

THE BRIDE OF CHRIST AS SPIRITUAL DIRECTEE

John of the Cross and Spiritual Direction

Ruthie Baigent

The soul in this condition of love is like a sick person In all that sick people think or see they have only one desire, the desire for health, and everything that does not lead to this is a bother and burden to them.¹

THE GOAL OF SPIRITUAL LIFE for John of the Cross is ‘the possession of God through union of love’, and our journey there is pain.² It is pain, as birth is pain, crossing the thresholds between the flesh and the spiritual, the frontiers from nothingness to existence, from death to life.³ When we hear Him, Christ calls us to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him, ‘for what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life?’ (Mark 8:34–38) I’ll answer that to avoid any potential for confusion: it profits us not at all! ‘For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain’ (Philippians 1:21).

In order to follow Christ, we must lose ourselves. John is meticulous in his logic, and meticulous in cutting out detritus in the way of that logic (and in the way of the heart, since logic and love take us to the same place in Christ, when we understand the premises correctly).⁴ John gives us a perspective on this spiritual journey to the heart, both from the point of view of logical imperative (in *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* and *The Dark Night*) and from the point of view of lived experience (in *The Spiritual Canticle* and *The Living Flame of Love*).

Here, I shall focus predominantly on the lived experience revealed to us by John in the *Spiritual Canticle*, and ask the question: *How are*

¹ St John of the Cross, *The Spiritual Canticle*, 10.1, in *The Collected Works of St John of the Cross*, translated by Kieran Kavanagh and Otilio Rodriguez (Washington, DC: ICS, 1991).

² St John of the Cross, *The Living Flame of Love*, 2.32, in *Collected Works*.

³ ‘The soul affirms also that she will pass by frontiers, which refer to the natural rebellions of the flesh against the spirit’ (*Spiritual Canticle*, 3.10).

⁴ The premises are the teachings of Christ, which can only be understood through the heart.

the works of John of the Cross helpful to the spiritual director? I shall talk about the directee as the ‘bride’ of the *Canticle*, and seek to discover what role the director can have in the bride’s spiritual journey, especially asking how the he or she can be a help instead of a hindrance. I will begin with a description of what it is to be the Bride.

The Bride

The premise of John’s oeuvre is that, once we hear Christ’s call, once we are wounded in our hearts, once Christ has ignited our love with His own, we carry this ‘wound’ of love (a death blow to the earthly life, and a ‘life blow’ to the eternal life!) forward, and it drives us, unrelentingly, to seek recovery and ‘health’. The only place we may find these is in Christ Himself. We may seek our healing elsewhere, being desperate and confused, but we will find no satisfaction. The obvious everyday things and people of life, the things we knew and put our hopes in before, are no longer available to us as consolations, now we are wounded by Love. That dream is over. Death and life cannot coexist, so we must seek life and only life. In order to hope to move into the new life, we must shed the accoutrements of the old: ‘All this is the activity of the old life, which is the death of the new spiritual life’.⁵ John is describing what it is to Love.

Christ knows our vulnerability to confusion in this half-way place, wounded but earth-bound, and He calls us to *stay* and look deeper: ‘Return, dove, the wounded stag is in sight on the hill, cooled by the breeze of your flight’. And behold! Our beloved is also wounded out of love for us! ‘Among lovers, the wound of one is a wound for both.’ And with this encouragement, the bride surrenders to the transformation of all her desires: ‘Now I occupy my soul and all my energy in his service; I no longer tend the herd, nor have I any other work now that my every act is love’.⁶ It is a plunge into the deep unknown where we are driven by necessity.

The bride, or directee, once wounded, now seeks her love—her life, her health—desperately, obsessively, and becomes insistent, ‘Now wholly surrender yourself! Do not send me any more messengers; they cannot tell me what I must hear.’ There is (painful and arduous) awareness of every false trail, the ‘life, not living where you live’, but life lived

⁵ *Living Flame of Love*, 2.33.

