

Handbook for Spiritual Directees **- resources and spiritual exercises -**

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Preparing for Spiritual Direction

Most spiritual directors have no objection to their directee talking about anything s/he feels is important at this time in life, even if they don't seem to have an explicit religious or spiritual focus. Knowing the overall context of the directee's life is important to your spiritual director.

Before your session, it is also good to reflect on how God has been present and active in your life lately. You can use the following questions to help you do so.

1. What has been the general spiritual "tone" of your life lately? You might express this in terms of colors, temperature, aromas--anything that helps you to articulate your experience.
2. What events, experiences, relationships, etc. have communicated to you a sense of God's presence?
3. What events, experiences, relationships, etc. have communicated to you a sense of God's absence? Consider the role of attachments and addictions, here.
4. Describe your manner of prayer lately. How well does your prayer help you to experience conscious contact with God?
5. What kinds of decisions in your life have you searching for a sense of God's will?
6. In what area of life do you sense God calling you to growth? What lessons, values, disciplines, etc. are you being challenged to grow into? What can you do to honor this?
7. What kind of feedback would you like at this time from your spiritual director?
8. Anything else you want to talk about? (Open forum. Consider using some of the resources in this handbook.)

Praying With Scripture: Lectio Divina

The approach to Lectio Divina I recommend is much less rigid than those you will find described in many places. In this approach, as in the classical one, we do identify the following movements:

1. *Lectio* – spiritual reading, preferably a passage of Scripture.
2. *Meditatio* – repeating the word or phrase that speaks to you; considering what it's saying to you if such reflections arise spontaneously.
3. *Oratio* – affective prayer; intercessions, gratitude, praise, just telling God where you are.
4. *Contemplatio* – simply resting in God in loving silence.

Many teachers have emphasized these movements, and have taught them as a four-step process, beginning with Lectio and proceeding in step-by-step fashion to contemplation. That's too rigid and unnatural for many, however, so here's what I suggest.

- A. Set aside at least 20 minutes for the process. Pick out your passage. Be sure you're in a quiet place.
- B. Begin with vocal prayer, dedicating your time to draw close to God. Invite the Holy Spirit to lead you in this prayer time.
- C. Spend a few moments just quieting yourself, noting your breathing, the feel of your body, the sense of being where you are. Ask yourself which of the four movements you feel drawn to at this time – e.g., it's OK to begin by resting in God if such a grace is already given, or to voice prayers of petition or gratitude, etc. You might also just want to tell God “where you are.”
- D. When you feel ready to read the passage, do so, slowly, reverently. Let the words wash over you and sink in as they will. Take a couple minutes of silence afterward and then read the passage again, slowly, prayerfully. Silence. If distractions arise, just notice them and return to the practice.
- E. If a particular word or phrase speaks to you, repeat it in your mind. Let its message really sink in until you no longer feel like repeating it. Silence.
- F. Talk to God about how this word has spoken to you. What considerations . . . questions . . . feelings . . . concerns, etc.?
- G. When you have expressed yourself to God, pause for a minute or two of silence. If you feel drawn to continue resting in silence, do so. If not, return to your passage and read from where you left off. If another word or phrase speaks to you, repeat Steps E and F.
- H. Continue doing this until you feel you have completed your prayer time.

Centering Prayer - this popular practice can be used in the context of Lectio Divina, which is where it rightly belongs. It is really an adaptation of E, wherein one would simply repeat the particular word until it leads you to silence and resting in God, and continue to do so when distractions arise.

Daily Review

Here is a practice used by many at the end of the day to see what lessons can be learned and how God was present and active through the day. Set aside fifteen to twenty minutes at the end of the day for prayer and review of your day. A suggested format is described below:.

1. Take a few moments of quiet. Breathe deeply. Ask God to help you see yourself as you truly were during the day.
2. Look back over your day - not to see what you did wrong but to honestly acknowledge what was going on with you and others.
 - * What happened? What did I do today?
 - * How did I feel? Why did I feel that way?
 - * Were my expectations and beliefs reasonable?
3. Affirm the healthy things you recognize.
4. Admit to yourself and God the unhealthy things. Ask God's forgiveness, believe it is yours, then decide if you need to apologize or make amends.
5. Use creative visualization to grow stronger. Honestly acknowledge the troubling situations of the day. See and feel yourself acting honestly and lovingly in these situations. Ask God for the grace to help you act in this new way.
6. Close with simple awareness of the sights and sounds around you, grateful for the good things in your life.

This process can be undertaken as a daily journal exercise or by prayerfully reviewing your day in your own mind. I like to take a walk before bedtime for examen. The important thing is to do it. It is a discipline, to be sure, but a very important one.

Awareness Examen

This is similar in many ways to the Daily Review on the previous pages. What follows is the process taught by J. Veltri, S.J. in his [Orientations](#) book for people making directed retreats. It can be used in place of the Daily Review, or in alteration. What you learn from this exercise would be a great topic for discussion in spiritual direction.

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This short prayer exercise is to help increase one's sensitivity to the Spirit working in one's life and to provide one with the enlightenment needed to cooperate and respond to this presence. If you use this daily you should find it helpful in noticing spiritual movements.

Thanksgiving

Begin by looking over the day and asking to see where you need to be thankful. Do not choose what you think you should be thankful for, rather, by merely looking over the day see what emerges, what you notice, even slightly. Allow gratitude to take hold of you and express this to the Holy One who at this moment beholds you.

