

A Time for SELAH: Spiritually Stronger Together through Group Spiritual Direction

John Hugh McNally

In a time when I was experiencing transition and challenging circumstances, my spiritual director suggested that I pray with the question, “If not this, Lord, then what?” As this question resonated and rippled, I discovered a deeper desire that seminary students with whom I worked at Acadia Divinity College would be enriched by spiritual direction. As the new director of Mentored Ministry working with the field education side of student formation, I continued learning and started inviting others to join me on a journey of discovery through group spiritual direction.

Patricia Hendricks, who works in cultivating spiritual formation and direction among emerging leaders, comments on seminarians:

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Since ministry is to be their occupation, it's essential that they have a spiritual director or participate in group spiritual direction for their self-care and for their spiritual growth. . . . Being in Christian ministry in any capacity is challenging and exhausting. It's easy to lose ourselves in the lives of others and in the administrative tasks, and it's even easier to forget our own self-care and to ignore our spiritual hunger. A spiritual companion can remind us to pay attention to our longings and to our questions. A spiritual mentor can remind us to notice God in all of the activities of life and to rely on the guidance of the Spirit. Those in seminary must be prepared for the work of ministry by being enabled to practice the art of listening to God.¹

In contextualizing these comments, our Mentored Ministry courses now intentionally include group spiritual direction to strengthen self-care, spiritual growth, attentiveness to the Spirit, and reliance on God's guidance.

In making a case for the prioritising of spiritual formation and direction, Morris Dirks writes a passionate plea to denominational and educational leaders.

Unless we give attention to the spiritual development of students as they study the deep truths of scripture, theology, and church practice, we foster the ongoing disconnect between information and application of truth to life. One of the key reasons for disillusionment among Christian leaders as they move through years of ministry is the tension between what they know and teach and what they actually experience in their individual walks with God. If we intend to stop this cycle, it must start in the seminary. Educational leaders must find ways to create a climate where spiritual direction is built into the fabric of the learning environment.²

I too am concerned about disillusionment and motivated by the desire "to stop this cycle." In this article, I describe small steps in trying to build spiritual direction into our learning environment. It is beyond the scope of this article to place spiritual direction within various perspectives and historical and denominational connections.³ I focus mostly on direction within groups.

Our approach fits within four forms of student mentoring. First, pastoral mentors meet with students at least twice a month for focused feedback about "hands-on" ministry along with theological reflection and soul care. Second, congregational or contextual mentors, small groups of three to five committed members from the church or ministry agency, meet with the student at least four times per year to provide encouragement, support, and feedback.

Third, peer mentoring groups practice mutual theological reflection once a month. Barbara Blodgett and Matthew Floding summarize the significance of such a practice:

Students in field education learn to minister authentically and faithfully by learning to make sense of themselves and their experiences. This work takes space and time and a community of practice that invites accountability. The practice of theological reflection, however it is done, creates the space for communal meaning-making that forms thoughtful and competent ministers who minister with integrity and faithfulness.⁴

Multifaceted, intentional theological reflection cultivates both ministry competency and theological integrity through field work and course work. Peer mentoring groups can deepen reflection, mutual ministry, and resiliency within seminary and beyond.⁵ Floding highlights a key insight from recent research on thriving pastors: “Working pastors know the richness of reflecting with a colleague or a regular peer reflection group on ministry experiences.”⁶ We seek to build mutual theological reflection into seminary experiences and ongoing formation.

Fourth, we integrate mutual spiritual direction once a month into field education through these same peer mentoring groups. Students are guided by the SELAH process described below, which I developed with inspiration from Leadership Transformation’s Selah Certificate Program in Spiritual Direction (<http://www.leadershiptransformations.org/selah.htm>). The Selah program name and methodology references the biblical word *selah* and the roots of spiritual direction’s core process in pausing to notice the presence and voice of God more deeply when in prayerful conversation together. The SELAH acronym as presented here, and its step-by-step group direction outline, are my own work, created as a way of shaping a group direction experience around the principles and processes that the Selah program teaches. The parts of this process can be pictured as a continuous cycle or spiral of renewal (see figure 1).