⁶ *Spiritual Canticle*, stanza 13; 13.9; stanza 28.

instead near death. And there is fear that even when we see our Bridegroom's face, we will take flight ourselves, because in this life we are always so close to death; we must pass through death as a kind of final purgation, to reach full union and be safe in our lover's arms.⁷

The call to Christ is relentless because, once love has been seen and our desire enflamed, there is no peace until we are united with Christ. 'Consequently the soul is dead to all it was in itself, which was death to it, and alive to what God is in himself. Speaking of itself, the soul declares in this verse: "In killing you changed death to life".'⁸ 'I will both lie down and sleep in peace; for you alone, O Lord, make me lie down in safety' (Psalm 4:8). The appetites are transformed; our desire is for God alone.



The Girl by the Window, by Edvard Munch, 1893

Union with God actually enables us to see all creation with the eyes of God, to respond to every situation in our lives with the heart of Jesus, and to be motivated by the Holy Spirit in all our actions. For John this transformation of our natural powers of knowing, loving, remembering, feeling and acting represents the psychological consequences of St Paul's words when he said: 'I live, now not I, but Christ lives in me' (Galatians 2:20).⁹

The desire is healthy because 'desire for God is the preparation for union with him'.¹⁰ Until we are united to God, every part of life that we

⁷ *Spiritual Canticle*, stanza 6; stanzas 11 and 12. The final stage of purgation is union (St John of the Cross, *The Dark Night*, 2. 21. 5, in *Collected Works*).

⁸ *Living Flame of Love*, 2. 34.

⁹ Kevin Culligan, 'St John of the Cross: Spiritual Guide', *The Way*, 33/1 (January 1993), 66.

¹⁰ *Living Flame of Love*, 3. 26.

see *without* seeing through God's eyes, is a torment to us: creation is insufficient, and we are insufficient to it.

As John of the Cross, the bride, is led onwards by his love, and takes the courage to draw out and follow Christ's teachings to their conclusion, he is following a logical as well as a loving imperative. He describes a tumultuous journey which is hard to navigate alone. Thankfully, our heart, through Christ, can lead us on this journey into the unknown, where our intellect flails and confuses us. There, our heart, encapsulating the union of love that we strive for and following its deepest desire, is like a homing device to our spiritual home in Christ. The Kingdom of Heaven is within us (Luke 17: 20–21). The *Spiritual Cantic* is descriptive of the spiritual journey of the heart; the journey to the heart.

The Role of the Spiritual Director

Two questions naturally arise. The first is whether it is necessary to have a spiritual director when Christ is leading us so well, and in such perfect empathy with us. 'The wound of one is the wound of both, and the two have but one feeling.' It is clear to me that there can be no other person on earth who can be in this perfect empathy. Furthermore, though we hear from John that God 'acts as a guide to the blind, leading it by the hand to the place it knows not how to reach', we also need to remember what Jesus makes so clear to us in John 14, that we *do* know the place we are going to, and we *do* know how to get there.¹¹ Simply by knowing Christ, we know the way, and we *do* know Christ: 'You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you' (John 14: 17).

John says 'there are three blind guides who can draw us off the road: the spiritual director, the devil, and the soul itself'.¹² It is *alone*—a word so often used by John—alone in his cell, imprisoned by his own friends, that John experiences 'a new awakening of Jesus himself in the depth of his own being ... a total transformation of his own consciousness in the Son of God'.¹³ John was led to Christ 'more surely than the light of noon' only by the light burning in his own heart.¹⁴ Given the certainty in following Christ and the danger of being drawn off the road by a blind guide, either ourselves, our spiritual director or the devil, John describes a scenario

¹¹ *Spiritual Cantic*, 13.9; *Living Flame of Love*, 3. 29.

¹² *Living Flame of Love*, 3. 29.

¹³ Culligan, 'St John of the Cross: Spiritual Guide', 64.

¹⁴ *Dark Night*, stanzas 3–4.

where the spiritual director and the soul are never necessarily safe, and must use each other to ensure that they keep to the Royal Road.

The second question is: *can there be a director for us on this journey, aside from God?* Did John himself have a spiritual director? I get the impression of a man living in hope of alliance, yet living in full awareness of the ultimate knowledge that there is no other director but God. Who can provide the hospitality and understanding that the bride (ultimately) can receive only from the bridegroom, according to the words of John? Who can direct and accompany a bride who is propelled forward by her deepest desire, consumed with attraction by the bridegroom's deepest desire for her; a bride for whom everyone and everything else serves only as an arrow of pain for the places where union *hasn't* yet been achieved, even until the day she dies; a bride for whom the things of daily life only serve to show us our growing edge, the life and freedom we *do not have*, and, at best, serve as cleansing in the purgative fires?