Ask For Light

This is a prayer for enlightenment from God. In the next step we will use our own reflection skills to dispose ourselves for the awareness that we hope will come more directly from God. This often happens unexpectedly or by way of a special little surprise even when we are expecting it! We have a hard time to believe that our own reflection and self understanding here is but a disposition for the Spirit's teaching us (Matt 10:20). Therefore ask the Spirit to show you what God wants you to see.

Finding God In All Things

Again look over the events of the day. This time ask the Spirit to show you where God's presence has been in your life, either in you or in others, and in the events of public life:

What public events from your local environment and larger world have impact or should have impact upon you?

- where are the signs of the Spirit?
- where are the destructive or divisive powers?

What interior events were significant for you?
-- notice what stands out even slightly, such as joy,
pain, turmoil, increase of love, anger, harmony,
anxiety, freedom, enchainment, presence of God, isolation.

Where do you sense you were being drawn by God's Spirit?

How have you been responding to these events or experiences?

Respond To God In Dialogue

Is there any one area you are being nudged to focus your attention on, to pray more seriously over, to take action on? This is where your energy needs focus instead of on the many other things you think are important. Discuss this with Jesus.

Express what needs to be expressed:
... praise ... sorrow ... gratitude ... desire for change ...
... intercession ...

Help And Guidance For Tomorrow

Ask God for your needs for tomorrow. For example, you may need to pray to overcome something ... to be more sensitive to God's activity in your environment ... to celebrate in some way you ... to let go ... to deal with some issue ... to be open to conversion in some area ... to make some decisions to act against some destructive forces in the various worlds of your life.

Johari Window

This resource is often used as a tool for personal growth and to help facilitate better relationships. You can use it to help sort issues in your relationship with God. Consider the diagram below:

	Self	Others
Others	Open	Blind
Self	Secret	Hidden

- A. Open Self - what you and others know and you?
- B. Blind Self - what others see, but you do not.
- C. Secret Self - what you know, but others do not.
- D. Hidden Self - what neither your nor others know.

In your life with God . . .

1. What do you share with God about yourself? How do you feel yourself belonging to God, and God to you? What constitutes the Open part of your relationship?
2. What do you hide from God (even though God knows what that is)? What do you withhold? What belongs to the Secret part of your relationship?
3. What do you think God sees in you that you might not be aware of (Blind spot)? What do you hear from Scripture? Church teaching? What do you think your spiritual director might say, here?
4. How open are you to the Hidden aspects of your being?

Clarifying Your Images of God and Creation

How we understand God and creation is foundational to one's spiritual perspective. Discussing this topic in spiritual direction with the goal of clarifying your own viewpoint can be most helpful, from time to time.

What follows are a few ways of imaging and conceptualizing how God and creation interact and co-exist. See what you think . . . where your own beliefs lie. Ask your spiritual director to share his or her own perspective so the two of you will know where you're coming from on this issue.

- note: all of these perspectives and considerations are within the monotheistic viewpoint.

How God and Creation Co-exist

- A. *Monism / pantheism* - creation is really God manifesting AS all these diverse forms. The universe is something akin to "God's body," with God's Being manifesting through all these forms. Ultimately, this view makes no essential distinctions between God and creation and tends to view God as primarily immanent, or within, creation.
- B. *Deism* - God created the universe, then retired to the supernatural realm, allowing creation to work itself out according to the lawfulness instilled within it by God. Some call this image of God "The Divine Clock-maker," as God winds up the universe, then allows it to spin out without any interference or intercession by God. This view stresses learning about the lawfulness of the universe and adapting one's life to it. The God of this universe is entirely transcendent, or external to creation.
- C. *Theistic revelation* - similar to deism, only God is more involved in shaping the universe through occasional periods of intervention and revelation. These revelations help to clarify and supplement our understanding of the moral and spiritual order of the universe that we might better direct our lives according to these norms.
- D. *Panentheistic creationism* - God created the universe and sustains it in being; God dwells within creation in a transcendent, supernatural realm as well (immanent and transcendent). Creatures depend upon God for their existence, and also possess their own intelligence and freedom, which they may use in conformity with God's ways, or in defiance thereof. God and creatures (especially spiritual beings) co-create through a shared medium of influence (thoughts, images, energies, love). God is both within and beyond the universe.

You will find these three views and various combinations of them in almost all the world religions. In general, it seems that most Eastern religions are A., Judaism and Islam are C., Christianity is D, while there are many instances of B. However, you can find examples of all four positions within most religions, though some will be considered more representative of a given religion than others. It

should also be noted that within some of these positions, there is variation; e.g., some distinguish between different types of monism/pantheism.

God's Moral Character

Given the four perspectives above, there remain other considerations, this one pertaining to whether God is caring, disinterested, or antagonistic. These views can overlap with the above perspectives.

- A. *Antagonistic attitude.* God is a "troubled Being" who basically projects and acts out on creation. Monists might consider the creation to be a way that God is trying to work out God's own "imbalances" or defects of character. Deists with this view of God would consider creation a "cruel joke." Other theist / panentheist positions would view creation as doomed to disorder and decay because it is ultimately derived from a malevolent Being. Needless to say, this view breeds cynicism and pessimism.
- B. *Disinterested attitude.* God could care less how creation unfolds, as God has done all that is justly required in creating a lawful universe. If the universe fails, this is no reflection on God, who is already happy in heaven. Primarily a deist position, although it can creep into the mindset of other theists as well. This viewpoint leads to apathy.
- C. *Loving attitude.* The universe is an expression of God's goodness and love and exists to share in God's happiness. All four perspectives can affirm this position, though each in its own way.

