

Soul Friendship Overview (Triad)

Most of us are more comfortable sharing the joy, difficulty, and pain of our inner world with just a few people than with a larger group. Triads provide space for spiritual formation and direction in a smaller, intimate setting. Although they involve fellowship, **they strive to facilitate soul friendship** rather than spiritual acquaintances. Bible study doesn't play a major role; however, prayer is central and these groups share *four common features*.

1) The Priority of Questions Over Answers

Some Christians are overly concerned about answering questions and treat them as something to be eliminated. However, Jesus knew the value of a good question. The spiritual journey inevitably confronts all of us with questions that need to be expressed and lived, not simply answered. *What is needed is a patient, listening presence* that encourages him or her to remain open to the questions and to God. People whose questions are answered rather than honored often stop asking questions ... at least of those who give answers. Others take their questions elsewhere, often moving outside the faith community. A group designed to support the spiritual journey **will honor questions and be careful never to try to simply answer them**. The church should be a place that encourages the spiritual quest.

2) Prayerful Listening

A group designed for soul friendship seeks to develop a climate of prayerful listening to each other and God. Prayerful means being attentive to God, which occurs within a context of prayer. Prayerful attentiveness is cultivated in a climate that honors silence. It is often helpful to begin Triads with silent prayer. Each person is encouraged to become still before God and aware of his presence. A way to nurture this is with *lectio divina*, which literally means "divine reading". *This ancient Christian practice involves a prayerful listening to Scripture* and is grounded in a balance of silence and the Word. Those listening are encouraged to set aside analysis and understanding, seeking instead to receive God's Word expectantly. **Then they attend to what they receive from God as a gift**.

3) Sharing Spiritual Experience

Triads give priority to speaking of spiritual experience. When external events are shared (i.e. new job, family news), *the focus should be on the participant's experience of God* in the midst of these life circumstances. Group members often find it helpful to prepare for Triads **by reflecting and journaling where God is in their experience**. Questions such as the following can assist this preparation:

- What do I think God has been trying to say to me in the past week(s)?
- How has God been present for me recently? When did God seem absent?
- What spiritual practices have been particularly meaningful to me in recent weeks?
- Which have been less meaningful than usual?

4) Climate of Support and Acceptance

Richard Foster says this about spiritual formation groups: "Give encouragement as often as possible, advice once in a while, reproof only when absolutely necessary, and judgment never." Love is the motive for attentive listening. Love is the motive for offering attentiveness to the Spirit. Love is the motive for reproof that is given. *And love is the motive for a climate of encouragement and hope*. Love means that if I need to be challenged about something, I am much more likely to receive it well. I may not initially welcome it, but I am almost certain to hear it eventually if it is offered in love. Soul friendship occurs when people who are committed to each other **pledge themselves to the support of each other's spiritual journey**. This is the primary purpose and dynamic of a Triad.

Triad Rhythm

In your Triad (3 people), we encourage you to spend time practicing Lectio Divina and Group Spiritual Direction. Below, you'll find insight on these, a suggested schedule, and a list of helpful questions and passages.

What is Lectio Divina?

Lectio Divina is a tried and true approach to meditating on passages from the Bible. However, it's not a formulaic technique — it's a practiced way of taking the Word of God deep into our hearts and lives. Lectio Divina in a group features quiet meditation on a Bible passage and soul talk in order to facilitate Christ-centered community.

What is Group Spiritual Direction?

Group spiritual direction is a mutual commitment to listen for God's voice and watch for God's movement in someone's life. Different from coaching or accountability, a spiritual direction group tends to each other's souls through silence, questions, and listening. Together we seek to see the ordinary parts of our lives as the fertile space in which God is moving.

During your weekly/biweekly time in your Triad, we recommend the following schedule, based on a one hour gathering (expand each section if meeting longer):

1) Spend time catching-up (10 minutes)

- What's going on in your life right now?