The only eyes we seek are Christ's. They can't be replicated, they can't be imitated. Christ is 'the supper that refreshes and deepens love', breathing its balsam fragrance of love through our garden, in this protected space 'bound round with linking dens of lions'.¹⁵ Who can come into this space, which is exquisite, and who can accompany us to where we are so powerfully propelled? What accompaniment is possible here, in the protected space of our committed and exclusive relationship with Christ, as described by John?

I imagine that John lives in hope because, although, as separate individuals on earth, we must exist with each other on parallel planes, we can *meet* in the spiritual. The planes meet in Christ; Christ makes this meeting possible. Simone Weil describes friendship as the meeting of parallels, with reference to the Holy Trinity both as model and as active agent. I would say this was also a good descriptive model of what happens in spiritual direction:

Pure friendship is an image of the original and perfect friendship that belongs to the Trinity and is the very essence of God. It is impossible for two human beings to be one while scrupulously respecting the distance that separates them, unless God is present in each of them. The point at which parallels meet is infinity.¹⁶

¹⁵ *Spiritual Canticle*, stanzas 15, 17, 24.

¹⁶ Simone Weil, 'Forms of the Implicit Love of God', in *Waiting for God*, translated by Emma Craufurd (New York: Harper and Row, 1973 [1951]), 208.

These parallels meet in spiritual direction, in prayer, in any place we are together in Christ. So there is hope for spiritual direction.

The Blind Guide

How can the spiritual director avoid being a 'blind guide'? Let us examine some of the pitfalls. John, speaking to us as the bride, tells us that he is 'no longer [to be] seen or found on the common' and that he will seem 'lost'. But, John says, it is through having lost herself that the bride is found.¹⁷ This guides the spiritual director to drop conventions and social mores when trying to understand and accompany the bride.

In this stanza the soul answers a tacit reproof of those in the world who customarily criticise persons who give themselves entirely to God. They think those persons are excessive in their conduct, estrangement, and withdrawal, and assert that they are useless in important matters and lost to what the world esteems.¹⁸

There are examples of souls being criticised for excessive conduct in the Bible, and two good examples are David (2 Samuel 6:16), and Jesus himself (Matthew 27:39–44).

The director needs not to waste the bride's or directee's time by attempting to guide her back to civilisation, back to the village where the common land is found! It is not in the well-known places, but in concealed caverns in the rocky mountain, deep in the thicket, that the bride/directee will be shown what her 'soul has been seeking', that which she has tasted with the initial stab of love, 'the breathing of the air, the song of the sweet nightingale; the grove and its living beauty in the serene night, with a flame that is consuming and painless'.¹⁹ It was on the cross, mocked as he died and unconsolated by the love of His Father, that Christ won His greatest victory. It is a problem all find when they go off with their beloved, seeking 'union of love', because it places the seeker on a spiritual collision course with the 'rulers' and 'authorities' of Ephesians 6:12. A spiritual director needs to be aware.

¹⁷ *Spiritual Canticle*, stanza 20.

¹⁸ *Spiritual Canticle*, 29.5.

¹⁹ *Spiritual Canticle*, stanzas 36–38.

John speaks of how the enemies of the soul seek, with great cunning, to use all earthly creation to attack the bride as she takes on the challenge of crossing the frontiers from flesh to spirit, 'the devils reinforce themselves with these other two enemies, the world and the flesh, in order to wage a rugged war'.²⁰ The flesh,

... sets itself up as though on the frontier to oppose the spiritual journey. A person must pass these frontiers by breaking through these difficulties and throwing down with wilful strength and determination all sensory appetites and natural affections.²¹

It is essential that the spiritual director is awake to the fact that, in her work, as in her life, the bride/directee cannot rest on her own power or she will be prey to the manipulations of the devil—as illustrated brilliantly in *The Preaching of the Antichrist* by Luca Signorelli.



The Preaching of the Antichrist, by Luca Signorelli, 1500–1504

²⁰ *Spiritual Canticle*, 3.9.

