

The Discerning Stance



**In Spiritual
Direction**

**Nick Helm
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The Discerning stance

Discerning stance - at the heart of

- spiritual direction
- formation of spiritual directors
- living faith

Being discerning - a loving
response to the call of love



The Discerning stance

Being discerning asks...

- How do I know this call (of love)?
- How do I identify its direction?
- How do I distinguish between this call and other calls?
- How do I gain freedom from those calls that are not the call of love, those that hinder my response to love?
- What help from God is needed?
- How do I choose and act in freedom, moving towards the call of love?



The Discerning stance

These questions create a **tension**

- I **know** this call of love
- How do I know this is true/real?

Tension - two pulls in different directions

- My prayer life is hopeless.
- Sense of failure & desire to pray

Tensions are frequently the way into discerning.



The Discerning stance

Activity

Think of something unresolved in you / your life (that you are willing to share with others)


How does this feel?

What pulls do you notice?

(What is the longing here? What is the fear/dis-ease?)

Can you recognise the direction / focus of the pull?

In pairs - share what emerged for you.



Four Dimensions in Discernment

Desire for God – and for God to be the centre (Love the Lord your God...).
Revealed in our longings and frustrations.

Recognition of the tension in the particular (ie the mixture of motives)

Need for freedom (Gal 5) from 'attachments', compulsions, fears (that which draws us away from God) so as to be better able respond to God's invitation/call.

Choosing the way to greater life, freedom, service – moving with the Spirit (Gal 5), seeking God / Spirit's help.



The Discerning stance

Being discerning is

- Listening to the desires within (the call is found there)
- Not about getting it right or perfect (that's me centred)
- About finding the better way (that is me shaped)
- About finding greater freedom to be who God created us to be and continually calls us to become
- About collaborating with God's Spirit in building the Kingdom



The Discerning stance

Discernment is not put on when we have a particular role or task...

It **is within us**...

But may not always be drawn upon

Sometimes...

- Used without realising
- Other ways may be used - rules (of heart or head), best guesses, random
- Abandoned out of weariness, laziness, despair...

Often it is costly...

- Take up your cross...



The Discerning stance

**Discernment is a fruit of
encountering/experiencing the love
of God**

Giving us

- A longing we can be in touch with
- A frustration when we are not
- A call to freedom from restraint/
constraint
- A call to choose and act - to
orientate, re-orientate, step
towards the divine lover.