2) Lectio Divina → [Love God](#) (15 minutes)

- Each reading is read aloud by a different member so we can hear God's Word ministered to us. Each reading is guided by a focus question to help us engage deeply with God's Word.
- After each reading, hold onto a minute of silence to absorb Gods' grace and truth.
 - **1st Reading:** Listen to the Holy Spirit minister God's Word to you. What one word or phrase especially touches your heart?
 - **2nd Reading:** Enter the passage. What emotions do you have? What personal struggle or longing in your life today is God speaking into?
 - **3rd Reading:** Receive what Christ has for you today. What is your personal invitation from the Lord? What do you sense God might be saying to you?

3) Group Spiritual Direction → [Love Others](#) (30 minutes)

Invite each person to speak briefly about what has been occurring in their faith journey since they last met. Encourage others to listen in silence rather than interrupting with questions or comments, seeking to heighten their attentiveness to God. Group members can then engage in dialogue with the first person. This should be focused on the experience of God, not the life circumstances that form the context. The contemplative style of group *that is built around silence is particularly useful in heightening prayerful attentiveness to God and each other.*

- **Share**
 - The first person shares for 3-5 minutes.
 - Spend 1 minute in silence.
- **Ask Questions**
 - The other members ask a question or make an observation to help the person mine their life with God. Remember ... silence is okay!
- **Pray**
 - Spend a few minutes praying for the person who shared. This can be as simple as prayer of blessing or something specific you feel led to pray for the person about.
- **Repeat**
 - Repeat the process above for the other two members.

4) Reflect → **Live Sent** (5 minutes)

- In light of our time together, how is God inviting you to live for the glory of God and the good of the people around you?

As you work through Lectio Divina and Spiritual Direction together, keep in mind:

In Lectio Divina:

- Based on how Jesus embodied and taught from the Old Testament, we know that he spent years meditating on them — probably in the *spirit* of what is now called “Lectio Divina.”
- In Lectio Divina we read and re-read a Scripture passage slowly and prayerfully as a means of furthering our intimacy with Jesus and submitting to his kingdom rule in our lives.
- There is no hurry or intellectual strain to figure out the Scripture’s meaning. We simply wait quietly on the Holy Spirit as we read, listening for the still, small voice of the Lord to speak personally to us through his Word.
- As God speaks to us we reflect on his Word by “ruminating” on it in our minds, gently and slowly repeating the Word to ourselves over and over. We’re renewing our minds to be transformed in God’s wonderful ways.
- We express to our Loving Lord whatever feelings or longings are stirred up in us by the Scripture. We confess to him a sin, struggle, or hurt.
- The Lectio Divina process ends with resting quietly in God’s arms. His Word has focused us on Christ’s indwelling presence, so we simply stay there with Christ in love, joy, and peace.

In Group Spiritual Direction:

- Value listening over speaking, asking questions over giving advice, and process over progress.
- No one in your group is the director or gets to direct people. Instead, we help each other listen to and for the voice of the real Director: the Holy Spirit.
- The focus of your time is not the person sharing, but their relationship with God.
- Accept the people you are with without judging their motives or actions, and believe the best about them and their heart and desire to follow Jesus well.
- Practice three-way listening. We are constantly listening to God, the person speaking, and to what’s happening in us.
- When asking questions, remember to keep your question short. A good question shouldn’t need a lot of setup.
- **Whatever is said in a Triad is confidential**, with the exception of threat of harm to oneself or others.

Spiritual Direction Questions

As we grow in asking good questions— open-ended and not leading, flow in conversation, and for discovery and not exposure— it can be helpful to have a list to draw from. What follows is a list of some questions that may prove helpful. Feel free to use them as you need, add to the list, or come up with your own. Remember, the goal of a good question is to merely be a stepping stone in the conversation.

- Where do you see God in this event/situation/emotion?
- As you think about the issue you're processing, what feelings rise up within you?
- Is there a narrative behind that thought/action that you may be believing?
- Regarding what you're talking about, what do you feel like is yours to hold? To release?
- What do you think that God feels/thinks about you as you experience this situation?
- Do you sense any invitation from God in all of this? What would you like God's invitation to be?
- What is it that you would like Jesus to do for you?
- What was that like for you?
- Is there a person in your life who acts the way you perceive God to be acting in your life?
- How does your body respond to that feeling?
- When in your life before have you had the feeling you're describing now?
- What is it like for you when you pray about this situation you're presenting?
- Are there any questions you wish we would ask you?

