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Spiritual direction as preventative clergy care: presented in a Wesleyan Quadrilateral paradigm

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION AS PREVENTATIVE CLERGY CARE:
PRESENTED IN A WESLEYAN QUADRILATERAL PARADIGM

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF GEROGE FOX EVANGELICAL SEMINARY
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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

D.Min. Dissertation

This is to certify that the D.Min. Dissertation of

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has been approved by
the Dissertation Committee on November 5, 2012
as fully adequate in scope and quality as a dissertation
for the degree of Doctor of Ministry in Leadership and Spiritual Formation.

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the New International Version of the Bible

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ABSTRACT

The question addressed by this dissertation may be stated as follows: Is there a practice that can be used as a preventive measure in the care of clergy's souls in the Church of the Nazarene? In response, I propose while there may be many spiritually healthy clergy who have never heard of spiritual direction, there are many who are in need of such an elixir for their souls and all would benefit from spiritual direction. To have healthy clergy all senior pastors in the Church of the Nazarene should have a spiritual director.

In Chapter 1, the ministry challenge is described through a true, narrative account of two pastors who enter a turbulent time in their ministry: one of the pastors is guided through the murky waters by a spiritual director, the other flounders about for a time before drying up. The term "spiritual direction" is then explored and defined for the context of this paper.

The second chapter will examine in depth how the Bible speaks for the need of spiritual direction for leaders. The question of how God provided for spiritual direction through and for various leaders is examined. Close attentions will be given to the following relationships: Adam and God, David and Nathan, Peter and Jesus, and Paul and Ananias.

Chapter 3 discusses the history and development of spiritual direction. Several of the spiritual leaders who were most involved with the development of spiritual direction are presented in depth. This chapter will show the long tradition of spiritual direction

from the early church to postmodernity with special attention given to how the history of spiritual direction flows through Wesley and the holiness churches.

In the fourth chapter what is accomplished through spiritual direction and why it is needed for senior pastors in the Church of the Nazarene is explored. The question of “is it reasonable?” will be given precedent.

In Chapter 5 what is currently being done in the Church of the Nazarene for pastoral health and why it is falling short will be looked at. Also examined will be examples of churches and denominations, both within and outside the Wesleyan family, that are doing spiritual direction for their pastors and how that is working in the context of their ministry.

In the conclusion, the solution to improved pastoral spiritual health as regular meetings with a spiritual director, which is well within the doctrinal paradigm of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral (Scripture, Tradition, Experience, and Reason), is presented.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

They made me keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard I have not kept!

Song of Solomon 1:6b

A Tale of Two Pastors

Marvin and Dan¹ entered the ministry within a few weeks of one another. They completed Bible College the same year and even did some postgraduate studies together. Upon completion of their ordination, both Marvin and Dan accepted the position of senior pastor at small, struggling churches. They were on different districts within the same denomination but stayed in contact with each other through e-mail and social media.

Marvin and Dan found that Bible college does not prepare a student for leadership in a small church, especially when that church is struggling to keep its doors open. However, they both were determined to succeed in the ministry they believed they were called to by God. Marvin and Dan had monthly breakfast meetings and shared their excitement over the growth their churches were experiencing, even if that meant leaving out a few of the details. In their zeal to restore these churches to vibrant, thriving congregations, they worked long hours and neglected their own spiritual needs.

¹ The following narrative is the true story of two pastors. All the names of individuals and institutions involved have been changed.

The monthly meetings between Marvin and Dan began to get rescheduled or canceled altogether. When they did meet, the conversation was shallow and not entirely truthful. “Hey Marvin, how are you?” “Great, Dan, how is the church going?” “Couldn’t be better.” They became even more distant when Marvin dropped out of the Master of Divinity program to focus more on his ministry. Dan pressed on with his studies, convinced that he would learn information that would be valuable to his ministry.

Dan began to struggle with keeping up on his studies and serving his community, not to mention being a husband and father. He found that his devotional life suffered when there were time constraints. He sent an e-mail to a few of his close friends, including Marvin, asking them to help hold him accountable to his private time with God. They all replied they would be happy to accompany him on the journey. However, as time went on, their well-meaning replies were forgotten and not one of them held to their commitment to keep Dan accountable.

The situation at Dan’s church went from business as usual to bad. A crisis developed when two married members left their spouses and had an affair together. To make matters worse, one of the couples involved was a member of a prominent family of the church. Dan prayed for guidance, sought help from other clergy members, and even called his District Superintendent² for advice. The District Superintendent advised Dan to invite the new “couple” to worship elsewhere. Dan replied that it would likely cause a church split and a great deal of stress on his part. The District Superintendent urged Dan to do the right thing and he believed the right thing was sending them elsewhere.

² The District Superintendent in the Church of the Nazarene is the overseer of 60-80 churches within a geographical location.

Dan told the couple it was probably best for them and the rest of the congregation if they worshipped elsewhere. The couple was angry and began a smear campaign against Dan. Just as Dan had predicted, many other people followed this couple out the door. Dan was a wreck emotionally and spiritually. He could not talk with his friends within the congregation about the situation, and it seemed his friends outside the congregation were not really interested in his troubles. Dan wondered why his district superintendent did not call him back to see how the situation was progressing. Dan entertained the idea that the district superintendent did not care either.

It was at this time that Dan remembered a post-graduate class he had on spiritual direction. Prior to the class the term, “spiritual direction” had been foreign to Dan. He learned that the practice was common in the Roman Catholic Church and was becoming increasingly popular in Protestant circles. Dan called the local Catholic college and set up an appointment with a spiritual director. Dan started meeting with his spiritual director on a regular basis and found the experience to be just what he needed. He felt free to tell his spiritual director everything and wept with joy as the spiritual director helped him be aware of God’s presence in every area of his life.

Dan proudly rejoiced about his spiritual direction experience on a social network site. That post prompted a message from his old friend Marvin. The message read:

Dan, I am glad everything is going well with you. Perhaps I need a spiritual director, although I am not even sure what that is. I am going through a rough time. The church is sucking the life out of me and dare I even say the holiness out of me. I find myself fantasizing about stuff I haven’t thought about in years. My relationships are crumbling; it feels my life is crumbling. I don’t know what to do. I can’t go to my district superintendent with this stuff because honestly if he knew what I was thinking and doing he would probably remove me right away. I tried talking to an experienced pastor, but he told me ministry is hard and it’s my cross to bear—pretty much suck it up and drive on. Maybe I just needed to get this off my chest and I will feel better once I hit send. Please don’t tell anyone, I trust you.

Dan immediately tried to call his friend but could not reach him. He sent Marvin a reply message describing in detail what a spiritual director was and how it would benefit him if he met with one. Dan prayed for Marvin, but because of the busyness of his ministry, he did not reach out to him with a second phone call. Dan did get another e-mail from Marvin that simply stated, "I don't think a spiritual director would help me, please keep praying for me." Dan thought about telling Marvin, "How can you be sure a spiritual director will not help if you don't try it," but he did not pick up the phone or send that e-mail.

A few months later, Dan saw a mutual friend who was on the same district as Marvin. Dan asked how Marvin was, and the friend replied that he was not sure. Marvin had resigned, and his ministerial credentials had been revoked for conduct unbecoming a pastor. Dan contacted a few more mutual friends of theirs, and no one had any answers to exactly what had happened to Marvin, but the consensus was that he collapsed under the weight of ministry. It also appeared that no one was sure where Marvin moved to or how to get in contact with him; even his social networking pages had been deleted. Eventually, Dan found someone who at least knew Marvin's whereabouts. According to this source, Marvin had moved half way across the country and was working as a night manager at a gas station.

Identifying the Problem

Marvin's story is not out of the ordinary. Maranatha Life's Life-Line For Pastors reports that eighty percent of seminary and Bible school graduates who enter the ministry

will leave the ministry within the first five years.³ That statistic for new pastors is alarming, but no more alarming than statistics for pastors overall. The following statistics from many different sources across denominational lines reveal that there is a problem:

- Eighty-six percent of clergy strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, “I pray with others but rarely have time for personal prayer.”⁴
- Fifteen hundred pastors leave the ministry each month due to moral failure, spiritual burnout, or contention in their churches.⁵
- Fifty percent of pastors’ marriages will end in divorce.⁶
- Eighty percent of pastors feel unqualified and discouraged in their role as pastor.⁷
- Fifty percent of pastors are so discouraged that they would leave the ministry if they could but have no other way of making a living.⁸

³ Maranatha Life’s Life-Line For Pastors, “Statistics About Pastors,” <http://maranathalife.com/lifeline/stats.htm> (Accessed February 10, 2012). Their statistics come from across denomination lines, and have been gleaned from various reliable sources such as Pastor to Pastor, Focus on the Family, Ministries Today, Charisma Magazine, TNT Ministries, Campus Crusade for Christ and the Global Pastors Network.

⁴ “Clergy Struggling With Identity and Feelings of Loneliness, Exhaustion”, <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Clergy+struggling+with+identity+and+feelings+of+loneliness,+exhaustion-a0157588267> (Accessed February 10, 2012). The survey was mailed to a sample group of 1,252 clergy representing the United Church of Canada, the Anglican Church of Canada, the Presbyterian Church in Canada, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec and the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada. The questionnaire received 338 responses.

⁵ Richard Krejcir. Schaeffer Institute, *Statistics on Pastors*, 2007, <http://www.intothyword.org/apps/articles/default.asp?articleid=36562&columnid=3958>, (Accessed February 10, 2012). This study took place over 18 years by Francis A. Schaeffer Institute of Church Leadership Development. The research by FASICLD is congruent with the research done by Barna, Focus on the Family, and Fuller Seminary.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

- Seventy percent said the only time they spend studying Scripture is when they are preparing their sermons.⁹
- Thirty-three percent of pastors confess “inappropriate sexual behavior with someone in the church.”¹⁰
- Forty-eight percent of pastors think being in ministry is hazardous to family well-being.¹¹

The problems are well documented, not only through statistics, but also through the many websites and books on the subject. H.B. London, Pastor to Pastors Emeritus for Focus on the Family and founder of H.B.L. Ministries, and Neil Wiseman, former professor of pastoral development at Nazarene Bible College write: “The risks in ministry are greater than ever. Pastors are working harder in a world that’s more corrupt . . . Fatigue shows in the eyes of pastors. Worry slows their stride. Vagueness dulls their preaching. This struggle takes a terrible toll . . .”¹² The problem is bad enough that Dr.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Injoy Ministries, “The State of the Pastor,” *Partners in Prayer Report*, quoted in “The State of Ministry, Marriage and Morals,” *Save America*, http://www.saveus.org/docs/factsheets/marriage_mortal.htm (Accessed February 9, 2012).

¹¹ “I See That Hand: Do You and Your Spouse Believe That Being in the Pastoral Ministry is Hazardous to Your Family’s Well-being and Health?” *The Parsonage*, November 19, 2000. http://www.family.org/pastor/parsonpollarchive.cfm?&showresults=parsonage_001113 (Accessed February 9, 2012).

¹² H.B. London Jr. and Neil Wiseman, *Pastors at Greater Risk* (Ventura, CA: Gospel Light, 2003), 14.

Daniel Spaite, calls pastors “ticking time bombs.”¹³ Dr. Spaite calls the modern pastor over-worked and refers to their life style as stressed out.¹⁴

Holiness church pastors are not immune to this problem. Among pastors of the Church of the Nazarene in the United States and Canada, 41 percent will leave active vocational ministry by the time they reach the fifteen year mark in their vocational tenure.¹⁵ In a recent sampling of 551 Nazarene pastors, sixty-nine percent of them reported feelings of exhaustion, and fifty-seven percent felt like they were incapable of the task assigned to them.¹⁶

The statistic that is most alarming is that seventy percent of pastors do not have a close friend, confidant, or mentor.¹⁷ It is unhealthy for any person of any profession not to have someone close to them who they can trust. Dr. Spaite warns, “positive and affirming relationships are crucial to maintaining mental and physical health.”¹⁸ God recognized in the Garden of Eden that it was not good for man to be alone (Genesis 2:18). “Like a chronic virus, loneliness troubles many pastors” writes London and Wiseman.¹⁹

¹³ Daniel Spaite and Debbie Salter, *Time Bomb in the Church: Defusing Pastoral Burnout* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Books, 1999), 9.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 10.

¹⁵ Kenneth Crow, *The Corps of Pastors of the Church of the Nazarene*. Research Center Report. Kansas City, MO: International Center of the Church of the Nazarene. <http://nazarene.org/files/docs/The%20Corps%20of%20Pastors%20of%20the%20Church%20of%20the%20Nazarene.pdf> (accessed July 11, 2012)

¹⁶ Jeren Rowell, *Ministerial Attrition: When Clergy Call it Quits*. Research center report. Kansas City: International Center of the Church of the Nazarene. <http://nazarene.org/files/docs/RelationshipSuperintendentsPastors.pdf> (accessed July 11, 2012).

¹⁷ Maranatha Life’s Life-Line For Pastors, *Statistics About Pastors*. This statistic is also quoted in *Pastors at Greater Risk* and *Time Bomb in the Church*.

¹⁸ Spaite and Salter, 88.

¹⁹ London and Wiseman, 52.

The case involving Marvin seems to suggest that lack of close relationships and loneliness were a catalyst for him leaving the ministry.

Marvin's story may not be out of the ordinary, but Dan's story is. These two men, both professing a calling from God, walked parallel paths into a storm. Marvin was not able to hold up under the storm, yet Dan emerged. Why? Would a family genome reveal a weakness in times of trouble for Marvin and vice versa for Dan? Was Dan strong in faith and Marvin lacking? Was Marvin's predicament much worse than the trouble that faced Dan? The answer for these two questions cannot be found, but an answer is given in the narrative. Dan visited regularly with a spiritual director, and Marvin did not.

Definition of Spiritual Direction

Spiritual direction was largely unheard of in Protestant circles twenty years ago, but the practice is now becoming quite popular across all of Christianity. Gordon Jeff, founder and original Chairman of SPIDIR (from SPiritual DIREction), an informal network for all concerned with the advancement of spiritual direction, makes the claim that, "If publishers' lists are anything to go by, spiritual direction is a fashionable growth industry."²⁰

Spiritual direction does not have one simple definition. Ask thirty spiritual directors, and you might get thirty different answers; however, each answer would be somewhat similar. I will present what I believe to be the four best definitions of spiritual direction and why I believe these definitions work well.

²⁰ Gordon Jeff, *Spiritual Direction for Every Christian* (London: SPCK, 1987), 1.

The first definition I will use has as a priority recognizing the presence of God. “Spiritual direction is the contemplative practice of helping another person or group to awaken to the mystery called God in all of life, and to respond to that discovery in a growing relationship of freedom and commitment.”²¹ Spiritual direction is a contemplative practice which means all efforts are made to quiet the mind. Quieting the mind is different than the practice of emptying the mind made popular by many practitioners of the New Age movement. Quieting the mind, contemplation, is an act to remove everything and anything that interferes with experiencing the presence of God. Rabbi Jacob Staub insists that even the spiritual directors must try to get themselves out of the way as they witness the way in which the Mystery unfolds in the life of the seeker and to help the seeker to discern the presence in their life.²² Spiritual direction enhances the ability to recognize being present to God.

The second definition builds on the first by adding to it the actualization of growing in grace. Spiritual direction is “help given by one believer to another that enables the latter to pay attention to God’s personal communication to him or her, to respond to this personally communicating God, to grow in intimacy with this God, and to live out the consequences of the relationship.”²³ Pastors do not have the benefit of some religious hermits, many of whom simply bask in the glory of God without the pressures of the outside world. Pastoral ministry takes place in a filthy world that slings mud at the

²¹ James Keegan, “What Is Spiritual Direction.” *Listen: A Seeker’s Resource For Spiritual Direction* (Oct 2011, Vol 5, Issue 4), 3.

²² Howard Avruhm Addison and Barbara Breitman, *Jewish Spiritual Direction* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2006), 4.

²³ William Barry and William Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction* (New York, NY: Harper One, 2002), 8.

pastor; therefore, the pastor needs to be continually formed for the sake of others.²⁴

Spiritual direction enhances the ability to apply the growth in grace that comes from being in the divine presence to the external world.

The third definition touches a topic that is critical to someone doing pastoral ministries. “In spiritual direction, the director helps others notice God in the most ordinary life circumstances, and provides an environment where spiritual healing can take place.”²⁵ The vocation of ministry makes the pastor susceptible to spiritual trauma; many liken it to war. If the pastor does not have a safe place to heal and rest, as was the case with Marvin, the end result will be tragic. Flora Slossan Wueller, who has been involved in the specialized ministry of spiritual renewal for over thirty years, writes:

It is no secret, for example, that the rapidly increasing divorce rate among clergy is due not so much to weak moral fiber as the fact that clergy families are less willing to endure the obsessive work, the distancing tactics, and even the abusiveness of clergy persons and other religious professionals who are driven frantic by their unhealed wounds and loss of spiritual, emotional renewal.²⁶

Spiritual direction allows a safe place for pastors to apply a healing and renewing balm.

The last definition is a reminder of what spiritual direction is not. The issue some have with spiritual direction is that it is one person directing another. This is not true; it is, in a sense, the Spirit who is directing. Gordon Jeff offers:

Direction, as I understand it, is two people sitting down together in an attitude of prayer to try and discern where the Holy Spirit is directing. The “director”, from his or her experience of others, from insight or wisdom, may sometimes have

²⁴ This is borrowed loosely from Robert Mulholland Jr.’s definition of spiritual formation: “The process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others.” M. Robert Mulholland Jr. *Invitation to a Journey* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 15.

²⁵ Alice Fryling. *Seeking God Together* (Downer’s Grove: IL, IVP, 2009), 20.

²⁶ Flora Slossan Wueller, *Feed My Shepherds: Spiritual Healing and Renewal for Those in Christian Leadership* (Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 1998), 83.

suggestions to offer to the “directee”, but the whole exercise is one in which the potential of the directee is being helped to emerge, and not in any sense a pushing of the directees into any kind of path of prayer.²⁷

The goal of the director is to help the directee hear or discern the Spirit’s promptings.

Alice Fryling, who has been practicing spiritual direction for many years, writes, “The purpose of this friendship is not that one person directs the other but that the spiritual director is a companion to the other. In other words, the spiritual director is not really the director. God is the director.”²⁸ Dr. Jerry Porter, a General Superintendent in the Church of the Nazarene, acknowledges the divine guidance: “Teach people to be taught by the Holy Spirit. We are not the Teacher. Our disciples are taught daily by the Holy Spirit.”²⁹

The director/directee relationship is not one where authority is exercised. Instead the director assists the directee in hearing the divine guide.

These definitions are varied, but they all paint a picture of companions walking hand in hand towards the voice of God. Spiritual direction is, therefore, a loving friend guiding another towards the divine presence in order for healing, discernment, and growth to take place. In Richard Rohr’s popular book, *Falling Upward*, he describes these people helping you on the journey as “authentic soul friends, we now sometimes call them spiritual directors or elders. Celtic Christianity called them *anmchara*.”³⁰

Throughout Christian history these help mates have been referred to as spiritual fathers,

²⁷ Jeff, 10.

²⁸ Fryling, 17.

²⁹ Jerry Porter, “Not a Program, A Way of Life,” *Pursuing The Way Of Holiness* (Feb, 2012), http://web.nazarene.org/site/DocServer/wayofholinessEmail_11_2011.html?docID=4161 (accessed February 21, 2012).

³⁰ Richard Rohr, *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2011), 50.

spiritual guides, spiritual companions, soul friends and spiritual mentors. Alan Jones intentionally uses the term spiritual friendship interchangeably with the term spiritual direction to break down any ideas that the relationship is authoritative in nature.³¹

Spiritual direction has also been referred to as holy listening. Although it has drawbacks and is resisted by some in the Church of the Nazarene, spiritual director/spiritual direction seems to be the title that best describes what is happening in the relationship.

Dr. Rhonda Carrim, professor at Northwest Nazarene University, also sees the benefits for being consistent in the use of the term “spiritual direction.” She lists two reasons, “First, for any who wish to explore further the topic or practice, this is the term used within the majority of literature, past and present. Second, from the perspective of both history and the broader Christian tradition, using the traditional vocabulary is a more straightforward way to present the purpose and approach of spiritual direction.”³² W. Paul Jones, in his book *The Art of Spiritual Direction*, is in agreement that there are many appropriate names for spiritual direction, but to avoid confusion one should be given primacy. He writes, “In this book, however, we will use the familiar terminology of spiritual direction and director as a way of acknowledging continuity with the long tradition spanning not only the church history, but, as we will see, our Old Testament heritage as well.”³³ For the sake of clarity, although it is recognized that it is not the only

³¹ Alan Jones, *Exploring Spiritual Direction* (Cambridge, MA: Cowley Publications, 1999), 3.

³² Rhonda Carrim, “Walking The Journey Together,” in *Spiritual Formation: A Wesleyan Paradigm*, ed. Diane Leclerc and Mark Maddix (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 2011), 161.

³³ W. Paul Jones, *The Art of Spiritual Direction: Giving and Receiving Spiritual Guidance* (Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 1989), 9.

and maybe not even the best descriptor, the term “spiritual direction” will be used to describe this relationship throughout this paper.

Identifying a Solution

Senior or lead pastors in the Church of the Nazarene need somewhere safe to go where, they will be assisted in encountering the divine presence, they can experience growth with someone who doesn't think they have already “arrived”, they will experience healing and peace, and they can be assisted in discerning that still, quiet voice. That “where” is with a spiritual director.

The statistics on pastors at risk prove that what is currently being done is not effective.³⁴ The solution is that senior or lead pastors need a spiritual director right from the beginning of their ministry. Thomas Green writes, “Good spiritual direction will thus always be valuable, at every stage of the interior life. There are two moments on our journey, though, when direction is particularly necessary: when we are just beginning, and when we move into the strange world of the dry well or dark night.”³⁵ Although it worked in the case of Dan, often times waiting until there is a crisis is too late. In my initial research I believed the solution to care for the pastor's soul was that every district in the Church of the Nazarene should have a full-time spiritual director on staff. Upon further research, I have concluded that although this might be something to pursue, it has several drawbacks.

³⁴ The current methods of caring for the pastor's soul will be discussed and shown why they are lacking in Chapter 5.

³⁵ Thomas Green, *The Friend of the Bridegroom: Spiritual Direction and the Encounter With Christ* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2000), 78.

The first drawback is that a spiritual director and directee should have a fitting relationship. It is not a relationship two people should be forced into. Green suggests that, “Spiritual direction is a friendly relationship. Directee and director must be comfortable with each other.”³⁶ If a directee is not comfortable with a director, he or she will have trouble opening up and being honest with the director. Likewise, if the director is not comfortable with the directee, he or she will likely not be able to properly lead one into the divine presence. It is a relationship of mutual respect.

The second drawback is that if the spiritual director is a paid staff member on a district, he or she may feel obligated to report what is going on to the district superintendent. The spiritual director’s loyalty should lie only with God but not with the district where direction is being provided or with the superintendent of the district. The fact of being on staff could lay the foundation to putting a director in a conflict of interest between clergy care and district loyalty.

The final drawback to having a full-time spiritual director on staff is that this person would know an incredible amount of information about the pastors in the same area and within the same denomination. In a perfect world, this amount of power would simply be a cross to bear and those involved would not fear the intimate information being used against them. However, this is not the type of temptation that any single person should have to bear. It makes more sense to have this information disseminated over several different directors rather than in the heart and mind of one person.

Therefore, I recommend that, as part of ministerial support and benevolence, every senior pastor be strongly encouraged to have a spiritual director whom the pastor

³⁶ Ibid., 40.

visits regularly. I also recommend, as part of ministerial support and benevolence, that clergy's visits with a spiritual director are completely covered financially.

The Argument

I do not intend this paper to be an outline or a manual on how the Church of the Nazarene should implement spiritual direction for their pastors, although I will reference how some denominations are doing spiritual direction in Chapter Five. The goal for this paper is to prove that spiritual direction for senior pastors in the Church of the Nazarene is within the denomination's doctrinal parameters. To do this, I will look at spiritual direction through the lens of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral.³⁷ Albert Outler determined that John Wesley used four different sources in coming to theological conclusions.³⁸ The four sources are: Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. Wesley clearly saw Scripture as the defining source and, therefore, this method does not warrant a square where all four sides are equal. Scripture and tradition carry the most influence with reason and experience confirming what Scripture and tradition teach.

John Wesley, although extremely well read, considered himself a man of one book, that one book being the Bible. Therefore, I will spend a considerable portion of this paper determining what Scripture demonstrates about the importance of spiritual direction for leaders. The Old Testament will be examined with a survey on spiritual direction being applied to various Old Testament leaders beginning with Adam and

³⁷ The phrase "Wesleyan Quadrilateral" was coined by 20th century American Methodist Albert C. Outler in his introduction to the 1964 collection *John Wesley*.

³⁸ John Wesley and Albert Outler, *John Wesley* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), iv.

special emphasis on Nathan as a spiritual director to King David. I will exegete 2 Samuel 12:1-14 for the purpose of showing that a model of spiritual direction was being practiced for leaders in the Old Testament. The New Testament will be examined with a survey on Jesus as a spiritual director to the original twelve apostles with specific focus on Peter. Paul will be explored as both director and directee, with special attention given to his relationship with Ananias at the onset of his conversion. I will exegete Acts 9:10-25 for the purpose of showing that a model of spiritual direction was being practiced for leaders in the New Testament.

I will look at the history of spiritual direction from the early church fathers until postmodern times. There will be several examples highlighted of important church leaders who saw the benefits of having a spiritual director and how that director impacted the lives of these particular leaders. I will examine spiritual direction for leaders in both the Catholic and Protestant traditions, with a focus on the Wesleyan branch of the Christian family tree.

After building a solid foundation of Scripture and tradition I will look at the purpose of spiritual direction and what the Church of the Nazarene might hope will be accomplished through its pastors entering into a spiritual direction relationship. The question of “what is the reason for spiritual direction” will be investigated. This will be looked at through the lens of both philosophy and psychiatry. Much attention will be given to how spiritual direction prevents pastoral burnout and moral failure, as well as to how spiritual direction works to heal the wounds that come from ministering to people in a fallen world.

For the final leg of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral I will investigate the experience of spiritual direction. A survey of what is currently being done for pastoral spiritual health in the Church of the Nazarene will be examined with an explanation of why it is falling short. There will be an overview of how spiritual direction is currently working in other denominations to keep their pastors spiritually and mentally healthy. In this research, I will be in discussion with congregations both within and outside the holiness family of churches. There will also be a discussion with pastors who, like Dan in the opening example, experienced incredible benefits by having a spiritual director.

The *Manual* of the Church of the Nazarene lists 26 separate duties the pastor should perform.³⁹ Among the duties a pastor is to perform are to care for, comfort and correct the people, as well as equip others for ministry. Does the Church of the Nazarene really want the person in charge of such important elements within the context of the local church to be a walking time bomb?

