

Charlotte Spirituality Center
Spiritual Direction Verbatim

Director: *Shea*

Directee: *John*

Date of Session: *Nov 11*

Session # 2

Session Location: *Coffee Shop*

Introduction: *This is a follow-up meeting with a congregant after a year or so. In the first visit, John expressed anger and hurt from the church because he felt alienated because of his politics after the murder of George Floyd. He told me several times that he is “a strong conservative.” He also happens to be a super-talented musician and is known around town for his gifts. I have been thinking about our conversation for some time and mentioned in passing that I would love to get together again sometime soon. He reached out to me the following Monday with some times that he would be available to meet. So, we scheduled a meeting for a less busy coffee shop so we could have a more intimate setting.*

Dialogue	Thoughts of Director	Feelings of Director	Body Response in Director	Body Response in Directee	Intuition
SD 1 - John, I'm so glad we could do this again.	How will this go?	Discerning	Smiling	Calm, he beat me to the shop and had a newspaper	Let him set the tone and pace
D 1 - Me too. Sorry I haven't reached out sooner.	Interesting	No apology necessary	Tilting my head, still smiling	Smiling	Maybe he regrets how our last coffee went
SD 2 - No need to apologize! I could have reached out to you, too. But I'm glad we made this happen. So how have you been?	I mean that.	Hopeful	Sipping coffee	Adjusts his seating	Could go any
D 2 - I've been doing well. Been playing a lot of music out and enjoying playing solo over the band.	Is he going to ask to get involved at the church?	Open	Relaxed	More serious look on his face	He's been thinking about our last conversation

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SD 3 - Nice! Yes, I've seen a few videos and posts of people going out to hear you. That must be nice to have such support from friends at the church and elsewhere.	I am reminded of his past comments that he feels alienated at the church.	I hope he sees he is loved and supported.	Smiling playfully	Head nod	He is open to that sentiment
D 3 - Yes, to be honest it has been nice to know that I am not the outsider I feel I am.	An opening to be curious	He's far from an outsider, and I will not take the bait to play into that narrative	Head nod	Serious face	Here we go
SD 4 - Tell me more about feeling like an outsider. That sounds lonely, painful even.	Remember pain is the cause	Compassion, compassion, compassion	Leaning in	Head tilts back	...
D 4 - I told you last time that I am conservative and that I think the church overstepped in its response to the George Floyd stuff. Wearing BlackLivesMatter t-shirts was too far.	This was before my time, so I did not see that, but clearly it provoked a strong reaction in him.	Curious	I stay in my leaned-in position	His body goes still, as if in expectation	Spirit, give me wisdom

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SD 5 - Yes, I remember that. And I remember you saying you've been at the church most of your life and that you were having a hard time moving past that. I am curious: What do you think it would take from the church for you to find healing from that experience? How can the church demonstrate its love and acceptance of you exactly as you are?	I know church leadership has offered to sit down with him and discuss it, but he has declined. Wondering if he would be honest with me.	Curious	I sit back	Tilts his head and looks away, deep in thought	He's pondering it
D 5 – I don't know. I guess acknowledging that regardless of who we are or our politics, we can worship together.	I agree.	Discerning	Hand to the chin	Shoulder shrug into a relaxed position	He's still thinking
SD 6 - *I allow some more silence to let his own words set in* Well, I agree with you, John. I think that is the aim of the church: to let our love for God and neighbor create wide tables and open doors. I didn't say this last time, but I want you to know that on the worship team we aren't looking for uniformity of thought. The only requirement is that you want to be there and love the team—which I know you do. So consider this an open	An olive branch	Cards on the table	Smiling	Smiling head nod	He seems receptive of that invitation

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invitation to join us if and when you want.					
D 6 - Thank you. I really appreciate you saying that. But if I'm honest, I like traditional worship more, because I can connect with the music and God without analyzing all the instruments like at the contemporary service. Plus, I often teach men's bible study at 930.	Another opening to show him what he just said re: not being an outsider	We have skirted over the pain a little, but this feels like an important connection to make	Smiling	Smiling, his words are warm	He's not as combative or angry as the first time we met
SD 7 - I totally get that! I am similar. I actually like the bells and smells of high church as a different type of sensory experience. You said something interesting that I think is worth repeating: You teach bible men's bible study at 930. I've seen you in there; it's a great group. Have you enjoyed doing that at the church?	The church <i>does</i> support him and has not limited his opportunities.	A little nuance to the narrative	Smiling	Head nod	He hasn't considered how this is a way that the church welcomes him
D 7 - I love it. It's a great group of men with different backgrounds and beliefs. We've been meeting for years.	Be wise here	Don't patronize but say this back	Smiling	Sips his coffee	Ask about that

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SD 8 - Sounds like you find a lot of meaning in that. I am glad. And reading scripture together is such a great way of considering where God is at work in our lives and the world.	Let him continue this thread or take our talk in another direction	Open	Sipping coffee, considering	Smiling	He does find it meaningful
D 8 - Yes, I like it a lot. Listen, I have to go in a few minutes, but I wanted to ask you about playing music <i>outside</i> of the church. I've been doing this solo gigs and could really use someone to play keyboard and sing with me. Is that something you'd consider?	Didn't see this coming!	Surprised	Eyebrows lifting	Smiling, extending his own olive branch	This could be a very interesting way of continuing the conversation, albeit in more melodic forms
SD 9 - To be honest, I haven't played out in some years, but I do miss playing music for the fun of it. I will absolutely consider it.	Honestly	Still surprised, but feeling good about the prospect	Smiling	Head nod	I'll let him do with that what he wants. More than a change of subject, he seems genuine in his comments.
D 9 - Well, I'll send you a list of songs I'm working on and let's set a time after thanksgiving to jam a little and see what happens. I gotta head out to work.	That sounds good to me	Content	Head nod	Extends hand for handshake	To be continued...

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SD 10 - Thank you for reaching out. I have really enjoyed our conversation. And I look forward to the next one—perhaps over music?	This went better than I expected. Looking down at my watch, we have been here over an hour.	Hopeful	Standing up, shaking his hand	He taps my arm, like an “atta boy” and leaves	

Reflections

I tried my best to highlight some of the key inflection points of the conversation. We were there a good while, but it didn't feel laborious. I genuinely like John. The first time I met him he seemed a bit brash, but this time he was warm and welcoming. He's not a project for me to work on or fix; I just tried to remind him of the truth: that he is loved and accepted just as he is. I was reminded of the quote attributed to Augustine: "Love God and do whatever you please: for the soul trained in love to God will do nothing to offend the One who is Beloved." This is not a free pass to do whatever we want. Rather, genuine love of God and others will bring us closer together. And that will require from all of us that we deal with our pain and confront the suffering/injustices of others. It is clear my job is to love in relationships and remain open to in-breaking moments of the holy.

Update: *I played music for over three hours on Monday evening at John's house. I will do the same next Monday evening. Unsure where this is headed, but I will follow the music in the divine dance of life.*