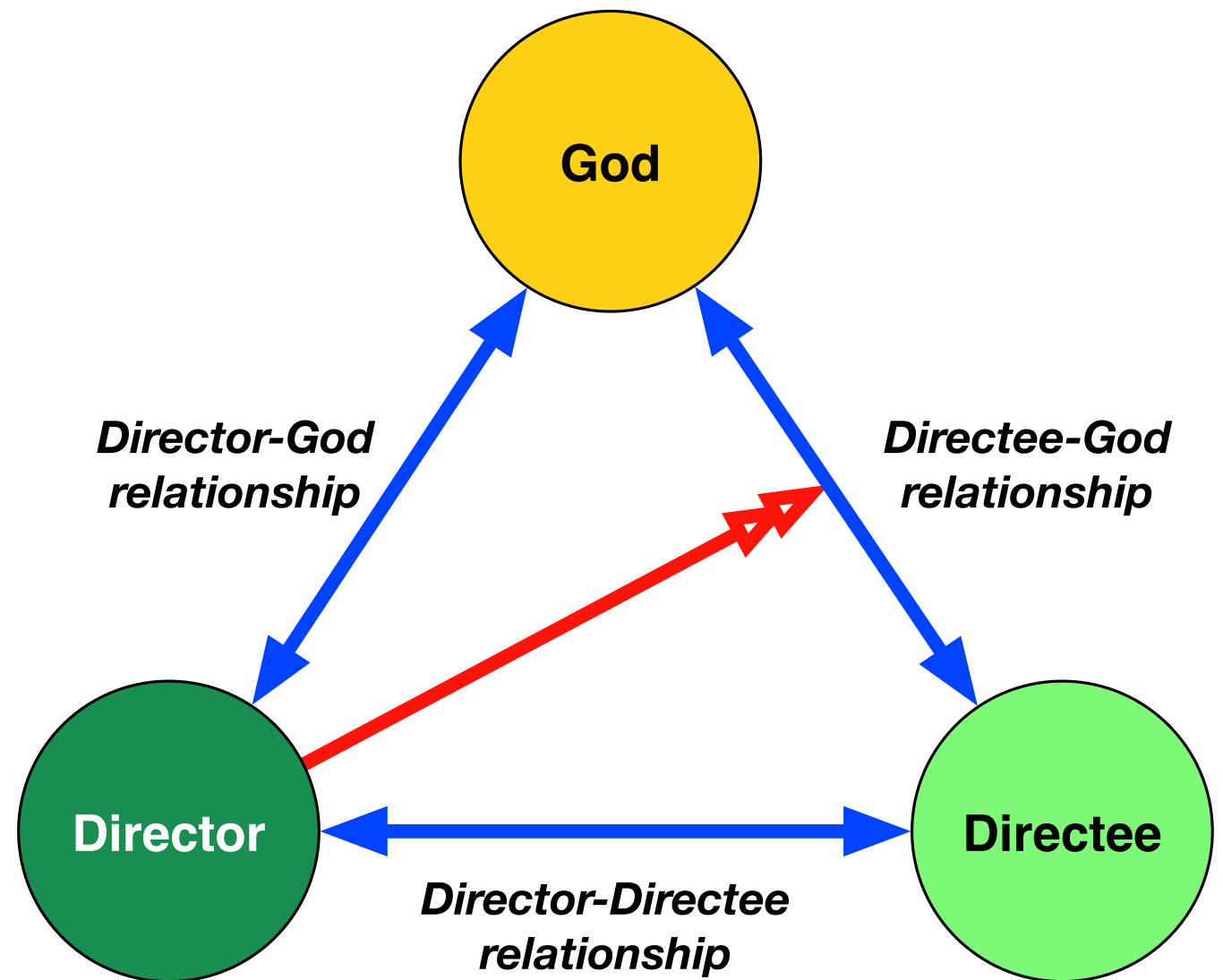
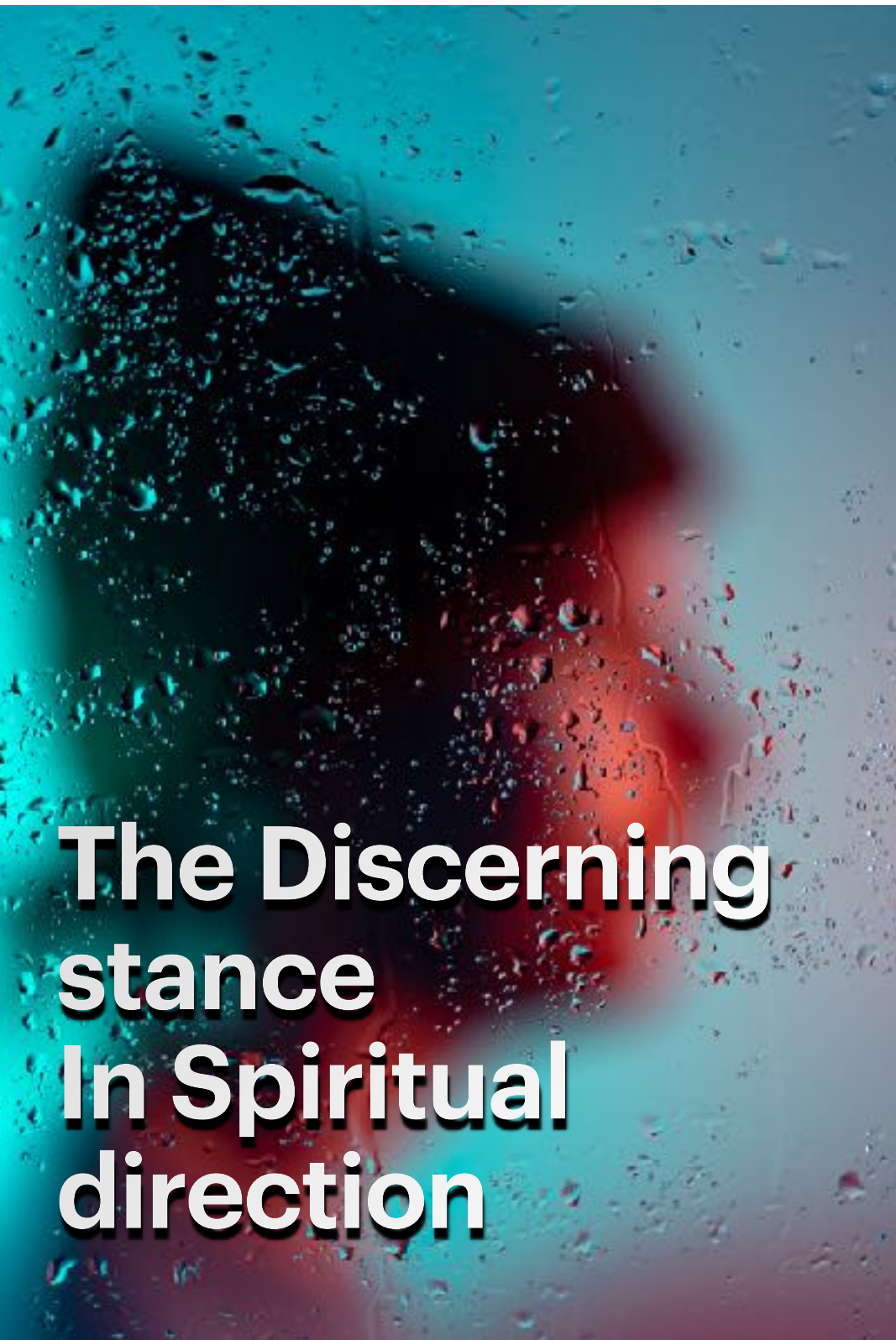
The Discerning stance