God's Gender

This consideration has less to do with God's interaction with creation, although in some systems of thought, it is very relevant. Which of the following viewpoints makes the most sense to you?

- A. *God is primarily masculine.* Predominates where creating is considered a masculine characteristic and creation a feminine or receptive role.
- B. *God is primarily feminine.* The feminine role is to give birth; the universe is "God's baby," as it were. God as nurturing, persevering, divine mother.
- C. *God is equally masculine and feminine.* Both qualities exist in balanced measure in God.
- D. *God is trans-gender.* Masculinity and femininity do not exist in God except, perhaps, analogously to our human understanding of the term. God has no gender, but can still be understood as personal -- i.e., a Being who has intelligence and will/intentionality.

Further considerations

1. What kind of image of God emerges for you from these comparisons?
2. How does this image relate to the teachings of your religious tradition?
3. How does this image influence your prayer? Your faith? Your lifestyle?
4. What other considerations or questions concerning your image of God do you still need to have clarified?

Guidelines for Discernment

- from [*Pathways to Serenity*](#), by Philip St. Romain -

Discernment, here, refers to getting a sense of what God's will might be in a given situation – especially one in which you must make a decision between two or more options. In Christian spirituality, it is based on the following assumptions:

- * God is a good God. He wants to give you much more than you want for yourself.
- * God knows who you are better than you know yourself. God also knows what you need in order to become the person he created you to be better than you know what you need for this.
- * When you are faced with a number of options, it is entirely possible that some of these options are better for you in terms of your overall human objectives than others.
- * When you surrender your preferences for different options to God, you become free to discern God's preference (if any) among these options.

Unless you accept these assumptions (at least on an intellectual level), the guidelines that follow will not make much sense.

The truly great master of the art of discernment was Saint Ignatius of Loyola. His writings on making choices and discerning God's call have stood the test of time and continue to provide a helpful structure for choosing among options. For this reason the guidelines presented here rely heavily upon the genius of Ignatius.

1. "When you are making a decision or choice, you are not deliberating about choices which involve sin [wrongdoing] but rather you are considering alternatives which are lawful and good. . ." (Saint Ignatius)
2. It is not necessary to agonize over God's will in choosing between healthy options in the small affairs of everyday life. "Ordinarily there is nothing of such obvious importance in one rather than the other that there is need to go into long deliberation over it. You must proceed in good faith and without making subtle distinctions in such affairs and, as Saint Basil says, do freely what seems good to you, so as not to weary your mind, waste your time, and put yourself in danger of disquiet, scruples, and superstition" (Saint Francis de Sales).
- 3 . In areas where you have binding commitments (marriage vows, parenting, religious vows, and so forth), "your basic attitude should be that the only choice still called for is the full-hearted gift of self to this state of life" (Saint Ignatius). In other words, every effort must be made to live out the implications of your binding commitments, even if those commitments were made poorly.

4. In areas of life where you have already made decisions (which can be changed) on the basis of God's call, "your one desire should be to find your continued growth in the way of life you have chosen" (Saint Ignatius).

5. "If you have come to a poor decision in matters that are changeable, you should try to make a choice in the proper way whether it would be maintaining the same pattern of life or it would demand a change" (Saint Ignatius).

6. If possible, you should avoid making important life decisions during times when you are emotionally upset, for it is likely that you shall then be running away from a problem rather than responding to God's call.

7. When attempting to discern among a number of options regarding significant lifestyle choices, you should proceed as Saint Ignatius suggests below.

A. First Pattern:

- * Clearly place before your mind what it is you want to decide about. What are your options?

- * Attempt to view each option with equal detachment, surrendering personal preferences to God.

- * Sincerely pray that God will enlighten and draw you in the direction leading to his praise and glory.

- * List and weigh the advantages and disadvantages of the various dimensions of your proposed decision.

- * Consider now which alternative seems more reasonable. Then decide according to the more weighty motives and not from any selfish or sensual inclination."

- * Having come to the decision, now turn to God again and ask him to accept and confirm it--if it is for his greater service and glory--by giving you a sense of serenity and holy conviction about this decision

B. Second Pattern: (This is an excellent follow-up on the First Pattern to "objectively" evaluate your decision.)

- * Since the love of God should motivate your life, you should check yourself to see whether your attachment for the object of choice is solely because of your Creator and Lord.

- * Imagine yourself in the presence of a person whom you have never met before, but who has sought your help in an attempt to respond better to God's call. Review what you would tell that person and then observe the advice which you would so readily give to another for whom you want the best.

- * Ask yourself if at the moment of death you would make the same decision you are making now. Guide yourself by this insight and make your present decision in conformity with it.

* See yourself standing before Christ your Judge when this life has ended and talking with him about the decision which you have made at this moment in your life. Choose now the course of action which you feel will give you happiness and joy in the presence of Christ on the Day of Judgment.

There is a big difference between reacting to life and responding to God's call. In the small self, you spend a lot of time reacting to life; you allow other people and circumstances to greatly influence your behavior. By undertaking a decision-making process such as that outlined above, you become more pro-active, or responsive to God's call. As with all the other spiritual living skills, right discernment will involve practice and checking matters out with the community. The fruit of this discernment will be fuller growth and deeper serenity--two very good reasons to persist in the struggle to discern God's call.

The Nature of Attachments

Desire--the attraction of the will toward any particular person, place, or thing.

--it is natural and inevitable for a created being with needs to have desires.
--our deepest, most fundamental desires are to live, to understand, and to be happy; these desires can ultimately be fulfilled only in God.