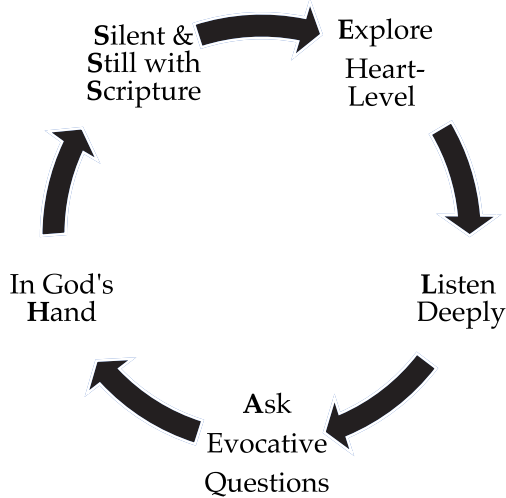


Figure 1. Schematic representation of the SELAH group spiritual direction process.

In our approach, the **S** in SELAH stands for **Silent & Still with Scripture**. In practice, the groups are invited to take around five minutes for this initial part of the process. One of Alice Fryling’s suggestions for the integration of biblical meditation suits our setting: “Some groups choose to simply read a passage of Scripture to start out their time together. This is usually read slowly and quietly by the facilitator. Often only a few verses are read, and some or all of them may be read more than once, interspersed with times of silence.”⁷ The session’s student facilitator invites everyone to focus on God’s presence and guidance through silent meditation on Scripture.⁸

The Spirit can work through Scripture and times of silence to prepare people’s hearts to be more receptive and responsive to how God may be moving through the time together. David Benner highlights how silence can cultivate attentiveness in group spiritual direction.

Julian of Norwich describes the process of prayerful attentiveness to another as involving a continuous looking back and forth between God and the person. . . . Prayerful attentiveness is cultivated within a climate that honors silence. It is often helpful to begin spiritual accompaniment groups with silent prayer. Each person is encouraged to become still before God and aware of his presence. In silence each person seeks to attend to God’s Spirit—in him or herself, in the others in the group and in their experience together.⁹

Beginning with silence helps people refocus on the person sharing and the Spirit stirring and resist the pull of distractions.

Many of Scripture's invitations to silence and meditation occur within the context of challenging circumstances and distressing dynamics. The biblical story can resonate with our story of formation under any circumstances. In Psalm 1, meditating upon Scripture with delight is contrasted with following wicked advice, taking sinful paths, and scoffing others. In Psalm 46, the call to be still is set within the invitation to experience God's presence in troubled times.

One of the options for invitations to such silence is to prayerfully and quietly say the words of the first half of Psalm 37:7 and drop one word or phrase at a time:¹⁰ "Be still in the presence of the LORD and wait patiently for him to act" (NLT). Be still in the presence of the LORD and wait patiently for him. . . . Be still in the presence of the LORD and wait patiently. . . . Be still in the presence of the LORD and wait. . . . Be still in the presence of the LORD. . . . Be still in the presence. . . . Be still. . . . Be. . . . When we feel scattered, this prayerful practice can help shift us from fretting to focusing on listening.

Whatever the form of the invitation, letting Scripture shape silent stillness can settle participants for prayerful listening and contemplative engagement. From the perspective of intercultural discipleship, sometimes symbols speak when words can't.¹¹ Symbols, songs and other formation resources may be effective in leading some people into silent stillness.

While a session can start with silence, silence also can permeate the process and give it a contemplative tone. Sue Pickering highlights this contemplative approach: "Group spiritual direction from a contemplative perspective involves a simple rhythm of silence, personal sharing, silence, response from the group, and silence, continuing until all have had a turn."¹² Starting with silence shaped by Scripture prepares people for the sharing of their spiritual journeys.

The next step of this journey of discovery in community is to have heart-to-heart sharing with confidentiality. In our approach, **the E in SELAH stands for Explore Heart-Level**. Editors of a collection of chapters on group spiritual direction sum up one way to start this step: "After a brief time of silent prayer on behalf of the presenter, the group listens attentively as a presenter offers a ten- to twelve-minute reflection on some significant experience of the past month."¹³ Scripture gives permission, even an invi-

tation, to share a full range of movements within our hearts as the Spirit shows us what is significant.

Psalm 37:4 encourages us to get in touch with positive movements in our hearts: “Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart” (NIV). Psalm 62:8 invites the expression of heavier or more difficult dynamics: “Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge. *Selah*” (NIV). The *selah* in this setting seems to imply that rather than rushing to the next thought, such sharing invites us to take time for a prayerful pause or an intentional interlude to interact with what has just been stated.