²¹ *Spiritual Canticle*, 3.10.

Earthly Powers and Sacred Schizophrenia

In *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze and psychoanalyst Félix Guattari give a sophisticated and detailed two-part description of the structures and mechanisms of this world.²² Their work is a good companion to John of the Cross. Though not writing from a Christian perspective, they do a good job of describing the powers with which the soul struggles as they seek to block its path.²³ Deleuze and Guattari don't offer a sense of the saving power of Christ, or the grace of God, but they *do* offer us a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms of the spiritual forces at play:

- in ourselves in relation to ourselves;
- in ourselves in relation to others;
- in others.

Deleuze and Guattari use an image of the double pincers of capitalism clamping down on anything that dares, and has the passion, to escape (a new business gets bought by a big corporation, and makes a lot of money, but loses its identity), and show us the dangers associated with escape. They use the terms of psychoanalysis to identify escape with a 'schizophrenic' refusal of the structures of the Freudian Oedipus complex, which is a 'double path' in which 'the solution offers no more of a way out than does the problem': 'no way of getting out, neurosis or normality'. 'As to those who refuse to be Oedipalized in one form or another, at one end or the other in the treatment, the psychoanalyst is there to call the asylum or the police for help.'²⁴

Thus, onlookers, John's 'worldlings' of the village common, fear for the bride and try to put safety measures in place, inflicting crippling restrictions upon her freedom, from which she must move away (as Christ moves away from the crowd who are trying to push him off a cliff [Luke 4:30]) if she is to follow her mission.²⁵ *Those to whom the bride turns for help have to first ensure they are not running the machinery of the devil to*

²² The two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* are: Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *The Anti-Oedipus*, translated by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: U. of Minnesota, 1983), and *A Thousand Plateaus*, translated by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: U. of Minnesota, 1987).

²³ *Spiritual Canticle*, 3. 11–12.

²⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 80–81.

²⁵ *Spiritual Canticle*, 29.5.

prevent escape! If they are, they cannot help the bride, and will instead, no doubt with the best of intentions, create great hindrance for her.

Likewise, the spiritual director? ... Likewise, the Church? This draws into focus the vigilance that is necessary to avoid spiritual abuse, which can rear its head in so many interesting and novel ways, following the clever tactics of the devil. If the bride comes to the spiritual director for help, the spiritual director must ensure that he or she proceeds with prayer and self-knowledge.

We're all so sure of what freedom looks like, and delight in attempting to teach it, but what is taught, safely in the classroom, doesn't necessarily sit well with the reality. The reality is that, according to John Piper, 'if you are a Christian, you will spend the rest of your life on this earth with a spiritual condition that may be called *sacred schizophrenia*'. By this he means 'having a self that must be denied, and a self that is doing the denying'.²⁶

This is (or ought to be) our norm. We can be honest and take this to the full logical conclusion, as John describes in *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*: 'To come to be what you are not you must go by a way in which you are not'.²⁷ Or we can be lukewarm and attempt to live with our feet in both camps. The devil prefers us lukewarm for two reasons:

- First, being lukewarm means we are weak. 'The appetites sap the strength needed for perseverance in the practice of virtue. Because the force of the desire is divided, the appetite becomes weaker than if it were completely fixed on one object.'²⁸
- Secondly, through weak and lukewarm people, Satan can inflict so much more torture and impediment on those who seek to follow Christ with their full hearts. We only have to look at the life of John to realise this—or look no further than the life of Christ.

The Oedipal double binds described by Deleuze and Guattari are analogies for the acts of the deathly, stratifying forces of earthly powers as they seek to capture what is free, weaponising anything that is available

²⁶ John Piper, 'Sacred Schizophrenia: A Meditation on Self-Denial', at <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/sacred-schizophrenia>.

²⁷ St John of the Cross, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, 1.13.11, in *Collected Works*.

²⁸ *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, 1.10.1.

to them (that is, *anything* that is not emanating from Christ's heart of love). All Christians know that we are not actually stuck in a double bind. Christ sets us free. Freedom is possible only in Christ—but what freedom looks like from the outside, from the worldly perspective, may be indistinguishable from what is known as schizophrenia, and this, against all Christ's teaching, is used by the devil to repress and exclude people.

