

# Eídon

A Newsletter on Christian Spirituality for Church Leaders

March 2008

## How Do I Find A Spiritual Director?

### Eídon

A Greek verb meaning to see or to perceive, frequently found in the New Testament

A question people sometimes ask is how to find a spiritual director. It's a wonderful question since most church leaders (whether credentialed or lay) could benefit from receiving regular spiritual direction. Here are some suggestions.

One place to start is at the website of Spiritual Directors International, which has an extensive list of directors in the English-speaking world. (Visit [www.sdiworld.org/seekfindguide.html](http://www.sdiworld.org/seekfindguide.html), then follow the links until you find your geographical area. Directors are listed by state, town, and then last name.)

Another place to look is my own denomination's list, the "Mennonite Spiritual Director's List," revised last December and soon available online at [os.mennoniteusa.org](http://os.mennoniteusa.org). This includes Mennonite spiritual directors in the U.S. plus one in Australia and another in Indonesia.

A third route is to contact local retreat centers and ask if they have people who offer direction.

### Getting More Information

After finding one or several candidates through these sources, you might have only names, phone numbers, and addresses of directors in your area. How can you find out more about them before you contact them?

1. Use your favorite search engine to see what information is available

on the Internet. Some directors have a website that introduces who they are and what they offer. If the director is a pastor, the church's website may tell you something about the person.

Recently I had to find a new director after my previous one moved away. I located the names of two nearby directors in whom I was interested. After persistent sleuthing on Google, I discovered more about each person and decided which one would probably fit me better. I learned still more by buying and reading a book one of these directors had written.

2. Ask people whom you trust if they know anything about the directors you're interested in—or perhaps they know of someone else who knows this director. Pastors may be good sources for this kind of information.

3. Nothing beats meeting the director face-to-face for an initial session. After the session you'll likely have a much clearer idea if this is someone you want to continue working with.

Your sense of his or her maturity is important since a director generally will not be able to guide you further along the journey of faith than she or he has personally traveled.

The best spiritual directors have both a gift from God for this ministry and solid training. A director should ideally know the processes of spiritual direction, the Bible and theology, the history of Christian spirituality, the art of discernment, and a wide variety of spiritual practices. It's fine to ask what training he or she has.

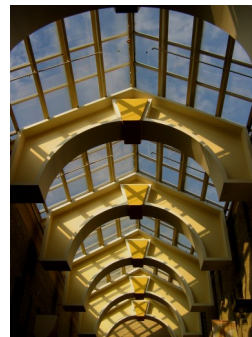
### Payment

A few spiritual directors offer their services at no charge, while others rely on spiritual direction for part of their income. Fees in my part of the country vary from \$20 to \$80 per session, though some directors may charge more. Many directors suggest a range from which you choose what you want to pay.

### Spiritual Friendships

If you live in an area without spiritual directors, try to find someone with whom you can form a spiritual friendship. To read more about spiritual friendships, go to [www.mennoniteusa.org/executive/congregational\\_life/docs/MakingSpaceForGod-SpiritualFriendship.pdf](http://www.mennoniteusa.org/executive/congregational_life/docs/MakingSpaceForGod-SpiritualFriendship.pdf).

Whether you choose a spiritual director or a spiritual friend, the person should definitely be grounded in the Holy Spirit—who is our true spiritual director.



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Coming in the  
May issue . . .

Meditation and  
Contemplation

Recognize. Receive. Respond. God is everywhere.

## Benefits of Spiritual Direction

I've been a pastor for eighteen years and a minister for twenty. For the last twelve years I've also received regular spiritual direction—which means that I've worked as a church leader for long stretches of time both with, and without, guidance from a spiritual director.

The big lesson I've learned from this is that if for some reason I could no longer receive regular spiritual direction, then I'd quit being a pastor. Immediately.

Working with spiritual directors has helped me to connect more deeply with God, and to respond more ably to God's initiatives.

### Recognizing God

First of all, spiritual directors have helped me to recognize what God is doing around me, in me, and often in spite of me. Since God is eternally present all the time, the most significant question is whether or not I as a person, and we as a church, are paying attention to the activity of our omnipresent God.

Spiritual directors help us to pay attention. They might ask, "Where have you seen the fingerprints of God in your life, your work, your neighborhood, or your congregation?"

Fingerprints are not that easy to see with the ordinary eye, as any detective will point out. To adequately see fingerprints on the door handle or the window jamb, detectives have to use special dusting powder. Through their giftedness supplemented by training, spiritual directors supply the

dusting powder to help us see the prints of God's handiwork in our lives.

### Receiving God

Second, spiritual directors have helped me to receive the initiatives of God that are launching all around me.

Accepting God's initiatives is not always easy. The most difficult divine initiative I've ever experienced occurred in the late 1990s when God launched a dark night in me. Later

this year I'll devote an issue of *Eidolon* to the dark night, but for now I'll simply say it's one of God's tools for transforming our disordered attachments to things other than God. While the dark night is always an initiative of divine love, we often experience it as quite painful, especially at first.

When this dark night began, I couldn't understand what was happening to me. I did not even have a name for it. But my spiritual director knew very well what it was. He correctly discerned it, named it, explained it, and helped me figure out ways of receiving this odd spiritual event that most Christians rarely talk about. I don't know how I would have navigated through that dark night without his wise help.

### Responding to God

Third, spiritual directors have helped me respond to God's initiatives of light and love. It's

not enough merely to recognize the acts of God and then to receive them humbly. We must also respond to them.

In the thirty-seven years since my baptism, I've attempted to discern about twenty major decisions, including where to go to school and what degrees to pursue, whom to marry, where to live, what jobs to take, and other decisions of similar magnitude.

For Christians, these acts of discernment are

about responding to God. We choose in response to the call, the nudging, or the movement of God. God initiates; we respond.

Some years ago my spiritual director and I began to explore what God might be inviting me to do in addition to being a pastor. That conversation lasted about three years and resulted in fresh perspectives on the central mission God wishes for me at this stage of my life. I have received this mission with joy—which is one clue that the mission is probably authentic.

In this way, receiving spiritual direction furthers our mission. Guidance from a wise spiritual director ultimately helps us to grow the spiritual fruit without which our discipleship has no integrity (Galatians 5:22-23). Spiritual guidance enhances our capacity to fulfill the core call of all Christians: to love God and neighbor (Mark 12:28-31).