Such intentionality counteracts misperceptions around exploring heart-level dynamics. Commenting on a phrase from spiritual formation literature,¹⁴ Fryling comments, “To talk about “moving from the head down to the heart” does not mean to move from thinking to feeling. . . . To speak from the heart, in the truest biblical sense, is to speak from the depth of our being, including both our thoughts and feelings.”¹⁵ Therefore, exploring heart-level dynamics is more about depth of sharing than about being emotional.

Fryling observes how a tendency to hide feelings may be addressed during direction:

Many of us spend enormous amounts of energy hiding our feelings—especially the negative ones—from others, from God and even from ourselves. But when we stuff our negative feelings into the dark corners of our soul, those very feelings control us. When we bring them to light and allow ourselves to feel them, they no longer have control over us. Spiritual direction can help us reach this place of freedom.

We may try to hide positive feelings as well as negative feelings, however. If, for instance, we feel like jumping for joy that we did something well, we may restrain ourselves because we fear others will think we’re bragging. Spiritual direction helps us here too.¹⁶

Whether people are more concerned about brooding or about bragging, spiritual direction can provide a safe place for going deeper together into feelings and thoughts in a world with so much uncertainty and hostility.

Benner’s conclusion is representative of how the literature generally seems to point toward smaller group size to maximize sharing and minimize hiding: “The optimal size is probably between three and five members. The maximum is probably six. When groups are larger than this, it

becomes difficult for everyone to share. It also becomes easier to hide."¹⁷ Ogden argues that such a small size also facilitates discipleship:

The greatest factor inhibiting those who are being discipled to disciple others (multiplication) is the dependency fostered by one-on-one relationships. The triad/quad, on the other hand, views discipleship as a come-alongside relationship of mutual journey toward maturity in Christ. The hierarchical dimension is minimized.¹⁸

This relational, mutual, accompanying emphasis that makes space for the Spirit to work certainly resonates with my experience of how group spiritual direction helps deepen discipleship.

To facilitate such deeper exploring, group spiritual direction participants need to learn how to **Listen Deeply, which encapsulates the L in our SELAH process**. Rather than rushing to responses or questions, participants learn to receive in silence what has been shared as they enter into deep listening. Practically, three to five minutes may be dedicated to listening after the initial sharing, with additional listening woven throughout the rest of the process. Marlene Kropf and Daniel Schrock describe how deep listening can develop with everyone involved, including the directee, as the process unfolds: "During this time, the presenter listens deeply to what each one says and does not make a verbal response."¹⁹

Such deep listening is so foundational that Fryling frames it as the core group purpose:

The purpose of group spiritual direction is to provide a place where individuals can experience what it means to be listened to and loved by others, so that they can learn to listen more attentively to God in their daily lives and be used by God to spread God's grace and love throughout the world.²⁰

Listening and loving facilitates the journey inward and outward as we are commissioned to go out, which flows from the truth of being cherished and welcomed in.

While this may seem straightforward, Scripture cautions against doing the opposite. The wisdom of Ecclesiastes states: "Go near to listen . . . do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God . . . let your words be few" (5:1–3 NIV). James candidly comments, ". . . let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger" (James 1:19). Eugene Peterson paraphrases the key line as "lead with your ears" (MSG). Mutual spiritual direction facilitates leading with our ears.

A biblical precedent for such engagement is the way that Jesus led with listening when he was with the disciples on the Emmaus road. Ruth Haley Barton comments,

Jesus models for us here another important element of transforming community—the ability to simply listen and *be with what is* without having to fix, give advice or problem solve. He seemed to know that what these two disoriented disciples needed, first of all, was to tell the story of what had happened and how it affected them in their own words. Even though Jesus definitely would have had his own perspective, he didn't rush in and offer that too quickly. He respected the fact that their experience of these events, the meanings they were placing on it all and the questions they were asking in response, were their own. What they needed was someone who would simply listen and be present to them in all their pain and uncertainty.²¹

In today's world full of so much pain and uncertainty, how many people are longing for "someone who would simply listen and be present to them"?