She calls the world 'wild beasts' because in the imagination of the soul that begins to tread the path leading to God the world is pictured as wild animals threatening and scaring her

Some generous souls will be faced with other wild beasts, more interior and spiritual: hardships and temptations and many kinds of trials through which they must pass Yet the truly loving soul, esteeming her Beloved above all things, trusting in his love and friendship, does not find it hard to say: 'Nor fear wild beasts'. And 'I will go beyond strong men and frontiers'.²⁹

The fervency of the bride may feel disturbing to outsiders. But the spiritual director, too, is an outsider if he or she cannot appreciate the bride's journey and the freedom that she needs on her journey, or cannot see her with Christ's eyes—the eyes of love. The temptation to 'help' is strong. Usually, being good Christians, we think we are acting for the person's own good. But we need to be firmly rooted in *freedom* truly to accompanying the directee where he or she is being led in Christ.

Yet it can be difficult to find loyal and understanding allies. John advises the directee to be careful because, 'From my observations Christ is

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little known by those who consider themselves his friends'. Spiritual directors, if incapable of judging correctly, may indeed be dangerous. The director must be aware of when he or she is holding back and fearful or panicking when faced with the contradictions of 'sacred schizophrenia', and try to avoid advice that does not come from God. If formulaic advice is

offered it will be nothing but a hindrance to the directee. The director may also offer too little of what is actually needed. As Christ begged his friends to sit with him *just for one hour*, and they could not manage this, we may beg our director to sit with us *just for one hour*, as we remain in communion with God. We may need the director simply to *be* with

²⁹ *Spiritual Canticle*, 3. 7–8.

us, as the bride sits with her Beloved. The bride is on a road to the completion of good work that Christ Himself initiated; we can trust that Christ holds the bride in His hands. We do not want to get in Christ's way by our lack of faith!

Love, Faith and Trust

If the spiritual director can accompany the bride well and respectfully, then the director will also be blessed. Through duty well performed, the director will be able to seek Christ, through service to His bride—even if the *love* of the director has not yet been enkindled; if the director has not yet 'entered the nous', as the Eastern Orthodox say. Duty, performed with love for the bride, as far as the spiritual director is able, may be the director's own path to Christ, and in this way, the director will become just as much a Bride of Christ as the directee. Christ will look at her with love, and the Bride will be grateful, in eternity. We are all equally loved, regardless of our capacity.

Which brings me back to the second question, *can* there be a director for us on this journey? Even if the director is rooted in freedom, can he or she give guidance? 'In solitude he guides her, he alone, who also bears in solitude the wounds of love.'³⁰

[The devil] can present many false ideas and forms to the memory under the guise of their being true and good. This he does by impressing them on the spirit and the senses through suggestion with much certification and efficacy. They then seem so certain that the soul thinks they cannot be false, but that what it feels is in accord with truth. Since the devil transforms himself into an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14), he seems to be light to the soul.

To a blind soul falsehood no longer seems falsehood, and evil no longer evil, and so on, for the darkness appears to be light, and the light darkness (Isaiah 5:20).³¹

John emphasizes that what comes from Satan may seem unimpeachably sensible, but it is still false. We cannot trust our senses. But then, how can we trust the senses of others? Spiritual directors are also human beings.

³⁰ *Spiritual Canticle*, stanza 35.

³¹ *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, 3. 10. 1–2.



The Preaching of the Antichrist, by Luca Signorelli (detail)

Satan is a great deceiver, but the spiritual director should not live in fear. *The Spiritual Cantic* teaches us that we should live in love, faith and trust, putting on the armour of God (Ephesians 6: 11), and avoiding our own (man-made) armour, which is always vulnerable to deceptive and manipulative forces. Philippians 1:6 says, 'I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ'. Spiritual directors need this same confidence, that, if they do their part in Christ, and give of themselves completely, it will not be in their own strength, and it will not be exhausting or overwhelming. There is only one way forward, and that is in Christ, in complete surrender, protected

by the armour of God; and from there, we feel our way.

