

EMMAUS PROGRAMME - SESSION 1

WHAT IS SPIRITUAL ACCOMPANIMENT?

A simple model of spiritual accompaniment:-

LISTEN - Explicit and implicit experience, listening for God

NOTICE WHAT MOVES - Discernment of Spirits, experience of God

STAY WITH THE MOVEMENT - Explore and notice the unnoticed

Spiritual accompaniment is: ‘Help given by one Christian to another which enables that person to pay attention to God’s personal communication to him or her, to respond to this personally communicating God, and to live out of the consequence of the relationship’
(Barry and Connolly – The Practice of Spiritual Direction. Latest edition: Harper One, June 2009).

Some Elements of Spiritual Accompaniment

- **Active Listening**
Skills; hearing about prayer **and** life; exploring and drawing out the experiences
- **Noticing feelings / thoughts ... movements** - in the speaker and the listener
- **Discernment – where is the experience of God**
Noticing movement toward God and counter-movement; self – awareness
- **Ability / Skills to stay with the experiences which seem to be of God**
Focusing; appropriate, useful questions / interventions
Simple, single, clear interventions
- **Helping people to pray**
What is right for them, now; Where God is already meeting them
Different methods of prayer & reflection; Experiment and reflect
Examen – Finding God in all things

- **Accompanying someone making a decision**
Understanding of processes; attitude of the one accompanying;
Useful focus and exercises
- **Avoiding**
Problem solving; Giving Advice; “Counselling”;
Focussing on counter-movement
- **Reflecting on your own experience and life as the listener**
What is moving in you as you listen?
What is happening in your own prayer and life?
Is there anything in life that affects your listening?
Where you are with God at the moment?
Discernment in your own experience
Ongoing formation, reading, retreats, Spiritual Direction
- **Supervision**
Support; accountability; consultation; to grow as one who accompanies
- **Boundaries**
Confidentiality; ethics and good practice; dual relationships;
Clarity of relationship - ‘contracting’
- **Referring people**
Knowing when; how to approach it; knowing resources available in your context



Implicit experience - God is present, not known or attended to

Remembered experience - God is known, conscious attention to presence

Living Experience - God is known and responded to

People come to spiritual conversations with a wealth of experience of God but it is likely that the experiences are implicit, not attended to. God may be known, but at this time it is not personal. Communication with God is one-way – God communicates with them.

They can be helped to look back over their experience and notice which memories are more significant, which carry more spiritual weight ... tell them something of who God is for them, and how God is in their lives. With patience, a remembered experience may come alive for a person – there is a recognition that this is God and a desire to respond.

A listener can help someone make an implicit experience explicit by use of active listening skills, drawing out an experience, looking at it from different angles. By avoiding problem-solving and giving advice, the listener helps the speaker to discover God in their own experience.