Through God's mercy and grace, such deep listening helps us become more attentive both to others and to our own story. Janette Bakke notes how this deeper dynamic emerges in groups:

The gifts of God's grace in and to others in such a group become lenses for recognizing the faithfulness of God present in our pilgrimage. Sometimes when we are acting in the role of director we may receive direction. . . . Through listening to someone else's story we begin to remember or recognize meaningful aspects of our story. . . . This added dimension of noticing how the work of the Spirit in another member speaks to our own hearts is a bonus of group spiritual direction.²²

I hope students in group direction will experience such mutual ministry moments through the Spirit's movements in all the group members' stories.

Such deep listening creates space for discerning what is happening within and behind what has been shared. Discernment is described in Scripture as a general Christian responsibility (1 John 4:1) and a specific spiritual gift (1 Cor. 12:10) used along with other gifts in the body as what is shared is not stifled but is tested together (1 Thess. 5:15–24).

To put this into practice, I invite students to inwardly ask themselves these questions before responding to what has been shared.

- As you listen in light of the Scriptures and the Spirit within, what is stirring in you through images, impressions, sense of the situation, intuition, etc.?
- As you listen with your whole self (ears, eyes, heart, undivided attention),²³ what are you noticing outwardly about how the person is coming across in sharing his/her heart?
- As you listen deeply and internally sift or weigh insights (1 Corinthians 14:29), what evocative explorations (see the next part of the process) are emerging for the person to be guided by the Spirit of Truth into all truth (John 16:12–15)?

For such deep listening within the group, it is vital to cultivate a listening heart outside the group sessions. In my instructions around this part of the process, I share imagery from Isaiah 50:4 for someone facing challenging circumstances: “The Sovereign LORD has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught” (NIV). A rule of life that includes regular listening to God in biblical meditation and prayerful interaction with God helps attune ears to a word for the weary with a teachable spirit and a listening heart. Fryling reinforces the role of such rhythms: “When members of the group have the habit of listening to God—in Scripture and in all aspects of life—they are much better equipped to listen to the directee with humble, welcoming attitudes.”²⁴

From such deep listening, wise words can emerge, especially in the form of open-ended questions. In our approach, **the A in SELAH stands for Ask Evocative Questions**. Fryling articulates the goal:

In group spiritual direction the goal is not to answer life’s questions. The goal is to draw closer to God in the midst of the questions. Many times it is in embracing our questions that we move more deeply into God’s love. . . . One of the greatest gifts we can give another is to ask a meaningful question. With our questions, we are inviting further exploration into whatever the directee is presenting.²⁵

Students steeped in scholarly “answers” often need to become more comfortable with discomfiting questions without easy answers.

Consider a few examples of evocative questions in Scripture. These open-ended questions arose after Jesus’ personal prayer time: “Who do the crowds say that I am? . . . But who do you say that I am?” (Luke 9:18–20). After the wind, earthquake, and fire came a gentle whisper with a question to ponder: “What are you doing here, Elijah?” (1 Kings 19:11–13).

In reflecting on the role of questions in Jesus' interactions in Luke 24, Barton comments:

This particular moment on the Emmaus Road is one that causes me to fall in love with Jesus all over again. You've gotta love a man (or a woman) who asks a good question, waits patiently for you to sort through your thoughts and emotions, and then asks a follow-up question that finally helps you to say what you need to say. Spiritual conversation just doesn't get any better than that!²⁶

As I journey with students, I want us to be captivated by Christ, including how he asks evocative questions that are catalysts for conversations exploring heart-level dynamics.

The wisdom of Proverbs 20:5 comes to mind: "The purposes of a person's heart are deep waters, but one who has insight draws them out" (NIV). I offer these guidelines for such drawing out. First, inwardly check the content and tone of your question for consistency with the character of Christ and the fruit of the Spirit. Second, be aware that your perceptions or questions may be for silent prayer and not for sharing. Third, track with the group conversation and discernment so that your question or comment fits with the present moment. Fourth, inwardly check the consistency of your question with the evocative explorations described in table 1 and contrasted with the content and tone of interpretative intrusions. Fifth, do not interrupt.

