

Monthly Triad Rhythm: Confession & Group Spiritual Direction

Most of us are far more comfortable sharing the joy, difficulty, pain, and sin of our inner world with 2 or 3 other people than we would be with a larger group. The goal of Triads is to provide space for formation in an intimate, smaller setting. Two spiritual disciplines that are best suited for smaller groups like a Triad are Confession and Group Spiritual Direction.

Confession is a form of prayer marked by acknowledging the wrongdoing and sin in our thoughts, actions, and intentions, with the intent to turn away from those thoughts, actions, and intentions. Confession of sin is primarily *upward* (toward God) in orientation, but is solidified in experience when expressed horizontally (with other followers of Jesus).

Group spiritual direction is a mutual commitment to listen for God's voice and watches for God's movement in someone's life. Different from coaching, mentorship, or an accountability group, a spiritual direction group seeks to tend 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.

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

In confession:

- Practice invitation, not pushing. Avoid placing pressure on someone to confess sin or asking prying questions to draw out details they did not share.
- Value intimacy, not exposure. **Whatever is said in a Bridgetown Triad is confidential**, with the exception of threat of harm to oneself or others.
- Practice brevity, not rambling. More often than not, a simple confession is best and most helpful.
- Value listening over speaking. With rare exception, when someone is confessing sin, the hearers should be silent
- Provide absolution, not advice. Absolution can look like reading a passage about God's forgiveness, praying for them and as you do praying God's forgiveness over them, or simply looking them in the eye and telling them how much God loves them and how he is full of forgiveness towards them.

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 together 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 Bridgetown Triad is confidential**, with the exception of threat of harm oneself or others.

Good Questions

As we grow in asking good questions—questions which are open-ended and not leading, questions which flow in conversation, and questions that are for discovery and not exposure—it can be helpful to have a list to draw from. What follows is a list of some helpful 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? What is yours 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 own life who acts (or has acted) the way you perceive God to be acting in your life right now?
- 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?

During your monthly time in Confession and Spiritual Direction, we recommend the following steps:

1. Spend some time catching-up (5-10 minutes)

2. Confession (20 minutes)

- Prompt: What are one or two ways that you've failed to love God or others this week/month?
- Person A shares, Person B & C Listen. (Most often, this can be 2-5 minutes).
"This week I didn't love _____ well when I..."
- Person B & C pray for person A and/or proclaim God's forgiveness over that person. Examples:
 - "_____, this sin is not who you are. You are loved by God and by us, and may you experience his love as you partner with God's Spirit to become who you truly are in Jesus."
 - Praying saying, "Father, thank you for your kindness and forgiveness over _____."
 - "Thank you for sharing with us. Because of what Jesus has done, you are forgiven."

3. Group Spiritual Direction (1 hour)

- Silence (2 minutes)
- Someone shares (10-15 minutes)
 - Note: If the person sharing doesn't fill the time, that's ok. Practice silence so the person can go slowly and not feel rushed.
- Silence (2 minutes)
- Ask questions (10-15 minutes)
 - Those who didn't share now ask questions that help the sharer dive deeper. Don't skip if you run out of questions; silence is ok.
- Silence (2 minutes)
- Debrief & Reflect (5 minutes)
 - Spend some time reflecting on the process. Start with the sharer then each other person. Some optional prompts might be: What was helpful/unhelpful? What was difficult? How could we grow in this?
- Pray & Continue (5 minutes)
 - Spend a few minutes praying for the person who shared
 - If there's time, move onto the next person and begin the process again at step 2