

Becoming the Best Spiritual Directee

Lecture notes by Deacon Scott Gilfillan

Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.” 1 Samuel 3:9

Preparation

Spiritual direction is a time to pay attention to **God's movement in our lives**. Preparation isn't about arriving with an agenda that the director must follow. It is about giving ourselves enough time and attention to notice what God may already be doing.

How I Prepare

Before meeting with my own director, I review my journal. I look for **themes, patterns, highs, lows, confusion, and consolation**. I also review my weekly blog reflections, which are usually shaped by a question I return to often:

How did I experience God during the past Month?

Sometimes I have a particular discernment to explore: *Should I lead this retreat? Teach another class? Rebalance my ministries and parish responsibilities?*

Other times I've simply had a difficult week and need to sit quietly with my director—perhaps even cry. My director gives me the space to do that.

That, too, is spiritual direction.

Preparing for Your Session

1. Begin where you left off.

What did you and your director discuss last time? What were you invited to pray about, read, practice, or notice? What happened when you did?

2. Review your journal and prayer.

Look for what catches your attention:

- Where did I experience consolation or desolation?
- What keeps showing up?
- What brought me life? What drained me?
- What surprised, disturbed, or delighted me?
- Where did I experience God?

3. Look for patterns.

Our encounters with God can seem like disconnected moments. Writing them down helps us recognize that they may be part of a larger conversation. Patterns often become clearer over time.

4. Prioritize.

You may have ten things you could discuss. Prayerfully identify **two or three that seem most important**. This helps you distinguish what is central from what is merely distracting.

5. Bring your whole life.

Family, work, ministry, relationships, decisions, disappointments, successes, and struggles can all become places where God meets you. Spiritual direction is not separate from ordinary life.

6. Notice what happened with your “takeaways.”

If your director invited you to pray with a Scripture passage, practice something, explore an interior movement, or pay attention to a particular area, come prepared to share what happened. Your experience between sessions becomes part of the next conversation.

7. Come prepared—but remain open.

Preparation is not a script. Sometimes a directee says, *“I don't have anything to talk about. I wasn't even sure we should meet.”* And within a few minutes, the Spirit begins to guide the conversation.

So prepare. But don't be afraid to let go of your preparation.

Characteristics of a great directee?

The best directees:

- pray consistently
- show up honestly
- experiment with suggestions
- journal
- remain teachable
- allow silence
- don't edit themselves
- don't perform

Follow up with suggestions that came forward during the session

- After the session, make notes, journal entries
- Look for actionable steps to take

Final Thought

Spiritual direction requires active participation, but it is ultimately God's work. Ours is to simply say, “Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.”