Disordered Desires--the inappropriate attraction of the will toward any particular person, place, or thing. --the fulfillment of such a desire hurts oneself or others; --the pursuit of such a desire violates moral values; --the cultivation of such a desire undermines the experience of God as the fulfillment of our deepest desire.

A. To have what you do not want (but what you cannot be rid of without violating your moral values).

B. To want what you do not have (in such a manner as to undermine your experience of what you need most . . . i.e. union with God).

Attachments--disordered desires which have become more or less habitual preoccupations of the mind and will.

A. Examples: approval of others, winning, controlling other people and circumstances, accumulating money, sexual experience., getting high on something, perfect work, losing weight, etc.

B. Effects on consciousness:

--Intellect is preoccupied with ways to get what you want and avoid what you don't want; other people seen as a help or a hindrance to obtaining attachment.; judgmentalism.

--Will is focused on getting what I want . . . selfishness

--Emotional climate is disturbed. Anxiety about not getting what I want; angry toward threats to my fulfillment.

--Attention is focused on past and future. NOW is missed.

--Experience of God: One who can help me get what I want.

Addictions--attachments which have become compulsive preoccupations. The mind and will are no longer capable of completely resisting indulgence.

Spiritual Significance of Attachments/Addictions: They are our primary obstacle to experiencing peace. . . happiness . . . union with God.

How to Know if You Have Attachments

1. Do you experience anxiety over situations beyond your control?
2. Is your mind "noisy," preoccupied over concern about which you derive little pleasure in considering?

3. Is it difficult for you to enjoy the NOW without disturbing memories from the past or anxious concerns about the future intruding?

--If you answer yet to any of these questions, you have an attachment of some kind.

How to Drop an Attachment/Addiction

Symptoms of Attachment:

1. Anxious preoccupation: restless thinking, judgmentalism.
2. Lack of serenity.

Quick Way to Drop an Attachment

1. Notice anxious preoccupation and its major themes. Verbalize these to God.
2. If no immediate action is required, say the Serenity Prayer, asking God to care for specific things not in your control, and to give you the grace to trust in God's Providence in your life.
3. Bring your attention into the Now, and do what you're doing. The anxious preoccupation will fall away in short order if you do not indulge it behaviorally or mentally.

For Stubborn Attachments and Addictions

1. Notice preoccupation and its major themes. Write these down.
- - "I feel anxious about . . . because (consequences)."
2. Turn each theme into a question?
"How can I be sure that. . ."
"What to say to impress so and so?"
"How to be sure I will have enough money?"
3. See how much this question has influenced your thinking and behavior. Make a list of past decisions and behavior related to this question. Ask God for the grace to be free of this disordered desire.
4. See how this behavior has affected you and others. Make a list.
5. Resolve to make amends where your behavior in reference to this issue has hurt another. Ask God for forgiveness. Sacrament of Reconciliation.
6. What real need (if any) is this question addressing?
7. What is the appropriate or prudent way to meet this need?
8. In your imagination, see yourself meeting this need in an appropriate manner. Ask for Divine Guidance to see how to do this, and to desire this kind of responsible behavior.
9. If old preoccupations arise, see and acknowledge them non-judgmentally, but do not indulge them. This is the true meaning of abstinence. Bring your attention into the Now, and do what you're doing. If it is time to meet your real need in the manner you decided on in #8, go ahead and do so in awareness and gratitude.

When All Else Fails

After doing the above for some time, it may become obvious that a compulsive attachment is so deeply rooted that you need additional help. Do not hesitate to ask for it. Help is available in the various Twelve Step groups and in addiction treatment programs.

Origin of the False Self System

1. *Perception of a conditionally loving developmental environment.*

- a. Body-feeling perception. Feeling rejected or conditionally accepted and loved.
- b. Splitting of feeling self into natural/wounded elements. Experience of fear, shame, hurt'. anger.

2. *Defensive contraction of psychic energy away from unconditional relationship with the environment by contracting the will.*

- a. Decreases vulnerability to environment.
- b. Provides sense of existence of psychic energy that "belongs to me," "is mine," within "walls" of contraction. Provides sense of a "me-they-can't touch, or hurt." Beginning of the delusion of non-relational autonomy, and the deepest level of the False Self system. Origin of relational alienation, willfulness, sin.
- b. Diminishes experience of "natural" union with the Divine, Who is the true Source of all energy and existence.

3. *Internalization of unhealthy rules from the environment; development of a Critical Parent system of internal programming.*

- a. It's not OK to talk about problems.
- b. Feelings should not be expressed openly and directly.
- c. Communication is best if indirect, with one person acting as messenger between two others (triangulation).
- d. Unreasonable expectations: always be happy, be strong, be perfect, be in control of your feelings.
- e. You are responsible for how others feel ("make us proud").
- f. Don't be selfish (which includes even legitimate self-love).
- g. Do as I say, not as I do (unhealthy modeling).
- h. It's not OK to play or be playful.
- i. Don't rock the boat. Peace at any price.
(Robert Subby, Lost in the Shuffle)

4. *Dis-empowerment of Adult system of intelligence (reason, freedom).*

- a. Dialectical relationship between Critical Parent and Wounded Child. Intensity of this relationship drains power and energy from Adult system; overshadowing of Adult.
- b. Disapproval within (from Critical Parent) and without (from shaming aspects of developmental environment) when powers of reason and choice are exercised contrary to the dysfunctional rules of the Critical Parent developmental system.

