

## **What Does a Spiritual Director Do?**

First and foremost, the director listens. To listen to another person in a way that helps that person hear the grace, love and truth of God is one of the greatest gifts we can give. Loving listening is active and engaged. It is more about offering questions than giving answers.

In the spiritual direction relationship, the focus is on the directee's relationship with God. This does not mean that we talk only about prayer or church or reading the Bible. We talk about everyday life – jobs, family, health, houses and desires. In spiritual direction we come back again and again to the question “Where is God in this?” We allow for times of silence so that the directee can actually notice God's presence in whatever they're experiencing...and notice himself or herself and what is really going on inside.

The spiritual director opens up a loving, non-judgmental space for a person to be honest about how things really are in their souls, what they actually believe and feel about God, themselves, others and life. The directee, as he or she is comfortable, can look underneath these thoughts and feelings and discover their deeper longings. In this kind of space, the directee can grow in knowing, understanding, accepting, and loving himself or herself.

John Calvin wrote, “Nearly all wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists in two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves.” (Institutes 1.1.1.) Calvin argued that one could not truly know God without knowing oneself and that one couldn't truly know oneself without knowing God. Calvin acknowledged the obvious dilemma in saying, “which one precedes and brings forth the other is not easy to discern.”

The spiritual director can help a directee implement healthy (according to the individual person) has resources/spiritual practices if the directee is sensing they would like to engage with something like this on their own.

The spiritual director is not a psychological counselor. For deeper psychological healing, the spiritual director will refer the directee to a therapist or counsellor. The environment of spiritual direction, then, is affirming and encouraging, but it is also a place of authenticity. In spiritual direction we look at the truth of our present situation and experience. The question asked is not, “What should be happening in my life?” but “What is happening in my life?” We look for God here, now, because the place where we are in our lives is the place where we find God. Sometimes He takes us back to what we need to face, but that always begins with today.