AND UPWARD

"Good direction will help to reconnect people with their bodies and emotions. It can help a sinner know God by grace with freedom and responsibility. As Kenneth Leech describes it, direction is healing, transforming, and reconciling as sinners are liberated from bondage as they move toward freedom. This freedom allows us to more truly love others. Rather than seeing directions as a movement inward, it should be seen as the process of moving upward and outward toward God and others." (67)