While these general guidelines can shape questions, Fryling notes differences in the quality of questions:

As wonderful as questions can be, some questions are simply not helpful. They can be manipulative or superficial. Sometimes they are so loaded with the suggested answer that they fall on deaf ears. A really good question is open-ended. It allows the other person to respond in any way she'd like. It allows for exploration. It gives permission for the other person to talk deeply if he chooses. It is invitational and welcoming.²⁷

Table 1 summarizes such contrasts from Fryling and from the coaching and core values of my SELAH approach to spiritual direction training.²⁸

Table 1. Descriptions of interpretive intrusions vs. evocative explorations. Participants in group spiritual direction should try to avoid the first column and favor the second.

Interpretive Intrusions	Evocative Explorations (SELAH Core Values)
1. Interpretive questions, advice, explanations, etc.	1. Evocative questions, brief reflections, noticings, a return to silence, etc.
2. Shifting to one's own agenda story	2. Sifting with <i>God-awareness</i> and honouring mystery
3. Shutting down uncomfortable feelings or thoughts by staying shallow	3. Opening up deeper feelings or thoughts with <i>self-awareness</i> , even if uncomfortable
4. Curiosity about "juicy" details in a "drama"	4. Clarifying—"holy interest" in vital details with God
5. Instructions intended to teach content about God	5. Invitation to meet God and reflect on the experience
6. Comments that are constrictive, stifling, or fixated on problems	6. Contemplativeness, spaciousness, <i>freedom, and flexibility</i>
7. Labelling (an attitude with a platitude)	7. Listening with <i>love and respect</i>
8. Performance pressure that may increase stress or anxiety for director and/or directee	8. A presence that is a nonanxious; a relaxed way of director being with the directee <i>in trust</i>
9. Correction of "wrong" answers	9. Being a companion of a person without "judging"
10. Head-level intellectual analysis	10. Heart-level soul engagement

Asking evocative questions is such a new way of approaching conversations that it takes many students months to learn such skills. Months into their shared journey, one group of students broke out in applause for a student who finally asked an evocative question. For whoever struggles with such skills, Dirks offers practical tips:

When someone falls into the trap of being an advice giver, it is best for the facilitator to suggest restating his or her thoughts in the form of a question. Our goal is to help the directee do her or his own spiritual work. There are times when a group will feel stuck—no one will know what to ask. *This is when someone should suggest that everyone stop for a minute or two of silence.* Sit quietly together as you listen to the Holy Spirit. Doing so will reveal the next turn in the road. At first it will feel a bit awkward, but the outcome is often a powerful question that leads to a breakthrough.²⁹

Whoever is facilitating the group direction session can ask people to restate advice as open-ended questions, refocus on the directee doing his or her own spiritual work, or suggest silence to allow the Spirit to reveal fresh questions or impressions.

Suggesting a *selah* pause for prayer in silence can be both an action and an attitude, a return to both prayerful listening and a listening heart. Solomon's wisdom flowed from the Lord giving him "a wise and discerning heart" (1 Kings 3:12 NIV) in response to his request. Calling for a *selah* time out makes space in the silence for me to call out to God when I have no clue what to do or what to ask except to pray for a discerning heart for a wise question.

Learning the art of asking evocative questions that draw people out can help prevent shutting people down. From his years of experience as a spiritual director and Christian psychologist, Benner shares these observations:

People whose questions are answered rather than honored often stop asking questions—at least of those who give answers. They may worry that their questions are being interpreted as signs of doubt or a lack of maturity. Or they may simply stop asking questions because they are tired of the answers. Others take their questions elsewhere, often moving outside the faith community to find others who are less interested in a destination and more committed to the journey, to any journey. All these outcomes are tragic.³⁰

These wise words are especially timely now, when we are trying to navigate the uncharted territory of a global pandemic, to facilitate challeng-

ing conversations around systemic racism, to integrate collective responses to the need for truth and reconciliation with Aboriginal and Indigenous peoples,³¹ to motivate an environmental ethic for climate change, and more. There are no easy answers for such complex challenges, so we need Christians and churches that honor questions. From my perspective, there is a real urgency to learning the art of asking evocative questions, of living with the ambiguity of questions, and of being committed to a shared journey of discovery and greater maturity. Group spiritual direction could contribute in some small ways to such developments.