5. Crystallization of the False Self Ego, or Survival System of Consciousness (occurs as early as five years of age).

- a. I am conditionally lovable and acceptable.
- b. The conditions for getting love and acceptance are defined by Critical Parent. These conditions spell out the kinds of things I must do to be loved and accepted.
- c. Therefore, I will adopt a life stance that will allow me to maximize opportunities for approval, and minimize my experiences of disapproval.
- d. This life stance will have its center "outside of self," in other people, activities, things, and in an utterly Transcendent, judgmental God.
- e. This life stance will assume a shape in the various roles I play. My giftedness will be expressed in the context of these roles.
- f. I will maintain myself in these roles by using addictive fixes. These fixes keep me out of touch with my inner emotional experiences, and keep my center "outside of self."

Characteristics of the False Self System

Consider the characteristics of the false self system listed below. For each that applies to you, write out how you experience this in your everyday life, and what consequences you and others suffer because of this.

1. I am more in touch with what I want for my life than what God wants for my life.
2. I frequently feel numb, empty, or cranky inside myself.
3. I am afraid to discover what's really going on deep inside of myself, and so I try to avoid this by living on a more superficial level.
4. When I become uncomfortable inside myself, I find some way to escape from this discomfort by using television, food, work, a relationship, alcohol, drugs, shopping, gambling, reading material, religious activities, or chatter.
5. I am often critical of myself.
6. I am often critical of others.
7. My mind is often filled with anxious preoccupations about the future, and if I will be able to get or have what I think I need.
8. It is difficult for me to just "be". I generally feel that I must be "doing something" to justify my life to myself.
9. I am trying to find happiness by getting something I don't have,, or getting rid of something I do have but don't want.
10. In relationships with others, I generally feel like I have to play a role ', or wear a mask. If I would not do this, the other would probably reject me.
11. Frequently, I do not even know what my true thoughts and feelings are.
12. My self-concept or idea of myself is skewed, so that I see myself as inferior to others, or I see myself as superior to others.
13. I am constantly comparing myself to others to determine if I am "ahead" of them or "behind" them in some area of life.
14. When people insult or ridicule something or someone I am identified with, I feel personally insulted and I become angry.
 - - E. g. When my country is put down, I become defensive.
15. The roles I play give me a sense of identity. What I do is who I am. If I could not do, I would not know who I am.
16. When someone criticizes the way I do something, I feel personally put down. I have a hard time separating what I do from my identity
17. It seems that all my thoughts, feelings, memories, and desires are related to my self-image--to changing it, or maintaining it.
18. If I could better control the people and external circumstances in my life, I would be happier.
19. I tend to view close friends and family members as "mine. " I tend to treat them that way, too.
20. I tend to view God as judgemental. I believe I have to do the right things--usually religious kinds of behaviors--to win God's approval. I seldom feel that I am in harmony with God.

21. It is hard for me to see how God is involved in the everyday affairs of my life. Generally, it seems that God has nothing to do with me and my life. God has better things to do.

22. In my prayer, I spend more time asking God to do what I want, than praying for the grace to do what God wants.

A Short Summary of Mystical Theology

A. Just as the body is already in the soul and the soul in the body, so, too, God is already in the soul, and the soul in God.

B. God is always present to the soul, giving it life, loving it, attempting to lead it to become what God has created it to be.

C. Attachments and addictions create disturbances in the soul that prevent one from knowing God's presence and responding to the leadings of the Holy Spirit.

D. Nevertheless, even in this state of disturbance, one can begin to relate to God in whatever way is most meaningful. Jesus Christ is God's invitation to a return to full union.

E. By loving God and others while dropping attachments and addictions, the false self will be put to death and the True Self born. This is sometimes a painful process--a cross which heals the soul.

F. Through the dark nights of transformation, the soul is drawn into deeper and deeper realms of silence which transcend thought and feeling. Here, God's presence is known intuitively, and the soul becomes increasingly free to follow the leadings of the Spirit without being disturbed by attachments, addictions, and other worldly influences.

G. Thus it is that the soul is deified, or made able to know God as Christ knows God. This is the fruit of the spiritual journey, and the reason for which we were created.

Spiritual Charisms

By spiritual charisms, I am referring to those gifts of the Holy Spirit given us for the good of the community (as opposed to the transformational gifts from Is. 11: 1-4). A traditional listing of these can be found in 1 Cor 12: 4-10; it is likely that there are many more, and theologians who have studied this topic have indeed expanded the listing.

The web site at <http://www.siena.org/> has a wealth of information on spiritual gifts. The quote below from their web site summarizes the significance of these in the spiritual life:

- *Discerning and exercising one's charisms can be a wonderful catalyst of spiritual growth.*
Few things nurture faith in God's loving presence like seeing God's provision and goodness reach others through the charisms of an ordinary person like you or me. The spiritual disciplines necessary to mature in the use of a charism change us and help transform us into more Christ-like people.
- *Understanding our charisms can free us from the need to compare ourselves with others and from judging others because they are different from us.*
Participants (in their workshops) regularly comment about how healing an experience it is to discern their gifts. Those who judged themselves for not measuring up to someone else's standard are freed by recognizing that their giftedness and calling may be different. Those who judged other Christians for having different priorities are able to relax and recognize the validity of the many calls within the larger Body of Christ.
- *Every charism represents a call from God. Becoming clear about the charisms that you have been given can greatly clarify decision-making.*
A lot of energy is released for service as individuals begin to acknowledge where they are not gifted and begin to concentrate on the areas where they are called and gifted.
- *Understanding your charisms helps prevent unnecessary failure and burn-out.*
Charisms of the Holy Spirit enable us to be exceptionally effective for the Kingdom of God. It is unusually energizing and fulfilling to exercise a charism and we are much less likely to burn out if working in the arena of our giftedness.
- *The discernment of charisms can help individuals understand and name what they are already experiencing.*

The siena.org web site lists three signs that indicate the presence of a charism.