While the time bomb ticks, good pastors with sincere calls, effective experience, and committed hearts continue to follow patterns that place them in a pathway of an explosion. They rely on the need for adrenaline to produce energy for their stressed schedules. They fall prey to a ministry-produced numbing, which makes them unaware of the physical damage stress causes. They blame the wrong causes for overwork and busy schedules. They do not connect health issues with any of these factors. They become casualties of a physical or emotional time bomb that has the potential to create unnecessary detours in their journey to answer God's call in their lives. But God calls servants to ministry, not to burnout. Then how can ministers protect themselves from a time bomb they do not hear ticking?⁴⁰

A relationship with a spiritual director can defuse the bomb—a relationship with a spiritual director can even keep a bomb from forming.

³⁹ *Church of the Nazarene Manual* (Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 2009), 185-187.

⁴⁰ Spaite and Salter, 59.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL EVIDENCE OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION FOR LEADERS IN THE CHURCH

When you read God's Word, you must constantly be saying to yourself, "It is talking to me, and about me."

Soren Kierkegaard¹

The Old Testament Scriptures

The purpose of this chapter is to explore what, if anything, Scripture has to say about spiritual direction for leaders. The Bible does not mention spiritual direction specifically; however, like many other topics that are not mentioned by name, including the Trinity, spiritual direction is included in the narrative of the story. The fourfold definition of divine presence, growth, healing and discernment used in the previous chapter will be the rubric for determining if spiritual direction is taking place in the selected biblical passages.

¹ Soren Kierkegaard, *Judge For Yourself and Three Discourses* (London: Oxford Press, 1941), 61. This is a paraphrase of the actual quote which reads: "True seriousness is this: when thou readest God's Word, then in everything that thou readest, constantly to say to thyself, 'It is I that am addressed, to me this is spoken', precisely that is seriousness."

God and Adam

The very first instance of a model of spiritual direction in Scripture takes place in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3). It involves the Creator as the immediate director and Adam and Eve as the directees.² Adam and Eve, in both a literal and symbolic interpretation, are leaders. In a literal interpretation, they are the first man and first woman and are given leadership over the land, “God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground’” (Gen 1:28).³ In a symbolic interpretation, they represent humanity and thus still have a leadership role over the other creatures of the earth.

The particular pericope in question, Genesis 3, has God coming to Adam and Eve in a crisis moment; however, it is implied that this was not the first time they encountered God’s presence. Old Testament scholar Gordon Wenham writes, “The description of Eden with its trees, rivers, gold, and so on emphasized God’s presence there. Therefore it seems likely that it was not unusual for him to be heard walking in the garden. . . . Maybe a daily chat between the Almighty and his creatures was customary.”⁴ The *New American Bible Commentary* adds, “The anthropomorphic description of God ‘walking’ (*mithallēk*)

² I hesitate to use God as a spiritual director in fear that pastors will glibly say that God is their spiritual director. God as the immediate spiritual director is a rare occurrence, but I think it provides an excellent example of what spiritual direction looks like.

³ The scripture quotations contained herein are from the New International Version Bible, copyright © 2002 by the Zondervan Corporation. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

⁴ Gordon Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary: Genesis 1-15* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1987), 76.

in the garden suggests the enjoyment of fellowship between him and our first parents.’⁵

The imagery of God walking with Adam and Eve in the garden has been used often to illustrate the beauty and peace of being present with God.⁶ In the crisis situation of Genesis 3 Adam and Eve have disobeyed God and therefore do not desire God’s presence. However, Adam and Eve even though they try, cannot hide from God.

God calls out, “Where are you?” (Genesis 3:8) to Adam and Eve, effectively demonstrating that God desires the presence of humankind to be of a willing nature and not something forced. The question, specifically in spiritual direction, has never been, “is God there?” but it has always been, “God is there; will you acknowledge him?” Adam and Eve are given the opportunity to take their situation and reflect upon it in the presence of God. Adam answers God, and in the manner that spiritual direction is still practiced today God, through a series of questions, leads the man to the threshold of growth and healing.

God, working as a spiritual director, guides Adam beyond what Adam believes to be the problem. Adam initially suggests the problem is, “I was afraid because I was naked.” God leads him to the real problem, “(I was afraid because) I ate it” (Genesis 3:10-12). The real problem is often brought to light when the presence of God is recognized. The desert father Mathois claimed, “The nearer a man approaches to God, the greater sinner he sees himself to be.”⁷ Richard Rohr explains it this way, “By definition, authentic God experience is always ‘too much’! It consoles our true self only after it has

⁵ K.A. Mathews, *The New American Commentary: Genesis 1-11:26*. (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 239.

⁶ This is best expressed by the hymn “In The Garden” written by C. Austin Miles (1912).

⁷ Helen Waddell, *The Desert Fathers* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1957), 24.

devastated our false self.”⁸ Adam’s false self was looking to pass the blame, even to the extent of pointing the finger at God in verse twelve, “The woman **you** put here with me— **she** gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it” (emphasis mine).

Growth in grace comes in many forms; for Adam and Eve, as often is the case in the Old Testament, it comes looking like discipline.⁹ God had set the parameters for right living: “And the Lord God commanded the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die’” (Genesis 2:16-17). The man and woman did not follow this command, nor were they willing to take responsibility for not following this command. The false self had not yet been devastated. Therefore, for growth to take place, the parameters had to change.

God said to the woman: “I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you” (Gen 3:16). God told Adam:

Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat from it, ‘Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return. (Gen 3:17-19)

⁸ Richard Rohr, *Falling Upward*, 13.

⁹ The only occasion for the spiritual director to issue out punishment or discipline is when the spiritual director is God. In normal situations, when the director is not divine, the director should not pronounce punishment. Alice Fryling goes into great detail about this in her book *Seeking God Together*. In the third chapter I will explore the relationship between the Sacrament of Penance and spiritual direction more completely.

Though this disciplinary action¹⁰ was severe, the harshest instruction came when the Lord removed the blessing of the Garden of Eden from them. The growth would take place when the couple realized how hard they had to work for what was once generously given to them.

It is important to note for the sake of spiritual direction that God, although banishing them from the garden, does not banish them from his presence. Eve praises the Lord in Genesis 4:1 for helping her give birth to a son. It also is apparent in Genesis 4:3-16 that God's presence was a common occurrence with the first family. Spiritual direction cannot be successful without the presence of God.

Adam and Eve were wounded by their decision to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They bore the shame in their knowledge that they were naked. To alleviate the shame, "they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves" (Gen 3:7). They tried to fix a spiritual malaise with a human balm rather than seeking a divine remedy. Their fix was inadequate. Wenham remarks: "Fig leaves were probably used because they are the biggest leaves available in Canaan, though their heavy indentations must have made them less than ideal for covering. . . . Though somewhat ineffective, these actions suggest urgency and desperation."¹¹ There was shame in what they had done, and there was shame in their complete inability to assuage the consequences of that decision.

¹⁰ Gordon Wenham makes an important distinction in that neither the man nor the woman are cursed: only the snake and the soil is cursed. The sentences on the man and woman take the form of a disruption of their appointed roles—not a curse.

¹¹ Wenham, 76.

God, acting as the divine spiritual director, knows that they need healing if they are to continue to function in the role to which they are called. The results of their decision are set, but God moves in grace to make their situation in life more bearable. There are three points of healing in the following passage: “The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them” (Gen 3:21).

God made Adam and Eve garments of skin to hide their nakedness.¹² It is not the spiritual director’s responsibility to walk the directee back in time and correct mistakes, but it is the spiritual director’s responsibility to walk in the moment with the directee toward healing from those mistakes. What was done in eating from the tree could not be undone, but they could have real garments to cover themselves. The garments were similar to a long shirt that reached all the way to the knees or ankles. “Whereas the human couple could only produce inadequate loincloths, God provided them with a proper outfit.”¹³

These garments of grace and healing not only lessened the shame, but also prepared them for the more difficult environment that they were about to encounter. Nakedness is the preferred method of dress in a lush garden where the ground does not have to be worked and tilled, but in the hostile land where they are banished to, the right clothing becomes a protectant that is all but necessary for survival. The garments not only help protect old wounds, but they also prevent new wounds from occurring.

¹² There is much being said about these garments of skin foreshadowing the sacrifice of Christ. There is no mention of sacrifice in the passage when, considering the Old Testament sacrificial system, if it was meant there surely would have been. The word used for “made” is the same word used when creating Adam. As neat and symbolic as it would be to tie these garments into a sacrificial motif, I believe doing so is a stretch at best.

¹³ Wenham, 84.

The most important aspect of Genesis 3:21 is that God clothed those who needed clothing. There are three images that come to mind: parents clothing their children (e.g., Proverbs 31, Luke 15:22), kings clothing honored subjects (e.g., Gen 41:42; 1 Sam 17:38), and the dressing of priests in their sacred vestments (e.g., Exod 28:41; 29:8; 40:14; Lev 8:13). The image of a mother clothing her children is a picture of steadfast love. It doesn't matter to the mother that the children disobeyed; she is still going to love them and clothe them. The image of a king clothing honored subjects demonstrates that Adam and Eve are still important, they still matter, and are highly thought of regardless of their failure in the garden. The image of a priest being clothed in his sacred vestments demonstrates that Adam and Eve are still in communication with God and can approach God. These three images together paint a portrait of healing.

The original plan for Adam and Eve was to "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground" (Gen 1:28). This was still Adam and Eve's calling, even after the fall. They would now have to perform this duty without having access to the garden and with soil that was less than forgiving.

It seems evident that God was guiding them and giving them discernment. As was mentioned above, Eve gave birth to Cain "with the help of the Lord" (Gen 4:1). She is acknowledging God's part in the matter, which she would not do if she felt God were absent. Adam and Eve appear to have accomplished what God called them to do, even though there is not much narrative beyond their crisis moment with the fall.

I conclude that spiritual direction took place between God and the leaders of humankind, Adam and Eve. There is ample evidence of God's presence, growth in grace, healing and discernment or purpose in the relationship between God and Adam and Eve.

Nathan and David

The biblical story of Nathan and David does not begin with the Bathsheba crisis but with a rested and peaceful King David looking to honor God. That David is a leader is without question. Ronald Youngblood writes, "Settled in his royal house and victor over his enemies, David's regal status is now beyond question."¹⁴ Nathan is referred to as a prophet (2 Sam 7:2), a term that carries ambiguous meanings. The most common definition for this Hebrew word (*nby*) is spokesman for the Lord. Although the spiritual director does not speak for the Lord, the spiritual director does lead others into the presence of the Lord to hear from the Lord. A further look into the relationship of Nathan and David will reveal the fourfold parameters of spiritual direction: presence, growth, healing and discernment.

It is important to note, as mentioned above, that Nathan and David's relationship does not begin in crisis mode. Although the ongoing relationship does not prevent a crisis from happening, perhaps it does allow David to respond appropriately to Nathan, the crisis and God when the time comes. The relationship begins with King David wondering aloud to Nathan why the king lives in such splendor and the ark of God is housed in a

¹⁴ Ronald Youngblood, *2 Samuel*, in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary Vol. 3*, ed Frank Gaebelin, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 884.

tent¹⁵ (2 Sam 7:2). Nathan offers a few words of discernment, “Whatever you have in mind, go ahead and do it, the Lord is with you” (2 Sam 7:3). The Bible seems to indicate that Nathan said this rather quickly without taking the time to properly engage the Lord. It could have been Nathan’s own personal opinion based on the favor that the Lord had been showering David with leading up to this moment.¹⁶

That night the situation changed when “the word of the Lord came to Nathan saying . . .” (2 Sam 7:4-16). In this rather lengthy discourse, the Lord lays out the Davidic covenant as well as the mandate that David should not build a temple, but that David’s offspring will engage that task. Nathan left David and seems to have entered in to a time of meditation. Thomas Merton defines meditation as the point where the mind bows down as if to “acknowledge its limitations and proclaim the infinite supremacy of God.”¹⁷ Nathan’s rational and logical thinking that the Lord would bless any seemingly good idea David had was replaced in meditation by the divine plan that the Lord was directing. Nathan reported his words of discernment to David (2 Sam 7:17) that led David to seek the presence of the Lord.

Old Testament scholar A.A. Anderson writes that after hearing the word of the Lord from Nathan, “David, apparently, entered the curtain-tent, housing the ark, and sat

¹⁵ This is the first instance of the relationship that scripture mentions. It is highly likely that the relationship existed prior to this by the way that King David honors and respects the prophet Nathan. I would conclude that the relationship began when King David arrived in Jerusalem.

¹⁶ A.A. Anderson, *Word Biblical Commentary: 2 Samuel* (Dallas, TX: Word Publisher, 1989), 117.

¹⁷ Thomas Merton, *Spiritual Direction and Meditation* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1987), 56.

back on his heels in a kneeling position.”¹⁸ The ark of the covenant of the Lord was a “visible sign that the invisible God was dwelling in Israel’s midst.”¹⁹ David entered into the presence of God and offered a humble prayer. An important part of this prayer is David acknowledging the will of the Lord that was brought to him through Nathan. David prayed, “For the sake of your word and according to your will, you have done this great thing and made it known to your servant” (2 Sam 7:21). Again, look to Anderson who writes, “The verse as a whole seems to refer to the revelation of the divine promise . . .”²⁰

In this early biblical encounter between Nathan and David, presence and discernment appear to be key features. These are the two aspects of spiritual direction that are most prominent when all is well. The narrative quickly turns from the Nathan/David relationship in a business as usual mode in 2 Samuel 7 to a crisis mode in 2 Samuel 12.

The encounter between Nathan and David in 2 Samuel 12 cannot be examined without at least a brief survey of 2 Samuel 11. David commits two errors: being somewhere he should not be and looking at something he should not be looking at in the first place. Verse one reads, “In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the King’s men and the whole Israelite army.” David should have been out with his army; he added to this poor decision by leering at another man’s naked wife: “One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace.

¹⁸ Anderson, 126.

¹⁹ B.J. Beitzel “Ark of the Covenant,” in *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, ed. W.A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 170.

²⁰ Anderson, 127.

From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful . . .” (2 Sam 11:2). David looked on lustfully, but this is not enough. After he finds out the woman, Bathsheba, is married, he still sent for her and impregnated her.

David is blinded by sin, and to cover up his affair, he brought Uriah, Bathsheba’s husband, back from fighting. David hoped that Uriah would sleep with her and assume he was the one to get her pregnant. However, Uriah is faithful and will not sleep with his wife while his fellow soldiers are out fighting. Finally, in cowardly fashion, David ordered Uriah to be sent to the front lines, only to have the troops pull back and abandon him. Uriah is killed, and after a brief period of mourning, Bathsheba is brought to David to become his wife. David believed the cover-up was successful and that all is well, but then the Lord sent Nathan to David (2 Sam 12:1).

There is great wisdom in sending Nathan. Jeannette Bakke, who has been practicing and teaching spiritual direction for over 20 years writes, “Although a spiritual director may have many natural gifts, trusting in their competency or expertise is not our main objective. Instead, we seek to trust God in them, and in the Holy Spirit through them.”²¹ David, in his experience with Nathan, had already developed a sense of trust in Nathan’s ability to help David encounter God. Thomas Green, spiritual director and seminary professor, is emphatic when he wrote that the “directee and director must be comfortable with each other.”²² This comfort level is even more important when the directee is the most powerful man in the nation.

²¹ Jeannette Bakke, *Holy Invitations: Exploring Spiritual Direction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006), 73.

²² Thomas Green, *The Friend of the Bridegroom*, 55.

Nathan showed wisdom as well by not coming out and accusing King David; instead, Nathan used a parable. Eugene Peterson remarks on the virtue of speaking with others and the importance of not simply being a good explainer or a good exhorter, but being able to proclaim the “word of God that is personal—God addressing us in love, inviting us into a life of trust in him . . . to guide and encourage an answering word that is likewise personal.”²³ Nathan approached David with care and wisdom and the knowledge that David had been blinded by sin. Bakke writes that when a directee communicates with a spiritual director honestly about what they are and are not doing, “they can better recognize their motivations and blind spots and consider adjustments.”²⁴ Thomas Merton, a veteran spiritual director says it best,

The whole purpose of spiritual direction is to penetrate beneath the surface of a man’s life, to get behind the façade of conventional gestures and attitudes which he presents to the world, and to bring out his inner spiritual freedom, his inmost truth, which is what we call the likeness of Christ to his soul. This is entirely a supernatural thing.²⁵

It was the only way to get David to see what was happening so that healing could begin. This is never easy. Henri Nouwen says it is, however, essential: “Thus, to receive spiritual help in time of need requires, first of all, not to deny but to affirm the search. Painful questions must be raised, faced and then lived.”²⁶

²³ Eugene Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor: Returning to the Art of Spiritual Direction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 93.

²⁴ Bakke, 125.

²⁵ Merton, 16.

²⁶ Henri Nouwen, Michael Christensen and Rebecca Laird, *Spiritual Direction: Wisdom for the Long Walk of Faith* (New York, NY: Harper One, 2006), 7.

Nathan's strategy worked and King David called for the death penalty for the man in the parable who has done exactly what the king has done (2 Sam 12:5). Whereas with the crisis and sin of Adam and Eve God spoke directly to the couple, in this situation God spoke through Nathan, but the discipline is just as devastating: "The sword will never depart from your house . . . the son born to you will die" (2 Sam 12:10, 14).²⁷ The difference in this situation, and that of Adam and Eve, is that David did not deflect the blame as Adam and Eve did, but says, "I have sinned against the Lord" (2 Sam 12:13). David's acceptance of responsibility aids in the healing and growth process.

Scripture indicates that Nathan went home and then the Lord struck the child with an illness (2 Sam 12:15). David pleaded with God for the child, but on the seventh day, the child died. It is unclear if Nathan was with David as he pleaded with God for the child; Scripture doesn't mention Nathan again until Bathsheba gave birth to Solomon. At that time, Nathan came with a word of the Lord that Solomon should be called Jedidiah that literally means "loved by the Lord" (2 Sam 12:25). Nathan helped David heal through this blessing from the Lord. Since the previous child was struck sick and died; it would not be a stretch to imagine David wondering if the same thing would happen to this child. However, the Lord sends word through Nathan that this child will be different and is loved giving David and Bathsheba a sense of peace. Bill Arnold, Professor of Old Testament Interpretation at Asbury Theological Seminary writes, "Nathan the prophet returns to declare . . . Yahweh's love for the new son. Such a blessing confirms that

²⁷ This is not the place for a theological analysis on why the discipline was as harsh as it was or why it seemed to involve an innocent child. There have been many papers and books written on that subject.

David has been restored in his relationship with Yahweh, he has put his sin behind him.”²⁸

Nathan the prophet is not mentioned in Scripture again until King David was on his deathbed. However, that does not mean that David and Nathan did not continue to have an ongoing spiritual direction type of relationship. The type of greeting extended between the two men in 1 Kings 1:22-24, late in David’s reign, points to the ongoing close relationship they shared, “While she was still speaking with the king, Nathan the prophet arrived. And they told the king, ‘Nathan the prophet is here.’ So he went before the king and bowed with his face to the ground. Nathan said, ‘Have you, my lord the king, declared that Adonijah shall be king after you, and that he will sit on your throne?’” This appears to be a greeting between two men who are close and respect one another and one another’s positions.

Nathan leads David into the discernment process one last time, again using questions to move the discernment process forward:

Have you, my lord the king, declared that Adonijah shall be king after you, and that he will sit on your throne? Today he has gone down and sacrificed great numbers of cattle, fattened calves, and sheep. He has invited all the king’s sons, the commanders of the army and Abiathar the priest. Right now they are eating and drinking with him and saying, ‘Long live King Adonijah!’ But me your servant, and Zadok the priest, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and your servant Solomon he did not invite. Is this something my lord the king has done without letting his servants know who should sit on the throne of my lord the king after him? (1 Kings 1:24-27)

There are many scholars who appear, based on their silence of the topic, to overlook a model of spiritual direction in this passage; rather, they conclude, what is happening is an

²⁸ Bill T. Arnold, *The NIV Application Commentary: 1 & 2 Samuel*, ed Terry Muck (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 538.

orchestrated coup d'état by Nathan and Bathsheba to get Solomon crowned as king by a senile king.²⁹ However, it is noted that “David still possesses a keen mind, for he knows exactly how to carry out his promise. Without hesitation he summons the men who can counter Adonijah’s supporters . . . David’s shrewdness in assembling such a well-chosen party of supporters contrasts with the picture (of him being senile).”³⁰ Patterson and Austel give depth to what Nathan accomplished,

Nathan’s prompt and decisive action foils Adonijah’s plot by rousing David to take the steps necessary to insure the public proclamation of Solomon as king. By so doing Nathan not only worked out God’s will but also saved Solomon’s life. Despite the urgency of the situation, however, Nathan displayed once again the ability to act tactfully and judiciously.³¹

Solomon is placed on the throne and God’s will is preserved.

Nathan was an integral part of David’s life from the time he became king until his death. Their relationship involves all the characteristics of spiritual direction that were defined in Chapter One. Nathan may have had the biblical title of prophet, but he also performed the office of spiritual director to a king.

Other Old Testament Examples

Moses gave spiritual direction to Joshua. He reminded Joshua that God’s presence would always be with him and would never leave him nor forsake him (Deut 31:7-8). Joshua was by Moses’ side as he declared the “Song of Moses,” a tribute to the presence

²⁹ Howard F. Vos, *Bible Study Commentary: 1, 2 Kings* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1989), 36.

³⁰ P.R. House, *The New American Commentary: 1 & 2 Kings* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001) 93.

³¹ R. D. Patterson and Hermann Austel, *1 & 2 Kings*, in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary Vol. 4*, ed Frank Gaebelein, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 31.

of the Lord, to the whole assembly of Israel (Deut 32). Moses blessed Joshua by the laying on of hands, and the spirit of wisdom filled Joshua (Deut 34:9). Moses laid the foundation for Joshua to discern the will of the Lord after Moses died (Joshua 1:1-9). This was a long and trusting relationship of spiritual direction.

Undoubtedly, Eli was a spiritual director to the young boy Samuel; he guided the boy to hear the Lord's call (1 Sam 3). Elijah was a spiritual director to Elisha; he blessed him with his spirit, and when Elijah was taken up, Elisha cried out "father" (2 Kings 2:12). Father Chester Michael, a Roman Catholic priest who has devoted a substantial part of his ministry to spiritual direction and who has started the Spiritual Direction Institute writes, "Four of the five books of the Pentateuch are mostly books of spiritual direction for the Israelite people."³²

It is evident that, through the pages of the Old Testament, there are models of spiritual direction developing and taking place. These models, that include, leading into God's presence, directing towards healing, guiding towards growth, and discerning the will of God will continue to be developed in the New Testament.

The New Testament Scriptures

Jesus was the perfect spiritual director. Jesus' unique relationship with the Father and the Holy Spirit allowed him to guide others into the Presence, steer them toward growth, provide healing and help them to discern God's path for their lives. Howard Rice writes, "In Jesus we meet a master spiritual guide; he paid attention to the disciples, held

³² Chester Michael, *An Introduction to Spiritual Direction: A Psychological Approach for Directors and Directees* (New York: Paulist Press, 2004), 3.

them in prayer and spoke truth that enabled their understanding of the real meaning of their lives.”³³ This corresponds to Barry and Connolly’s two main characteristics of a spiritual director, “he or she must be in a conscious relationship with God and also be able to relate well with people”³⁴ Jesus is well-qualified to facilitate this relationship. Jesus provided this relationship to an variety of people: Nicodemus, the woman at the well, Mary, Mary Magdalene, Jesus’ mother, the Apostles,³⁵ etc. However, I think the best example of Jesus giving spiritual direction is in his relationship with Peter.

Jesus and Peter

The first recorded meeting of Jesus and Peter in Luke’s gospel is an example of trust building (Luke 5:1-11). Simon (Peter), the professional fisherman, was washing his net when Jesus got into his boat and asked Simon if he would go out into the water so that Jesus could teach the growing crowd. When Jesus finished speaking, he told Simon, “Put out into deep water and let down the nets for a catch.” Simon was obedient to Jesus’ request even though he had worked hard all night and not caught anything. Simon’s obedience is rewarded with a catch so large that the nets can not contain it. Simon recognized something in Jesus and fell to his knees begging Jesus, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!” Simon also recognized that he can trust Jesus and that Jesus has

³³ Howard Rice, *The Pastor as Spiritual Guide* (Nashville, TN: Upper Room, 1998), 59-60.

³⁴ Barry and Connolly, 143.

³⁵ There is not nearly enough space available to explore the subject of whether Jesus provided spiritual direction to Judas and if Jesus did provide it did the guidance lead Judas to betray Jesus. Two excellent sources on this topic would be N.T. Wright’s book *Judas and the Gospel of Jesus: Have We Missed the Truth about Christianity* and Peter Rollins’ book *The Fidelity of Betrayal: Towards a Church Beyond Belief*.

authority. Jeanette Bakke finds this issue of trust so important in spiritual direction that she devotes an entire chapter to it in her book *Holy Invitations: Exploring Spiritual Direction*.³⁶

I have already noted that Jesus was the ideal spiritual director, and based on Luke, Chapter 5, I also assert that Peter displayed the traits that make him an ideal directee. Peter demonstrated that he was open and willing to try anything in an attempt to get the desired result (Luke 5:5). Peter recognized that he was not perfect and he had a spiritual struggle (Luke 5:8). Peter also displayed a yearning for something more in his spirituality evident by his willingness to leave everything and follow Jesus (Luke 5:11).

That Jesus is a perfect director and Peter is an ideal directee does not indicate that these two accomplished everything in their first encounter, and Peter no longer needed Jesus' direction. Spiritual direction is never a quick fix; often it is a life long relationship. Scot McKnight uses Jesus and Peter's relationship as a paradigm for people looking to grow in faith. McKnight points to the importance of recognizing and following wise advice in a lasting relationship. He writes:

Let me urge you to find someone who is wise, someone who is loving, someone who is just, someone who is peaceful, and ask them if you can regularly spend time with them. Tell them they don't need to pull out a lesson each day or prepare anything. Ask them if you can spend time with them and do life with them once a week or once a month, so you can hear their wisdom and absorb it.

Now the hard part. I'm going to ask you not only to find a mentor and listen to a mentor, but do everything you can to do what the mentor advises you to do. The wise are those who are receptively reverent enough toward the wise that they listen and do what the wise advise.³⁷

³⁶ Bakke, Chapter 4.

³⁷ Scot McKnight, *One. Life: Jesus Calls, We Follow* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), 88.

As Peter grew into a leader in the early church, he needed this relationship even more, demonstrated perfectly by Peter's crisis of the cross that I will discuss later.

It is a bit ironic to discuss whether Jesus guided Peter into God's presence considering Jesus is God. However, it is doubtful Peter recognized this, at least at first, and one can even speculate just how well Jesus knew this to be true early on. The Transfiguration (Luke 9:28-36) is the best example of Jesus guiding Peter to the presence of God. Jesus took Peter, along with James and John (the inner circle), up onto a mountain to pray. Prayer by its very definition is a "means of communication that binds together God and humankind in intimate and reciprocal relationship."³⁸ Just by bringing Peter to such an intimate occasion (Jesus often went off alone to pray), Jesus guided Peter to the Presence. In this instance there is more!

The inner circle did not realize how blessed they were and drifted in and out of sleep. When they became fully awake they saw Jesus, Moses and Elijah in glorious splendor. Peter is impressed enough by this display to know that it is good for him to be there, although he really has no idea why or what is going on here. While Peter is speaking, "A cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud" (Luke 9:34). Lukan and New Testament scholar John Nolland writes, "The cloud is the sign of God's presence and the mode of his transportation . . . The fear the disciples experience is fear of the divine presence."³⁹ R.H. Stein adds, "The divine presence comes upon the scene in the form of a cloud, a common symbol of the presence

³⁸ Samuel Balentine, "Prayer," in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. D. N. Freedman (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1077.