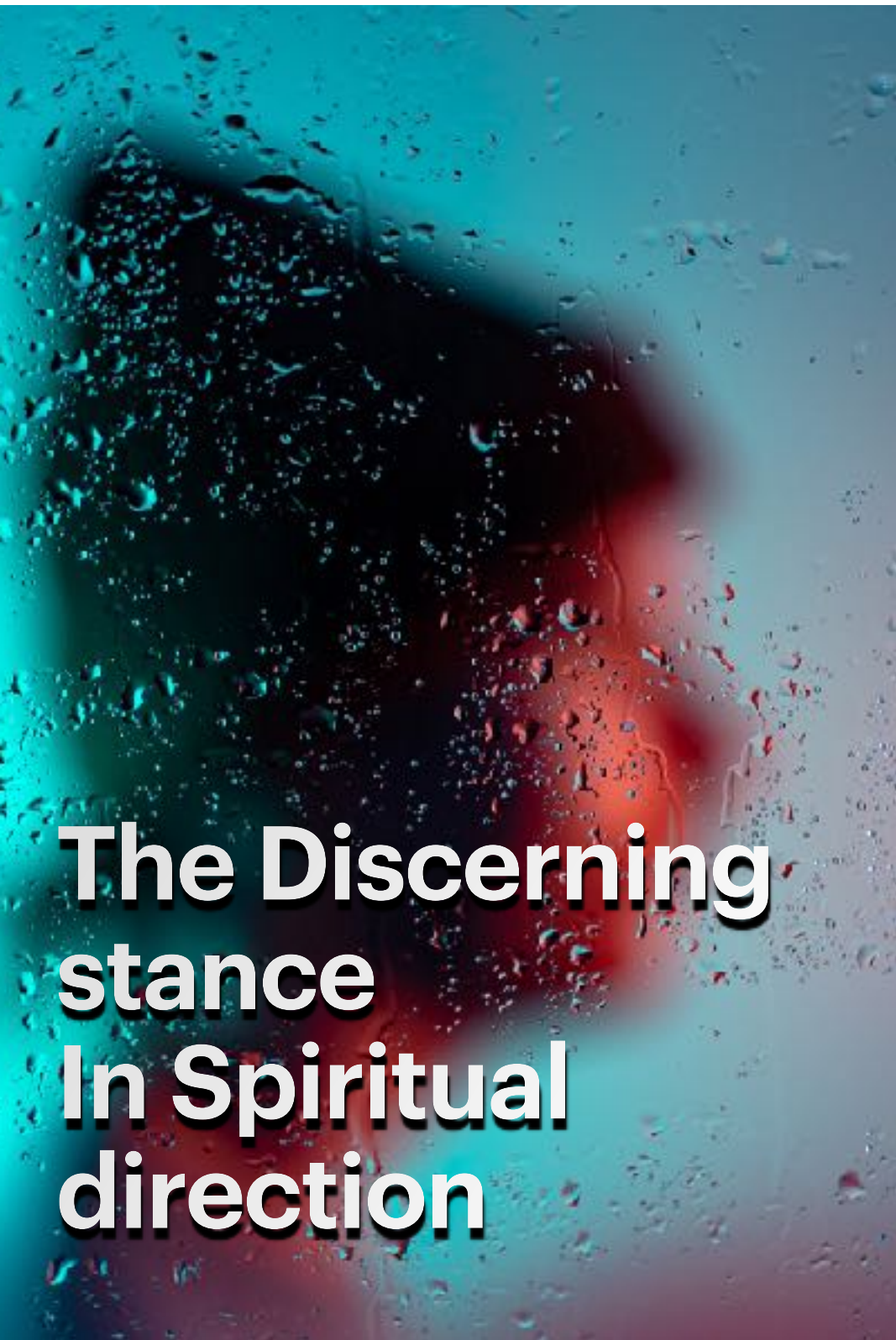
When implicit discerning becomes more explicit