Kropf and Schrock sum up the group spiritual direction process as follows:

A good process is spacious, hospitable, and prayerful—and after the group learns its rhythms and movements, the structure will hardly be noticed. Instead, participants will be set free to pray, reflect, and discern God’s ways in their lives. They will grow into maturity in Christ and become lively partners with the Spirit as they meet together and as they go out to love and serve God in the world.³²

I experienced the blessings of such a spacious, hospitable, prayerful spiritual direction group in the midst of a season with significant stressors in my life. As we consider formation in crisis, in a time with so much suspicion and pain in the world, imagine the ripple effects of groups of people experiencing spacious, hospitable, prayerful places and sharing such blessings with others.

Whatever the context for becoming spiritually stronger together, a recurring theme in spiritual formation is the need for relinquishment and empowerment. Such transformation occurs only in the Spirit’s strength. In this part of our approach, **the H in SELAH stands for In God’s Hand**. This step may only take a minute or two as participants share in silent prayer, offer one-line prayers, or participate in a prayerful symbolic action. In spiritual formation courses, I share with students a simple, profound prayer from Richard Foster. He describes a prayerful way to put things in God’s hands as we put our “palms down” and then our “palms up”:

Begin by placing your palms down as a symbolic indication of your desire to turn over any concerns you may have to God. Inwardly you may pray, “Lord, I give to you my . . .” Release it. You may even feel a certain sense of release in your hands. After several moments of surrender, turn your palms up as a symbol of your desire to receive from the Lord. Perhaps you will pray silently: “Lord, I would like to receive your . . .”³³

This prayer form can be used to lead into the stillness at the start of the session, but it can also conclude a time of responding to a directee's sharing.

This is a way to pray the images in Scriptures, such as in Psalm 63:8, "I cling to you; your right hand upholds me" (NIV Psalm 139:7–10 vividly describes God's continuing presence and sustaining power:

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?
If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths,
you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side
of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold
me fast. (NIV)

I have experienced the truth of this text through transitions and celebrations, through highs and lows, as God's hand has guided me and held me fast with sustaining strength from the Spirit. My hope is that the small steps of developing and implementing our SELAH group spiritual direction process will make space for our students and the people with whom they work to experience the promises of this passage.

Selah.

NOTES

- 1 Patricia Hendricks, *Hungry Souls, Holy Companions: Mentoring a New Generation of Christians* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 2006), 107, 109.
- 2 Morris Dirks, *Forming the Leader's Soul: An Invitation to Spiritual Direction* (Portland, OR: SoulFormation, 2013), 177.
- 3 For a representative but not exhaustive range of resources, see these titles; they convey some of the rich roots and fruits of spiritual direction. William Barry and William Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, rev. ed. (New York: HarperOne, 2009); William Barry, *Spiritual Direction and the Encounter with God: A Theological Inquiry*, rev. ed. (New York: Paulist, 2004); Sherry Bryant-Johnson, Therese Taylor-Stinson, and Rosalie Norman McNaney, eds. *Embodied Spirits: Stories of Spiritual Directors of Color* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 2014); Tilden Edwards, *Spiritual Director, Spiritual Companion: Guide to Tending to the Soul* (New York: Paulist, 2001); Margaret Guenther, *Holy Listening: The Art of Spiritual Direction* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2004); Kenneth Leech, *Soul Friend: Spiritual Direction in the Modern World*, rev. ed. (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 2001); Gerald May, *Care of Mind, Care of Spirit: A Psychiatrist Explores Spiritual Direction* (New York: Harper One, 1992); Gary Moon and David Benner, *Spiritual Direction and the Care of Souls: A Guide to Christian Approaches and Practices* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004); Barbara L. Peacock, *Soul Care in African American Practice* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020); Angela Reed, Richard Osmer, and Marcus Smucker, *Spiritual Companionship: A Guide to Protestant Theology and Practice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015).
- 4 Barbara Blodgett and Matthew Floding, eds., *Brimming with God: Reflecting Theologically on Cases in Ministry* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015), 1. This textbook provides “cases” for such mutual theological reflection during the first term of the first year of Mentored Ministry, which equips students for reflecting on their own ministry cases in subsequent terms.
- 5 Matthew Floding, ed., *Welcome to Theological Education!* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2011), 37–40. In the same book, Donna Duensing has a chapter titled “The Power of Reflecting with Peers” (pp. 65–74). Such reflecting within peer cohorts is a resource for resilience. See also Bob Burns, Tasha Chapman, Donald Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry: What Pastors Told Us about Surviving and Thriving* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013), 283–95.
- 6 Matthew Floding, ed., *Engage: A Theological Field Education Toolkit* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 36. The study’s name is the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence Peer Learning Project.
- 7 Alice Fryling, *Seeking God Together: An Introduction to Group Spiritual Direction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 74. This helpful resource is a required text in our course The Soul of Leadership.
- 8 For a variety of other ways to integrate Scripture in spiritual direction see Liz Hoare, *Using the Bible in Spiritual Direction* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 2016).
- 9 David Benner, *Sacred Companions: The Gift of Spiritual Friendship and Direction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 169.