³⁹ John Nolland, *Word Biblical Commentary: Luke 9:21-18:34* (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1993), 501.

of God.”⁴⁰ Clearly Jesus had led Peter to the presence of God. Peter is not only in God’s presence, but he also heard from God, “This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him” (Luke 9:35). A potential flaw in Jesus directing Peter is that Scripture does not mention Jesus working with Peter about what he heard God say. This does not mean Jesus did not; only that Scripture does not mention it. There are many conversations and events that Scripture does not mention.

Scripture does not mention Jesus having many one-on-one conversations with his disciples, but it is not a stretch to assume that he did. The Scriptures do testify to the fact that Jesus practiced a model of group spiritual direction. In her book on group spiritual direction, Fryling writes that, “The purpose of these groups is not counseling or therapy . . . the intentional goal of group spiritual direction is to help each participant become more aware of God in their own lives, for the sake of others.”⁴¹ The Gospel writers go into great detail about Jesus leading, guiding and instructing the disciples. He taught the disciples how to pray and how to notice God in the most unlikely of places. Jesus instructed them, not simply to impart knowledge, but also to guide them to a deeper level of faith and trust in God. Peter was a part of the group moments, but Peter also appears to have received more individual attention than the other disciples. This is most evident in the crisis of the cross.

Jesus prayed specifically that Peter’s faith would not fail in the face of temptation. Peter boldly proclaimed, “Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death” (Luke

⁴⁰ Stein, R. H., *The New American Commentary: Luke* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 286.

⁴¹ Fryling, 27.

22:33). Jesus informed Peter that he would not deny him not just once but that Peter would deny Jesus three times. Jesus led the disciples to a place of prayer and begged them to pray that they would not fall to temptation. The disciples were over-confident and fell asleep.⁴² This over-confidence, or taking the enemy lightly, is a problem that plagues many pastors who push prayer behind their many ongoing tasks, and it rarely ends up happening. The over-tired pastors then fail to recognize the spiritual withering of their soul.⁴³ A spiritual director can help the pastor realize this as Jesus did for Peter. However, Peter ignored Jesus' warnings, and in terms of contemporary social media, he is about to have an epic fail.

Jesus found the disciples asleep after his time of prayer had concluded and he warned them a second time to pray so that they would not fall into temptation. In this capacity, Jesus is acting as friend, spiritual director and Messiah. Judas arrived and Jesus was arrested. "Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus). Jesus commanded Peter, 'Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me'" (John 18:10-11) Luke and Mark do not record this event and John's Gospel is the only one that names Peter as the attacker. This was the second time that Jesus had to warn Peter that he was in danger of preventing God's direction.⁴⁴

⁴² Luke's Gospel is kind to the disciples and states that they fell asleep because they were exhausted from sorrow. This isn't mentioned in the other Gospels and the surrounding text doesn't indicate that they were filled with sorrow.

⁴³ London and Wiseman, 50.

⁴⁴ See Mathew 16:22-23 for the other instance.

Peter, who had been spiritually humble when first encountering Jesus, is knocked off his “I’ve arrived” horse by Jesus’ arrest and the subsequent rebuke for trying to protect Jesus. Janet Hagberg and Robert Guelich refer to Peter’s predicament as “the wall” and define it as such: “The Wall represents our will meeting God’s will face to face.”⁴⁵ This crisis moment, encountering the wall, often leads to what many refer to as the dark night of the soul, that will be explored further in Chapter Three. Peter is lost; his spiritual director was taken from him, and he apparently, based on his actions, could not grasp any of Jesus’ teachings. This all led to Peter’s threefold denial of Jesus.

Peter was still in crisis mode when Mary Magdalene alerted him to the fact that Jesus’ body was not in the tomb (John 20:1-9). Peter raced to the empty tomb and went inside. The author of John’s Gospel records: “Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed” (John 20:8). This is important because there is no mention that Peter also believed. Bultmann concluded, “It is presupposed that Peter before him was likewise brought to faith through the sight of the empty grave.”⁴⁶ However, there is no proof for this, and Luke’s Gospel ends this section with Peter wondering what had happened (Luke 24:12). Therefore, I conclude that Peter was still in his faith crisis, even after seeing the empty tomb. It is going to take more than an empty tomb for Peter to find healing in his crisis.

Jesus then appeared to the disciples as they were hidden behind lock doors in fear of the Jews. “The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord” (John 20:20b).

⁴⁵ Janet Hagberg and Robert Guelich, *The Critical Journey: Stages in the Life of Faith* (Salem, WI: Sheffield Publishing Company, 2005), 114.

⁴⁶ Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: a Commentary* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1971), 684.

There may be some that take the fact that Peter is not named specifically as a clue that Peter was not among the disciples hiding in the room when Jesus appeared; this is only conjecture. Peter is not singled out in this group situation, but his spiritual director is not about to let him continue suffering from his crisis of the cross.

Jesus comes full circle with Peter, meeting him once again after Peter had a night of fishing when nothing was caught (John 21:1-14). Jesus again instructed those fishing where to put the nets and they pulled in a large bounty of fish. After a shared breakfast together, Jesus turned his full attention to his directee:

When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?”

“Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”

Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.”

The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Feed my sheep. Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, “Follow me!”

Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, “Lord, who is going to betray you?”) When Peter saw him, he asked, “Lord, what about him?”

Jesus answered, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.” (John 21:15-22)

The way in which Jesus addresses Peter is an indication that the celebration of the catch is over. Johannine expert Leon Morris writes: “There is an air of solemnity about John’s use of the full name, Simon Peter, and then of his reporting that Jesus used the expanded form, Simon son of John.”⁴⁷

Jesus reaches deep into Peter’s soul with his three questions. The first question, “Do you love me more than these?” has traditionally been interpreted as whether Peter loved Jesus more than the other disciples loved Jesus.⁴⁸ However, Morris makes an excellent observation in light of Peter’s three-fold denial of Christ: “He had remained with his fellows and had gone fishing with them. Where did his supreme affection lie? With his companions with whom he resorted, or with Jesus whom he denied?”⁴⁹ The question then becomes, “Do you love me more than you love the other disciples?” After all Peter’s devotion had been to a non-crucified Lord, and it is clear in Peter’s actions and words that he had not wanted a crucified Christ. Morris claims Jesus is asking Peter if he is ready to love Jesus as he is, and not as Peter wished him to be.⁵⁰

Peter answered quickly, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you” (John 21:15). This quick response by Peter could suggest that he has not yet grasped the concept of

⁴⁷ Leon Morris, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Gospel According to John, Revised* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 767.

⁴⁸ This view is accepted by Westcott, Bultmann, Lenski, Barclay and others (Morris, 768). Peter often professed his devotion exceeded that of the others (Matt 26:33; Mark 14:29; John 13:37). Perhaps Jesus is making Peter think, “in light of what you have done, do you still believe you love me more than these others love me?”

⁴⁹ Morris, 768.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

discerning through prayer. However, Peter has had nothing but time to think and meditate on how much he loves Jesus, even the Jesus who is different than he imagined. Jesus asks Peter this question three times, the same number of times that Peter denied Jesus. This is not a coincidence. Jesus is clearly restoring, at the very least, Peter's faith.

The biblical text says that Peter was hurt (John 21:17b). The chorus to "Broken" by Lifehouse is:

I'm falling apart, I'm barely breathing
 With a broken heart that's still beating
 In the pain, there is healing
 In your name I find meaning⁵¹

This song could easily be speaking of this moment between Peter and Jesus. There is healing in the pain that Peter feels. Peter is hurt by the acceptance that he had failed Jesus and that it did not go unnoticed. Jesus does not let this pain take root. He brings it to the surface, even though it temporarily causes more pain, so that Peter can let go of it. Morris writes: "This must have had the effect of a demonstration that, whatever had been the mistakes of the past, Jesus was restoring Peter to a place of trust."⁵² Jesus was guiding Peter to a place of healing.

Peter is also showing signs of growth under Jesus' guidance in this passage. The normally self-proclaiming, unshakable pillar of faith admitted, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you" (21:17c). Köstenberger writes, "Perhaps at long last Peter has learned that he cannot follow Jesus in his own strength and has realized the hollowness of affirming his own loyalty in a way that relies more on his own power of

⁵¹ John Paul White and Melissa Ann Peirce, "Broken" (EMI Publishing, <http://www.lifehousemusic.com/lyrics/default.aspx?tid=10621629>), accessed April 17, 12.

⁵² Morris, 772.

will than on Jesus' enablement."⁵³ Peter has returned, at least for the time being, to the humility that he displayed when he first met Jesus and cried, "Away from me Lord, I am sinful man!" (Luke 5:8).

This passage also shows discernment about God's direction in Peter's life. After Peter said that he loves Jesus, Jesus replied, "Feed my lambs," "Take care of my sheep," and "Feed my sheep" (John 21). It is not completely clear what Peter is being called to do, but a pastoral role is evident. To read more into it may be misleading. Borchert observes: "Perhaps it is sufficient to conclude at this point that whatever one has to say here about Peter, it is clear that Jesus had a task for him, but not for the Peter of the preresurrection. It was Peter who needed to be sifted by the penetrating questioning of Jesus in order to do the work of the risen Lord and be reinstated after his devastating fall."⁵⁴

Jesus next reminded Peter that following Jesus is more literal than he may care to imagine. Jesus warned Peter through imagery that a commitment to following him would lead to imprisonment (John 21:18). As a spiritual director, Jesus is giving Peter this warning so that Peter will not consider it a failure when he is arrested or faces hardship like he did when Jesus was arrested and crucified. Peter will later repeat this thought to his flock: "Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed" (1 Peter

⁵³ A. J. Köstenberger, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 598.

⁵⁴ G. L. Borchert, (2003). *The New American Commentary: John 12-21* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003), 337.

4:12-13). This is evidence that Peter had matured and grown in grace over the years, but that growth and maturity is not always evident after the resurrection.

Jesus had just reinstated Peter, warned him that he will face persecution and given him the command “Follow me;” however, Peter wondered if the disciple whom Jesus loved (probably John) was going to suffer a similar fate. Borchert calls this a “gnawing question” and adds, “‘What about someone else?’ is a very human question. . . . Our concern for others can actually sidetrack us from facing God’s personal demands on us. That was the problem with Peter in this verse, and Jesus was prepared to confront him with this sidetracking of his personal calling.”⁵⁵ Peter had to stop letting everything else get in the way of his personal calling; a problem that he later wrestled with in Acts 10-11.

Further Biblical texts state that Peter did amazing things in the early church, a sign of growth. Extra biblical texts state that Peter did meet the fate that Jesus had warned him about, and was crucified upside down, a sign of discerning and fulfilling the path God had ordained for him.⁵⁶ Peter was known for putting his foot in his mouth and stepping into uncertainty when the others seemed to hide in the background. Clement of Rome wrote of his mentor: “There was Peter, who, because of unrighteous jealousy, endured not one or two but many trials, and thus having given his testimony went to his appointed place of glory.”⁵⁷ Through it all Peter is known as one of the most prominent saints in Christianity, thanks in no small part, to having had the greatest spiritual director.

⁵⁵ Borchert, 339.

⁵⁶ Köstenberger, 599.

⁵⁷ Michael W. Holmes, M. W., *The Apostolic Fathers : Greek Texts and English Translations* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1999), 35.

Ananias and Paul

Some might suggest that Peter is the most well known leader in early Christianity; if this is true, then Paul⁵⁸ is clearly the second most well known leader in the upstart religion. There are some who would argue Pauline primacy over Petrine primacy based solely on the number of epistles collected in Scripture.⁵⁹ There may be debate over who was considered the top leader, but there is no debate that both were very important leaders in the early church.

Paul is often used as the prime example of a spiritual director in Scripture, a fact that will be revisited at the end of this chapter. However, who acted as a spiritual director to Paul? Gamaliel may have acted in the role as spiritual guide while teaching Paul (Acts 22:3). After his conversion/calling, Paul may have relied on Barnabas to meet the needs of spiritual direction (Acts 9:27; 11:25-26; 13). Simeon, Lucius and Manaen may have filled this role for Paul (Acts 13:1-2). These may all be good examples, but I want to explore a person who, although he did not fill the role for Paul for a long period of time, was essential in Paul's development. Ananias demonstrates the spiritual director model of helping Paul into God's presence, guiding Paul to grow, leading Paul to healing and assisting him with God's direction in his life.

Ananias demonstrated a capacity for being a spiritual director in Acts 9:10. Scripture records, "In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, 'Ananias!' 'Yes, Lord,' he answered." Ananias was open to the presence

⁵⁸ Prior to Acts 13:9 Paul was called Saul. To avoid confusion I will use the name of Paul at all times when referring to Saul of Tarsus.

⁵⁹ James White, director of Alpha and Omega Ministries, has often used this argument in his debates on Petrine Primacy. More information can be found on his website, www.aomin.org.

of the Lord. Much like the boy Samuel, Ananias answered positively to the Lord's calling (1 Samuel 3). However, Ananias was called to offer assistance to the man who was infamously persecuting Christians and Ananias has obvious concerns. Acts scholar, Polhill, writes: "Ananias at first protested the commission. He was all too aware of who Paul was . . . Surely Jesus did not want him to go to this man. Ananias's reaction is understandable and should not be seen as his refusing the Lord."⁶⁰ Ananias obeyed the Lord's instructions and finds Paul (Acts 9:17).

Just as Ananias demonstrated a capacity for being a spiritual director, Paul likewise demonstrated the capacity to be directed. Paul was sensitive to the Lord's presence as his encounter on the Damascus road illustrates (Acts 9:4-6). Paul, after the encounter, obeyed the Lord and went to the place where he was directed (Acts 9:8). Paul, while waiting for further instruction, practiced the spiritual disciplines to cultivate his soul for another encounter (Acts 9:9-11). Joseph Fitzmyer, one of the most renowned experts on Acts, writes, "Saul, who has been confronted by the risen Christ, is depicted as not only fasting, but also communing with God in prayer. He practices ordinary Jewish acts of piety as he awaits further guidance."⁶¹ Paul was eager to engage the Trinity.

When Ananias encountered Paul Ananias laid hands on him and prayed with him. Every spiritual director uses prayer as the means to direction. Henri Nouwen says the "greatest call of a spiritual director is to open the door to the opportunities for spiritual growth and sometimes to provide a glimpse of the great mysterious light behind the

⁶⁰ J. B. Polhill, *The New American Commentary: Acts* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 237.

⁶¹ Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles* (London: Yale University Press, 1997), 428.

curtain of life and of the Lord who is the source of all knowing and the giver of life.”⁶² In Ananias’ prayer over Paul a door is opened to a new beginning and Paul could see again (Acts 9:18).

Ananias guided Paul in holistic healing. Although some may argue that spiritual direction may assist in spiritual healing and maybe even in emotional healing, they contend it does not provide physical healing. Moon and Brenner take objection to this when discussing spiritual direction; they write, “Healing involves efforts to help others overcome some impairment and move toward wholeness. These curative efforts can involve physical healing as well as spiritual healing, but the focus is always the total person, whole and holy.”⁶³ Book of Acts expert, F. Scott Spencer, comments on Ananias’ role in this healing: “Paul receives the healing ministrations of Ananias, including baptism and the laying on of hands to restore his sight and infuse him with the Holy Spirit.”⁶⁴ In the narrative of Acts, the laying on of the hands is as significant as the prayer. Dr. Mikeal Parsons comments, “The gesture is appropriate, for in Acts the laying on of hands conveys, among other things, both healing and the gift of the Spirit.”⁶⁵

Ananias’ healing hands appear to heal Paul, not only from his physical blindness, but also from his spiritual blindness. The Scripture states, “Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized” (Acts

⁶² Nouwen, Christensen, and Laird, *Spiritual Direction*, 13.

⁶³ Moon and Brenner, 11.

⁶⁴ F. Scott Spencer, *Journeying Through Acts: A Literary-Cultural Reading* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishing, 2004), 108.

⁶⁵ Mikeal Parsons, *Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament: Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 131.

9:18). Luke Timothy Johnson views this as a significant spiritual healing: “The expression is obviously intended as metaphorical rather than literal. Paul ‘was blind but now can see’; the Light that blinded him paradoxically relieved him of his spiritual blindness.”⁶⁶ Ananias’ role in both the physical and spiritual healing of Paul cannot be overlooked nor should it be simply because Ananias fades from Luke’s narrative after Acts 9.

There is much conjecture after the baptism about Ananias’ role in Paul’s life. Many scholars agree with Kistemaker when he suggests: “Although Luke deletes the account of Paul meeting the Damascus believers, we are confident that Ananias served as Paul’s spokesman, removed barriers of fear and resentment, and caused the church to accept its former persecutor.”⁶⁷ Fitzmyer goes so far as to write, “Ananias has thus been the means whereby Saul is legitimized as a Christian and becomes a witness to Christ in the Lucan story.”⁶⁸ What Ananias did during Paul’s “several days with the disciples in Damascus (Acts 9:19b) or during his three years in Arabia (Acts 9:23; Gal 1:17-18) is purely speculative.

A case can be made, however, for Ananias providing Paul guidance in discerning the Lord’s direction in his life. Paul, himself, said in recalling the moment, ““then he (Ananias) said: ‘The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from his mouth. You will be his witness to all people of what you have seen and heard. And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized

⁶⁶ Luke Timothy Johnson and Daniel Harrington, *Sacra Pagina: The Acts of the Apostles* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 165.

⁶⁷ Simon Kistemaker, *New Testament commentary: Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1990), 346.

⁶⁸ Fitzmyer, 429.

and wash your sins away, calling on his name” (Acts 22:14-16). According to Paul, Ananias helped him discern what the Lord was calling him to do and what direction the rest of his life would take.

Ananias, even in a short-term manner, provided spiritual direction to Paul. Randall Earl Denny, longtime pastor of the Spokane Valley Church of the Nazarene, sums up the Ananias-Paul relationship nicely. He writes in his devotional commentary on Acts, “On Jesus’ behalf, Ananias confirmed Christ’s commission to Saul. Interpreting Saul’s amazing experience, he translated the blinding light into the Lord’s direction for Saul. People may have many kinds of experiences, but how needful for growing Christians to give direction to the new follower of Jesus.”⁶⁹ Ananias served a purpose for such a time as this to perhaps the most influential Christian evangelist ever.

Other New Testament Examples

The New Testament provides other wonderful examples of spiritual direction. Peter and John provided direction and guidance to those in Samaria (Acts 8:14-17). Peter helped Cornelius and his family find their way in the faith (Acts 10), and it is implied in extra-biblical texts that Peter was Mark’s longtime spiritual director.⁷⁰ Phillip was a soul friend to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-40). Timothy was a spiritual father to the

⁶⁹ Randall Earl Denny, *Wind in the Rigging: A Study of Acts 9-12 and Its Meaning for Today* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1985), 30.

⁷⁰ Paul and Barnabas obviously helped Mark in this role as well, but I infer that Peter became more of a spiritual guide based on the tradition of the second Gospel being written by Mark from what he had learned from Peter.

leaders in Corinth (1 Corinthians 4:15-17). The greatest example of a spiritual director outside of Jesus, with many references, is Paul.

It is not difficult to see Paul as a spiritual director to other leaders in the young church. He gave direction to Silas and Timothy; perhaps Paul even provided guidance to Peter. In his introduction to spiritual direction, Chester Michael writes, “The whole body of Pauline Epistles may be seen as spiritual direction on the part of Paul for his converts.”⁷¹ Dr. Victor Copan writes in his book, *Saint Paul as Spiritual Director*,

The Apostle Paul was chosen because of his prominence in the canon and because of his more thorough treatment of how life is to be lived as a Christian—in combination with his use of imitation language throughout his writing, thus setting himself up as a model to be emulated and because he simultaneously functioned as a spiritual director to the fledgling communities.⁷²

Paul is a wonderful example in the sense that he provided spiritual direction and also received spiritual direction.

Scripture may not mention the office of spiritual director; however, this brief survey demonstrates that a model of spiritual direction was taking place throughout Scripture. There is unequivocally guidance given to those in leadership positions that leads to divine presence, growth, healing and discernment found throughout the Holy Scriptures. The model of spiritual direction was set in the Garden, lived out perfectly in the flesh through Jesus and the paradigm passed to many in the early church.

⁷¹ Michael, 4.

⁷² Victor Copan, *Saint Paul as Spiritual Director* (Bletchley, UK: Paternoster, 2007), 3. This book is highly recommended for anyone doing a thorough study of Paul or spiritual direction. Victor Copan develops Paul as a spiritual director though using a model of imitation.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL EVIDENCE OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION FOR LEADERS IN THE CHURCH

History is the Letter of Instructions, which the old generations write and posthumously transmit to the new . . .

Thomas Carlyle¹

The purpose of this chapter will be to explore the historical evidence of spiritual direction models for leaders in the Christian church. In the first half of this chapter, particular attention will be given to those who were influential in the development of spiritual direction models and provided spiritual direction to leaders. The second half of the chapter will be a brief summary on how spiritual direction models have developed within some denominations and followed by a more in-depth focus on John Wesley and the holiness traditions.

Spiritual Direction Prior to the Onset of Denominationalism

It is believed that the practice of spiritual direction was passed down from the disciples mentioned in the New Testament who both provided and received spiritual

¹ Thomas Carlyle, *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays: Collected and Republished in 4 Vol. 3*. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1857), 382.

direction. Both Irenaeus—who in his youth heard the Apostle John speak—and Tertullian recorded that the Apostle John was the spiritual director of the bishop of Smyrna, Polycarp.² Paul likely provided spiritual direction to Linus, the second recorded pope, since Linus was with Paul during the writing of 2 Timothy (2 Timothy 4:21).³

Very few writings are available from the early church fathers, perhaps because of the persecutions and destruction of literature.⁴ Not until Constantine the Great converted to Christianity did a wide sampling of Christian literature become available. However, insight can be gained into what was going on through later writers. John Cassian, writing in the fifth-century, believed that the spread of monasticism and resulting spiritual direction was a revival of the purity of the ancient church.⁵ Therefore, the desire to grow spiritually with the assistance of a spiritual father found in the desert was a reflection of similar practices from the first few hundred years of Christianity.

The life of Origen (185/184 – 253/254) bears witness to what Cassian implied. Many believers studied under Origen, but perhaps none better known than Thaumaturgus (Gregory the Wonderworker)⁶ who became the bishop of his Cappadocian homeland.⁷ In

² Francis Joseph Bacchus, “St. Polycarp” in *The Catholic Encyclopedia Online*, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12219b.htm> (accessed May 4, 2012).

³ Eusebius, and Christian Frederic Cruse, *Eusebius’ Ecclesiastical History: Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), 67.

⁴ E. Glenn Hinson, *The Early Church: Origins to the Dawn of the Middle Ages* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 71-73.

⁵ John Cassian, *The Conferences – Enhanced* (Wyatt North Publishing), Kindle Electronic Edition: Locations 6505-6558.

⁶ Eusebius, 218.

⁷ Werner Jaeger, *Early Christianity and Greek Paideia* (Boston, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1961), 51.

Gregory's farewell address, which is the most vivid picture left of the method and influence of the great Christian master, the scholar recounts with touching devotion, the course along which he had been guided by Origen to whom he felt he owed his spiritual life.⁸ It is important to note that Gregory referred to Origen as guiding him, not simply teaching him, and also mentioned Origen's impact on his spiritual life rather than his academic life. Origen himself wrote of a spiritual father as one who heals:

First approve the physician to whom you should make known the cause of your sickness, one who knows how to be weak with the weak, to weep with one who weeps, who has learned the art of caring and compassion. More concisely, when he gives good counsel and proves himself a learned and merciful physician and when he shall give any spiritual counsel, you will act upon it and follow it.⁹

He applied this healing to his pupils even after they became leaders, demonstrating the belief that leaders need spiritual direction.

Saint Anthony of Egypt (ca. 251-356), known as the Father of All Monks and founder of Christian monasticism,¹⁰ often hinted at spiritual direction when describing those with the gift of discernment. He claimed to have known many who pursued asceticism for many years, "but whose lack of discernment eventually led to their spiritual demise."¹¹ Leading others in the discernment process became a cornerstone in the task of the Desert Fathers, as many people made pilgrimages to see them for their

⁸ Henry Wace, ed. *A Dictionary of Christian Biography and Literature to the End of the Sixth Century A.D.: With an Account of the Principal Sects and Heresies* (Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), 772, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/wace/biodict.tp.html> (accessed May 7, 2012).

⁹ Jerome Neufelder and Mary Coelho, eds., *Writings on Spiritual Direction* (New York, NY: The Seabury Press, 1982), 78.

¹⁰ Edward Butler, "St. Anthony" in *The Catholic Encyclopedia Online*, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01553d.htm> (accessed May 4, 2012).

¹¹ George Demacopoulos, *Five Models of Spiritual Direction in the Early Church* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 8.

wisdom and guidance.¹² The Desert Fathers encouraged others to find help in discernment. Jerome Neufelder quotes a teaching moment from an anonymous Desert Father when he writes,

In my own room I do all that a person is counseled to do there, and I find no consolation from God. The elder said: “This happens to you because you want your own will to be done.” The brother said, “What then will you command me to do, father?” The elder said, “Go, give yourself over to a man who fears God, be humble before him, give up your own will to him, and only then will you find consolation from God.”¹³

This is a reminder of Jesus’ own teachings about how the Christian journey is not something that one should attempt alone (Mark 6:7, Luke 10:1, Mathew 18:20).

St. Jerome (ca. 347-420), who led an ascetical life in the desert for five years, is widely known for his Latin translation of Scripture, *The Vulgate*. However, amidst his devotion to study, he found time to be a spiritual director to Paula and Eustochium.¹⁴ It demonstrates how important spiritual direction was for the desert fathers and for those who had spent any time with them.

John Cassian (ca. 350-435), who was mentioned earlier, provides some of the earliest known writings on spiritual direction from the first 500 years of Christianity. He made a strong case that everyone, including leaders, needed spiritual direction. He wrote, “Who is so smug and blind as to trust his own judgment and power of discernment when the chosen vessel [Paul] confesses that he had need of counsel with his fellow apostles.”¹⁵

¹² E. Fahlbusch, & G. W. Bromiley, “Desert Fathers,” in *Vol. 2: The Encyclopedia of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003), 72.

¹³ Neufelder and Coelho, 2.

¹⁴ Charles Coppens, "Spiritual Direction." *The Catholic Encyclopedia Online*, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05024a.htm> (accessed May 7, 2012).

¹⁵ Cassian, *The Conferences*, Loc: 5755-5762.

