

Spiritual Guidance / Direction Overview

-from John Mabry's book Starting Spiritual Direction

In **spiritual guidance/direction**, two or more seekers enter sacred space to dream, explore, and discern a path toward personal wholeness and deeper intimacy with the Divine.

Why do people seek spiritual guidance/direction?

- Sometimes people have **powerful mystical experiences** that they don't understand or can't explain, and they need a safe space to explore their import.
- Sometimes people are **wrestling with difficult beliefs**, or have been **spiritually wounded and want to heal**.
- Some people are in the process of **changing beliefs** and need support as they sort through what they will keep and what they will discard.
- Other people have **important life choices** to make and want to make sure they are listening to their deepest wisdom before they make a commitment.
- All of these are common, but most commonly people come to spiritual direction simply because they **want to grow closer to the Divine**, they want a richer, more fulfilling spiritual life, or they want support as they deepen their spiritual practice.

Questions often considered in the course of spiritual guidance/direction:

- What is the **Divine "up to"** in all of our daily ups and downs?
- How is the Divine **moving and nudging and forming us**, through both our triumphs and our defeats?
- How do we **resist** the Divine call?
- How does the **Divine's desire for intimacy threaten us and push us beyond our comfort zones?**
- What does this intimacy require of us?
- What is it calling us to?
- In what ways are we **out of congruence with the deepest truth of our souls**—with this Divine calling—and how does this imprison us and limit us?
- How can we **move into deep places of interior freedom** that are transformative and healing and liberating, not only for us, but for the world?

Spiritual direction is often the only place in our lives that many of us have to deeply explore such questions, witnessed by another soul, without judgment or condescension. It is the place where we can be encouraged and challenged to open ourselves more deeply than we ever thought was possible. This is deeply healing work.

One metaphor that I like is that of the spiritual director as couple's counselor. The couple, of course, is you and the Divine. Both of you want deeper intimacy, but how do you get there? Intimacy is scary, and often the things that get in our way aren't even conscious. The spiritual director is there to hold the space, to speak what she notices, and to help guide you and the Divine into the kind of deep and meaningful connection that you both desire. Spiritual direction is also a place to work through big decisions in our lives, where we can consider which choices are most in congruence with our soul, with our deepest longings, and with the sacred covenants we have made.