We become

- more able to recognise and name the mix of desires operating
- more able to choose which to respond to and act
- more instinctive, more habitual - so at times we do it without thinking
- we know the feel of orientation and disorientation - and naturally choose/ move towards life/love

It becomes a stance towards all life





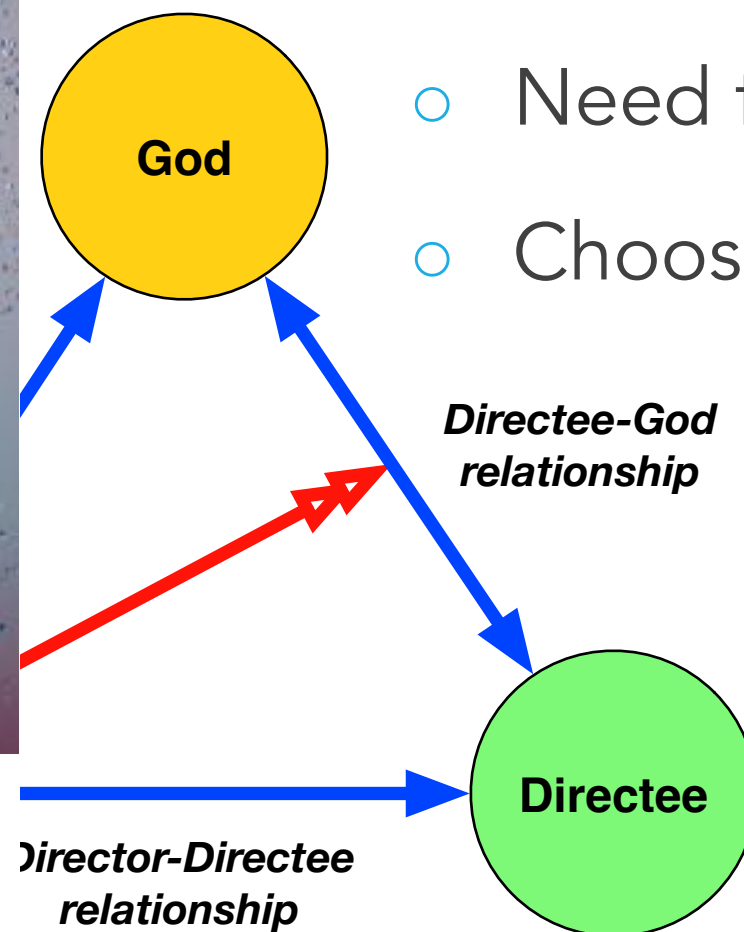
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We are holding a space for the
directee...