If Paul needed spiritual direction, how could anyone possibly deny that it is beneficial for him or her during his or her Christian walk? Paul was not new to faith; he had been a Pharisee and had been trained by the master Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). Paul also had a direct revelation from Jesus Christ on the Damascus Road (Acts 9). If someone with that type of pedigree needed spiritual direction, it is reasonable to assume it is for everyone. St. Dorotheos, writing a century after Cassian, remarks in his *Directions on Spiritual Training* about the importance of having a guide: “No men are more unfortunate or nearer perdition than those who have no teachers on the way of God. For what does it mean that where no guidance is, the people fall like leaves? A leaf is at first green, flourishing, beautiful, then it gradually withers, falls, and is finally trampled underfoot. So it is with the man who has no guide.”¹⁶

Cassian does not paint an attractive portrait of someone who would deny spiritual direction. He lamented, “Whence we clearly see that the Lord does not Himself show the way of perfection to anyone who having the opportunity of learning despises the teaching and training (guidance) of the Elders.”¹⁷ This is not surprising because of his affinity for the desert monks to whom people made pilgrimages to seek out wisdom and training. To take such training and then not apply it would be similar to a smack in the face to Cassian and the desert fathers. Cassian saw this disrespect as a lack of humility, which he believed lead away from perfection. “And so it is clearly shown that none can attain the end of perfection and purity, except through true humility, which he displays in the first

¹⁶ Kenneth Leech, *Soul Friend: Spiritual Direction in the Modern World* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2001), 40.

¹⁷ Cassian, *The Conferences*, Loc: 1275. My translation does not use “guidance”. However, the translation of *Patrologia Latina* (Vol. 49-50) by Neufelder and Coelho suggest that “guidance” is a suitable replacement for “training”.

instance to the brethren . . .”¹⁸ Humility, through seeking and following the guidance of elders, is the path to purity for Cassian.

Cassian recognized the need for confession because harboring even an evil thought stood in the way of discernment.¹⁹ The topic of confession is not mentioned explicitly in the definitions of spiritual direction offered in the Introduction, but it is implied. In *The Art of Spiritual Direction*, Jones writes that sometimes a particular circumstance weighing heavily upon a person can initiate direction if it is confessed. He writes marriage crises, grief, wayward children, sexual affairs, and unethical practices as such circumstances that when confessed can be a catalyst to proper direction.²⁰ However, unlike Roman Catholic sacramental confession, the spiritual director uses these confessions to help move a directee into God’s presence, work towards healing, step towards growth and/or find God’s direction in it.

Perhaps Cassian’s most enduring paradigm of spiritual direction was guiding through the examples of others. Demacopoulos writes, “Admonition through saintly example is the hallmark of Cassian’s writing. In both the *Institutes* and the *Conferences*, Cassian communicates moral and ascetic lessons through the words and actions of legendary figures. . . . [In] *Conferences*, Cassian conveys his ascetic agenda through the authoritative voice of distant heroes.”²¹ This is also the model that Paul used throughout

¹⁸ John Cassian, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series, Volume XI: Sulpitius Severus, Vincent of Lérins*, (New York, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1894), 287.

¹⁹ Cassian, *The Conferences*, Loc: 1929.

²⁰ W. Paul Jones, 101.

²¹ Demacopoulos, 123.

his letters exhorting people to follow him as he followed Christ (1 Corinthians 1:11, Galatians 4:12, Philippians 3:17, 1 Thessalonians 1:6).²²

Saint Benedict of Nursia (c.480-543) was a contemporary of Cassian and wrote about spiritual direction in his rule for monks. In both Chapters 45 and 46 of *The Holy Rule of St. Benedict*, he calls for a confession to the Abbot if any transgression or mistake is made. He adds, “If, however, the cause of the offense is secret, let him disclose it to the Abbot alone, or to his spiritual Superiors, who know how to heal their own wounds, and not expose and make public those of others.”²³ Once again, this model has a confessional tone, but not for sacramental reasons. It is a relational confession between the Abbot and those the Abbot is guiding and teaching to sustain a relationship of love. The *Prologue to the Rule* bears witness to this:

We are, therefore, about to found a school of the Lord's service, in which we hope to introduce nothing harsh or burdensome. But even if, to correct vices or to preserve charity, sound reason dictateth anything that turneth out somewhat stringent, do not at once fly in dismay from the way of salvation, the beginning of which cannot but be narrow. But as we advance in the religious life and faith, we shall run the way of God's commandments with expanded hearts and unspeakable sweetness of love; so that never departing from His guidance and persevering in the monastery in His doctrine till death, we may by patience share in the sufferings of Christ, and be found worthy to be coheirs with Him of His kingdom.²⁴

²² Victor Copan’s primary argument for Paul as a spiritual director is based on the paradigm of imitation. His book, *Saint Paul as Spiritual Director: An Analysis of the Imitation of Paul with Implications and Applications to the Practice of Spiritual Direction* is an excellent resource to study this model in more depth.

²³ Benedict of Nursia, *The Holy Rule of St. Benedict* (Atchison, KS: St. Benedict’s Abbey, 1949), Electronic Text, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/benedict/rule2/files/rule2.html#ch46> (accessed May 9, 2012).

²⁴ *Ibid.*

This prologue also indicates, as was mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, that spiritual direction is not direction provided by the director but guidance provided by God.

Saint Bernard of Clairvaux (1091-1153) was adamant in correcting a potential flaw in spiritual direction. Corrupted human nature has a desire to lead and manipulate, rather than walk alongside and join. These selfish characteristics could also manifest themselves in the spiritual direction relationship. In preaching on being a spiritual guide, St. Bernard exclaimed, “Know that you must be mothers to those that are assigned to you and not masters.”²⁵ Bernard believed to properly guide someone, more than correction was needed, but also encouragement and nurture. Encouragement and nurture, at this time, were seen as feminine or motherly characteristics. St. Bernard expands on this in a letter to the parents of one of his young monks: “I will be for him both a mother and a father, both a brother and a sister. I will make the crooked path straight for him, and the rough places smooth. I will temper and arrange all things that his soul may advance and his body not suffer.”²⁶

Saint Bernard did much more than offer a combined male and female paradigm of spiritual direction; he demonstrated the need for leaders to have spiritual direction even at the highest positions. In a letter to Pope Eugene II he writes, “I shall still love you as a father of the poor and the wealthy. . . . I will instruct you not as master, but as a mother,

²⁵ Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, “Sermon #23” *Patrologia Latina Vol. 183*. Electronic Text, http://books.google.com/books?id=8fUUAAAAQAAJ&pg=PP7&source=gbs_toc_r&cad=4#v=onepage&q&f=false (accessed May 10, 2012).

²⁶ Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, *As seen Through His Selected Letters* (Washington D.C.: Henry Regnery Publishing, 1953), 169.

indeed, as a lover.”²⁷ The model of a spiritual director as a lover might raise eyebrows in the 21st century; however, it matches the language and imagery of the Song of Songs beautifully. The more important idea is that this guidance is to a pope who in the 12th Century was one of the most powerful people in the western world.²⁸

Saint Catherine of Siena (1347-1380) was another person who demonstrated that the Pope needed guidance and direction. She built on the encouragement platform, created by Barnabas and used by Saint Bernard, of spiritual direction using it to elicit healing. She wrote to Pope Gregory XI,

This is what I wish to see in you. If up to now, we were not very resolute. I wish and pray in truth that the amount of time which remains be used as a real man would, following Christ, whose vicar you are, like a strong man. Fear not, reverend father, for anything that may result from these tumultuous winds which are now blowing against you, those rotting members of the Church who have rebelled against you. Fear not, for God’s help is close to you.²⁹

Saint Catherine not only uses the encouragement model, but also appears to borrow from Paul, and later Cassian, when she uses the model of imitation to help bring growth and healing in a crisis situation. When she sent the above letter to Pope Gregory XI, he was struggling with the decision of whether to return the papacy to Rome and end the Avignon papacy.³⁰

²⁷ Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, *Five Books on Consideration: Advice to a Pope* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1976), 23-24.

²⁸ Mark Noll, *Turning Points* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 107-127.

²⁹ Saint Catherine of Siena, *As Seen in Her Letters*, trans. Vida Scudder (London: J.M. Dent and Sons Publishing, 1927), 165-66.

³⁰ Bruce Shelly, *Church History in Plain Language* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishing, 1995), 220-221.

Pope Gregory XI strongly sought after Catherine's guidance. While his cardinals urged Pope Gregory to return to Avignon, the Pope disguised himself as a common priest in order to seek Catherine's guidance. Her biographer writes, "In order not to cause any scandal the head of the church . . . put on a simple priest's robe and went alone to the Sieneese woman to let her decide his fate and the fate of the church for many years to come."³¹ Catherine would attest that it was not her guidance but the guidance of God.³² Her biographer continues, "He entered, and Catherine fell at the feet of the Vicar of Christ. The Pope told her to stand up, and late into the night the two of them sat alone talking. When Gregory left her he had been strengthened and edified."³³ This story is a wonderful description of a top leader seeking discernment from, of all people in that era, a woman.

Saint Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) was another woman whose influence was formative in the development of spiritual direction. It is not possible to share her contributions to spiritual direction without at the same time also sharing those of St. John of the Cross (1542-1591). Their stories and their development of spiritual direction overlap and intertwine to form a beautiful tapestry. Teresa would become John's spiritual mother, and he would become her spiritual guide.³⁴ Dr. Thomas Green writes, "Teresa

³¹ Sigrid Undset, *Catherine of Siena* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1954), 218.

³² T.C. Oden, *Pastoral Counsel* (New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing, 1989), 40-41.

³³ Undset, 217-218.

³⁴ These two facts are mentioned in nearly every book on St. Teresa or St. John. There are four main books that I used to gather most of the biographical information used in this section on St. Teresa and St. John. They are as follows: *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross* (Translated by Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez), *The Life of St. Teresa of Jesus* (Translated by David Lewis), *Invitation to Christian Spirituality* (John Tyson), and *The Dark Night of the Soul* (Gerald May).

says that Alvarez and St. John of the Cross were the best of the many spiritual directors she had in her lifetime.”³⁵

In May of 1572, John arrived in Avila to assist Teresa in founding a reformed Carmelite convent. John’s ministry at the convent included providing teaching and guidance to the sisters. However, John’s “spiritual direction ministry also extended into the city, to a wide range of people, including well known sinners.”³⁶ There is no mistake that John’s greatest accomplishment was his mutual guiding relationship with Saint Teresa. Kieran Kavanaugh writes in his biographical sketch of John, “From her he received as much as he gave in those years of profound and open conversation, a conversation that once on Trinity Sunday so soared that the two not only went into ecstasy but were seen elevated from the ground.”³⁷ The relationship was mutual, but John appeared to push Teresa to greater heights. Kavanaugh continues, “On November 18, 1572, while John was her director, Teresa unexpectedly received the grace of spiritual marriage. She was now in the seventh and final dwelling place of her spiritual journey; there in the center room of the interior castle, she came to know the highest state of intimacy with God.”³⁸ Saint Teresa experienced profound spiritual growth under John’s direction.

Saint Teresa was 27 years older than Saint John, and while he provided her guidance, she provided him with the experience of a life lived. Dr. Gerald May

³⁵ Green, 12.

³⁶ Saint John of the Cross, *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross* (Washington D.C.: ICS Publishing, 1991), 17.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

comments, “Of all those who influenced John’s work, however, the most important was Teresa . . . though he seldom acknowledged her as a source, nearly all of John’s imagery and most of his fundamental insights can be found in Teresa’s earlier writings.”³⁹

If Teresa’s experiences were the skeleton that initially influenced the form of the dark night of the soul, John’s imprisonment and torture became the muscle and flesh. John was arrested and put in prison because of the reforms he was aiding among the Carmelite community. He was imprisoned in Toledo where public beatings were the weekly affair, and a prison cell barely large enough for his body became his home. It is during these dark times that he composed the poem “Spiritual Canticle,” but the “Dark Night of the Soul” was also certainly taking shape.

“The Dark Night of the Soul” is not a poem or treatise about suffering; it is a poem about victory. Gerald May wrote a book refuting misconceptions regarding the meaning and importance of the “Dark Night of the Soul.”⁴⁰ The issue May takes most offense at is that God has abandoned a person leaving them in the dark night. The poem has eight stanzas, and only the first two describe any type of spiritual purgation. Kieran Kavanaugh comments on the final six stanzas, “[they] speak of some of the marvelous results obtained from spiritual illumination and union with God through love.”⁴¹ May refers to the “Dark Night of the Soul” as “the story of a love affair: a romance between

³⁹ Gerald May, *The Dark Night of the Soul: A Psychiatrist Explores the Connection between Darkness and Spiritual Growth* (San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins, 2005), 16.

⁴⁰ The book is called: *The Dark Night of the Soul: A Psychiatrist Explains the Connection Between Darkness and Spiritual Growth*.

⁴¹ Saint John of the Cross, 358.

God and the human soul that liberates us to love one another”⁴² and describes it as a “deeply encouraging vision of the joys and pains we all experience in life. It inspires the desire to minimize suffering and injustice wherever possible, and at the same time, it sheds a hope-filled light on the pains that cannot be avoided.”⁴³ Consequently, this understanding of the dark night of the soul establishes Saint John of the Cross as a major figure in the crisis paradigm of spiritual direction.

John understood there would be difficulties in the faith journey because he experienced them first hand. He also experienced great victories and blessings that flowed out of the difficulties. Armed with this knowledge, he was able to guide and direct others through a wide variety of situations. A guide is most needed in these difficult times, and in his writings, John seems to cherish and exhort those who not only were going through a dark night, but even those who completely doubted their faith.⁴⁴

Perhaps more importantly as it relates to spiritual direction John recognized that the faith journey was never meant to be attempted alone. He writes in *Spiritual Maxims and Sentences*,

The person that desires to be alone, lacking the assistance of a master and guide, will be like a lonely tree in the field that has no owner. No matter how much fruit it bears, strangers will pick it all, and it will not get ripe. The person that is alone without a spiritual guide, and has virtue, is like a glowing ember that is alone. It will become more frigid rather than hotter. The person that falls down by himself remains on the ground alone and does not value his soul, since he entrusts it only to himself. If you are not fearful of falling alone, how do you dare to try to rise alone? Notice how much more can be done by two together than by one alone.⁴⁵

⁴² May, *Dark Night of the Soul*, 12.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁴⁴ Saint John of the Cross, 272-273, 420-421, 430.

⁴⁵ Neufelder and Coelho, 5.

This was not a new or an original idea; it echoed the teachings of Jesus sending the disciples out two by two.

Some of this era doubted a need for a spiritual director. John wrote on the heels of the Protestant Reformation, and the cry of *sola fide* or *sola scriptura* was ever present. The new Reformists believed God would direct them through the words of scripture and another fallen human being was unnecessary for guidance. On the other end of the spectrum was the cry that the mystic did not need someone to interpret what God was telling him or her. John countered with:

God is completely satisfied that the guidance and direction of people be mediated through other people, and that a person be guided by human intelligence, that He certainly does not desire that we confer all our confidence to His supernatural communications, nor that we authenticate their veracity and surety until they come to us through this natural instrument of the mouth of another person. As often as He manifests some truth to a person, He confers upon his soul a particular capacity for also manifesting this to the appropriate person. Until a person does this, he usually is living without complete peace of mind, because he has not received it from another person like himself.⁴⁶

John spoke of the when of direction and the need of direction, but another of his great contributions to contemporary spiritual direction was what a director should not do. He writes in his commentary on “The Living Flame of Love,” “. . . many spiritual masters cause great harm to a number of souls; not understanding the ways and properties of the spirit.”⁴⁷ St. John’s biggest fear was that directors would try to rush directees through the dark night of the soul experience, and this equates to modern day directors who try to fix the directee. John understood the director’s job was to accompany the

⁴⁶ Saint John of the Cross, 412.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 685

directee on the journey, giving encouragement and recommendations on hearing the Holy Spirit. John and Teresa also feared that instead of advice, the director would give orders, which was a common, faulty practice for directors prior to John and Francis de Sale.⁴⁸ Throughout John and Teresa's writings they warn that giving orders tends to be very manipulative and dangerous and is why almost all spiritual directors no longer do this. Saint John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila wanted to make sure that spiritual direction was a practice where God's direction was sought rather than the director's agenda accomplished. To this end they often wrote instructions for directors.⁴⁹

Saint Francis de Sales (1567-1622) arrived on the heels of Teresa and John and into a world ripped apart with religious fervor because of the Protestant Reformation. Anglican priest and expert on spiritual direction Kenneth Leech calls Saint Francis de Sales "the most insistent of all writers on the necessity of direction."⁵⁰ Saint Francis de Sales especially argued that leaders need spiritual direction: "And why should we wait to be masters of ourselves in that which concerns the spirit, since we are not so in what concerns the body. Do we not know that doctors when they are sick call other doctors to judge as to the remedies that are right for them?"⁵¹ This reasoning points every clergy to another clergy for spiritual care. When asked who should find a spiritual director, Saint

⁴⁸ According to *The Life of St. Teresa of Jesus* this was a problem that plagued Saint Teresa with some of her earlier confessors. Saint Teresa's struggles with it may have been a major reason Saint John wrote so much about it. Saint Teresa, *The Life of Saint Teresa of Jesus* (London: Burns, Oats, 1870).

⁴⁹ The entire XXIII Chapter of *The Life of St. Teresa of Jesus* is dedicated to this matter. Saint John offered instruction for directors often in *The Spiritual Canticle*.

⁵⁰ Leech, 59.

⁵¹ Saint Francis de Sales, *The Sermons of St. Francis de Sales on Our Lady* (Rockford, IL: Tan Books and Publishers, 1985), 131.

Francis de Sales answered, “The wise man tells us: they that fear the Lord; that is to say, the humble, who eagerly seek their spiritual progress. Since it is of the greatest urgency, Philothea, that you should travel with a good guide on this holy journey of sanctity . . .”⁵²

Saint Francis de Sales urged others to take on a spiritual director in order to encounter God more fully. In his letters, books and sermons, he often compared a spiritual director to an angel who provided guidance and helped discern the direction of God. He wrote in an *Introduction to the Devout Life*,

This spiritual guide should always be an Angel in your eyes, i.e., when you have found him, do not see him merely as a human person, nor confide in him as such, nor in his human knowledge only, but in God, who will bless you and communicate to you through this man, placing into his mind and on his lips those ideas necessary for your happiness, so that you should listen to him as an Angel, who comes down from heaven to lead you back to heaven with him.⁵³

The emphasis in this quotation and throughout de Sales’ writings, is the importance of having a spiritual director who will help the directee encounter God.

Saint Francis de Sales wrote that a good director “must be filled with charity, knowledge, and prudence; if one of these three qualities is lacking in him, there is danger. I say once more to you, pray to God to give you such a person, and, when you have received him, praise his divine Majesty.”⁵⁴ To de Sales, a good director provided assistance in matters of discernment as well as in drawing near to God. However, a good director can only do these things if the directee is open and honest. The directee must

⁵² Saint Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life* (New York, NY: Image Books, 2003), 34.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

share if he or she has been “tormented by sadness or melancholy or have been inclined to undue gaiety, a desire to acquire worldly goods, and similar inclinations.”⁵⁵

Saint Paul of the Cross (1694-1775) was heavily influenced by reading Saint Francis de Sales’ “Treatise on the Love of God.” Paul provided spiritual direction to many people; however, because travel was slow and face-to-face direction was rare, most people who sought and received his guidance did so through writing.⁵⁶ This is an excellent model in contemporary culture where, although travel is fast, face-to-face encounters are still rare, and correspondence through e-mail and social media is becoming the norm.⁵⁷

Saint Paul, in his many letters,⁵⁸ constantly reminds the reader that God is the chief and final director. He is quoted, “God wants us to seek human help and direction . . . the Holy Spirit is the one who guides and directs, especially in prayer. The human director is a help to catch the voice and love-indications the Holy Spirit gives us.”⁵⁹ This is a common theme among almost every spiritual director surveyed and cannot be repeated enough. It is also why the theme of seeking a good or humble director reoccurs

⁵⁵ Ibid., 104.

⁵⁶ Kelley Bennet, *Spiritual Direction According to St. Paul of the Cross* (Staten Island, NY: Alba House Publishing, 1993), 3.

⁵⁷ For two excellent sources on this topic see *Viral* by Leonard Sweet and *Follow You, Follow Me: Why Social Networking is Essential to Ministry* by John Voelz.

⁵⁸ Saint Paul of the Cross’ letters are only available in an Italian edition (*Lettere di San Paolo della Croce, Roma, 1924*). Therefore, for quotes from Saint Paul I relied on Kelley Bennet’s excellent book on Saint Paul of the Cross.

⁵⁹ Bennet, 112.

over and over again. Saint Paul, in a letter, urged Sister Colomba Gandolfi to pray for a good and holy spiritual director.⁶⁰

Saint Paul of the Cross, according to his letters, saw the most significant aspect of spiritual direction as helping discern the Spirit. He wrote to Agnes Grazi, “Do not believe in your heart, in your feelings, and especially in any interior voices, all the more so when they are not of things for the great glory of God.”⁶¹ Saint Paul wanted those that he directed to have a series of checks and balances. He believed it an awesome blessing to receive a vision from the Spirit, but only if the individual made sure through a spiritual guide that the vision was from the Spirit and not some other spirits.⁶²

Spiritual Direction After the Onset of Denominationalism

The Roman Catholic Church has an unbroken line of practicing a model of spiritual direction in one sense or another over its long history. The Catholic Encyclopedia states, “In one way, the Church requires all her adult members to submit to private direction . . .”⁶³ However, upon further examination, the author ties this directly into the Sacrament of Penance (Confession). Confession is a part of spiritual direction, but it is not in itself spiritual direction. The author went on to add that spiritual direction, not the Sacrament of Penance, is required in the “lives of Christians who aim at the

⁶⁰ Ibid., 112.

⁶¹ Ibid., 113.

⁶² Ibid., 69-77.

⁶³ Coppens, “Spiritual Direction.” (accessed May 15, 2012).

attainment of perfection”⁶⁴ and “All religious are obliged to do so by their profession.”⁶⁵

This would seem to indicate that spiritual direction is required for all leaders in the Catholic Church. After speaking with several nuns, priests and spiritual directors in the Catholic tradition, I have determined that it is not the case. However, the leaders are strongly encouraged to seek spiritual direction. Joan Ebbitt, DCSW, a licensed clinical social worker and spiritual director who specializes in ministering to clergy, was asked whether it is mandatory for priests to see a spiritual director. Her reply was, “No, but it certainly should be.”⁶⁶

The laity is also strongly encouraged to seek spiritual direction, and according to official teachings, it is considered a part of salvation. In the Catechism of the Catholic Church it is written,

Conversion is accomplished in daily life by gestures of reconciliation, concern for the poor, the exercise and defense of justice and right, by the admission of faults to one's brethren, fraternal correction, revision of life, examination of conscience, spiritual direction, acceptance of suffering, endurance of persecution for the sake of righteousness.⁶⁷

Since Vatican II, the role of the Spirit has been emphasized more than ever in the Catholic Church, and because of that, there is an increased sense of spirituality. In his *Menti Nostrae* of September 23, 1950, Pope Pius XII suggested that without spiritual direction, it is often very difficult to be duly responsive to the impulses of the Spirit, and

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Joan Ebbitt, interview by author, July 15, 2012, Weber Retreat Center, MI.

⁶⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, <http://www.scborromeo.org/ccc/para/1435.htm> (accessed May 15, 2012).

he praised spiritual directors, stressing the particular importance of direction in the training of seminarians.⁶⁸

Gene Barrett suggests there is a revival of spiritual direction in the Catholic Church and cites the many retreat and training centers available for spiritual direction.⁶⁹ There has been an amazing number of books written about and by spiritual directors in the Catholic tradition in the last century. The more popular authors in this field include, Joseph de Guibert, Thomas Merton, Thomas Green, and Henri Nouwen.

The Anglican Church also enjoys a rich history of spiritual direction; its history dates back to 1549 and the first Book of Common Prayer. The Book of Common Prayer suggests that the ministry of spiritual direction is woven into the fabric of the priest's duties.⁷⁰ Gray Temple writes, "Anglican/Episcopal spiritual direction is deeply rooted in our denominational history. No long time Episcopalian is ever surprised to learn of this resource. . . . It has a legitimacy among us that is distinctive."⁷¹ Spiritual direction in the Episcopalian tradition is popular enough that Susan Howatch formed her best-selling fictional novels around the topic of spiritual direction in the Anglican Church.⁷²

The Anglican Church has experienced a wealth of individuals who championed the cause of spiritual direction over the last century. Reginald Somerset Ward was one of

⁶⁸ Leech, 69.

⁶⁹ Moon and Benner, 73.

⁷⁰ *The (Online) Book of Common Prayer*, "The Ordination of a Priest". <http://www.bcponline.org/> (accessed May 16, 2012).

⁷¹ Moon and Benner, 94.

⁷² These series of novels form two series: The Starbridge Series (*Glittering Images, Glamorous Powers, Ultimate Prizes, Scandalous Risks, Mystical Paths, and Absolute Truths*) and The St. Benet's Trilogy (*The Wonder Worker, The High Flyer, and The Heartbreaker*).

the best-known full-time spiritual directors,⁷³ and Thornton called him “probably the most influential spiritual director of modern Anglicanism.”⁷⁴ Gilbert Shaw guided the Anglican Church to recover the contemplative life and move from a rigid spirituality to one that embraced freedom.⁷⁵ In his book, *Anglican Spiritual Direction*, Peter Ball outlines the distinctive and significant contributions the Anglican Church has made to the ministry of Spiritual Direction, including spiritual direction engaging mind, body, soul and spirit.⁷⁶ Kenneth Leech, an Anglican priest, has been a public voice for spiritual direction, and while his book, *Soul Friend*, is ecumenical in nature, it has furthered the cause for spiritual direction within the Anglican Church.

The Lutheran Church has no formal guidelines for spiritual direction and no guidelines for training. That, however, does not mean spiritual direction is not flourishing within Lutheran circles. An unscientific and perhaps unacademic Google search of “Lutheran spiritual direction” revealed thousands of individual Lutheran church web pages claiming that spiritual direction is an offered ministry. Eva Basch-Kahre, psychoanalyst and spiritual director in the Lutheran church, writes in regard to spiritual direction, “Since the 1950s many retreat houses have been built, and lay people as well as priests direct there . . . During the last two or three decades the Lutheran Church has been

⁷³ Leech, 77.

⁷⁴ Martin Thornton, *English Spirituality* (London: S.P.C.K, 1963), xv.

⁷⁵ Leech, 78.

⁷⁶ Peter Ball, *Anglican Spiritual Direction* (New York, NY: Morehouse Publishing, 2007).

looking more and more towards the Roman Catholic Church for inspiration. Many of us [Lutherans] have attended courses in spiritual direction in Roman Catholic institutions.”⁷⁷

The direction of Lutheran spiritual direction has come from the director helping an individual recognize sin in his or her life to creating safe places where transforming grace can be found. Ann Bergstrom, an Evangelical Lutheran Church in America pastor and spiritual director who serves at Walker Methodist Health Center, Minneapolis, and Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, St. Paul, Minn., writes spiritual direction "is about creating a hospitable space and time in which to notice the promptings of the Spirit. In a sense, I'm providing a nest for another person, a safe place. For me, spiritual direction is dealing with the ordinary stuff of life and noting where the holy mystery is and may be leading."⁷⁸

The Presbyterian Church does not have the body of literature on spiritual direction that some of the other denominations, but Ben Johnson believes it has made important contributions to its understanding and practice.⁷⁹ The most well known proponent of spiritual direction from this tradition is Eugene Peterson. Peterson has urged pastors towards spiritual direction. He writes about his experience practicing spiritual direction, both as the director and the directee.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Spiritual Directors International. "What is Christian Spiritual Direction." http://www.sdiworld.org/what_is_spiritual_direction2/what-is-christian-spiritual-direction.html (accessed May 16, 2012).