1. When you exercise the charism, you feel energized, and a closeness to God.
2. Other people give you positive feedback concerning your exercising of this gift.
3. You are effective when you exercise the gift. E.g., healings happen when healers pray for people; teachers can convey knowledge, etc.

Everyone who is baptized has been gifted by the Spirit. The more we grow in the spiritual life, the more charisms we will find emerging, and the ones we've known about for years will deepen.

There are a few web sites that provide inventories and even online questionnaires to help you begin to identify the charisms given to you. Some are more comprehensive than others, but give them all a try and see what you come up with.

- <http://www.churchgrowth.org/cgi-cg/gifts.cgi>
- <http://www.cforc.com/sgifts.html>
- <http://buildingchurch.net/g2s.htm>
- <http://mintools.com/spiritual-gifts-test.htm>

The team at Heartland Center for Spirituality received extensive training from the Catherine of Siena Institute consultants and we have their excellent inventories and resources to assist in discerning your charism.

The topic of spiritual gifts is a good one to touch base on from time to time in spiritual direction.

Psychological Types

Knowing your psychological type can help you to understand and “own” many aspects of your uniqueness. It can even assist in determining what prayer style comes most naturally for you, and what general spiritual pathway you are likely to travel.

The approach to psychological types that I find most helpful is that developed by the psychiatrist, Carl G. Jung, and systematized in the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI).

Listed below are a few resources that can help you determine your psychological type and some of the characteristics and implications of your type:

- http://www.advisorteam.com/temperament_sorter/register.asp?partid=1 (Kiersey-Bates Temperament Sorter)
- <http://homepage.mac.com/philothea/download/LT-personalities.pdf> (Living Together, Loving Together, part 2)
- <http://www.heartlandspirituality.org/premium/slideshows/jungtypes/> (web Power Point presentation)
- <http://www.humanmetrics.com/> (another online testing resource)
- <http://typelogic.com/> (superb descriptions of the 16 types)
- <http://home.att.net/~revdak/spir243/lecture07.htm> (prayer styles of the types)
- <http://shalomplace.org/psychetypes.html> (comprehensive online course on psychological types and spirituality)
- <http://www.innerexplorations.com/catpsy/3.htm> (*Tracking the Elusive Human*, by Jim and Tyra Arraj)

For those who are interested, learning more about your psychological type and how it comes to play in your relationships and spirituality is an excellent topic to explore in spiritual direction.

Spiritual Pathways

Every world religion recognizes that different individuals have different ways of traversing on the spiritual journey. No doubt this is due, in part, to the different ways that people with different psychological types pray, worship and serve. It's also related to the types of charisms that individuals are blessed with.

Learning to identify your primary spiritual pathway can be helpful in many ways, as it's most likely that you will be happiest and find the closest possible relationship with God if you are true to yourself, here. Obviously, this topic is also a good one to discuss and discern in spiritual direction.

What follows are a few ways that different writers and spiritual traditions have described spiritual pathways:

Christian Tradition

- A. Monastic - highly structured communal life; contemplative focus; most introverted types would do well, here.
- B. Contemplative / psychological - Dominicans, Carmelites, etc. Contemplative focus, but also somewhat active in the world. Action flowing from contemplation. Introverts and EN types.
- C. Apostolic - Jesuits, Franciscans, Diocesan Priests, Protestantism, laity. Extraverted types.

Yogic pathways correlated with Jung's psychological types

1. The Way of Loving Devotion. Loving God with one's whole heart.
 - a. Most natural for feeling types (24%)
 - b. Committed relationship with the Beloved. Recognizing the Beloved in all people and creation.
 - c. Ethics implicit in the demands of relationship.
 - d. Self-centeredness killed in love for the good of the Other.
 - e. Song of Songs. Devotional Christianity. Bhakti yoga.
2. The Way of Service. Loving God with one's whole strength.
 - a. Most natural for all extraverted and sensate types (74%).
 - b. Selfless action for the glory of God.
 - c. Ethics implicit in the demands of service and daily work.
 - d. Self-centeredness killed in detachment from results of service.
 - e. Mother Theresa. Jesuit/lay spirituality. Karma yoga.
3. The Way of Knowledge. Loving God with one's whole mind.

- a. Most natural for IT and IN types (8%).
 - b. Discovery of God as the Source of all Truth.
 - c. Ethics implicit in the order of the universe.
 - d. Self-centeredness killed by detachment, discrimination, and disidentification with Egoic elements.
 - e. St. Thomas Aquinas. Jnana yoga.
4. The Way of Insight. Loving God with one's whole soul.
- a. Most natural for IN and IS types (14%).
 - b. Discovery of God as the Source of one's being. Intrapersonal exploration. Somewhat impersonal mysticism.
 - c. Ethics implicit in the requirements of inner silence.
 - d. Self-centeredness killed by absorption in deep Silence.
 - e. Eckhart. Anthony de Mello. Trappists. Raja yoga.

Matthew Fox's Four Pathways

The Via Positiva is about awe and wonder and the joy and praise that comes from truly beholding Nature and Creation. Rabbi Abraham Heschel says that if you behold God's Creation with anything less than Radical Amazement you're not seeing what's really there.