With the best of intentions, all human beings can act in our own strength and cause damage. The psychologist Karen Kessel Wegela writes:

We want to remove the suffering when we see it, but our desire to remove suffering is mixed up with our desire to be comfortable and not bothered by others' pain. Sometimes, when our intentions are confused in this way, we end up saying or doing something that makes the situation worse.³²

'The most important thing is to actually help.' This may sound trite, but what more can be said? 'It doesn't matter if we do it right if we are not really helping.'³³

Let us look to Christ. Christ came down to earth from heaven, to a place where He could be with us, communicate with us directly, be our

³² Karen Kessel Wegela, *How to Be a Help Instead of a Nuisance: Practical Approaches to Giving Support, Service, and Encouragement to Others* (Boston, Ma: Shambhala, 1996), 80.

³³ Kessel Wegela, *How to Be a Help Instead of a Nuisance*, 177.

advocate, model *life* for us, and lead us to the Glory of God. As incarnate God, Jesus is one of us, enduring all the pain that we endure, experiencing love, compassion, temptation, a need for friendship and allies, and rejection—everything. Jesus constantly sees us with the eyes of God, by returning to His Father in prayer. Jesus teaches us how to live in heaven on earth. He stops on His way in order to help people, and He actually helps! Questions such as *what do you want?* seek out the heart of the individuals He stops for. He speaks straight to the hearts of those He helps: ‘if you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, “Give me a drink”, you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water’ (John 4:10); and ‘do not sin any more’ (John 8:11, 5:14). It is concise and it is enough.

Jesus may be the Son of God, and have the power to forgive our sins, but He speaks to us as equals, and He speaks to our hearts as friends speak to one another. He doesn’t lord it over us, or need us to do things a certain way. In fact, Jesus, in His life on earth, shows us what it means to live in the Spirit, and even how His life is *enlarged* by relationship with us, not diminished. Christ models to us a life of openness and relationship, even in unexpected places. Michael J. Nicosia’s meditation, ‘Stations of Justice’, gives a reflection of Matthew 15:21–28, where Jesus appears to have the humility to expose his own failures and learn from *us*:

Some of the conventions that Jesus inherited supported nationalism, war, racism, slavery, misogyny, and heterosexism. On this occasion he might have failed to reach out in answer to a desperate need, but a feisty woman challenged him, broadened his vision, and released his love.³⁴

As spiritual directors, as human beings, we can get things very wrong when we think we are getting them right. To correct ourselves, to avoid blocking others, and to set ourselves on the right course, we must be committed not to any values, works or movements, but *only to the Lord*. The Soul is sick because it seeks its true love. If is to be accompanied, the Soul must be held in a way which is responsive to the Christ who is being sought, *in* the directee. We must be alert to *truth*, and only to *truth*. We are entering a territory where there are no rules, no boundaries,

³⁴ Michael J. Nicosia, ‘Stations of Justice’, seventh station, available at <https://paxchristiusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/the-stations-of-justice.doc>.

except those that truly exist in the sacred space where the spiritual and material realms meet, where Jesus himself is present with us, and where he listens to us and guides us himself, in love.

We have a promise that we can achieve what we seek, because when two or more gather together in Jesus' name, Jesus tells us He is there with us (Matthew 18:20). This sacred space is a space which is antithetical to the world of the flesh and thus is at once 'dangerous'—from the perspective of the world—and *completely safe*, a space where we find love, peace and joy in circumstances which, from the outside, can look like insanity and chaos. Our painful 'sickness' may look preventable and sensible people will want to protect us from this crazy space, as his friends and family tried to protect Jesus (Mark 8:31–33; Matthew 16:21–23, Mark 3:21). Jesus' response is clear, 'Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.'

Navigating this ruleless realm as a spiritual director challenges us to become the Bride ourselves. The truth, like a parable, can only be understood in the fertile soil of the open heart. We can't use our human judgment, human experience, or even human tradition to predict the response we need to make for God. God is *life*, bigger than anything we can conceive of. To accompany into this place of *life* is a blessing both for directee and director: a rare and beautiful gift. Though this is a gift available for the taking, we can't achieve it in our own strength. When we are walking on sacred ground, we must do so in abject humility and surrender to God, in love, or risk being a 'blind guide' who is a hindrance at best and, at worst, blocks the gates of Heaven to our directee.

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