⁷⁸ Rochelle Melander, "Soulful Conversations," *The Lutheran*, October 2003, http://www.thelutheran.org/article/article.cfm?article_id=3823 (accessed May 16, 2012).

⁷⁹ Moon and Benner, 112.

⁸⁰ Eugene Peterson, *Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 130-31.

Wayne Chittenden, an Elder at Valley Presbyterian Church in California has taken the concept of spiritual direction for church leaders into the business world. Through spiritual direction, Chittenden is helping business CEOs with the discernment process as they seek God's direction in running their companies. Wayne also meets with several pastors who he guides in the path of discernment.⁸¹

Conversations: A Forum for Authentic Transformation is an ecumenical spiritual journal endorsed by counselor and popular author Larry Crabb.⁸² The purpose of *Conversations* is to “provide spiritual accompaniment and honest dialogue for those who long for radical transformation in Christ. It stimulates hunger and illuminates the path by drawing on classical wisdom and practice, exploring the vital role of community, and illustrating the journey with realism and hope.”⁸³ The journal contains many articles for leaders in the church, and the website also provides a forum for people to post their cares, concerns and thoughts.

Spiritual direction can now be found in nearly every branch of the Christian family tree.⁸⁴ In an interview for *Christianity Today* Jeannette Bakke, author of *Holy Invitations: Exploring Spiritual Direction*, is quoted as saying, “Evangelicals are listening for God in ways that are different from our usual understanding of discipleship. We are

⁸¹ Wayne Chittenden, interview by author, May 16, 2012, Adrian, MI, phone interview.

⁸² Chris Armstrong and Steven Gertz. “Christian History Corner: Got Your Spiritual Director Yet?” *Christianity Today*, April 1, 2003, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2003/aprilweb-only/4-28-51.0.html> (accessed May 16, 2012).

⁸³ “Purpose,” *Conversations: A Forum for Authentic Transformation*, <http://conversationsjournal.com/> (accessed May 16, 2012).

⁸⁴ For more information on individual denominations and tribes there are three excellent sources: *Spiritual Direction and the Care of Souls* by Gary Moon and David Benner (cited previously), *Tending the Holy: Spiritual Direction Across Traditions* by Norvene Vest and the Spiritual Direction International website, <http://www.sdiworld.org/>

looking at many Christian disciplines, including prayer, silence and solitude, discernment, journaling, and others...Spiritual direction is one of these disciplines many evangelical Christians are learning about and exploring.”⁸⁵ The recent popularity of spiritual direction is seen in articles about it in popular magazines like *Christianity Today* and *Relevant*. It is also evident in the number of books published on the topic and the number available in mainstream bookstores.⁸⁶

Spiritual Direction in the Wesleyan-Holiness Traditions

Wesley Tracy, in his chapter “Spiritual Direction in the Wesleyan-Holiness Tradition,” writes about spiritual direction among the holiness traditions: “If there is one area of agreement, it is the idea that spiritual direction is not relevant. The holiness churches vigorously seek the goals of spiritual direction, but spiritual direction per se is not a common part of their vocabulary.”⁸⁷ I am in agreement that holiness churches vigorously seek the goals of spiritual direction; however, I am in disagreement with the statement that spiritual direction is not relevant. The exact term “spiritual direction” may not be used, and therefore, it is not part of the vocabulary, but a model of spiritual direction based on the fourfold definition of divine presence, growth, healing and discernment is certainly in place in any tradition that has Wesleyan roots. W. Paul Jones recognizes spiritual direction’s role in the Wesleyan tradition and writes, “Throughout the

⁸⁵ Armstrong and Gertz (accessed May 16, 2012).

⁸⁶ Amazon lists 462 titles published since the year 2000 and 86 titles published since 2010 with the words “Spiritual Direction” in the title.

⁸⁷ Moon and Benner, 115.

Wesleyan movement, then, spiritual direction is the necessary instrument of support, discernment, and accountability through which the redemptive process is enabled.”⁸⁸

John Wesley’s affinity for spiritual direction certainly was formed in him at a young age. John Telford writes in his biography, *The Life of John Wesley*,

John and Charles Wesley were in their mother’s congregation. Charles was only four; but John, who was eight and a half, must have followed these services with peculiar interest. The curate appealed to his rector to discourage these novel assemblies, but Mrs. Wesley’s defence was so complete that her husband would not interfere. She also resolved to set apart some time every evening to converse privately with each child “in something that relates to its principal concerns.” John’s turn came on Thursday. How he prized the opportunity may be seen from his letter to his mother, written when he was Fellow of Lincoln. “If you can spare me only that little part of Thursday evening which you formerly bestowed upon me in another manner, I doubt not but it would be as useful now for correcting my heart, as it was then in forming my judgment.”⁸⁹

Harper comments that, “It is not too much to say that both parents, and especially Susanna, served as spiritual directors to their children.”⁹⁰ Jones drives home the point by writing, “Every Thursday evening was set aside for John’s spiritual direction session with his mother.”⁹¹

John Wesley did not end his desire or his need for spiritual direction as he became an adult. It appears that he received a model of spiritual direction from Sarah Ryan. He wrote to Mrs. Sarah Ryan in January of 1758, “I cannot think of you without thinking of God. Others often lead me to Him; but it is, as it were, going round about: you bring me

⁸⁸ W. Paul Jones, 96.

⁸⁹ John Telford, *The Life of John Wesley* (New York, NY: Eaton & Maine, 1898) <http://wesley.nnu.edu/?id=84> (accessed May 20, 2012).

⁹⁰ Steven Harper, “John Wesley: Spiritual Guide,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 20 (Fall 1985), 91.

⁹¹ W. Paul Jones, 72. This is also mentioned in Richard Heitzenrater’s book, *Wesley and the People Called Methodist* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 26.

straight into His presence.”⁹² In an article for the Wesleyan Theological Journal Wesley Tracy comments that Jane Bisson, Elizabeth Ritchie, Joseph Benson and Mrs. Crosby were also among those who served Wesley as a spiritual guide.⁹³

Wesley believed everyone needed spiritual direction for growth in grace and holiness.⁹⁴ Jones demonstrates this idea through the following pattern: “Susanna Wesley was John Wesley’s spiritual director. He, in turn, was the spiritual director for the early class meeting leaders, who then became spiritual directors of the persons placed under their care. And the most capable members of each group, in turn, became the directors of their own groups.”⁹⁵ The pattern Jones uses shows that even leaders need spiritual direction. Tracy writes, “Wesley was convinced that spiritual guidance was essential for all. He repeatedly warned his people, both fledglings and veterans, that they could not keep warm alone.”⁹⁶ John Wesley wrote, “I believe there is no saint on earth whom God does not teach by man.”⁹⁷

Wesley was adamant that there was danger lurking if a person tried to make the spiritual journey without a guide. In a letter to Frances Godfrey he writes, “It is a blessed thing to have fellow travelers to the New Jerusalem. If you cannot find any you must

⁹² John Wesley, *The Letters of Reverend John Wesley*, 8 vols. ed. John Telford (London: Epworth Press, 1960) Jan 20, 1758. <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-letters-of-john-wesley/wesleys-letters-1758/> (accessed May 20, 2012).

⁹³ Wesley Tracy, “John Wesley, Spiritual Director: Spiritual Guidance in John Wesley’s Letters,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 23 (Spring-Fall 1988): 152.

⁹⁴ John Wesley, Sermon 23 “Sermon on the Mount III”, Sermon 97 “On Obedience to Pastors,” *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. 5-6, 7-8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002).

⁹⁵ W. Paul Jones, 78-79.

⁹⁶ Tracy, 149.

⁹⁷ John Wesley, *The Letters of Reverend John Wesley*, June 28, 1776 (accessed May 21, 2012).

make them; for none can travel that road alone.”⁹⁸ Wesley believed the road was lined with sin and without the proper guidance, it was too easy to stray from the path.⁹⁹ Randy Maddox determined it was because of the subtleness and deceitfulness of sin that Wesley was convinced every Christian needed spiritual direction to provide accountability for their growth in holiness.¹⁰⁰

Wesley often taught and provided spiritual direction with two models: Christian conferencing and one-on-one correspondence. Jones writes, “Christian conferencing was Wesley’s way of declaring spiritual direction to be a mandatory means of grace. One cannot be a Christian alone. Further, one is forever becoming a Christian, thereby requiring mutual sharing for the sake of accountability.”¹⁰¹ Christian conferencing took place in the Societies or what contemporary religious culture would call small groups.¹⁰² Society is defined as a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their own salvation.”¹⁰³ Hardy concludes, “Wesley affirmed the value of and need for personal formation (as well as faithful connection to the church), there was a heightened need for

⁹⁸ Ibid., August 2, 1789.

⁹⁹ Ibid., December 15, 1772.

¹⁰⁰ Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley’s Practical Theology* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1994), 212.

¹⁰¹ W. Paul Jones, 85.

¹⁰² For a detailed description of the Society see Moon and Benner, 118-123.

¹⁰³ J.F. Hurst and James Richard, *John Wesley the Methodist: A Plain Account of His Life and Work* (New York, NY: Eaton & Mains, 1903), <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/john-wesley-the-methodist/chapter-ix-society-and-class/> (accessed May 21, 2012).

spiritual direction focused on the challenges of cultivating holiness of heart and life. The Societies and their sub-structures became the place/space where questions were asked and guidance was provided.”¹⁰⁴

Within the society were class meetings, bands, select society, spiritual guides, penitent band, and family religion. Tracy describes the bands as “same-gender groups of five or six persons committed to each other and to the holy life.” He also adds, “Wesley felt that Methodism was closest to the New Testament ideal in the band meetings.”¹⁰⁵

These band meetings closely resemble group spiritual direction.

Wesley wrote five starter questions to be used in each band meeting:

1. What spiritual failures have you experienced since our last meeting? What known sins, if any, have you committed?
2. What temptations have you battled with this week? Where do you feel the most vulnerable right now?
3. What temptations have you been delivered from this week? Please share with us how you won the victory.
4. Has the Lord revealed anything to you about your heart and life that makes you want us to join you in taking a second look at what might be sinful attitudes, lifestyle, or motivations?
5. Is there any spiritual problem that you have never been able to talk about-to us or even to God?¹⁰⁶

These questions are very similar to questions used in a contemporary setting for leading group spiritual direction:

1. What activities in your life seem to draw you to God? What activities in your life seem to pull you away from God?
2. How do you experience temptation in your life?
3. How would you like God to help you in this?

¹⁰⁴ Douglas Hardy, “Spiritual Direction Within A Wesleyan Ecclesiology,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 41, (Spring 2006), 155.

¹⁰⁵ Moon and Benner, 121.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. These are the questions stated in a contemporary style. The exact wording as used by John Wesley can be found in *The Works of John Wesley*.

4. How do you sense we could be helpful to you now?
5. What do you see as the first step on this next phase of your spiritual journey?¹⁰⁷

It is evident that what is now referred to as “group spiritual direction” is modeled from John Wesley’s band meetings.

Wesley also provided for leaders in his societies. The select society was a small group for leaders in the Methodist Connexion.¹⁰⁸ Wesley demonstrates the importance of these meetings in a letter to Thomas Wride, “It is of importance to mind the Select Society . . . If the leaders and the bands are closely attended to, they will do well; otherwise not.”¹⁰⁹ The Methodist annual conference, which has evolved into an organizational meeting, was originally designed to provide corporate clergy spiritual direction.¹¹⁰

Jones sums up the societies’ purpose well when he writes, “The heart of spiritual direction provided in these class sessions was an honest sharing of individual needs and problems, covering every arena of daily living, with all the members expected to respond with support, insights, and accountability.”¹¹¹ The Methodist Connexion has influenced many popular models of discipleship and spiritual direction. Douglas Hardy concludes in his excellent essay, *Spiritual Direction within a Wesleyan Ecclesiology*, “Providing and receiving spiritual guidance was at the heart of all the activities instituted in Wesley’s

¹⁰⁷ Fryling, 52-53.

¹⁰⁸ Moon and Benner, 122.

¹⁰⁹ John Wesley, *The Letters of Reverend John Wesley*, September 16, 1785 (accessed May 22, 2012).

¹¹⁰ W. Paul Jones, 89.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 86.

connectional system. If holiness of heart and life was the *telos* of his proclamation, then an interconnected system of spiritual direction for all was his means toward that end.”¹¹²

If the societies were a foreshadowing of group spiritual direction, perhaps it will be said that Wesley’s personal correspondence is a foreshadowing of social media spiritual direction. Tracy writes, “We discover in his personal correspondence John Wesley, the spiritual guide. We might even use the term spiritual director, for Wesley appears to fulfill the requirements set forth in the literature of spiritual direction.”¹¹³ The requirements for spiritual direction set forth in the introduction are divine presence, growth, healing and discernment; Wesley appears to meet all of these requirements in his letters.

John Wesley wrote often to Ann (Nancy) Bolton.¹¹⁴ Although, her letters back to him have been lost, a sense of what she wrote can be pieced together through the letters to her. It is likely that she wrote to Wesley about experiencing the peace of God even during times of great grief, evident by Wesley’s reply, “That you speak of feeling the peace of God in the midst of the most exquisite sufferings does not surprise me at all.”¹¹⁵ The peace that is written about by Nancy and John comes from knowing that God is present in times of grief.

Wesley, leading with questions, wrote to Mrs. Pywell about God’s presence, “Do you find no decay in faith? Do you as clearly as ever see Him who is invisible? Is your

¹¹² Hardy, 157.

¹¹³ Tracy, 148.

¹¹⁴ According to Tracy there are 84 known letters to her between March 12, 1759 and January 12, 1791.

¹¹⁵ John Wesley, *The Letters of Reverend John Wesley*, January 14, 1780 (accessed May 22, 2012).

hope as lively as at first? Do you still taste of the powers of the world to come? And can you say in as strong a sense as ever?”¹¹⁶ She replied, “I am always sensible of the presence of God, which is never interrupted by company or hurry of business, though I am often much exposed to both. . . . I sometimes find lowness of spirits, which I think came upon me first by grief, occasioned by a brother and sister leaving the good ways of God.”¹¹⁷ These are just a few examples of Wesley helping others into the presence of God through written correspondence.

John Wesley encouraged others through personal correspondence to grow in grace. He guided them along the path of holiness with care and concern. This is best illustrated in his many letters to Ann. In his very first letter he wrote, “The best and most desirable thing of all is that you should live and die wholly devoted to God . . . studying one thing—to be holy both in body and spirit, an whole burnt offering of love.”¹¹⁸ Two months later he directs her towards sanctifying grace, “He has already given you the faith of a servant. You want only the faith of a child. Look up, my sister, my friend! Jesus is there! Doubt not His love! Forget yourself. . . . But look unto Jesus! See the Friend of Sinners! Your Friend; your ready and strong Savior.”¹¹⁹ When she replied that she thought she was far away from holiness, John beckoned her on towards growth, “How far are you from holiness? Nay, rather think how near you are to it! You are no farther from it than you are from faith, than you are from Christ. And how far is He from you? Is He

¹¹⁶ Ibid., April 23, 1771.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., February 28, 1772.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., February 13, 1768.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., April 7, 1768.

not nigh? Is He not just now knocking at the door of your heart? Hark! The Master calleth you!”¹²⁰

Wesley had an amazing recollection of his written relationships considering how many people flocked to him for direction. In a letter to Mrs. Crosby, he remarked how he is concerned at not having heard from her for so long. He then went on to direct her in growth,

It comforts me to hear that your love does not decrease: I want it to increase daily. Is there not height and depth in Him with whom you have to do, for your love to rise infinitely higher and to sink infinitely deeper into Him than ever it has done yet Are you fully employed for Him, and yet so as to have some time daily for reading and other private exercises If you should grow cold, it would afflict me much.¹²¹

In nearly every letter written by Wesley, the tone of a spiritual director guiding a directee to growth in grace can be heard.

Wesley used spiritual direction in the written form to provide healing. Wesley once spoke harshly about certain mystical writers, and those words offended Henry Brooke. Brooke wrote to Wesley about the matter, to which Wesley replied,

Dear Harry,
Your letter gave me pleasure and pain too. It gave me pleasure because it was written in a mild and loving spirit; and it gave me pain because I found it had pained you, whom I so tenderly love and esteem. But I shall do it no more: I sincerely thank you for your kind reproof; it is a precious balm-and will, I trust, in the hands of the Great Physician, be a means of healing my sickness. I am so sensible of your real friendship herein that I cannot write without tears. The words you mention were too strong and they will no more fall from my mouth. My dear Harry, cease not to pray for your obliged and affectionate brother. John Wesley¹²²

¹²⁰ Ibid., May 9, 1768.

¹²¹ Ibid., June 14, 1757.

¹²² Ibid., April 21, 1783.

This healing of a relationship echoes the restoration Jesus directed Peter to embrace.

John Wesley assisted directees in discerning the Spirit through letters. Ann Bolton was comfortable serving in her village of Witney. However, Wesley felt she was called to do more and wrote, “I am not content that you should be pinned down to any one place. That is not your calling. Methinks I want you to be (like me) here and there and everywhere. Oh what a deal of work has our Lord to do on the earth! And we may be workers together with Him!”¹²³ John, in helping her discern, was always quick to encourage as well, “You give me a pleasing account of the work of God which seems to be dawning about Tavistock. It is probable you was (sic) sent thither for this. Redeem the time; buy up every opportunity; and never be discouraged, although many fair blossoms shall fall off and never ripen into fruit.”¹²⁴

These are just a small sampling of the many letters providing spiritual direction that John Wesley wrote. Steven Harper, in writing for the *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, summarizes what Wesley’s letters meant: “I have come to believe that it is the letters where we see the spiritual guidance of Wesley most personally demonstrated. There can be no doubt that Wesley knew that letters were a time-honored medium of spiritual direction.”¹²⁵

Spiritual direction in the holiness churches, as is the case with nearly every denomination or movement, is becoming increasingly popular. Northwest Nazarene

¹²³ Ibid., May 13, 1774.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Harper, 93.

University has a required spiritual direction class as part of its Master of Spiritual Formation program. In a recent book, *Spiritual Formation: A Wesleyan Paradigm*, there is an entire chapter devoted to spiritual direction.¹²⁶ There are members of holiness churches receiving and giving spiritual direction. Douglas Hardy, Professor of Spiritual Formation at Nazarene Theological Seminary, concludes,

Serious pursuit of holiness of heart and life—the kind implicated and advocated in Wesleyan doctrine and the broader church’s liturgies—gives rise to the need for individualized spiritual direction. A church, therefore, cannot be “Wesleyan” only in its doctrinal affirmations, its teachings, and its liturgy. Without corresponding Wesleyan spiritual practice that is both ecclesial *and* of the nature of society/order, it is Wesleyan in name only.¹²⁷

To be a branch on the Wesleyan Theological family tree, spiritual direction, as much as prayer and fasting, should be a part of spiritual formation.

It is clear that tradition and history speak of many models of spiritual direction. The roots can be traced from the early church, into the desert, through the Middle Ages, working their way in the Reformation and all through denominationalism. In many instances the exact words “spiritual direction” are not used, but the framework, the model and the end result are within the parameters of spiritual direction as defined in the introduction.

¹²⁶ Diane Leclerc and Mark Maddix, eds. *Spiritual Formation: A Wesleyan Paradigm* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2011).

¹²⁷ Hardy, 160.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE REASON LEADERS IN THE CHURCH NEED SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

Every formula of every religion has, in this age of reason, to submit to the acid test of reason and universal assent.

Mahatma Gandhi¹

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the question, “Is it reasonable for leaders to seek spiritual direction?” To investigate that question, ten reasons why leaders in the church should have a spiritual director are listed: it is Biblical, it is traditional, experience points to its benefits, there is a need to go deeper, for accountability, to be objective, for encouragement, peace, health, and to sustain faith in a crisis.² A simple paragraph will be given to the first three topics since they have a chapter of their own, but the remaining seven will be looked at in more detail in this chapter.

¹ K.L. Seshagiri Rao, *Mahatma Gandhi and Comparative Religion* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas Publishers, 1990), 59.

² These ten reasons are modified from Mary Houser’s “Ten Reasons to Have a Spiritual Director”, <http://www.catholic.net/index.php?option=dedestaca&id=5558&grupo=Church%20Teaching%20QA&canal=Catholicism%20101> (accessed May 30, 2012).

The Reason of Scripture, Tradition and Experience

In Chapter Two, it was demonstrated that a model of spiritual direction is found in both the Old and New Testaments of scripture. Therefore, since spiritual direction was practiced and found beneficial in the writings that the Church of the Nazarene believe are given by divine inspiration,³ it is reasonable to conclude that it is a practice worth exploring.

In Chapter Three, a brief survey of the history of the Christian church showed that spiritual direction or a model of spiritual direction has been a common practice over the course of Christianity's 2,000 years. In that span, the practice was shown to be, in nearly every instance a help to others in their spiritual formation.⁴ It is reasonable that a spiritual exercise that has been practiced since the beginning of a movement with favorable results should continue to be practiced.

The focus of Chapter Five will be on the experience of spiritual direction. An examination of how it works in other denominations will be explored. What is currently being done in the Church of the Nazarene and why it is not working will also be explored. It is my hypothesis that based on experience, spiritual direction is a reasonable alternative to some of the forms of clergy care that are currently being practiced.

³ Inspiration of The Holy Scriptures is further defined in Article IV of the Church of the Nazarene's 16 Articles of Faith. *Manual, 2005-2009*, 31.

⁴ There are several instances, especially in the writings of Saint John of the Cross and Saint Teresa of Avila, where poor spiritual direction was less than beneficial.

The Reason of Going Deeper

“Christian perfection” is a popular phrase in the Church of the Nazarene. The phrase comes from John Wesley, who defined it in great detail in his book, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*. Wesley’s claim is that Christian perfection is loving God and neighbor to the utmost of one’s ability through the grace of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.⁵ Wesley spends more time in the book describing what Christian perfection is not, rather than what it is. There are many places in the book where he reminds the reader that Christian perfection is not immunity from temptation, a completion of growth in grace, or a destination to arrive at. He adds, “It is good to renew ourselves from time to time, by closely examining the state of our souls, as if we had never done it before: for nothing tends more to the full assurance of faith, than to keep ourselves by this means in humility, and the exercise of all good works.”⁶ For Wesley and the Church of the Nazarene with their Wesleyan roots, the individual Christian is always a work in progress.

Colorado Springs is the home of the United States Olympic Complex. Inside the complex are some of the world’s greatest athletes. They spend their time honing their craft and working out to be in the best physical shape possible. Even though they are already the elite of the elite in their chosen sport, there is not one person in the training center who is not trying to improve. But the athletes are not there to train alone. Every athlete is under the constant watch of a staff of coaches who guide and direct the athletes

⁵ John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1966), 22-25.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 110-111.

to greater growth. The need for a coach is clearly seen in the 1981 Academy Award winning film, *Chariots of Fire*. The movie, based on a true story, demonstrates how Olympic runner Harold Abrahams realizes that natural ability and dedication alone will not gain him an Olympic medal. He took on a coach who honed his technique, and Abrahams won a gold medal in the 100 meters. If an Olympic caliber athlete understands the need for another set of eyes or another voice of instruction or encouragement, how much more so does a pastor need it in his or her chosen field?

Brian McLaren offers a key piece of advice on growing spiritually in his book *Naked Spirituality*. McLaren writes, “A secret to the spiritual life is desiring to actually be more spiritual than you appear to be.”⁷ An Olympic athlete will occasionally lose the desire to improve, and that is when a coach is indispensable. Likewise, a leader in the church can reach that state when he or she shifts into cruise control spiritually. Wiseman and London comment, “Being so close to religious issues, it’s possible for pastors to operate as if their continual spiritual development and growth came by a sort of spiritual osmosis. Pastors who leave the ministry say it all started when they became dry or empty and they didn’t work to replenish or connect with the source.”⁸ George MacDonald’s fictional book, *The Curate’s Awakening*, is about a clergy member who has become dead to the divine through his dealings with the non-holy of every day living.⁹ A spiritual director can see the writing on the wall in these situations and like a coach, work towards guiding the sail in the proper direction before running aground.

⁷ Brian McLaren, *Naked Spirituality* (New York, NY: Harper One, 2011), 87.

⁸ London and Wiseman, 56-57.

⁹ George MacDonald, *The Curate’s Awakening* (Grand Rapids, MI: Bethany House Publishers, 1993).

Gerald May, a psychiatrist and spiritual counselor, sees the spiritual director working as a life coach when he writes,

Thus, it is to be expected that spiritual direction will give primary attention to such things as the directee's inclinations in relation to personal prayer life and other ascetical practices like fasting and simplification in life; to senses of God's presence, absence, or callings; to experiences of fundamental meaning; to personal longing for God; and to the multiplicity of factors that seem most to help or hinder freedom for fullness of living in God's reality.¹⁰

All of these attributes work towards guiding the directee into a deeper and more meaningful relationship with Christ in the midst of everyday living. May is emphatic that everyday experiences play a formational role in the Christian, but these experiences need to be viewed through a lens that works to clarify God's movements. May writes, "In other words, all of life's experiences can appear legitimately in spiritual direction, but they need to be seen in the light of spiritual concern, and at all costs they should not be allowed to eclipse that light."¹¹

Pastors can easily isolate themselves. In nearly every poll on clergy stress, one of the top areas is isolation.¹² Whether or not isolation is a hazard of the calling and cannot be avoided is debatable; however, it is currently a reality in many church leaders' lives. A spiritual director can point out when isolation is becoming dangerous and remind the directee that holistic spirituality takes place in the midst of relationships with others, not

¹⁰ Gerald May, *Care of Mind, Care of Spirit: A Psychiatrist Explores Spiritual Direction* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1992), 17.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² London and Wiseman, 172-186.

apart from them.¹³ This will nudge the directee to greater intimacy with Christ that is beneficial for the ministry of the church as well as the overall health of the pastor.¹⁴

John Adams, from the Turner Ministry Resource Center writes, “Professional clergy face overwhelming obstacles and stressors along their paths of ministry. A clergy coach, knowledgeable of the challenges in ministry, might be a great gift of self-care one could obtain in support of the journey.”¹⁵ Adams does not use the terminology “spiritual director,” but everything he writes about this coach speaks of the characteristics of a spiritual director. He writes, “A clergy coach is a person who listens, who is trained to ask good questions. A clergy coach is a professional, following a code of ethics, dedicated to your goal or issue.”¹⁶ Adams adds, “A clergy coach may be an asset for church professionals at any stage in their leadership.”¹⁷

Pastors are called to a life of learning and growing in grace. It is reasonable to assume that if the best athletes in the world need a coach and an extra set of eyes on them to improve, so do clergy. It is also reasonable to determine that a spiritual director will help motivate and encourage the directee to go deeper in his or her relationship with Christ, and in the process, further his or her ministry.

¹³ Mulholland, 43.

¹⁴ London and Wiseman, 266.

¹⁵ John Adams, “Coaching and Clergy-Care,” *The Bridge* January 2011, https://www.pilink.org/documentlibrary/178_The%20Bridge%20JANUARY%202011.pdf (accessed June 5, 2012).