...to be discerning

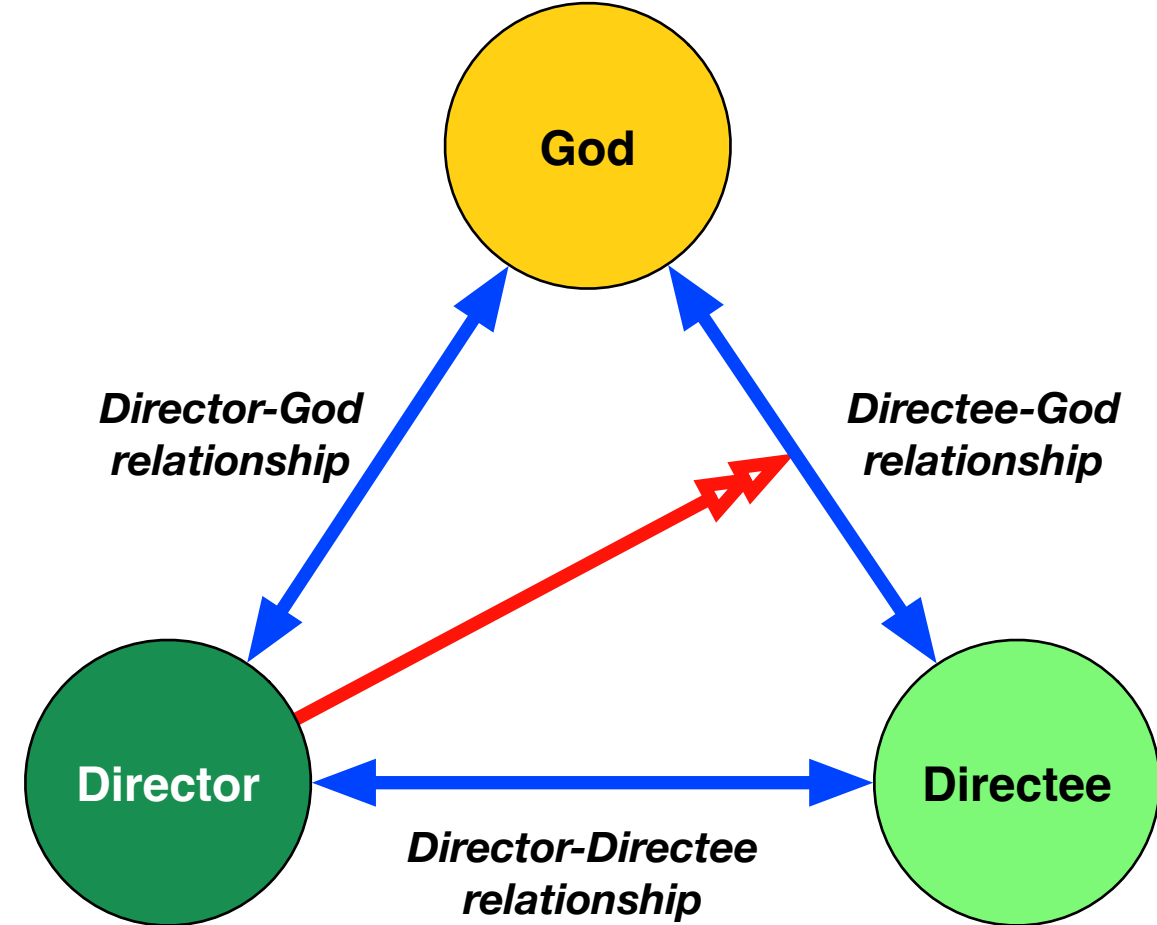
To explore the four dimensions:

- Longing for God
- Tensions
- Need for freedom / help
- Choosing and acting





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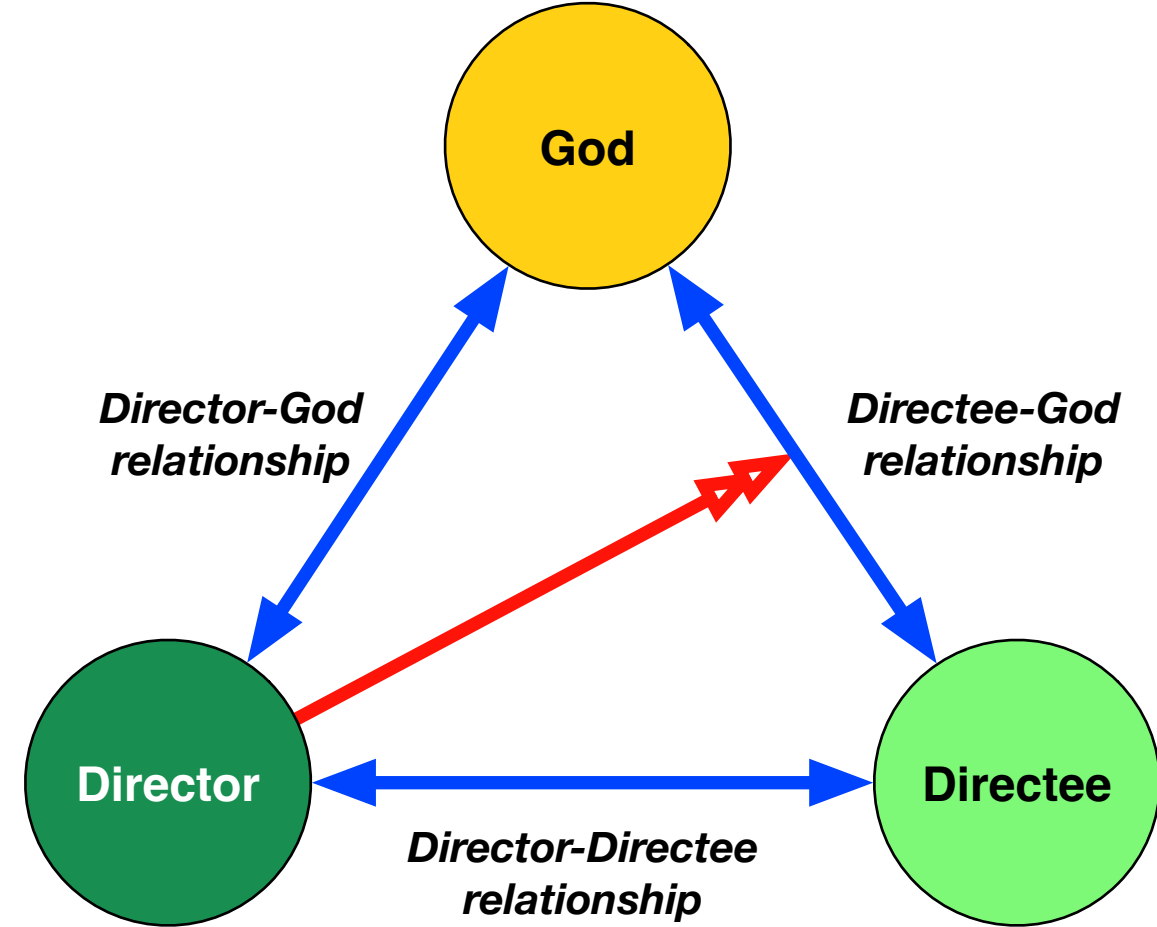


We need to be discerning

- In our holding of that space
 - In what we respond to / don't respond
 - In how we respond
 - In our focus
- In our holding of our relationships



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Noticing the four dimensions in ourselves:

- Our *longing* for God in our role
- The *tensions* experienced in the moment
- Our need to *act in freedom*
- *Choosing* and acting



The Discerning stance

Reflect on how you found yourself responding to 'the discerning stance'

Notice

- what captured your imagination
- anything you found yourself longing for
- what you found affirming
- what you found yourself saying 'yes' to
- what you found challenging
- what you found yourself going 'but...' to



Share

Bring back:

Comments, questions,
clarifications...



Lord, my God, when your love spilled over into
creation

You thought of me.

I am from love of love for love

Let my heart, O God,

always recognise, cherish and enjoy your
goodness in all of creation.

Direct all that is me towards your praise.

Teach me reverence for every person, all
things.

Energise me in your service.

Lord God,

may nothing ever distract me from your
love...

neither health nor sickness

wealth nor poverty

honour nor dishonour

long life nor short life.

May I never seek nor choose to be other than You
intend or wish.

Amen.