

## Introduction

We all go through bleak periods. In terms of spiritual direction, it is helpful if we can begin to discern what is going on for the directee when this happens. Are they drifting away from Godde? losing their faith? Is Godde taking them into the wilderness, to strip them of illusions and/or perhaps to speak tenderly to them (Hosea 2:14)? Is this some kind of "dark night of the soul"? and what exactly does that mean, anyway? Are they depressed? And how can we help a directee through times when Godde seems to be playing hide and seek, or simply to have disappeared? These questions are the focus of what follows.

## Checklist for Spiritual Directors:

### Dark Night

1. Is there a loss of familiar landmarks on the spiritual journey?  
there may be anxiety (in prayer) related to this
2. Is there a loss of Godde images? or a sense that Godde is present without any mental image or representation?
3. Is there a sense of the absence of Godde? perhaps combined with a feeling of vulnerability or spiritual nakedness?
4. Is there a sense of becoming more dependent upon Godde? of learning to trust Godde, whatever the directee's thoughts and feelings?
5. Is there a sense of the directee being stripped of illusions about herself?
6. Is there a deepening awareness of and intimacy with Godde?
7. Where is the real focus of the directee's life? are they still wanting to serve Godde?
8. Biblical passages to reflect on: Psalm 88, Song of Songs, Jesus in the garden of Gethsemene (Matthew 26:36-46, Mark 14:32-42, Luke 22:39-46), the death of Jesus (Matthew 27:45-46).

### Depression

1. Is this person depressed? Checklist of symptoms can be found at [www.cet.org/piuds.htm](http://www.cet.org/piuds.htm)
2. What is it that this person is de-pressing?
3. Is there a sense of movement towards Godde? or are they self-absorbed? Are they still on the right path, despite everything? or have they given up or lost their way?
4. What are your feelings as director as you work with them?  
Frustration, annoyance or resentment may indicate depression.  
Grace and consolation are more likely a sign of the dark night.
5. Is there any sense of the presence of evil? (this is rare).  
Is directee open about what is going on? willing to have it looked at from any perspective? - how is prayerful awareness affected as you discuss with the directee? Does it lead you into a deeper sense of God's presence

and grace or does it lead you into coldness, alienation, antagonism, or selfishness ?

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