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

The Reason of Accountability

The term “confessor,” as mentioned in the previous chapter, is an ancient church term used for a model of spiritual direction. It was not used in the sense of a sacramental confession, but in the mutual sharing and comforting of one person opening up to another to assist in bearing the burdens. In the contemporary church, since confession is almost always thought of in the sacramental sense, Henri Nouwen sees this role taken up by the spiritual director. He writes, “A spiritual director in this strict sense is not a counselor, a therapist, or an analyst, but a mature fellow Christian to whom we choose to be accountable for living our spiritual life and from whom we can expect prayerful support in our constant struggle to discern God’s activity.”¹⁸

Richard Foster, in his classic book *Celebration of Discipline*, succinctly points out the benefits of a confessional relationship, “The discipline of confession brings an end to pretense. God is calling into being a church that can openly confess its frail humanity and know the forgiving and empowering graces of Christ. Honesty leads to confession, and confession leads to change.”¹⁹ Brian McLaren, not so succinctly, lists three reasons why having a person to share with is beneficial:

Sharing our secrets with another human being as well as with God helps us in several ways. First, until I dare to share with you some secret, I am certain that I’m the only person so twisted and crooked and pathetic. But quite often, after I share my secret with you, you will tell me that you have the same problem, that you’ve made similar mistakes, and in our shared confession we both learn that we truly are not alone. We’re all a mess, and honesty, like misery, loves company. Second, when I dare to share and you dare to respond with compassion rather than judgment and rejection, your mercy and continuing acceptance can make visible

¹⁸ Henri Nouwen, *Spiritual Direction: Wisdom for the Long Walk of Faith*, 23.

¹⁹ Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins, 1998), 157.

for me the good news that previously seemed beyond belief for me. Experiencing mercy and grace from you, someone both present and visible to me, I can believe in mercy and grace from God, who is present but not visible to me. I realize I am in a safe presence, a presence in which I don't need to pretend, because I am accepted by grace just as I am. In your gracious presence I experience God's gracious presence. And then, third, comes the great surprise. In the environment of grace—human and divine—I find myself free, free to continue falling if I must, but also free to start doing better if I can. I am no longer being drained by the constant anxiety of possibly being exposed for what I really am. That previously wasted energy can now be redirected into actually living a better, fuller life.²⁰

All these reasons point towards holistic health that is the cornerstone to successful and healthy ministries.

In the Church of the Nazarene, it is the pastor's responsibility to see to the spiritual growth of the members of the church.²¹ The pastor is to check on their devotional life including their practices of the spiritual disciplines. But who checks on the pastor? Mulholland advises that the community of faith holds one another accountable. He writes, "When we don't feel like worshipping, the community should carry us along in worship. When we can't seem to pray, community prayer should enfold us. When the scriptures seems closed for us, the community should keep on reading, affirming and incarnating it around us."²² This is well and good for everyone except the leader. There is uneasiness when it is the leader who is struggling with his or her spiritual life. The question of how a leader can lead if he or she doesn't get it right is unfairly bantered about. This is why the leader needs someone outside the community to be accountable to.

²⁰ McLaren, 97.

²¹ *The Manual*, 413.8.

²² Mulholland, 146.

London and Wiseman offer a solution that sounds like a spiritual director. They write, “Find a support person who cherishes your uniqueness and understands ministry—a soul friend to help you focus on the meaning of ministry and remind you of its possible fulfillment. . . . The goals for this connection are dialogue, hope, prayer and accountability.”²³ This is a personal relationship that is highly preferred over the impersonal accountability groups that are sometimes thrown together.

The Clergy Recovery Network, designed to support, encourage and provide resources to religious professionals in recovery, are mostly against any type of accountability group. They argue,

Having hall monitors for Christian Leaders does not work. Skillful probing tends to result in skillful denial. When groups are established to hold pastors accountable, these groups are seldom, if ever able to provide the essential elements of trust, shared struggles, empathy, absolute confidentiality, camaraderie and heart to heart honesty which promote open sharing and actually help clergy in their struggles. Too often no matter how we dress up such groups they come off like they are checking on the pastor to be sure he does not have struggles instead of supporting him in his struggles.

When groups are created as described above, they can even be destructive. Churches and Boards erroneously conclude their leaders, because they are in an accountability group, are doing just fine. Other measures which could be more helpful are not considered or pursued. Faulty assumptions based on secrets kept are made about the spiritual, emotional and family health of the leader. Pastors who do not feel safe to share honestly with such groups learn to lie or stretch the truth. Telling the truth to such a group would be too threatening as is evidenced by 96% of CRN poll respondents not telling their struggles to such groups.

An additional complication with these groups exists. Almost no pastor is comfortable to share his heart in such a group but saying so is almost impossible when his Board, trying their best to be helpful, establishes such a group. If a pastor had the courage to say, “I don’t find this kind of group safe and I don’t wish to participate” he would be viewed as having something terrible to hide. The Church and its leaders would be better off to recognize this approach is faulty and

²³ London and Wiseman, 136.

find healthier, more creative means of aiding their pastors' with their personal lives.²⁴

These accountability groups are not the solution. Wolrey goes on to add, "Establishing a group for ministerial accountability is easy. Creating healthy environments which invite vulnerability is difficult We must create safe and nurturing environments for quality relationships to blossom and we must provide ministry staff the time and money to engage in such relationships."²⁵

London and Wiseman are crystal clear when they write, "Everyone needs someone to hold them accountable. Every pastor needs someone to come alongside him and say, 'Have you thought about this? Have you questioned yourself about why you did what you did? Let me make a suggestion or two.'"²⁶ It is reasonable that the type of accountability and relationship that is being sought after can be found through a spiritual director.

The Reason of Objectivity

The English-American idiom, "You can't see your nose in front of your face" paints the picture that one is too close to the situation to see it objectively. This is a common situation for pastors to find themselves in, especially when it comes to their own spirituality and how God is speaking to them through the people and situations they

²⁴ Dale Wolrey, "If Accountability Groups Don't Work, What Does?" March 19, 2010, Clergy Recovery Network, <http://www.clergyrecovery.com/?p=466> (accessed June 6, 2012).

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ London and Wiseman, 199.

encounter. A spiritual director would help the church leader recognize, through conversation, the God moments more clearly.

Marjorie Thompson, who was once the Director of Pathways Center for Spiritual Leadership at Upper Room Ministries, writes,

God's presence and the ways of the Spirit are not generally self-evident to us. They are subtle and unobtrusive, often hidden in the midst of ordinary events and interactions. It takes practice to see the grace of God in everyday life. A spiritual mentor can help us pay attention to signs of grace, to listen for God's "still small voice" in our daily encounters and experiences. A guide can also direct our attention to the dynamics of our heart, so that we can become more aware of how God speaks through it.²⁷

Pastors are often overly busy doing the work of the church; therefore, it is common for them not to slow down and observe these God moments. Spiritual direction may be the only thing that can make a pastor slow down and do some careful self-examination.

The careful self-examination that a spiritual director can help a pastor with is similar to the Third Point of St. Ignatius of Loyola's Examen: ". . . to ask account of our soul from the hour that we rose up to the present Examen, hour by hour, or period by period: and first as to thoughts, and then as to words, and then as to acts. . . ." ²⁸ This is a spiritual exercise to help jog the memory to recollect the moments that went by in a blur. Thompson is adamant that self-examination is not turned into something other than a spiritual exercise. She writes, "I want to be perfectly clear that self-examination is not an invitation to psychoanalysis, problem solving, self-lecturing, or ego-absorption. The

²⁷ Marjorie Thompson, *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 110-111.

²⁸ Saint Ignatius Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola-Enhanced Version*, Christian Classics Ethereal Library, Kindle Edition, 29.

whole point of self-examination is to become more God-centered by observing moments when we are not so.”²⁹

It is true that the Examen and any other method of self-examination can be accomplished on one’s own; however, self-examination excludes the possibility of objectivity by its very nature. Thomas Green acknowledges the benefit of a spiritual director in this instance when he writes, “The fundamental method of spiritual direction is conversation . . . [which] enables one to objectify, to conceptualize, and thus to understand one’s own living of the life of faith, hope and charity.”³⁰ Oftentimes, just as something is overlooked in the day-to-day business, it is overlooked in the Examen. It is through conversation that the mind slows down enough to catch it. Green has described a spiritual director as a diagnostician³¹, a term that fits well with helping someone see something he or she may have overlooked.

The spiritual director not only helps the directee notice where God has been overlooked, but he or she may also help the directee to see God in the mundane. Janet Ruffing compares it to panning for gold. She writes,

A spiritual director made this observation in one supervisory session: Spiritual direction is like panning for gold. A directee comes and together we dip into the stream of their life and pull up all kinds of things. Rocks of all sizes—I can never guess what’s coming next—all kinds of conflicts and problems, then all of a sudden some fleck or nugget of pure gold emerges into view in the bottom of the pan as we swirl the water around, emptying out the rocks. . . . A skillful, graced director gives that gold reverence, time, interest, and attention, until the directee realizes how much more valuable and significant are the flecks of gold—the

²⁹ Thompson, 91-92.

³⁰ Green, 40.

³¹ Ibid., 42.

experiences of grace and the Spirit—than are all the stuck or problematic areas of his or her life.³²

Without a spiritual director, these nuggets lay trampled under life, perhaps never to be recognized for their beauty.

The spiritual director helps the directee be objective in sensing God’s movement and discernment as well as helping the directee be objective about what is going on in his or her life. Father John Bartunek writes, “The main point of spiritual direction is providing oneself with an objective point of view. As the old proverb puts it: *no one is a good judge in their own case*. . . . We all tend to favor our strong suits and ignore our weaknesses. This is true for musicians, athletes, actors . . . It’s a human thing.”³³ This is the danger of doing exercises such as the Examen alone. People have a tendency to focus too much on what they have done well or, in some cases, too much on what they have done poorly. A spiritual director provides much needed balance. Father Bartunek continues, “That’s why in all areas of expertise and growth, a good coach, instructor, or teacher is so necessary. . . . This objective point of view is all the more valuable because of the director’s larger share of wisdom and experience.”³⁴

Kenneth Boa summarizes, “We are too close to ourselves to see things as they are, and at times our self-deception and insensitivity makes us vulnerable to becoming ‘hardened by the deceitfulness of sin’ (Hebrews 3:13). All of us need the insight, hope,

³² Janet Ruffing, *Spiritual Direction: Beyond the Beginnings* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2000), 57.

³³ John Bartunek, “Can Someone Be Their Own Spiritual Director?” *Catholic Spiritual Direction*, <http://rcspiritualdirection.com/blog/tags/finding-a-spiritual-director> (accessed June 6, 2012).

³⁴ *Ibid.*

affirmation, and tenderhearted engagement that soul friends can offer.”³⁵ The possibility of missing out on some of the gems that God provides the Christian leader should be reason enough to seek out a spiritual director. Add to it humanity’s inability to look at oneself objectively, and the case is clearly made that spiritual direction is a reasonable resource for growth in spirit and ministry.

The Reason of Encouragement

The position of a pastor can be a lonely, thankless calling. Eugene Peterson paints the following picture:

From Monday through Saturday, an unaccountably unruly people track mud through the holy places, leaving a mess. The order of worship gives way to the disorder of argument and doubt, bodies in pain and emotions in confusion, misbehaving children and misdirected parents. I don’t know what I am doing half the time. I am interrupted. I am asked questions to which I have no answers. I am put in situations for which I am not adequate. I find myself attempting tasks for which I have neither aptitude nor inclination. The vision of myself as pastor, so clear in Lord’s Day worship, is now blurred and distorted as it is reflected back from the eyes of people who view me as pawn to their egos. The affirmations I experience in Sunday greetings are now precarious in the slippery mud of put-down and fault-finding.³⁶

It is no wonder Bob Sewell writes, “Obviously pastors have a lot of problems. And every pain is a potential reason for severe burnout.”³⁷ The pastor does not need someone else to beat him or her up; the pastor needs someone to offer him or her love and

³⁵ Kenneth Boa, *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 440.

³⁶ Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor*, 54.

³⁷ London and Wiseman, 195.

encouragement. Just as Barnabas was a source of encouragement to Paul, a spiritual director can be a source of encouragement to the pastor.

The Henri Nouwen Society's definition of spiritual direction is an example of why spiritual direction is a reasonable resource for the clergy who needs love and encouragement. The Society states, "Spiritual Direction is the simple gift of offering to another the gentle but tenacious encouragement to open fully to God's loving presence, and to discern the action of the Spirit in every aspect of life."³⁸ Thompson builds on that definition with a description of the relationship between director and directee. She writes, "The love of a spiritual director for the one directed is always mediated by the love of Christ. It is agape love. The ongoing expression of that love is faithful prayer, both within and beyond meeting times."³⁹

The C. John Weborg Center for Spiritual Direction trains twenty spiritual directors each year from an ecumenical pool of applicants. One of the main foci is on encouragement. The Center's belief statement reads, "Spiritual direction is a ministry of listening, discernment, and prayer in a confidential setting of encouragement and compassion."⁴⁰ Jennifer Diebel, a Licensed Professional Counselor and National

³⁸ "Spiritual Direction," Henri Nouwen Society, <http://www.henrinouwen.org/> (accessed June 6, 2012).

³⁹ Thompson, 111.

⁴⁰ "Graduate Certificate in Spiritual Direction," North Park Theological Seminary, <http://www.northpark.edu/Seminary/Centers/Center-for-Spiritual-Direction/Certificate-in-Spiritual-Direction> (accessed June 6, 2012).

Certified Counselor, and trainer of spiritual directors, lists “encouragement” as one of her primary areas of training for spiritual directors.⁴¹

The very act of spiritual direction itself is encouraging. Gerald May relays the comments of one of his clients regarding spiritual direction when he writes, “Being in spiritual direction is just like being in prayer, only there is someone with me in it.”⁴²

Being present to someone during prayer is a hallmark of care and concern and a source of encouragement for people. The general concern for people that a spiritual director shows is also a source of encouragement. Alice Fryling adds, “Asking loving questions is a countercultural phenomenon. We live in a culture where having answers is more popular than asking questions.”⁴³ Listening, which is a major part of spiritual direction, is also a source of encouragement in a culture where people may hear, but few listen.

Pastors wrestle with “crammed calendars, hectic homes, splintered dreams, starved intimacy” and a vanishing purpose that once seemed so meaningful.⁴⁴ It is reasonable that they need encouragement. They need encouragement to seek deeply after God. They also need encouragement that they have a meaningful purpose. A spiritual director can apply encouragement in both areas.

⁴¹ Jennifer Diebel, “Spiritual Direction” http://www.jenniferdiebel.com/Spiritual_Direction.html (accessed June 6, 2012).

⁴² May, *Care of Mind, Care of Spirit*, 113.

⁴³ Fryling, 47.

⁴⁴ London and Wiseman, 14.

The Reason of Peace

Peace is needed for many of the same reasons that encouragement is needed. The Bible speaks of “the peace of God, which transcends all understanding” (Philippians 4:7a); a sense of peace best describes what happens in spiritual direction. May does an excellent job of describing this peace that he claims is not encountered in any other interpersonal relationship. He writes, “This atmosphere is one of spaciousness and underlying peace; of openness and receptivity; of a kind of quiet clarity in which it is easier to allow and let be.”⁴⁵

Research presents many examples of those who proclaim to find incredible peace through their spiritual direction relationship. Included below are two of the testimonies that demonstrate peace. Jeff Imbach writes,

We seem to live with so many difficult and destructive images of God, images that shame us and intimidate us. It is a true delight to watch a person begin to experience and to trust God’s ongoing and faithful love for them that will never leave or diminish. The light begins to dawn and life begins to flow in a whole new way. Fear begins to recede into the background and we begin to breathe the fresh air of new beginnings and new possibilities.⁴⁶

And Elizabeth de Smaele proclaims,

One of the most priceless gifts of the past 6 years has been claiming my status as a beloved daughter of God. It has required some effort to silence the voices of my history and to break the many patterns which weighed me down. I've learned to recognize my false selves and have stepped into living from my true self. It's fabulous to walk in the freedom of living the true me. There's nothing like being (and becoming) the person I was created to be, knowing myself as dearly loved, and being formed to be more like Christ--even with faltering steps--on this road of transformation.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ May, *Care of Mind, Care of Spirit*, 113.

⁴⁶ Jeff Imbach, “What Is Spiritual Direction?” <http://spiritual-direction.com/soul-journeying/soul-invitations/more-about-spiritual-direction/> (accessed June 7, 2012).

⁴⁷ Elizabeth de Smaele, “Spiritual Direction,” *Deeper Devotion*, <http://www.deeper-devotion.net/index.html> (accessed June 7, 2012).

These are just two examples of many that demonstrate how spiritual direction provides peace for a troubled soul.

Dan Burke, a spiritual director in the Roman Catholic Church, writes to a directee extolling the virtues of peace. He writes to Mother Luisita, “Fix your gaze on heaven, not on earthly things that all pass away. . . . Peace, it seems to me, is an indispensable factor if we are to have life in our souls. Lack of peace is harmful to you. . . . Try not to lose God’s peace or His presence.”⁴⁸ Dan Burke is not overstating the importance of peace, especially as it relates to church leaders and them doing ministry well. A restless or troubled heart will not be able to focus on the ministry task at hand.

Father Joseph Tetlow, a Jesuit priest, claims spiritual direction is not only paramount for peace in the individual but can lead to world peace.⁴⁹ He makes the connection between individual peace that leads to compassion and then connects compassion to world peace, but he reminds the listener that it starts with individual peace. World peace through spiritual direction may be a bold claim, but it is reasonable to assume that the more individuals who are at peace, the better chance there is that the world will be at peace.

⁴⁸ Dan Burke, “I Need Peace, I need Your Prayers” Catholic Spiritual Direction <http://rcspiritualdirection.com/blog/topics/peace> (accessed June 7, 2012).

⁴⁹ Joseph Tetlow, Spiritual Directors International, <http://info.sdiworld.org/post/new-sdi-youtube-video-with-joseph-tetlow-sj> (accessed June 7, 2012).

The Reason of Health

Pastors, on average, are not healthy. Jeren Rowell looks at pastor's health in great detail in his book, *What's A Pastor To Do?* He writes,

To embrace pastoral ministry as a life of sacrifice is not a surprise for most of us. We expected sacrifice. What we may not have been totally prepared for, however, was the immense challenge of staying healthy while doing this work. In fact, most pastors do not keep their health. The relentless pressure of pastoral life takes a colossal toll on our spirits, minds, and bodies. . . . A majority of us probably fail to take proper care of our bodies. Many pay a big price after years of neglect. As I said to start, it's not looking too good for us. According to Kenneth Crow, the average tenure for Nazarene pastors in a congregation now hovers somewhere just over 3 years. Studies also show that a growing number of pastors are out after only 15 years in the ministry.⁵⁰

Bob Sewell advises that a pastor's wellness and wholeness should be a part of the initial interview process so that it will become an established priority long before it becomes a serious problem. He is adamant that effective ministry requires wellness of spirit, soul, and body.⁵¹ Verbally, it would be difficult to find anyone who disagreed with him. However, pastors have been wearing burnout and stress like a badge of honor, and they have been applauded for it.⁵² Carmen Renee Berry writes that pastors have a Messiah complex. She writes, "These Messiahs neglect themselves because they feel that they are supposed to sacrifice their own well-being for the sake of others."⁵³

⁵⁰ Jeren Rowell, *What's A Pastor To Do? The Good and Difficult Work of Ministry* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 2004), 11-12.

⁵¹ London and Wiseman, 201.

⁵² There are no statistics to support this, but it has been my observation over the years. I have heard countless pastors brag about not missing a Sunday in so many years or working 80 hour work weeks. Dave Gerber, who is a spiritual director in the Church of the Nazarene, has shared with me on several occasions that the biggest problem he sees in pastors is that they abuse their own health and relationships in the name of God.

⁵³ Carmen Renee Berry, *When Helping You Is Hurting Me: Escaping The Messiah Trap* (New York, NY: Crossroads Publishing, 2003), 18.

James Dittes, a United Church of Christ minister and former Professor of Psychology of Religion at Yale University writes about clergy pain and suffering,

Pain is the mark of ministry. . . .The minister is not called to suffer. . . .The call is in the suffering when it happens. . . .Calling may be suffered for, suffering is not called for. The easy misunderstanding that suffering is called for . . . leads people to seek the suffering and to suppose that simple submission, meek compliance, passive acceptance of blows . . . is sufficient as ministry.⁵⁴

To some, pain and suffering is tangible evidence that they are doing their job well. Flora Slosson Wuellner, in her book on spiritual healing for leaders, calls that type of thinking “abusive theology.”⁵⁵ She is encouraged to note, “In recent decades, churches, denominations, and religious institutions are beginning to take seriously the emotional well-being of Christian leaders.”⁵⁶ Spiritual direction will never take the place of physical or mental healthcare, but it can assist in both areas.

Gerald May notes a connection between spiritual direction and psychology when he writes, “The psychiatric dimensions of spiritual direction may seem small and insignificant when compared with the overwhelming essential movement of the Holy Spirit in people’s lives. Yet these psychiatric phenomena are intimately related to the Spirit’s movements and they deserve both attention and response.”⁵⁷ Dan Burke takes it a step further and comments on the connection between spiritual direction, psychology and physical health:

The psychological and physical aspects of our souls impact our spiritual lives. There is no easy way to extricate these realities from one another. Yet, just as you

⁵⁴ Wuellner, 81-82.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 78.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 82.

⁵⁷ May, *Care of Mind, Care of Spirit*, ix.

would not go to a spiritual director for physical therapy, it is also unwise to attempt to deal with deep psychological issues with a spiritual director (at least not one who has not received special training in both fields). It is true that the state of our spiritual lives can and will effect us emotionally. If these emotions prove to be a hindrance to your spiritual progress, they should be addressed with your spiritual director. Conversely, your spiritual life, as it grows, will positively impact your psychological and physical health. When emotional or psychological issues are serious, it is important to seek out those specially trained professionals that can help you as needed.⁵⁸

All three areas are needed to make a person healthy holistically, but they cannot always be completely separated.

Nancy Pfaff testifies to how spiritual direction can sometimes cross the boundary of spiritual and emotional healing and touch the mental and physical aspects.

As I reached another crisis in my life, marital difficulties, I found it necessary to look for my next spiritual director. I met him when I went on a three-day retreat. He is my most recent Spiritual Director. I connected with him at the Mercy Center in Burlingame, California. During that retreat, I experienced a miracle of physical healing. His style of spiritual direction was different than I had experienced before. He suggested certain spiritual reading, which is common facet of spiritual direction, but he also asked me to record and share my dreams. When we met daily for our one-hour sessions, I shared my insights during my spiritual reading plus my dreams which revealed my current reasons for grief and anger. He affirmed my reasons for my emotional pain and asked key questions to help me discern what I needed to do to help myself and to experience God's help. One of the dreams during that retreat was so dramatic in nature, that I woke up the next day free of the symptoms of Chronic Fatigue Immune Dysfunction. The dream, together with the dream work my director and I did together, opened long repressed and suppressed areas of my soul to the light of God. The physical healing along with healing of my soul were the results. This director's style which helped me discover my false self, my shadow side, and helped me invite God into these areas, so improved the quality of my entire life, that I began studying spiritual direction myself.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Dan Burke, "Spiritual Direction Is Not Psychological Counseling," Catholic Spiritual Direction, <http://rcspiritualdirection.com/blog/2011/04/20/spiritual-direction-is-not-psychological-counseling> (accessed June 8, 2012).

⁵⁹ Nancy Pfaff, "What Is Spiritual Direction And How Can It Help My Spiritual Journey," Sacred Quest, http://sacred-quest.com/Articles/what_is_spiritual_direction_and_.htm (accessed June 8, 2012).

Her story is dynamic, and it does not always happen this way, but spiritual direction can assist healing in many ways.

Another way in which spiritual direction plays a role in the health of a leader is a reminder of the soul-sustaining gift of Sabbath keeping. Stairs writes in her book,

Listening for the Soul: Pastoral Care and Spiritual Direction,

The practice of Sabbath-keeping is another way to connect with God. Pastoral caregivers will be enlivened in spirit and more able to offer care from a strong, healthy foundation if they are regular keepers of the Sabbath. . . . Deep down, we know that when we fail to guard the Sabbath, the world would have us to itself. We do not want to be on the run or having to watch the clock, but we no longer seem to know how to protect leisure for praying and playing. As a new century lies before us, the practice of keeping Sabbath may be a soul-sustaining gift just waiting to be unwrapped once more.⁶⁰

Stairs is not the only one to connect Sabbath keeping to a holistically healthy life.

Bob Sewell, in the chapter “Help and Healing for Wounded Healers” in the book

Pastor’s At Greater Risk writes,

I also recommend that every pastor make a serious commitment to a weekly Sabbath for himself. I believe God made the human body and mind to work on seven-day cycles. Keeping the Sabbath might be hard to do, but it’s incredibly beneficial. It’s stepping onto God’s plan as a response to how He made us. Scripture’s Sabbath command isn’t an arbitrary requirement but a call to worship, to rest, to change the pace and to refocus. It’s a call to be alone with God one day a week so we can make sense of all the other needs. A pastor can choose another day besides Sunday.⁶¹

London and Wiseman are quick to concur and they add,

The Sabbath renewal idea needs much more attention than it is presently receiving among pastors and congregations. A serious commitment to return to the Sabbath might be part of the answer we’ve all been seeking for lowering stress levels among pastors. Philip Yancey raises this issue, ‘I wonder how much more

⁶⁰ Jean Stairs, *Listening for the Soul: Pastoral Care and Spiritual Direction* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000), 117.

⁶¹ London and Wiseman, 203-204.

effective our spiritual leaders would be if we encouraged them to take one day a week as a time for reflection, meditation and personal study. I wonder how much more effective our churches would be if we made the pastor's efficiency—our number one priority'."⁶²

Abraham Heschel's *The Sabbath* presents the Sabbath as not another Law but an invitation to the Holy of Holies. He writes, "There is much that philosophy could learn from the Bible. To the philosopher the idea of the good is the most exalted idea, but to the Bible the idea of the good is penultimate; it cannot exist without the holy. The good is the base, the holy is the summit. Thing created in six days He considered good, the seventh day He made holy."⁶³ All church leaders would benefit holistically if they remembered the purpose of the Sabbath and did not look at it as another spiritual discipline.

Dr. Dan Brunner, in a lecture given to doctoral students at George Fox University, commented that most pastors do not take a Sabbath because they have too high of an opinion of themselves.⁶⁴ They feel their church would fall to pieces if they made themselves completely unavailable one day a week. Wayne Muller agrees, "One of the astonishing attributes of Sabbath time is its unflinching uselessness. Nothing will get done, not a single item will be checked off any list. Nothing of significance will be accomplished, no goal realized. It is thoroughly without measurable value. Many of us are reluctant to slow our pace because we feel a driving need to be useful."⁶⁵

⁶² Ibid., 204.

⁶³ Abraham Heschel, *The Sabbath* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), 75.

⁶⁴ Dan Brunner, class lecture, "Spiritual Formation In The Minister," October 26, 2010, George Fox Evangelical Seminary, Cannon Beach, OR.

⁶⁵ Wayne Muller, *Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight in Our Busy Lives* (New York, NY: Bantam Books, 2000), 211.

