

Spiritual Direction Certificate Sample Reflection Paper

Reflection Paper 1: Class of 2024

Kristi Gaultiere, August 2022

Retreat

The Spiritual Formation retreat was an amazing week! I loved getting to know the others who came and was surprised at how quickly I felt a sense of belonging. What an incredible group of people the Lord brought together.

I appreciate all the learning and work Bill put into the notebook and teaching. The TLC times were a good discipline for me to “come away” with Jesus and have such a spacious and beautiful place to get free of distraction, get in touch with what I was feeling, and lay my soul bare before the Lord. It was meaningful to be able to process these times with others and the back and forth rhythms of silence and community are a grace. I enjoyed the rhythm of life we practiced and meditating on the scriptures, memorizing Matthew 11:25-30 and praying the breath prayer “Jesus Delights in Me, I delight in you my Lord.” That was a good one for me to practice, really trusting Jesus delights in me and receiving his love and finding my security in Him.

The VIM plan was challenging to me but the coaching Bill offered got me interested to experiment with this training. It will take discipline and accountability so I am glad I am a part of the Spiritual Direction Training program because that will motivate me to stay with it and to be connected with others who are working a VIM plan.

Books

For the first six months *Sacred Companions*, *Holy Listening* and *The Listening Life* were our text books on the ministry of spiritual direction. Overall, they gave me a great vision of this ministry the Lord is calling me to. Of the three, I especially appreciated the focus from *Sacred Companions* and the gift of spiritual friendship. As a woman it was meaningful to read Margaret’s chapter on “Women and Spiritual Direction.” Her analogy of spiritual

direction as spiritual midwifing was something I deeply resonated with. The Listening Life I started three times and stopped as I found it a hard read. I did hear another student say it was his favorite of the three so I will persevere.

Classes and Supervision Groups

The classes and supervision groups on spiritual direction have been really great. It is good to see the other students and to have this opportunity to connect between our retreats. I especially appreciate time to interact online and to ask questions. It is helpful to hear our teachers and supervisors share examples of their experiences with spiritual direction personally both as a giver and receiver. At first I felt scared to share an experience of ministering spiritual direction but my supervisor and group were very supportive and affirming.

Receiving Spiritual Direction

Receiving spiritual direction personally has been good for me. It takes a lot of courage for me to trust another person in this intimate way. It is not convenient and takes discipline for me to work this into my life. But I have found it fruitful. It is good to have my director hold space for me and to be listened to in a context that is safe for me to share anything without taking responsibility for how the other person feels. Also it is good for me to be in a position where I am not a leader, where I am not known in any ministry context.

Sometimes I am surprised what I hear myself say. I have also been surprised that I have run out of words in my sessions a couple of times and then I especially noticed the blessing of having my director sit in that silence with me. I have appreciated her prayers for me also. I need another person who prays for me!

The other thing that's helpful for me to be on the receiving end is that it prepares me for giving spiritual direction to others. It's an important lesson for me to keep receiving spiritual direction for myself and not just learning to be a spiritual director for others.

Giving Spiritual Direction

Giving spiritual direction the first time was a huge step of faith for me! I felt inadequate and intimidated. The power and responsibility is huge. But I took Jesus' hand and ventured into this. I found it very meaningful and helpful to pray often as I anticipated this first meeting and to arrive early to pray and prepare. Imagining Jesus with me helped me stay tuned into seeking the voice of Holy Spirit as I listened to my directee. It also helped me to open with a

Scripture and prayer before I met with this woman. Her faith and expectancy also helped and I found the time very meaningful and enriching. I finished the session praising the Lord and then processing my emotions. This is important for me to do or I will get burned out by having internalized the directee's emotions and stressors. When I feel tempted to worry about her during the month I just pray for her and release her to His loving care and action.

I did have to wrestle with my tendency to be self-conscious during the sessions. When I compared myself to her and felt inadequate I was not able to listen to her well or to Holy Spirit. Thankfully, I've been able to stay out of shame and rely on God's grace.

I do not take my directee's trust for granted. This is a sacred calling and ministry and I am honored to hold this space, foster her connection to Jesus, and be an ambassador of Christ to her, a soul shepherd. It makes me smile that my caring shows her that Jesus is with her, listening with empathy, love, and good purposes. The Four A's of Empathy and previous experiences of receiving and giving empathy have helped me to offer empathy in the sessions in a way that is becoming more natural the more I do it.

Leading Lectio Divina

Leading a group of women in Lectio Divina was also a stretch to my faith. I was aware I felt dependent on the Lord "showing up." It helped me to have experienced another person leading me in a group lectio before I led this. Also I've been doing lectio on my own and experienced the power of the Spirit meeting me in the Word.

Several of the women had not experienced lectio before so before I invited them I shared a little about it and why I was leading this group and how this practice has blessed me. I told them the group would be simple: we would gather to pray, listen to God in His word, share with each other and pray for each other. I told them we would start on time and we would end on time and that as hostess I would just serve water.

In the 1st Reading I was blessed to hear the words the other women noticed and shared. Several of us had the same word stand out and that felt validating to know I was not alone. Especially because it was a hard word to "surrender." I noticed two of the women flipping in their Bibles to study different Scriptures and their shares were "heady." Hearing a few of the women express their emotions and concrete need in their life in the 2nd Reading helped me to pray for myself and them. In the 3rd Reading I didn't hear a clear invitation but it was good to rest in God's embrace.

In the sharing time I helped the women focus on their personal experiences and needs, rather than analyzing the Scripture or talking about other people. Then at the end I asked each woman to pray for the woman on her right. I prayed first to set a model. This helped

me to be assured each woman would be prayed for by someone else so I did not feel like I had to be heroic to minister a great prayer for everyone.

Summary

I am grateful for the learning that I am gaining in this training and I hope to get to know the people in this training better and that each of us will be more courageous to speak up in our groups and share our experiences. I am curious to know more of what others are feeling and to learn from their experience. It helps me to know that I am not alone when I feel insecure and also when I feel elated in what God is doing as I venture on the Spirit.

I am thankful for this opportunity in this Reflection Paper to process what I am experiencing and learning and I look forward to continuing to grow personally and professionally through the Soul Shepherding Institute and Spiritual Direction Training.