

Practice Makes Perfect (Almost): Guidance

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Individual and Corporate Practice of Guidance

The spiritual practice of “guidance” is an organic and functional leading of the Holy Spirit in an individual life and in corporate entities of the Body of Christ.

Richard Foster spends a whole chapter outlining **corporate** guidance because our era highlights the individual almost exclusively (1978, ch. 12). He observes that “expressions of corporate guidance are among the most healthy signs of spiritual vitality today” (159).

- Acts 13:1-3 gives the corporate call of Barnabas and Saul to mission work. Note they are (1) worshipping; (2) fasting; (3) listening to the Holy Spirit.
- Acts 15, esp. vv. 22, 28
- Exodus event for a people
- Matthew 18:19-20
- Quakers

What would it mean for a church to “corporately” seek guidance?

Individual guidance is a moment-by-moment dependence on the leading of the Holy Spirit in your life. To know this kind of life-journey requires several postures.

- Ephesians 5:8-10, 15-18
 - Proverbs 16:2-3
 - Proverbs 16:9
 - Romans 15:22-32
- ✓ Traditional view of guidance versus the Way of Wisdom – God’s sovereign will, his moral will, and the way of wisdom. [“dot” method vs. target approach]
- ✓ Specific guides (from highest and best to lowest): Bible, inner witness, personal desires, special guidance, circumstances, mature counsel, common sense, [fleece].

The Spiritual Director

In the Middle Ages not even the greatest saints attempted the inward journey without a spiritual director. Today, the use of a spiritual director is used mostly by Catholics in

monastic systems, although the number of trained spiritual directors is growing in Protestant circles (see directory).

A spiritual director is a means of God to open the path to the inward teaching of the Holy Spirit (Foster 1978, 160). It entails a relationship between two or more people and the Holy Spirit (Reese and Loane 2012, 189). It has biblical precedent.

- 1 Thess 1:6; 2:14
- Heb 13:7; 6:12
- 1 Cor 4:16, 17
- 1 Cor 11:1

In Protestant circles programs of discipleship have replaced a spiritual director. Since most churches do a poor job with discipleship, might we do better with a return to a spiritual director or discipler or spiritual mentor?

Reese and Loane outline what may be discovered through spiritual mentoring: (1) intimacy with God (who God is), (2) identity as beloved children of God (who I am), and (3) a unique voice for kingdom responsibility (what am I to do with my life) (2012, 189; see Anderson and Reese 1999, 12). These points give direction. Simple but life transforming. They also describe five dynamics for a healthy relationship – 1. attraction and initiation; 2. relationship of trust and intimacy; 3. responsiveness (teachability); 4. accountability; 5. empowerment (ultimate goal) (2012, 190-199).

Characteristics of a good spiritual director include:

- Ability to listen and to be discerning, without judgmentalism.
- Genuine personal maturity without conscious or infantile needs for authority.
- Comfortable acceptance of himself or herself.
- Compassion and commitment.
- Willingness to exercise tough love.
- Willingness to share their own inward journey with its struggles and doubts.

Eccles 4:10

Bibliography

Richard Foster 1978

Garry Friesen. *Decision Making and the Will of God*. Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1980.

Keith Anderson and Randy Reese. *Spiritual Mentoring*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1999.

Randy Reese and Robert Loane. *Deep Mentoring*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2012.