The next path is the Via Negativa: the way of darkness, suffering, silence, letting go, and even nothingness.

In the Via Creativa we co-create with God; in our imaginative output, we trust our images enough to birth them into existence. This is Path Three.

The fourth path is the Via Transformativa, the transformative way. This is a path of compassion, the relief of suffering, the combating of injustice, of speaking up for those who have no voice.

Stages of Spiritual Growth

What follows are several ways of charting the spiritual journey. Each has its own unique perspective; see if you can identify yourself in these descriptions, and, after a few sessions, discuss this with your spiritual director. See what determinations the two of you together come up with.

The web site url for each of these provides much more detailed information and description. Be sure to check it out.

- M. Scott Peck's four stages: <http://www.escapefromwatchtower.com/stages.html>
 1. Chaotic, Antisocial. Frequently pretenders; they pretend they are loving and pious, covering up their lack of principles. . .
 2. Formal, Institutional, Fundamental. Beginning the work of submitting themselves to principle-the law, but they do not yet understand the spirit of the law, consequently they are legalistic, parochial, and dogmatic. . .
 3. Skeptic, Individual, questioner, including atheists, agnostics and those scientifically minded who demand a measurable, well researched and logical explanation. Although frequently "nonbelievers," people in Stage III are generally more spiritually developed than many content to remain in Stage II. . .
 4. Mystic, communal. Out of love and commitment to the whole, using their ability to transcend their backgrounds, culture and limitations with all others, reaching toward the notion of world community and the possibility of either transcending culture or -- depending on which way you want to use the words -- belonging to a planetary culture. . .

- James Fowler: Stages of Faith Development (<http://faculty.plts.edu/gpence/html/fowler.htm>)
 1. Intuitive-Projective faith is the fantasy-filled, imitative phase in which the child can be powerfully and permanently influenced by examples, moods, actions and stories of the visible faith of primarily related adults. . .
 2. Mythic-Literal faith is the stage in which the person begins to take on for him- or herself the stories, beliefs and observances that symbolize belonging to his or her community. . .
 3. Synthetic-Conventional faith, a person's experience of the world now extends beyond the family. A number of spheres demand attention: family, school or work, peers, street society and media, and perhaps religion. . .
 4. Individuative-Reflective faith is particularly critical for it is in this transition that the late adolescent or adult must begin to take

seriously the burden of responsibility for his or her own commitments, lifestyle, beliefs and attitudes. . .

5. Conjunctive faith involves the integration into self and outlook of much that was suppressed or unrecognized in the interest of Stage 4's self-certainty and conscious cognitive and affective adaptation to reality. . .
 6. Universalist. The persons best described by it have generated faith compositions in which their felt sense of an ultimate environment is inclusive of all being. They have become incarnators and actualizers of the spirit of an inclusive and fulfilled human community. . .
- Teresa of Avila's Seven Mansions (<http://www.ourgardenofcarmel.org/castle.html>)
 1. The souls in the First Mansions are in a state of grace, but are still very much in love with the venomous creatures outside the castle -- that is, with occasions of sin -- and need a long and searching discipline before they can make any progress. . .
 2. The soul is anxious to penetrate farther into the castle, so it seeks every opportunity of advancement -- sermons, edifying conversations, good company and so on. It is doing its utmost to put its desires into practice: these are the Mansions of the Practice of Prayer. . .
 3. although the soul which reaches the Third Mansions may still fall back, it has attained a high standard of virtue. Controlled by discipline and penance and disposed to performing acts of charity toward others, it has acquired prudence and discretion and orders its life well. . .
 4. Here the supernatural element of the mystical life first enters: that is to say, it is no longer by its own efforts that the soul is acquiring what it gains. Henceforward the soul's part will become increasingly less and God's part increasingly greater. . .
 5. It marks a new degree of infused contemplation and a very high one. By means of the most celebrated of all her metaphors, that of the silkworm, St. Teresa explains how far the soul can prepare itself to receive what is essentially a gift from God. . .
 6. The soul is, as it were, betrothed to its future Spouse; in the Sixth, Lover and Beloved see each other for long periods at a time, and as they grow in intimacy the soul receives increasing favours, together with increasing afflictions. The afflictions which give the description of these Mansions its characteristic colour are dealt with in some detail. . .
 7. Here at last the soul reaches the Spiritual Marriage. Here dwells the King -- "it may be called another Heaven": the two lighted candles join and become one, the falling rain becomes merged in the river. There is complete transformation, ineffable and perfect peace; no

higher state is conceivable, save that of the Beatific Vision in the life to come. . .

- Classical Christian Stages (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14254a.htm>)
 1. The purgative way is the way, or state, of those who are beginners, that is, those who have obtained justification, but have not their passions and evil inclinations in such a state of subjugation that they can easily overcome temptations, and who, in order to preserve and exercise charity and the other virtues have to keep up a continual warfare within themselves. . .
 2. The illuminative way is that of those who are in the state of progress and have their passions better under control, so that they easily keep themselves from mortal sin, but who do not so easily avoid venial sins, because they still take pleasure in earthly things and allow their minds to be distracted by various imaginations and their hearts with numberless desires, though not in matters that are strictly unlawful. It is called the illuminative way, because in it the mind becomes more and more enlightened as to spiritual things and the practice of virtue. . .
 3. The unitive way is the way of those who are in the state of the perfect, that is, those who have their minds so drawn away from all temporal things that they enjoy great peace, who are neither agitated by various desires nor moved by any great extent by passion, and who have their minds chiefly fixed on God and their attention turned, either always or very frequently, to Him. It is the union with God by love and the actual experience and exercise of that love. . .