Spiritual directors cannot make a church leader take a Sabbath; however, it is quite a bit more difficult to skip a Sabbath if the person is aware that someone who cares about him or her is going to ask about it. Life coach Tony Stoltzfus reminds his clients, “Sabbath is the discipline God gave us to keep ambition and overwork in check. . . . Sabbath is a great antidote to the causes of overwork.”⁶⁶ Less frequency of overworking equals less stress, which in return, equals better health.⁶⁷

Spiritual direction can play a role in the church leaders overall health. The pastors’ overall health plays a role in their ability to perform their duties as shepherd of the people. Therefore, it is reasonable that a spiritual director is beneficial for clergy in the Church of the Nazarene.

The Reason of Crisis

There is not a church leader who does not face crisis at some point; some may even face crises on a daily basis.⁶⁸ A recent Barna research finds, “Pastors may be employed in one of society’s most demanding professions and many churchgoers may

⁶⁶ Tony Stoltzfus, *Working Yourself to Death*, <http://www.coach22.com/discover-coaching/resources/11-07workingyourselftodeath.htm> (accessed June 9, 2012).

⁶⁷ Alexandra Sifferlin, “Why Stress Makes It Harder to Kick the Common Cold,” *Time*, April 3, 2012, <http://healthland.time.com/2012/04/03/why-stress-makes-it-harder-to-kick-the-common-cold/> (accessed June 9, 2012).

⁶⁸ David Kale and Mel McCullough, *Managing Conflict In The Church* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 2003), 5.

place unrealistic expectations on their leaders.”⁶⁹ Demands and unrealistic expectations are a recipe for crisis. The report continues,

Being a spiritual leader of other people creates unusual relational dynamics and expectations. One of those areas is often a lost sense of connection with others: a majority of pastors (61%) admit that they "have few close friends." Also, one-sixth of today's pastors feel under-appreciated. Pastors also deal with family problems: one in every five contends that they are currently "dealing with a very difficult family situation."⁷⁰

A pastor who is under-appreciated or struggling with issues at home will undoubtedly allow these problems to affect his or her ministry, which will lead to a crisis.

David Kinnaman, who directed a study of pastors' self-perceptions, commented on this research, “The study also underscores how difficult the role of pastoring is—and it should remind churchgoers to express gratitude to the men and women who serve.”⁷¹

Kinnaman goes on to add that pastors would be wise to seek help, perhaps even enlisting something like a life coach. The pastor in crisis needs a spiritual director. Chester Michael writes, “One of the most important times when spiritual direction is needed is during a crisis.”⁷²

The previous chapters demonstrated that many models of spiritual direction developed under the weight of a crisis moment: Adam ate the forbidden fruit, King David lusted after and stole the forbidden fruit, Peter denied what had previously been his life, Saul needed safety and security as he joined with those he had previously persecuted, and

⁶⁹ Barna Group, “Pastors Feel Confident in Ministry, But Many Struggle in their Interaction with Others,” July 10, 2006, <http://www.barna.org/leadership-articles/150-pastors-feel-confident-in-ministry-but-many-struggle-in-their-interaction-with-others> (accessed June 10, 2012).

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Michael, 139.

Saint John of the Cross struggled in prison. The story in Chapter 1 even demonstrates a stumbling into spiritual direction as a result of a crisis. Spiritual direction can be and is preventive medicine in soul care, but it is also a much-needed resource in times of crisis.

May demonstrates how spiritual direction, differing from psychotherapy, can help in a time of crisis:

In classical spiritual direction it is traditional for directors to help directees evaluate sufferings and discomforts in terms of their graced potentials. Certainly this approach is far more likely to happen in spiritual direction than in counseling or psychotherapy, which nearly always leap to “remedy the problem.” . . . We must reclaim some of the old wisdom that says there is a difference between consolation and simply feeling good, and that suffering is often indeed the outer clothing of growth.⁷³

A spiritual director helps the leader see crisis and suffering as an opportunity for growth. Brian McLaren builds on this idea when he writes, “We can rest in God in the eye of the storm, seeing our difficulties neither as punishments for some past offense nor as evidence that God’s protection has gone off-line, but as an opportunity for God to speak expanding good into an expanding void.”⁷⁴

A spiritual director also helps the pastor look beyond the suffering. Sue Monk Kidd writes, “In the crisis we need to hang onto God’s little jokes, to those priceless moments when something round with pleasure bounces upon us. We need to hold onto the celebration of becoming, to the bliss that wells up from deeper places we’re tapping.”⁷⁵ The tendency is to focus on the crisis, yet God may be up to something in

⁷³ May, *Care of Mind, Care of Spirit*, 61.

⁷⁴ McLaren, 202.

⁷⁵ Sue Monk Kidd, *When the Heart Waits: Spiritual Direction for Life’s Sacred Questions* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1992), 99.

other areas. The spiritual director can help the pastor break the bonds of tunnel vision and see that everything is not bad and dark.

London and Wiseman warn, “Pastors are especially vulnerable . . . during seasons of fatigue, frustration, and hopelessness.”⁷⁶ For this reason, it is vital that pastors engage a spiritual director during times of crisis. To not do so could lead to moral failure, burnout or desertion from the ministry.

Conclusion

“The early Wesleyan movement borrowed richly from many traditions, which accounts for its widespread appeal. It likewise seized upon anything practical that could be used as an instrument for spiritual growth. Wesley’s genius was in knowing where to look.”⁷⁷ It is reasonable that Wesley would embrace something, if it worked, regardless if it was associated with what some might deem an unacceptable practice. Spiritual direction has proven to work. Thompson relays the words of a man, who discovered spiritual direction,

This is how one man described the benefits of his spiritual mentoring: I have discovered personnel support for my journey. Not only have I been accepted, affirmed, appreciated, and given words of assurance about God’s work in my life, but I have known the incalculable support of prayer from a man who knows me and who cares about God’s work in my life. I no longer feel alone in my struggle.⁷⁸

God desires everyone to have a companion along the way.

⁷⁶ London and Wiseman, 50.

⁷⁷ W. Paul Jones, 82.

⁷⁸ Thompson, 123.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE EXPERIENCE OF WHY LEADERS IN THE CHURCH NEED SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

God has so ordained things that we grow in faith only through the frail instrumentality of one another.

Anonymous¹

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the experience of spiritual direction, mostly within the context of the contemporary Church of the Nazarene. I will explore and discuss the reasons why district superintendents, colleagues, friends, therapists, and retreats are not and cannot provide adequate spiritual director for a pastor in the Church of the Nazarene. Testimonies of those who have had positive results with spiritual direction will be examined. A brief survey of what one group is currently doing to introduce spiritual direction to its pastors will be investigated.

¹ This quote is often attributed to Saint John of the Cross on the internet. Marjorie Thompson also does so in her book (124). However, it cannot be found in any of his printed works. A Carmelite scholar in Victoria, Australia says he doubts if this is John of the Cross. Philip Harvey, e-mail message to the author, June 19, 2012.

Why Not District Superintendents?

The job of a district superintendent in the Church of the Nazarene is not easy. It is complex and demanding. The *Manual* of the Church of the Nazarene lists thirty distinct tasks that the district superintendent is to perform.² Some of those tasks could reasonably be a full time job in and of themselves for a district superintendent in charge of 50-100 churches across a wide geographical area.³ Rowell, in his excellent paper on pastor and district superintendent relationships, suggests, “The work of a Nazarene district superintendent is generally understood as including the responsibility to provide support for the pastors under their charge.”⁴ This role might be called being a pastor to pastors. However, nowhere in the job description of a district superintendent in the *Manual* does it suggest that this is a role the district superintendent is to fill. There is certainly nothing that would even hint at the thought the district superintendent should attempt the role of a spiritual guide or director to the pastors. Yet, as Rowell suggested, it is often assumed.

The role of spiritual director to the pastors is not listed in the job description of a district superintendent, but that is only one reason among many why the district superintendent should not try to fill this role. A district superintendent may be an excellent pastor, an excellent administrator and an excellent financial manager, but that does not mean he or she will be an excellent spiritual director. A spiritual director has a charism, a spiritual gift, or a calling much like a pastor to that position. A desire to be a

² *The Manual*, 116-120.

³ A great example of this is the second duty listed. “To be available to the local churches in his or her assembly district as needed, and as necessary meet with the church board to consult with reference to spiritual, financial, and pastoral matters, giving such helpful advice and assistance as the superintendent may deem proper” (208.2). In a district of 75 churches this could literally consume 40 hours a week of the superintendent’s time.

⁴ Jeren Rowell, *Ministerial Attrition* (accessed June 15, 2012).

spiritual director does not necessarily make someone qualified to be a spiritual director; the gifts are needed as well.

There is also the question of conflicting loyalties. Rowell, after suggesting district superintendents look out for the best interests of the pastor, writes:

However, there is also an apparent expectation that district superintendents will stand in the gap to protect the vitality of a congregation from the incompetence or malpractice of a careless pastor. This can become a nearly impossible tightrope on which a district superintendent is called to balance his or her work. It places the pastor and district superintendent in a sometimes tenuous relationship. One oft-repeated theme in this study was the expectation violation that pastors have experienced when they called their DS for help in a time of church conflict only to experience their supposed advocate siding with the church board's wish to run them out. For this reason and others, there is an evident strain of relational trust that exists between many Nazarene pastors and superintendents.⁵

This would make a spiritual director/directee relationship next to impossible. Barry and Connolly add, "Conflicting loyalties tend to interfere with the director's ability to listen."⁶ A spiritual director who cannot listen is not a spiritual director. This is not to put blame on the district superintendent; after all, he or she does have to consider the welfare of the individual churches. It simply demonstrates another reason why a district superintendent cannot be a spiritual director to pastors on his or her district.

The next reason is a lack of honesty, not from the director in this case, but from the directee. Howard Rice suggests, "They also may not speak from the heart with those in authority in their denominational structure for fear that they will be thought less of or passed up for promotions."⁷ Gilbert does an excellent job of describing why a pastor

⁵ Rowell, "Ministerial Attrition," 3.

⁶ Barry and Connolly, 150.

⁷ Howard Rice, 161.

would feel the need to be less than honest when discussing personal spiritual matters with a district superintendent. He writes,

How do I say, “I am tired of this ministry, the people don’t cooperate, my family is complaining, and I have more and more doubts about God’s effectiveness in my life?” What if we say that to the wrong parishioner? *We dare not tell our bishop or judicatory leader.* He or she may be my pastor, at least in theory, but how can you have this person as your pastor when he or she is also your boss?⁸

A pastor surveyed put it this way,

The ideal is for the DS to be the pastor's pastor. This is admirable, but impossible. Bottom line, he is my immediate supervisor and key to any new assignments. Confessing my inadequacies to him, no matter how good a pastor he is, is simply shooting myself in the foot. When I need a confidante, it would have to be a pastor of another denomination or a friend of extremely high trust.⁹

It is clear why there would be hesitancy on the part of pastors to air their troubles. It is for this reason that Bakke advises, “It is not appropriate to seek spiritual direction from persons [district superintendents] other than our director because of disenchantment, ambivalence, or defensiveness. We need to remind ourselves that we are seeking God through direction, not primarily wise human advice.”¹⁰

Rowell, in his study, asked pastors who had indicated they had thoughts of leaving the ministry, why they did not contact their district superintendent. Twenty-six point six percent indicated they were afraid of the consequences of admitting such a thing. The following comments were also made,

- “DS seems disconnected from real life and giving practical support.”
- “See him as a boss more than a friend; don't get to speak with him very often.”

⁸ Richard Gilbert, “Healing The Holy Helpers: Healthy Clergy For The Third Millennium,” PhD diss., Oxford, 2003, http://www.gtfeducation.org/images/dynamic/file/academics/otl/OTL_Gilbert.pdf (accessed June 15, 2012), np.

⁹ Rowell, “Ministerial Attrition,” 16-17.

¹⁰ Bakke, 122.

- “My DS is great but I'm responsible, he's busy.”
- “Didn't want to add to his stress load; he is aware of our situation, hate to complain.”
- “I did talk with him but not until the decision had been made.”
- “I was ashamed and felt I had failed.”¹¹

These comments demonstrate a lack of communication, a poor qualifier for a spiritual direction relationship. Rowell interprets the data by indicating,

These observations may begin to indicate that the DS is not generally viewed by the pastor as a partner in decision-making regarding persistence in active vocational ministry. A qualitative assessment of the narrative responses in these survey instruments reveals the general category of trust as a prominent theme. This general thematic category includes the ideas of not only potential negative consequences but also the regular comment from pastors who view the DS as too busy with other matters to be concerned about their trouble.¹²

The pastors are correct when they indicate the district superintendent is too busy, although many superintendents would hesitate to ever admit that they were too busy for one of their shepherds. This is one more indicator of why pastors need an outlet other than their district supervisor for their spiritual matters.

The final reason that a district superintendent should not take on the role of spiritual director for pastors is that pastors already come to them in matters of church business. It would be all too great of a temptation on both parties to allow a spiritual direction session to become a question and answer session on the welfare of the church. Gordon Jeff writes, “It seems to me important that where clergy need to discuss their work in detail, this should not impinge on the spiritual direction session, which is there for the directee’s own ongoing relationship with God. . . . Usually I think it is better for

¹¹ Rowell, “Ministerial Attrition,” 11.

¹² Ibid., 12.

the work consultancy to be done elsewhere.”¹³ Just as business and pleasure do not mix, spirituality and business do not mix.

The district superintendent provides a great service to the church and to pastors; however, the service of spiritual direction is not part of his or her role. No finger is being pointed at district superintendents in blame; spiritual direction is simply not part of their duties. This is not to say that spiritual direction cannot happen between pastors and district superintendents; God can speak to people through all relationships and situations.¹⁴

Why Not Colleagues

There are some districts in the Church of the Nazarene that have zone or regional meetings for their pastors. Pastors within the same area, usually 8-12, meet for prayer, encouragement and discussion. This, however, does not take the place of what spiritual direction provides. There are a number of factors that keep this from being considered a form of group spiritual direction.

The normal pastor-to-pastor conversation sounds like this, “How are you?” “Great, how are you?” Good, how is the church going?” “Really, really good. Yours?” “Everything is running smoothly.” Howard Rice suggests the reason for this “fantasy” conversation is that pastors “may not trust their colleagues in ministry out of a desire to look respectable or strong for the sake of the congregation they serve.”¹⁵ No one wants to

¹³ Jeff, 26.

¹⁴ Bakke, 121.

¹⁵ Rice, 161-162.

admit failure if everyone else is trumpeting success, even if he or she is almost certain that everyone else is not telling the truth. Gordon Jeff states it this way, “God knows how reluctant clergy are to talk about their failures in the usual clergy gatherings or with the church hierarchy. Indeed for many clergy, clergy gatherings are frequently destructive of confidence because all around seem to be proudly parading their ‘successes’, making the sensitive priest feel even more incompetent.”¹⁶

It is quite sad that pastors do not feel they can be transparent with the group of people who are likely going through many of the same struggles that they are going through on a daily basis. Richard Gilbert laments this sad state of affairs:

We simply do not trust or respect each other. Maybe we don’t feel safe within ourselves. So we are willing to discuss the community Thanksgiving service, but can’t open up about the woundedness that we *all* experience, summarizes the feelings of many. We must determine to relate to other clergy as peers and colleagues, not competitors. When we yield to the latter, even if the facts verify it, we have strayed from the language of vocation to worldly standards.¹⁷

He is correct to identify that pastors do not act like called agents of God when they hide their struggles from one another. They more closely resemble CEOs from rival companies when they behave this way. However, unless it is a special group, odds are they will continue to be reluctant to share their struggles with one another.

There are times when what a pastor is going through is just too personal to share in a group session. Wuellner, in her wonderful book on caring for clergy, quotes Dr. Morton Kelsey when she writes, “Problems and anxieties may arise that are too personal and serious to share with the group. After all, a prayer group is not an encounter group or

¹⁶ Jeff, 26.

¹⁷ Gilbert (accessed June 16, 2012).

a therapy group. . . . I have seen too many people damaged by such encounters.”¹⁸ When things are that serious and that personal, they are best discussed in one-on-one encounters and with a person who can be trusted deeply.

Dr. Spaite warns that pastors are so accustomed to being guarded with their struggles that they do not know how to open up and share. He writes, “Even relationships with other pastors don’t always address this need for relationship because many do not know how to build a relationship without incurring comparisons or hiding insecurities.”¹⁹ It is often the case that clergy need to be led, through questions, to open up and share their problems. It may even take quite some time for a pastor to reach the place where he or she is willing to be transparent.

Because of these problems regular meetings with other pastors cannot fill the role of a spiritual director. This does not imply there is anything wrong with pastors meeting together regularly for fellowship, but they need another outlet for their spiritual well-being, and that outlet can best be served through one-on-one spiritual direction.

Why Not Friends?

Rice suggests pastors often refer to a soul-friend or an accountability partner when they are asked about spiritual direction. They suggest that a friend fills the need for spiritual direction in their lives. Some would even suggest a spouse fills that need to which Rice warns a spouse cannot and should not bear the full weight of spiritual

¹⁸ Wuellner, 88.

¹⁹ Spaite and Salter, 86.

guidance or direction.²⁰ Bakke goes even further and discusses the dangers associated with having a spouse bear the spiritual problems inherently involved in ministry.²¹ Although a true friend may come closest to providing spiritual direction, he or she still falls short of accomplishing what happens in a spiritual direction relationship.

The first thing that needs to be recognized is the difference between the term “spiritual friend” and a “spiritual” friend as it relates to spiritual direction. Gerald May writes,

I feel spiritual friendship can be seen as synonymous with spiritual direction, but one must be careful about the meaning. The notion of friendship can raise the issue of increasing mutuality in the relationship. This is a divergence from the classical model that can have both positive and negative consequences. . . . While such mutuality encourages greater intimacy and sharing among the parties, by removing the structure of the more formal relationship it courts the danger of turning spiritual direction into spiritual conversation in which there is little accountability, direct confrontation, or precision in the discernment. As in psychotherapy, mutuality can interfere with perspective.²²

Having a friend who is spiritual is great, but it is not the same as having a “spiritual friend.”

A friend who is spiritual may be prone to the same errors that an individual would make while trying to do spiritual direction alone. Bakke writes, “Some friends find that when they are with each other often and share numerous social encounters, it becomes more difficult to remain sufficiently objective in spiritual direction together.”²³ Dan Burke elaborates on it in more detail,

²⁰ Rice, 162.

²¹ Bakke, 122.

²² May, *Care of Souls*, 9-10.

²³ Bakke, 124.

Blind spots and delusion are what they are because we don't see them – we cannot see them on our own. This often is true because of our familiarity with them. Have you taken a close look at your car lately? Walk around it. Take note of each nick, dent, or other flaw. Why don't you see those every day? This is because they have become “normal” to you. The flaws are there, but daily exposure minimizes our awareness (unless, of course, we are obsessive about such things). Spiritual flaws disappear because we see them every day and they are thus *normal* to us. The same can happen with friends. If we have defects or attachments that don't annoy our friends, then they will disappear to them, and thus they will be unable to help us overcome them. Even worse is when they share the same sin or defect and thereby encourage our own sin and weakness. This is common with the sin of gossip. Our blind spots become theirs because they are so close to us, or so much like us, or regularly participate in the sin or dysfunction with us.²⁴

Sometimes friends are too close to each other to see what is really going on in each others life.

There is also a difficulty in letting a friend see that one may have a dark side. Generally people want their friends to have a good perception of them and, therefore, they may find it difficult to be completely open with them. Burke warns, “Thus, when they make assessments, we feel judged (in the negative sense) and will likely begin to quibble about the minute errors in their assessment. . . . This reaction comes out of pride and vanity and the concomitant need for approval (sometimes from both sides of the relationship).”²⁵ This could lead to irreparable damage to the relationship that would not happen in a true spiritual director/directee relationship.

Copan does see benefits in the friend as a spiritual director. He writes, “The use of the term friend returns the concept of spiritual direction to the sphere of every day life,

²⁴ Dan Burke, “Can A Friend Be My Spiritual Director?” Catholic Spiritual Direction, <http://rcspiritualdirection.com/blog/topics/spiritual-direction/perspective-expectations> (accessed June 16, 2012).

²⁵ Ibid.

demystifies it, and allows this activity to take place within the context of any friendship between two Christians.”²⁶ Jones sees this as an ideal way to daily keep in touch with Jesus. He adds, “Spiritual direction seeks to guide us deeper into the double mystery of God and of ourselves by means of companionship.”²⁷ These benefits are real; however, they do not outweigh the problems or potential outcomes, the most dangerous being a ruined friendship.

Spiritual direction needs to be an intentional act with a spiritual director, not a random occurrence with a friend. Bakke demonstrates the distinctions, “Differences exist between talking about God with family and friends and intentionally choosing to listen to God in spiritual direction. Participants in a spiritual direction relationship are very deliberate at the outset about the goal of being available to listen to God and each other. This is the central purpose of the relationship.”²⁸ When the central purpose is to listen to God and not try to intertwine that with all the dynamics of a friendship, there is a much greater chance of experiencing the benefits of spiritual direction.

Having friends are important; having a spiritual director is important. However, this is not a prime candidate to kill two birds with one stone. These are two separate relationships. Bakke writes that although both relationships are valuable, their differences are insurmountable to combine the two into one person.²⁹ Therefore, let friends be friends and a spiritual director be someone else.

²⁶ Copan, 13.

²⁷ Alan Jones, *Exploring*, 47.

²⁸ Bakke, 121.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 124.

Why Not With A Trusted Member Of The Congregation?

There is a temptation by the pastor to share intimate details with a close member of the congregation. After all, this person may be whom the pastor spends more time with than anyone else outside of his family. However, all the reasons for not having a friend as a spiritual director also apply in this instance as well as the delicate balance of pastor/congregation relationship. Rice writes, “Many pastors have no one to whom they can turn for advice, correction or encouragement. They do not dare speak of their most intimate needs and desires with those within the congregation for fear of destroying the pastoral relationship.”³⁰ How close a pastor becomes to those within the congregation is an entire research question in and of itself, but it is sufficient to say that a member of the congregation cannot function as the pastor’s spiritual director.

Why Not A Counselor?

Pastors will occasionally refer to a counselor or therapist when asked about spiritual direction. Counseling and spiritual direction are not the same activity, nor are they performed by the same professional. Barry and Connolly explain, “While we borrow, with gratitude, concepts and practices from the psychological fields, we believe that spiritual direction is a helping relationship distinct from psychotherapy and psychological counseling.”³¹ The major difference is that pastoral counseling, therapy,

³⁰ Rice, 161.

³¹ Barry and Connolly, 144.

psychotherapy and other helping relationships are problem centered, whereas spiritual direction is growth centered.³²

May, who before his passing was one of the foremost experts on the differences between spiritual direction and psychotherapy, writes,

There are many similarities between spiritual direction and psychotherapy, but they are fundamentally different undertakings. In the modern state of flux among spiritual and psychological interests, it is very important to keep the distinctions as clear as possible. It is very tempting to blur these differences in the name of integration, but to do so is to risk psychologizing the process of spiritual direction. . . . in practice it takes great maturity and vigilance to avoid turning spiritual direction into a form of pastoral-psychological counseling that misses the spiritual mark. . . . The most obvious difference in content between psychotherapy and spiritual direction is that the former focuses more on mental and emotional dimensions (thoughts, feelings, moods, and so on) while the latter focuses more precisely on spiritual issues such as prayer life, religious experiences, and sense of relationship to God. The primary danger in bringing these dimensions together is that mental and emotional concerns may kidnap the gentle spiritual attentiveness required of both director and directee.³³

There is a difference in reason, content and goal.

It is stated above that the reason for counseling is problem centered and the reason for spiritual direction is growth centered. Dr. Rhonda Carrim expands on this,

Issues such as problem solving are more correctly associated with pastoral counseling. While pastoral counseling includes spiritual guidance, a presenting problem—such as difficulty in marriage or family relations—is generally the reason for seeking counsel. In this context, the primary goal is resolving a problem. By contrast, deepening one's relationship with God through attentiveness to the movements, invitations, and guidance of the Holy Spirit lies at the heart of spiritual direction.³⁴

³² Green, 38.

³³ May, *Care of Souls*, 15-16.

³⁴ Carrim, 163.

W. Paul Jones breaks it down to therapy, counseling and spiritual direction when he writes,

Therapy is required when debilitating mental or emotional anguish or pain becomes so severe that one is no longer able to cope with daily living
Counseling is needed to resolve a problem, clarify an issue, or sort out a particular situation, usually for the sake of making a decision.
Spiritual direction encompasses the totality of one's life—body, mind, and spirit—as these function in one's environment of meaning.³⁵

These are not always absolutes. There are some who only seek spiritual direction when they are in a crisis, and there are some who have a lifelong counselor to help them grow mentally. Copan summarizes well by writing, “Psychotherapy tends to focus more on the mental and emotional dimensions of life whereas spiritual direction focuses on spiritual issues.”³⁶

The content is quite different beginning with the differences in attitude between the professional therapist, counselor, or psychologist and the spiritual director. Tracy notes one contrast lies in the area of compassion and empathy. He adds, “The faith mentor (spiritual director) will freely express compassion and empathy. Even interpersonal and existential psychotherapists seem to work hard to police feelings of empathy and compassion.”³⁷ The spiritual director will feel with the directee, even perhaps weep or laugh with the directee; that is mostly not the case in the other helping relationships. Israel Galindo explains,

Because most people who seek pastoral counseling are experiencing anxiety due to a crisis of some sort, the helping relationship is often tense, sometimes

³⁵ W. Paul Jones, *The Art of Spiritual Direction*, 21.

³⁶ Copan, 19.

³⁷ Moon and Brenner, 129.

conflictual; at times the person seeking help is even suspicious of the helper. In the process of spiritual direction, however, the atmosphere tends to be more relaxed, and the focus is on the way grace is operating in the life of the directee.³⁸

The spiritual director wants to maintain an atmosphere of peace even in dealing with some very disturbing and difficult situations.

A second difference in content is closely related to the reason to begin. Tracy writes, “The psychotherapist is concerned with discovering, analyzing, interpreting and healing for the inner self. The faith mentor, spiritual friend or covenant group leader cares more about growth in grace and movements of the Holy Spirit.”³⁹ The process in spiritual direction is designed to draw the voice of the Lord out to be heard. In the other helping relationships, the content is designed to draw out something that will alleviate a problem. Leech states that some of the other helping relationships, clinical theology⁴⁰ specifically, may, in fact, be concerned with the depths of the spiritual life, but it does not make them spiritual direction. He adds, “Its (clinical theology) concern is with depressive and schizoid states, with psychological and spiritual affliction, and with interpreting these conditions in theological terms.”⁴¹

The goals of the various helping relationships are quite different. Tracy provides the following bullet points on goals:

- Spiritual direction: Transformation by the grace of God, in Christ, wholeness, holiness, Christlikeness.

³⁸ Ibid., 212.

³⁹ Ibid., 129.

⁴⁰ Clinical theology is primarily a British movement and it is similar to the pastoral counseling movement in the United States that seeks to identify and fix a problem.

⁴¹ Leech, 93.

