

Charlotte Spirituality Center

Spiritual Direction Verbatim

Director: Esther Hethcox
Directee: Mary
Date of Session: 11/20/2024
Session Location: Outdoor coffee shop
Session # 1

Introduction: *This verbatim is a conversation with a parishioner re-imagined for spiritual direction. Identification markers have been changed. Mary is a 28 yea-old woman earning her PhD at UNC. She grew up in Spain, with a Catholic mother and Protestant father, and practiced Catholicism while attending an all-girls Catholic school. She realized she was queer in this time, and for the past 15-20 years, has been deeply wrestling with how be a part of a faith community that she believes will never fully affirm her being. She left the Catholic church and only began attending in the past year through campus Catholic life. She is on the quiet side, warm and joyful, but also cautious. Her friends, who are young adults of my church, encouraged her to talk with me about her journey. We are meeting in an outdoor coffee shop, that has space to talk intimately.*

Dialogue	Thoughts of Director	Feelings of Director	Body Response in Director	Body Response in Directee	Intuition
SD 1 - Mary, hi! It's so great to see you!	She looks a lot more at ease than when we first met (at a gathering)	eager	reaches out to touch arm	extends arms for a hug	felt like there was preestablished trust & comfort
D 1 - Hi! Thank you so much for meeting me—I've been looking forward to it since my friends mentioned you and FPC, it sounds like you do such cool work there.	Nice	affirmed			
SD 2 – It's a great gig, and allows me to meet wonderful people! I'm grateful for your openness to meet.	Don't want this to become about me + ministry small talk				
D 2 - Yes! Aubrey and Jack mentioned that you might be helpful to talk to. I don't even know where to start...	She's naming a need/want, it's a Big Thing	Glad she is direct that she wants to talk, but feeling cautious	leans in, makes eye contact	Also leans in	the pre-existing trust is really helpful for this—but don't be too comfortable/bold/risky
SD 3 - Is there a word that comes to mind when you think of what you're holding?	Gently guiding	Still cautious			

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D 3 - *pauses* paradoxical	Interesting	Curious	moves head, small smile	Smile as well	Okay, ready to talk about something...
SD 4 - why that word?					
D 4 - I feel like I live two lives...in one I love God and love the church, and in the other I love myself but know that the church and God will never love me. I feel like this love is a paradox—it's all intertwined with hate.	Ooofff. Gonna let that sit for a minute	Sad	Trying not to tear up		
SD 5 - I'm hearing that you don't believe these two can exist without contradiction	Saying what she said in different words				
D 5 - Yeah, I feel like I have to choose one or the other.	Wow, that is a lot of pressure	Sad	Trying not to nod and have that taken as affirmation that these things are true		
SD 6 - (gives a moment of silence) "love intertwined with hate" is an interesting phrase. Help me understand that.	let that sit for a moment. There is a lot of ideas about God from others in her words, but not her own ideas.	Curious	Leaning in still, eye contact	Eye contact	Want to see where we go from here
D 6 - I guess...I can't shake the idea that God hates who I am, that I'm a sin. It just follows me every time I'm in a church. And it sucks because I love the church and love God but God hates me.	Kinda starting to go in a cycle	Sad			

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SD 7 - Hate is a such a strong word. I wonder--have you heard that word from God?	Wanting to pull back from words of others and feelings of unsafety. Use this time to wonder	Hopeful but cautious, not sure if this is too far	Still leaning in	Sits back to think	
D 7 - *pauses* like...directly? A voice from heaven like?					
SD 8 - sure—or scripture, music, witness, movies, anything.	Really not sure if I've wandered into therapy space	Conflicted about going farther			
D 8 - I guess...just from my family. And other Christians. *silence for a minute* but yeah, I guess...not from God himself.					
SD 9 – well, you also used the word love several times. Have you heard that word from God?	Still not sure if this is ok	Still conflicted			
D 9 - Yeah, but not in those direct words. More like in descriptions of God's love for the world and Jesus saying God loves us. Have you?	Conflicted about sharing or not, but this is a moment to place God's love next to all the hate that is being remembered	Feel like sharing a little (but not too personal) will be a moment of trust building		She's looking at my intently	
SD 10 - Isaiah 43, verse 4 ends with the clearest I've ever heard; "and I love you."					
D 10 – That's pretty damn clear.	Good reception	A little relieved, never want to force scripture on others		Says with a laugh and smile, but eyes start to show tears	
SD 11: I notice that your having a response to that.					

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<p>D 11: I don't think I ever have been told that God has said those words packed together. I hear "For God so loved the world" and stuff...but never with the "I" and the "you"</p> <p>SD 12: there is a lot of room between that "I" and "you"—let's sit for a time in that space, and hold that love in this particular moment. And if something stirs or rises up for you, that can be named. And if silence is what it becomes, that is good too.</p> <p>D 13: I would like that.</p>	<p>She seems relieved, hopeful</p>	<p>Feeling some hope too</p>			

Reflections

This was much more difficult to write than I thought it would be. While I changed a lot of identifying facts and cut out a lot of the conversation, everything written was named in this time together, I just adjusted my responses to be a little less pastor-y/responding more and trying to be more quiet and just nudge toward something. It's hard not to make a space to affirm and offer a theology of healing (which is usually how these conversations end up as they are seeking that) and to just nudge. I believe my struggle lies in the question of how pastors can be spiritual directors. I couldn't get away from the pastoral part of me (especially in D9/SD10) Do we have to turn off the pastor part of us completely? Just a wondering :)