- The Seven Chakras of Hinduism (many sources)
 1. Root. Associated with base of spine. Security concerns.
 2. Sacral. Associated with navel area. Emotional intimacy, sexuality.
 3. Solar plexus. Power, control.
 4. Heart. Love, compassion, balance.
 5. Throat. Communication, self-expression.
 6. Third eye. Insight, visualization.
 7. Crown. Enlightenment, cosmic consciousness.

Writing Your Mission Statement

A mission statement is a short summary of “what you want to be and do” -- what qualities you want to develop, what you want to accomplish, what contributions you want to make” (Steven Covey). Writing a mission statement in spiritual direction can be an excellent process for discerning God’s call into the future.

In the life of Christian faith, there are a few spiritual principles which can inform your mission statement:

1. God has created you a good and unique human being.
2. God’s unconditional love desires your growth and happiness.
3. It is God’s will that you become the unique person whom God has created you to be.
4. Cherishing and developing your uniqueness is consistent with “doing God’s will.”
5. Your happiness gives glory to God.

Do these principles describe something of your understanding of God and God’s will?

Guiding Questions

It is good to take a few minutes for prayer before responding to these.

1. What do you perceive to be your strongest gifts?
2. What values are most important to you?
3. What do you enjoy doing most?
4. If you could do anything you wanted and resources were no problem, what would you do? Where/how would you live?
5. What relationships are most important to you? What do you hope to be able to say about these relationships in five years?
6. What kind of epitaph would you like to have written on your tomb?

Writing the Statement

After spending time reflecting/journaling with the above questions, write a short statement that summarizes your core beliefs and aspirations. Write it in the first person (“I, Jane Doe, affirm. . .”) or as a prayer, and say it in your own words. Let your first draft come spontaneously. . . don’t worry about grammar, punctuation, redundancy. Later, you can edit this draft and shorten it.

Once you've got it the way you want it, write it up nicely and post it someplace where you can review it frequently (journal, calendar, prayer book, framed on a wall). Use it as a meditation, an examination of consciousness, an energizing source of affirmation and direction for you.

Writing Your Own Rule (or Way) of Life

A Rule of Life is most associated with Catholic religious orders, who use the Rule to outline what is important to deepen the development and expression of their spirituality and to honor their distinctive charism. If you have come to a better sense of your own charisms and have done the mission statement exercise which preceded this one, you are ready to consider what your own Rule of Life might be.

First a word about the term, "Rule," however. For many, this connotes images of all sorts of "Do's" and "Don'ts." Understandably so, for that is the usual meaning of the term. In the context used by religious, however, it identifies essential practices for growing on the spiritual journey. The "Rule," then, might be understood as a kind of covenant you make with God--a way of saying that you intend to do what is necessary to grow as fully as God is calling you to grow.

Let's get started . . .

- A. *Begin by reviewing your Mission Statement.* Keep this vision in mind throughout the process. Use this as the opening statement for your Rule of Life.
- B. *Growing in Relationships*
 1. With God
 - a) What practices do you need to do to remain close to God? Be specific here, including how much time to give to them, when, how often, etc. One suggestion, here, is to make a list of practices for daily, weekly, monthly and yearly attention.
 - b) Next to each of the practices listed above, indicate its importance to you using a rating scale of 1-5.
 - c) Under the heading of "Growing in Relationship with God," write out what you commit yourself to doing daily, weekly, monthly and yearly. Be specific in describing the practice for each time period.
 2. With Family . . .
 - a) You can repeat the 3 steps listed above for other relationships -- e.g., marriage, children, friends, and so forth. In spiritual direction, we are most concerned with developing your relationship with God, but the others are obviously relevant, as are the following points, which you might also wish to pursue at some time.

C. Caring for Self

1. What practices do you need to do to properly care for your body?
Follow the process steps in B1 above to come to your decision and write your response.
2. What practices do you need to do to properly care for your psyche (mind, emotions, imagination, memories)? Again, follow the Steps in B1. Be sure to consider factors like fun, play and so forth.
3. Any other aspect of caring for self you want to consider, repeating the process steps of B1.

D. Service and Work

1. Make a list of specific ways you can give witness to your faith and values in the work place and everyday life.
 - a. Brainstorm specific behaviors and practices.
 - b. Rate each of these behaviors on a scale of 1-5.
 - c. Under this heading, write out what you would like to commit yourself to do, when, etc.
2. Make a list of specific ways you can give witness to your faith in your faith community. Repeat the Steps of D1.

E. Overall Lifestyle

1. What kind of lifestyle seems most consonant with the values you have identified above? Consider the following:
 - Urban vs. suburban vs. rural
 - Wealthy vs. middle income vs. poverty
 - Married, single, religious life.
 - Conventional vs. alternative / simple
 - And so forth . . .
2. What values do you wish to commit yourself to expressing in your overall lifestyle? Consider your reflections from E1 and any others you might wish to identify.

3. Write a statement listing the values from E 2 and how you would like to give evidence of these in your lifestyle.

Further Reading

- *Balancing Life by the Rule*, by Debra Farrington:
- http://www.spiritualityhealth.com/newsh/items/article/item_2893.html
- *Your Own Rule*, by St. Paul Parish (Riverside, IL)
- <http://stpaulsparish.org/Your%20Own%20Rule.html>
- *Creating Your Own Rule of Life*, by Episcopal Diocese of West Texas
- <http://www.westtexasonline.org/spiritlife/liferules2.htm>