- 10 I learned this way of entering silence through this book and related resources: Don Postema, *Space for God: Study and Practice of Spirituality and Prayer*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: CRC, 1997).
- 11 See the chapter titled “Symbols Speak when Words Can’t” in this excellent discussion of discipleship development across different cultural contexts: W. Jay Moon, *Intercultural Discipleship: Learning from Global Approaches to Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2017), 68–89. I experienced the powerful role of symbols during the check-in time for our Selah spiritual direction training times. After the lighting of a candle to represent Christ as our Light, each participant placed a symbol on a low table and briefly shared its significance in representing how we were coming to the retreat or interacting with the current theme of our spiritual direction training.
- 12 Sue Pickering, *Spiritual Direction: A Practical Introduction* (Norwich, UK: SCM-Canterbury Press, 2011), 194.
- 13 Marlene Kropf and Daniel Schrock, eds., *An Open Place: The Ministry of Group Spiritual Direction* (New York: Church Publishing, 2012), 12.
- 14 Henri Nouwen portrays spiritual formation as “the movements from the mind to the heart through prayer in its many forms that reunite us with God, each other, and our truest selves.” “Formation of the heart” is a prominent theme within this book and elsewhere in Nouwen’s writings. Henri Nouwen, *Spiritual Formation: Following the Movements of the Spirit* (New York: HarperOne, 2010), xvi.
- 15 Fryling, *Seeking God Together*, 57.
- 16 Fryling, *Seeking God Together*, 61.
- 17 Benner, 174. See, for example, Fryling, *Seeking God Together*, 127; Janette Bakke, *Holy Invitations: Exploring Spiritual Direction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000), 145; James Bryan Smith, *Spiritual Formation Workbook: Small Group Resources for Nurturing Christian Growth*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2001), 18; Rose Mary Dougherty, ed., *The Lived Experience of Group Spiritual Direction* (New York: Paulist, 2003), 10. The latter book is a follow-up to the author’s classic work that describes such group dynamics in detail: Rose Mary Dougherty, *Group Spiritual Direction: Community for Discernment* (New York: Paulist, 1998). One notable variant on this general trend is the adaptation by Heather Webb offered in *Small Group Leadership as Spiritual Direction: Practical Ways to Blend an Ancient Art into Your Contemporary Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005).
- 18 Greg Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials: A Guide to Building Your Life in Christ*, rev. expanded ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2018), xii–xiii.
- 19 Kropf and Schrock, *An Open Place*, 13.
- 20 Fryling, *Seeking God Together*, 8
- 21 Ruth Haley Barton, *Life Together in Christ: Experiencing Transformation in Community* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014), 54. This helpful resource is a required text in our course Faith Development through Small Groups.
- 22 Bakke, *Holy Invitations*, 144.
- 23 I introduce students to how the Chinese character for listening includes several ideas and images: ears, eyes, heart, and undivided attention.

- 24 Fryling, *Seeking God Together*, 73–74.
- 25 Fryling, *Seeking God Together*, 45–46.
- 26 Barton, *Life Together in Christ*, 54.
- 27 Barton, *Life Together in Christ*, 53.
- 28 The words in italics in table 1 are taken from the original Selah Core Values document, © Angela Dean Wisdom, 2016, for Leadership Transformation's Selah Certificate Program in Spiritual Direction (<http://www.leadershiptransformations.org/selah.htm>).
- 29 Dirks, *Forming the Leader's Soul*, 165–66.
- 30 Benner, *Sacred Companions*, 167.
- 31 The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada is a national royal commission that has published "calls to action" for churches, educational institutions and other groups to respond to the oppressive and destructive colonial history and current policies related to Aboriginal peoples. See http://trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf.
- 32 Kropf and Schrock, *An Open Place*, 18.
- 33 Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, 20th anniversary ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 1998), 30–31.