

Spiritual Direction in the 21st Century

By: Greg Ollick

There are several trends in our culture today that will positively affect spiritual direction in the 21st century. One of the most significant is our renewed interest in spirituality. In the recent past many have said that Christianity is nothing more than an ancient myth that had been handed down over the years, even to the modern age. Now the very latest scientific, archeological, and historical discoveries confirm, and in fact prove, the truth and accuracy of our teachings, teachings about the nature of God and man and their relationship to each other.

Today people are more inclined to want to know more about God, his nature and his will for their lives. They are not at all satisfied with what they are learning from the secular rationalists. They can see that there is something of ultimate importance missing from their lives. They are dropping out of the school of self-indulgence by the thousands and rejecting the doctrine of instant gratification.

People used to say that religion and spirituality were irrelevant to their lives. They believed that biblical values and spiritual concepts were not only irrelevant but also unbelievable. They had no practical consideration of God and little knowledge of scripture. Church meant little or nothing to them. Now everyone wants more spirituality. *Spirituality* is the new "buzz-word" of the 21st century and people everywhere, in all walks of life, are seeking a more spiritually oriented existence, a life modeled after the life of Christ. It is the spirituality of Jesus that shows us the nature of God and makes his will for us clear.

This renewed interest in the spirituality of Jesus has revealed his compelling, and in fact irresistible, love for each of us no matter

who we are or what we've done in the past. So people everywhere are seeking to develop a personal relationship with the *person* of Jesus Christ. They are seeking spiritual direction because their newfound faith has inspired a renewal of heart that has led to conversion and commitment. People today are experiencing a true hunger for God and they are more open to spiritual direction. They want more than the world can offer. They want eternal life for themselves and others through Christ Jesus. The ministry of spiritual direction will indeed grow and evolve in the 21st century. The grace of God is abundant and as directors we must be willing to step out in faith and go where ever the Spirit leads.

Christian spirituality has seen many forms of expression over the past twenty centuries. From the first century martyrs to the desert hermits, from the monastics to the Franciscans, and from the parish priest to the elementary school teacher, the men and women of God have sought to live lives of prayer and action (service) prompted by faith and inspired by the Holy Spirit.

In past centuries, although people lived without the technology of the computer age, and although communication and information interchange were much less efficient, they had more time. One negative influence that our culture will have on spiritual direction in the 21st century is our seeming inability to make time for God, time that ultimately leads to *timeless* eternity.

The goal of spiritual direction is that the directee develops a more intimate relationship with God, and it takes time. Our technology-soaked culture gives us too much to do and too much to distract us from God. Time alone with God is vital to developing a meaningful relationship with Him. One cannot become intimate with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit while watching television, sending emails or engaging in Internet chats with others.

To build any meaningful relationship requires a regular devotion of time. Anyone who has fallen in love knows that. If we really want to develop intimacy with God we must make time to get alone with Him. One of the biggest challenges of the 21st century is to create time for God. After all, He *created* time for us.

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The History of Spiritual Direction Part II



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