- Psychotherapy: Integration, becoming fully human, self acceptance, self actualization.
- Pastoral counseling: Survival of life's jolts, coping with crisis, submission of sin, guilt and shame to the grace of God in Christ.⁴²

As with the reason to begin and the content, the goal of spiritual direction is not focused on fixing a problem but connecting with God. Gordon Jeff states, "In counseling, the task may frequently end before issues of God have come seriously into the picture; in direction, God is the starting point."⁴³ In fact God is the focal point throughout. May reminds those interested in spiritual direction that it is all about God when he writes, "In spiritual direction . . . the true healer, nurturer, sustainer, and liberator is the Lord, and the director and directee are seen as hopeful channels, beneficiaries, or expressions of grace for each other. This is a radical difference, and one that cannot be overemphasized."⁴⁴

There is room, and sometimes a need, for a person to have a spiritual director and a therapist. Tilden Edwards emphasizes ". . . that the content and intent of psychology, at its root, is pathology driven and needs to be complemented by the ministry of spiritual direction."⁴⁵ A pastor who believes a counselor is all he or she may need may find out that a counselor is not ready to work with the unique issues found in pastoral ministries. Rice adds, "The therapist may be ill-equipped to assist pastors with issues of faith and doubt and personal issues such as sexuality, power, authority, and competition."⁴⁶ A leader in the church, may at times, need more than spiritual direction, but the leader

⁴² Moon and Brenner, 132.

⁴³ Jeff, 27.

⁴⁴ May, *Care of Souls*, 18.

⁴⁵ Copan, 19.

⁴⁶ Rice, 162.

always needs spiritual direction and from someone who is called and qualified to provide it.

Why Not A Retreat?

Retreats are quite popular in Christianity during these hectic days. *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary* defines retreat as

- 1) An act or process of withdrawing especially from what is difficult, dangerous, or disagreeable.
- 2) A place of privacy or safety.
- 3) A period of group withdrawal for prayer, meditation, study, or instruction under a director.⁴⁷

The pastoral retreat combines all three concepts. In an ideal world, the pastor withdraws from the church, outside world and all else that may cause stress. The pastor then moves to a safe and private place for a time of prayer and renewal. Retreats traditionally last between two to 40 days.

A common practice in the Church of the Nazarene is the pastor and spouse retreat. In this situation, the pastor and his or her spouse go to a different location with other pastors and spouses for a period of 4-5 days. These events, as pastors testify, function more like a business meeting than a retreat. Guest speakers provide messages that range from motivational to how to manage your money to the challenge of growing a church. The last thing a pastor needs on a retreat is a challenge to be more productive! There is not a spiritual director or anyone available to provide spiritual guidance during these

⁴⁷ *Merriam-Webster*, "Retreat," <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/retreat> (accessed June 19, 2012).

retreats. There are set times of prayer and perhaps even all night prayer events, but no one there to specifically provide direction.⁴⁸

Pastors talk about retreats as if they were some type of spiritual vacation with an abundance of visiting and fun but little or no spiritual direction. Gordon Jeff uses the word conductor in place of spiritual director in discussing the Fellowship Retreats that he ran and directed:

I felt that even those Fellowship Retreats were losing a Golden opportunity for spiritual direction and further growth and awareness, despite the usual encouragement to retreatants to come and talk with the conductor. Where else than in retreat could there be a better or more sustained opportunity to talk through with individuals both where they are up to in their Christian pilgrimage, and also what is actually happening to them in the course of the retreat? On many retreats only a handful of retreatants bother to take the opportunity of talking with the conductor—maybe because the conductor is so withdrawn as not to inspire confidence? But I believed that a retreat could well be the starting point for many people to discover the action of God in their lives, and to start on the path of having a spiritual director.⁴⁹

The retreat concept is not flawed at all, but how most modern clergy and leadership conduct the retreat causes it to miss the mark.⁵⁰

Testimony From Those Who Experienced Spiritual Direction

When looking at experience as evidence for spiritual direction, those who have experienced spiritual direction and testified of their experience can make the best case.

⁴⁸ There are no statistics to support this analysis. These are purely my observations and the observations of other pastors I have talked with around the United States.

⁴⁹ Jeff, 74.

⁵⁰ I will discuss the retreat again later in this chapter with a focus on how a retreat is run for clergy benefits as it relates to spiritual direction.

The following testimony is from a well-educated leader in the church who was struggling to remain anchored to his faith.

I did not even know what a spiritual director was, but I did go to see her. I entered a program of spiritual direction, foreign to my Protestant tradition, to deepen my faith experience and listen for God's direction for my life. But I, the intellectual, was truly skeptical. Right from the start, I was not at all sure I would like the experience. . . . [spiritual direction] is teaching me to live more deeply. I am learning to let go, to be led, to forgive, to love, to wait, to serve. I have more peace, more fun, more willingness to deal with anxiety, more willingness to see myself and less fear.⁵¹

This individual was skeptical, but in the end found God's presence, healing, discernment and growth.

Alice Fryling gives her own excellent testimony in her book on group spiritual direction:

About the time I discovered spiritual direction, I was beginning to learn that trying to prove my worthiness to myself did not work any better than trying to prove my worthiness to other people. In my meetings with a spiritual director and in group direction, I began to experience what it means to have the Spirit of God direct my life. Over and over again, my experiences in spiritual direction remind me that I am already beloved by God. I do not need to prove that truth. The effect of spiritual direction in my own life is that I have become less active but more effective, and more passionate but less driven. The Holy Spirit directs my life with a gentle, caring touch. Over the years, my conversations in spiritual direction have continually reminded me that God is always wanting to extend grace and love to me in order for me to extend grace and love to others. This journey into personal and group spiritual direction is ongoing, fruitful and full of joy.⁵²

There is evidence of divine presence, discernment and growth in her testimony that was not there prior to engaging with a spiritual director. Fryling goes on to list the testimony of others in her care,

⁵¹ Hagberg and Guelich, 24.

⁵² Fryling, 14.

- Tara said that when she first began spiritual direction, she thought, what a wonderful luxury, to spend time each month just on my journey, my issues, examining my relationship with God. It wasn't long however, before I felt like spiritual direction was no longer a luxury but a necessity.
- Someone else said that spiritual direction "helps me refocus my attention on what God is doing and the evidence of that in my life. It helps me to recall the main events over the past month, to bring them into focus and see where God has been at work."
- I never had a safe place to talk like that—to be affirmed in my relationship with God.⁵³

These experiences show that when spiritual direction takes place lives are transformed.

Gerald May performed an experiment where he took pastoral counselors and chaplains who were unfamiliar with spiritual direction and had them participate in spiritual direction. What follows are their comments on the experience,

- I was relaxed here. It seemed as if I didn't really have to achieve anything. I could be more allowing and open than I ever am in counseling.
- After awhile it seemed as if it were all a kind of prayer. We were talking about all kinds of things, but I was in prayer . . . both of us were.
- I felt refreshed and invigorated both during and after our talk. I let go of a lot of things, my own agendas and my efforts to steer things one way or another.
- I felt a great difference in responsibility. Often I carry a heaviness about my clients, feeling I must be very careful to try and make things go right. I know counseling is a shared responsibility, but I can't keep from feeling its weight. Yet in the spiritual direction experience it was as if all that weight was lifted from me. I didn't shrug it off; it was really lifted.
- It's difficult to express and it sounds paradoxical, but here where I'm dealing with what is obviously the most important part of a person's life, it's like my input is the least important. Maybe a better way to put it is that at this level I can't really know how things should come out. I still have to use all my faculties and my best judgments, but I am almost forced to surrender the ultimate outcome of things.
- I was just being there, open, and alert, and responsive, but just being. I was more intrigued by the power of God than by the specifics of my own abilities or by the drama of the other person's story.
- I felt a real sense of participation. Not just being a part of the relationship, but of something immensely larger. It was humbling and at times a little scary, but it was also very peaceful.

⁵³ Ibid., 32.

- It seemed to me that this is how all my counseling relationships should be. I've experienced the same kind of allowing and letting-be on rare occasions in counseling, but here it pervaded the entire session. I know that it couldn't have been anything but a healing experience for both of us.⁵⁴

These are all professional leaders in the church and their experiences are amazing. It not only demonstrates the difference between counseling and spiritual direction, but it also demonstrates the soul transforming power of spiritual direction. What happens in spiritual direction cannot be replicated with any other relationship.

What One Church Is Doing That Works

The Vineyard-USA branch of churches is doing an excellent job providing for clergy care. Doug Anderson serves as a National Coordinator and Mercy Response Director. As National Coordinator, Doug oversees the Vineyard's Community Care Net, which is a ministry of pastoral care for Vineyard pastors including a pastor's Sabbath retreat. Doug identifies with the unique struggles pastors face and has a passion to see them renewed and empowered to fulfill their calling.⁵⁵ Doug oversees this project, but many others make it a reality. One of those is David Nixon.

David Nixon, founder of the School of Spiritual Direction and Vineyard-USA spiritual director for Pastor Sabbath Retreats, discussed the importance of the retreats and what happens at a Pastor Sabbath Retreat.⁵⁶ “The purpose of the retreats,” he said, “is to help restore a burned-out pastoral leader, heal a pastoral leader before burn-out can set in

⁵⁴ May, *Care of Souls*, 114-115.

⁵⁵ Vineyard, USA, <http://www.vineyardusa.org/site/search/node/pastor%20care> (Accessed June 20, 2012).

⁵⁶ David Nixon, interviewed by author, August 23, 2011, Norwood, OH, written notes. All references to David Nixon come from this interview.

and teach pastoral leaders appropriate self-care so that they avoid the burnout process altogether.” Nixon added, “The goal is to have pastors who are healthy and full of the joy the Good News provides.”

Nixon stated that the pastors and their spouses, usually 6-8 couples, are whisked away to a secluded location where they can be free of all distractions. The cost is covered by Vineyard-USA, which, alleviates the financial stress for many pastors. Laptops, iPads and cell phones are frowned upon for the retreat and usually cannot function because of the remote location. During the retreat, the pastoral couples are introduced to the spiritual directors available and then times are arranged to meet with one of the directors for spiritual direction. For some of the pastors, it is the first introduction to spiritual direction. Nixon exclaimed, “but for most it is not the last.” Pastors tend to leave the retreat and find a spiritual director near their homes for an ongoing relationship.

Don Follis, has worked at the Vineyard Sabbath Retreats as a Team Pastor provided this information about the retreats:

There were about 8 staff and about 10-12 couples. Very intimate. Lots of time to rest, tell your story, grieve losses and heal. We had on staff: the director, the team pastors, a worship leader, two who oversaw prayer, a clinical psychologist and a life coach.

As staff members, we had to show [up] 24 hours early and stay a day after everyone left. We were there 12 days, about 14 with the travel. Long time but well worth it. One of the most interesting 12 days of my life.

All senior pastors there were away from their pulpits one week and most two.

During the 10 days each couple tells their story and gets prayer. Each couple got a 3-hour slot at some point during the 10 days. The couples get specific instructions ahead of time on how to think about writing and tell their story. Rarely in my 30+ years of ministry have I seen so many tears or so much laughing or so much honesty.

The staff tell their story the first day and the tears begin flowing. It was amazing and very touching. All present sign covenants the first day in a very formal ceremony that information during the next 10 days will never be shared beyond the retreat—ever.⁵⁷

David Nixon is very excited about the transformation that is taking place in the lives of the pastors that attend these retreats. He said they often arrive beaten and broken but return full of life and spiritually renewed with wisdom on how to stay that way. He did not have statistics on the success rate of these retreats but said that he stays in touch with many of the pastors and they continue to exhibit signs of growth and healing long after they leave.

The Church of the Nazarene could borrow from this idea. It would be exceptional to have a spiritual director on hand at pastor and spouse retreats, camp meetings⁵⁸, and even district assemblies. It would be a great way to introduce the concept of spiritual direction to pastors who may not be familiar with it. To borrow from the Vineyard Church in this area would be transformative in the ministry field of the Church of the Nazarene.

⁵⁷ Don Follis, e-mail message to the author, July 3, 2012.

⁵⁸ Camp meeting is a tradition on many of the Church of the Nazarene districts. The district retreats to a campground for renewal, evangelism, discipleship and fellowship. These camp meetings last between 5-14 days.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

Loneliness is the first thing which God's eye named, not good.

John Milton¹

If the Church of the Nazarene is going to have holistically healthy clergy, then the pastors must have someone who is their spiritual director. Howard Rice laments, "Every pastor needs someone who can act as a mentor or wise guide. The work of ministry is too dangerous to attempt by oneself."² A spiritual director is not a guarantee against stress, moral failure, burnout or any of the other dangers lurking in ministry. However, having a spiritual director will aid the pastor in finding God's presence, seeking God's direction, healing, and growing in grace. In this closing, I will briefly reiterate the need for divine presence, discernment, healing and growth in the life of a pastor.

Presence

Divine presence is a place of comfort. "Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, 'He is my refuge

¹ John Milton, *The Doctrine & Discipline of Divorce* (London, 1644), electronic edition, http://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/ddd/book_1/index.shtml (accessed June 22, 2012).

² Rice, 161.

and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.' . . . He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart" (Psalm 91:1,2,4). Thomas Keating writes that divine presence is the goal of all Christians.³ He adds, "The awareness of God is shot through with awe, reverence, love, and delight all at once."⁴ Sadly, many pastors are not making time for this joy-giving awareness of God.

Research shows that less than one-third of pastors make time for daily devotions or read scripture for any reason other than sermon preparation.⁵ The numbers of pastors leaving the ministry are alarming but not quite as alarming as those pastors who stay and avoid God's presence. Eugene Peterson paints a grim portrait of what this looks like when he writes,

American pastors are abandoning their posts, left and right, and at an alarming rate. They are not leaving their churches and getting other jobs. Congregations still pay their salaries. Their names remain on the church stationery and they continue to appear in pulpits on Sundays. But they are abandoning their posts, their *calling*. They have gone whoring after other gods. What they do with their time under the guise of pastoral ministry hasn't the remotest connection with what the church's pastors have done for most of twenty centuries.

A few of us are angry about it. We are angry because we have been deserted. Most of my colleagues who defined ministry for me, examined, ordained, and then installed me as a pastor in a congregation, a short while later walked off and left me, having, they said, more urgent things to do. The people I thought I would be working with disappeared when the work started. Being a pastor is difficult work; we want the companionship and counsel of allies. It is bitterly disappointing to enter a room full of people whom you have every reason to expect share the quest and commitments of pastoral work and find within ten minutes they most definitely do not. They talk of images and statistics. They drop

³ Thomas Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart* (New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2009), 18.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 88.

⁵ Schaeffer Institute, *Statistics on Pastors*, <http://www.intothyword.org/apps/articles/default.asp?articleid=36562> (accessed June 22, 2012).

names. They discuss influence and status. Matters of God and the soul and Scripture are not grist for their mills.⁶

It is frightening to think of a pastor leading people in spiritual matters while, at the same time, the pastor is not seeking God. It would be like a pilot flying an aircraft blind or a soundboard operator trying to get the mixture just right while deaf.

A pastor, without actively seeking God's presence, will find himself or herself in a myriad of troubles. For this reason the authors of *The Pornography Trap* warn, "Pastors should be in a process of spiritual direction in which they can demonstrate their active steps to grow closer with God."⁷ A spiritual director will not only help the pastor sense God's presence, but the spiritual director will be able to alert the pastor when he or she is not actively pursuing the divine presence.

It is a wonderful ideal that all leaders could be like Brother Lawrence, who claimed that even his busiest work did not turn him away from God.⁸ This is not the case with most pastors. Therefore, a spiritual director is beneficial to all, especially church leaders who find themselves looking at a busy schedule most days rather than seeking the presence of God.

Discernment

A pastor makes an enormous number of decisions every day. Many of those decisions have the ability to be a catalyst to the spiritual life of those in the pastor's care.

⁶ Eugene Peterson, *Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity*, 1-2.

⁷ Ralph Earl Jr. and Mark Lasser, *The Pornography Trap: Setting Pastors and Laypersons Free from Sexual Addiction* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 2002), 131.

⁸ Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God*, trans. Robert Edmonson (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 1985), 67.

Such decision-making should not be taken lightly because of the lasting implications to all involved. A broken hearted pastor, who does not wish to be named, shared the following story.

I was headed back to the office after a busy day of meetings. I checked my schedule and there were still two items left to do. The first was to visit a terminally ill woman whose children attended our Wednesday evening Caravan. The second was to finish up a lesson plan for Sunday school class. I didn't want to do either, I was tired and just wanted to go home, but I opted to just do the lesson plan and visit the woman another day. She died that night and I never got a chance to share the good news with her.⁹

As that story was being told tears ran down the cheeks of this pastor, and the impact that small decision made on him was enormous. If such a small fleeting decision can be so impactful, it demonstrates how bigger decisions can feel like the weight of the world. A spiritual director can help a pastor sense God's direction in these lofty matters.

The discernment process does not simply involve making a list of positives and negatives over two choices but gets to the spiritual heart of the matter by asking what the motivation is. W. Paul Jones quotes the president of a Christian denomination when he writes, "Unless I have a spiritual director with whom humility can be nurtured and perspective preserved, I do not see how I can keep from arrogance over the power that I have, and the breadth of power I might be tempted to seek."¹⁰ When the motivation is about self, it is rarely about God. The process of spiritual direction will assist in floating to the surface the motivation to be examined, and then a proper course of action can be planned.

⁹ This story was told to me in the summer of 2010. When I contacted the pastor, he gave me permission to share it, but asked that his name be withheld.

¹⁰ W. Paul Jones, 30.

Eugene Peterson, who often brings up the topic of spiritual direction in his books, discusses how a mentor helped him hear God’s direction for a relationship that had a lasting impact in his life. He writes,

My first spiritual director didn’t know he was a spiritual director. He had never so much as heard the term spiritual director, and neither had I. But our mutual ignorance of terminology did not prevent the work. . . . He was not only the first but among the best of the spiritual directors I have had. Those meetings shaped one of the significant relationships in my life, with lasting effects.¹¹

The spiritual director, although not demanding or heavy handed, will help clergy discern the still small voice.

Healing

The pastoral work force is composed of “wounded healers,” a phrase popularized by Henri Nouwen.¹² These “wounded healers” need to watch out for and care for their own health. Sarah Butler offers the reminder that if “clergy are to return to healthy believing, living and serving” we need to focus on our relationship with God and with others.¹³ Perhaps the easiest way to start building relationships with others and moving forward down the path to healing is through a spiritual director.

How might a spiritual director help the pastor find healing? When looking at the ministry through the lens of G. Lloyd Rediger, the following image comes into focus:

¹¹ Peterson, *Under the Unpredictable Plant*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 183.

¹² Henri Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society*, (New York, NY: Double Day, 1990).

¹³ Sarah Butler, *Caring Ministry: A Contemplative Approach to Pastoral Care* (New York, NY: Continuum, 2007), 47.

The pastoral role now includes an unfocused and expanded range of duties. The congregation expects the pastor to be in charge of nearly everything (except activities that the powerbrokers want to control). Being “in charge” here means not only seeing that the activities get done, but also that everyone interested in them is happy with them. From doing the bulletin, to repairing the furnace, to increasing the pledges and enhancing the congregation’s image of the community, the pastor must see that everything is taken care of or expect to be blamed when people are disappointed. Because pastors now feel so dependent on the approval of the congregation, it is easier for them to imagine that they are indeed responsible for everything in the congregation. The clinical name for this delusion is codependency, or collusion.¹⁴

Can love be found in such a place where co-dependency exists. A spiritual director can remind the pastor that life is not summed up by what the congregation thinks of him or her but in the loving arms of the Father. Through spiritual direction, the pastor can see the wisdom of self-differentiation and move forward to breaking the bonds of co-dependency. When these bonds are broken, the pastor can release the feelings of guilt, shame and inadequacy and focus on love, joy and self-acceptance.

A spiritual director can also help the pastor see God in the ugly and hurtful situations and relationships that seem to define the world. This, along with self-differentiation, will relieve stress. Stress is often responsible for emotional suffering and also is the catalyst to many other physical ailments. The American Institute of Stress describes how stress can cause physical diseases:

Many of these effects are due to increased sympathetic nervous system activity and an outpouring of adrenaline, cortisol and other stress-related hormones. Certain types of chronic and more insidious stress due to loneliness, poverty, bereavement, depression and frustration due to discrimination are associated with impaired immune system resistance to viral linked disorders ranging from the common cold and herpes to AIDS and cancer. Stress can have effects on other hormones, brain neurotransmitters, additional small chemical messengers elsewhere, prostaglandins, as well as crucial enzyme systems, and

¹⁴ G. Lloyd Rediger, *Clergy Killers: Guidance for Pastors and Congregations under Attack*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 23.

metabolic activities that are still unknown. Research in these areas may help to explain how stress can contribute to depression, anxiety and its diverse effects on the gastrointestinal tract, skin and other organs.¹⁵

A spiritual director can go a long way in reducing the stress a pastor feels by giving him or her a voice to be heard and thereby providing a key to a healthier life.

Growth

There is room for the entirely sanctified pastor in the Church of the Nazarene to grow. Sadly, there can sometimes be a greater need for the pastor to grow than the members of the congregation. Rice explains why this can be true when he writes, “Sometimes the profession of ministry has not strengthened the faith of those called to this vocation. The pastoral vocation has caused them to become immune to the very gospel they have proclaimed. Words such as gospel, forgiveness, and new life may seem to apply only to parishioners and not to pastors themselves.”¹⁶ This can lead to destruction unless the pastor has someone in his or her life who can point this out and guide him or her back to the proper path.

Rice suggests such a person is a spiritual guide or spiritual director. It is someone who can be trusted in times of need. He writes,

Those of us whose lives have lost a sense of the holy because we talk about holy things all the time may need a neutral person to help point the way to an ongoing discovery of God’s presence in our lives. The spiritual guide may require a guide. Most pastors need to find a spiritual director who will help us stay spiritually alive. The director can assist the pastor in dealing with issues of faith and doubt,

¹⁵ “America’s No. 1 Health Problem,” The American Institute of Stress, <http://www.stress.org/americas.htm> (accessed June 25, 2012).

¹⁶ Rice, 157-158.

with matters of stress and bitterness. The spiritual director may be the one person who can help the pastor keep faith alive in the darkest days. Above all, the spiritual director is someone to whom the pastor can be accountable. Just knowing that we are accountable for our thoughts and actions may prevent habits of bitterness and cynicism from becoming ingrained.¹⁷

Rice appears to suggest that people forget about growth and just try to stay spiritually alive. However, in many cases, simply making it through those stages is a sign of growth. Frost and Hirsch comment, "... spiritual growth often takes place in contexts of pain, struggle, doubt, and the unknown. In these times, neat, off the shelf answers don't suffice. . . . It's only through a shared pilgrimage that Christian and not-yet-Christian can come to a place of encountering the Holy in the midst of the storm."¹⁸ Growth can come from that which people think is dark, evil and unholy, and people need one another to see that in their lives. A spiritual director is trained not only to help clergy see the light at the end of the tunnel, but also to notice the beauty in the dark.

Growth is not only for the benefit of the pastor. The church will benefit and the Kingdom will benefit. Mulholland does a beautiful job of interweaving wholeness and holiness into a beautiful tapestry when he writes,

Our spiritual formation comes within a corporate and social context. Our growth toward wholeness in Christ is for the sake of others within the body of Christ, that we might nurture one another into the wholeness of Christ. Our growth toward wholeness is also for the sake of others beyond the body of Christ, that the redeeming, healing, transforming love of God may be made known in a broken and hurting world.¹⁹

¹⁷ Ibid., 162.

¹⁸ Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shape of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission For the 21st-Century Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishing, 2003), 97.

¹⁹ Mulholland, 141.

Spiritual direction, like a stone thrown into water, touches many more than just the person at the point of impact. It is beneficial to the growth of the entire body of Christ.

Closing Remarks

The ministry is a challenging calling. The minister needs help. Shawchuck and Heuser say it well,

Ours is a lonely and danger-fraught profession. None of us should attempt it alone—no more than would one lonely soldier go forth to fight a battle and win a war. We need each other. Will we ever learn to remember this? Demands for total competency can become heavy. Divine causes can get very sick. Pure meanness can be perpetrated under a guise of righteousness. Meeting behind a sign that says ‘church’ does not guarantee the people involved will act like a church. Help from beyond oneself is essential for the maintenance of sanity and strength, not to mention a proper spiritual perspective and healthy personhood. A minister can victimize others. A minister can be victimized by others. Every minister needs a minister.²⁰

Every clergy needs a spiritual director. Gilbert echoes those sentiments, “With all that is happening in and to ministers and ministry, it is important to stress that *all* clergy need to be in a covenanted relationship with a peer, a counselor, a therapist or a spiritual director with whom there is regularly scheduled supervision, discussion, trust-building and accountability to self, social network, vocation and God.”²¹ He later adds, “It is important that we commit to this time and relationship and there should be a requirement, denomination-wide, stated clearly in the Letter of Call or contract between congregation or other workplace and the minister.”²²

²⁰ Norman Shawchuck and Roger Heuser, *Leading the Congregation: Caring For Yourself While Serving The People* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993), 106.

²¹ Gilbert, np.

²² Ibid., np.

The Church of the Nazarene needs such a contract for their pastors. The denomination has taken great strides in the care of their shepherds but has yet left the area of spiritual direction largely untouched. This dissertation has shown that spiritual direction is within the parameters of the theology of the Church of the Nazarene. Therefore, the recommendation of this dissertation is that ongoing spiritual direction should be provided for each senior pastor of the Church of the Nazarene. Leech offers the reminder that it is not meant only for times of crisis but “is more important when there are no particular crises. It is a continuous ministry and involves the healthy as well as the sick.”²³ Furthermore, spiritual direction is recommended through the availability of spiritual directors at retreats and camp meetings. And just as pastors receive medical care benefits, they would also receive a benefit package that covers the cost of seeing a spiritual director on a regular basis.

Pastoral ministry is a time consuming business and many pastors may possibly lament that they just do not have time to travel and visit with a spiritual director at a set time and place. Here, John Wesley’s method of spiritual direction by letter can be implemented and adapted to the current culture. In a world of texting, e-mailing and social media, meaningful correspondence may be conducted rapidly. These interactions can be done conveniently during the daily lulls in life. Pastors may not have two hours to commit to travel and interaction; however, they can find a few minutes here and there each day to communicate with a spiritual director.

The example of the Vineyard Church, as mentioned in the previous chapter, would allow the church leadership to meet with a spiritual director at events specifically

²³ Leech, 96.

designed for spiritual health. Clergy already gather at camp meetings, district assemblies, and pastor and spouse retreats for the purpose of renewal. They have already set aside time for these events; therefore, having a spiritual director on hand would further the purpose of these gatherings and enrich the spiritual life of the pastors.

Spiritual direction is not a fad or part of some postmodern movement. Rather, the biblical, historical, reasonable, and positive experiential aspects of the practice are demonstrated here. Jeff writes,

It is because I trust in the power of the Holy Spirit that I believe the current enthusiasm for spiritual direction is not just another passing fashion which will once more fade out into a relatively insignificant role.²⁴

Spiritual direction is transformational in a world that needs transformed. Leech writes, “Spiritual direction must be reclaimed in the service of the Kingdom of God.”²⁵ Let spiritual direction be reclaimed for the glory of God and the edification of pastors in the Church of the Nazarene.

²⁴ Jeff, 125.

²⁵ Leech, xix.

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