Suggested Lectio Divina Passages

<p>Any Psalm</p> <p>Matthew</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 5:1-12 <input type="checkbox"/> 5:13-16 <input type="checkbox"/> 7:7-11 <input type="checkbox"/> 8:1-4 <input type="checkbox"/> 8:23-27 <input type="checkbox"/> 9:2-8 <input type="checkbox"/> 9:18-25 <input type="checkbox"/> 14:13-20 <input type="checkbox"/> 16:13-20 <input type="checkbox"/> 17:1-8 <input type="checkbox"/> 18:1-5 <input type="checkbox"/> 26:6-13 <input type="checkbox"/> 26:36-46 <input type="checkbox"/> 26:69-75 <input type="checkbox"/> 27:32-44 <input type="checkbox"/> 27:45-54 <input type="checkbox"/> 28:1-10 <p>Romans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 5:1-5 <input type="checkbox"/> 8:1-11 <input type="checkbox"/> 8:31-39 <input type="checkbox"/> 12:1-5 <input type="checkbox"/> 14:7-12 	<p>Mark</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1:9-13 <input type="checkbox"/> 1:21-27 <input type="checkbox"/> 1:40-45 <input type="checkbox"/> 2:1-12 <input type="checkbox"/> 4:1-9 <input type="checkbox"/> 4:35-41 <input type="checkbox"/> 6:45-52 <input type="checkbox"/> 8:1-9 <input type="checkbox"/> 8:22-26 <input type="checkbox"/> 9:2-8 <input type="checkbox"/> 9:33-37 <input type="checkbox"/> 10:17-22 <input type="checkbox"/> 10:46-52 <input type="checkbox"/> 11:15-19 <input type="checkbox"/> 12:41-44 <input type="checkbox"/> 13:32-37 <input type="checkbox"/> 14:3-9 <input type="checkbox"/> 14:43-50 <input type="checkbox"/> 15:33-39 <input type="checkbox"/> 16:1-8 <p>1 Corinthians</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1:4-9 <input type="checkbox"/> 13:1-13 <input type="checkbox"/> 15:35-41 <input type="checkbox"/> 15:50-56 	<p>Luke</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1:39-45 <input type="checkbox"/> 2:25-32 <input type="checkbox"/> 4:40-44 <input type="checkbox"/> 5:27-32 <input type="checkbox"/> 10:38-42 <input type="checkbox"/> 11:9-13 <input type="checkbox"/> 11:33-36 <input type="checkbox"/> 12:13-21 <input type="checkbox"/> 13:22-32 <input type="checkbox"/> 13:32-34 <input type="checkbox"/> 15:1-7 <input type="checkbox"/> 17:11-19 <input type="checkbox"/> 19:41-44 <input type="checkbox"/> 22:14-23 <input type="checkbox"/> 22:39-46 <input type="checkbox"/> 24:36-49 <p>2 Corinthians</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 4:7-11 <input type="checkbox"/> 5:1-5 <input type="checkbox"/> 5:11-15 <p>Ephesians</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1:17-23 <input type="checkbox"/> 2:11-22 <input type="checkbox"/> 3:14-21 	<p>John</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1:1-9 <input type="checkbox"/> 1:10-18 <input type="checkbox"/> 1:35-42 <input type="checkbox"/> 6:16-21 <input type="checkbox"/> 6:35-40 <input type="checkbox"/> 7:37-39 <input type="checkbox"/> 10:1-5 <input type="checkbox"/> 10:11-18 <input type="checkbox"/> 12:1-8 <input type="checkbox"/> 12:20-26 <input type="checkbox"/> 13:1-11 <input type="checkbox"/> 13:31-35 <input type="checkbox"/> 14:1-7 <input type="checkbox"/> 14:8-14 <input type="checkbox"/> 14:15-21 <input type="checkbox"/> 14:25-30 <input type="checkbox"/> 15:1-11 <input type="checkbox"/> 15:12-17 <input type="checkbox"/> 16:12-14 <input type="checkbox"/> 20:11-18 <p>Philippians</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1:3-11 <input type="checkbox"/> 2:1-4 <input type="checkbox"/> 2:5-11 <input type="checkbox"/> 2:12-18
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