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Tyndale University

A Didactic Approach to Spiritual Formation:
Integrating Spiritual Practices to the Seminary Curriculum of the
Diaspora of Chinese Students in Panama, Central America

A Research Portfolio
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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by
Jacqueline Siu Yin Lam

Toronto, Canada

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ABSTRACT

An awareness of God's presence and a capacity to hear Him are two important elements to cultivate an intimate relationship with God for spiritual growth. This research portfolio seeks to answer the question: Will prayer encounters with God through the practice of praying with the Scriptures facilitate the participants' capacities to hear God and increase an awareness of His presence? The context for the research portfolio is seminary students and a small group of participants from the Iglesia Evangelica China De Panama from the Chinese diaspora in Panama, Central America.

This portfolio offers my spiritual autobiography (Chapter II), which traces the influences of three different Christian spiritual traditions (Foster 1998) and my professional training in various fields that have helped me hear God and experience God's presence in my daily life. A four-year academic model and curriculum (Chapter III) is created from the experience of my spiritual formation and implemented for the Alliance Bible School of Central and South America. Finally, a field research project (Chapter IV) is offered to examine the effectiveness of *Lectio Divina* to facilitate prayer encounters in a small group of students from the Iglesia Evangelica China De Panama. The results show positive responses by the participants in their ability to hear God and experience his presence. However, practicing quietness remains a challenge for some Chinese Christians for their spiritual growth in Panamian context.

DEDICATION

To my Heavenly Father,
who called me to be his beloved daughter.

To my Lord Jesus,
who settled my true identity at the Cross.

To the Holy Spirit,
who lovingly and patiently prays for me and walks with me along the journey.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

In *the Horse and His Boy*, the third of C.S. Lewis' (1982) seven children's stories about Narnia, the great lion Aslan accompanied Shasta on his night journey without being visible at first (Lewis 1982, 172). This felt presence comforted Shasta and accompanied him to arrive safely at Narnia. Later, Shasta discovered that Aslan had walked between him and the edge of the cliff to keep him safe on his journey (Lewis 1982, 196). This analogy of Shasta and Aslan mirrors my life experience. I had an image of taking a journey with a powerful yet invisible Companion who guided my every step through the ups and downs. This felt presence of God, and the conversations I had with Him, have guided, comforted, and protected me on my spiritual journey. My heart is full of gratitude to the Lord, my Maker, who has accompanied me all the way, even during my loneliest and darkest moments. In my forty-plus years of experience, this felt presence of God has involved not only my cognition but also my emotions and bodily senses. This theme of the felt presence of God appears in every chapter in this portfolio.

I have been aware of God's presence in my life through three ways: the Word of God, life's circumstances, and prayer. 1). *The Word of God*. After becoming a Christian, I began to love reading the Bible whenever I had the time. I

have read the Bible from cover to cover many times and have participated in an eight-month discipleship program. As a result, I am filled with a lot of head knowledge about God. There is a pattern of communication with God in my daily devotions that often happens when I am thinking, planning, or worrying about something. For example, a timely message might be given from the Bible reading in my next morning's devotions, and it is as if God has spoken to me face to face. There are times when I can hardly wait for the morning to come so that I can hear God's message; this eagerness has motivated me to keep my daily morning devotions. I am usually a heady person with an analytical mind, but these messages I have received are not a cognitive, analytical understanding of the passage, but an intuitive knowledge that God has spoken to me. It is a gut feeling when I instinctively know without a doubt that it is a message from God. These timely messages are proof of God's closeness and tender care for me. In the first twenty years of my spiritual journey, this has been the dominant channel for me to be able to feel God's presence, and it has caused the following two channels to come into play.

(2). *The circumstances of life.* Whenever I have to make major decisions in life, I have discovered that God usually closes all the doors except the right ones. This recurring process of the doors closing and opening has taught me to wait. Gradually, I have learned to trust and to wait patiently. The length of these waiting periods has progressively increased along this spiritual journey. I have begun to feel an intimate presence of God in this liminal space. Apart from the recurring theme of the door closing and opening, there have been times when

things have gone smoothly, and assistance was unexpectedly provided by some people. It has helped me to see God in the small details, beyond my imagination, and has sharpened my awareness of God's presence.

(3). *Prayer encounters with God.* At the beginning of my Christian walk, God made his presence known to me by granting my requests through concrete actions, such as helping me to find a lost object, providing material goods, giving immediate provisions to meet my financial needs, giving me ideas about how to do my architectural design, and offering many other visible replies. Occasionally, I began to hear his responses by receiving a Bible verse in my mind. This way of hearing God's voice has continued for many years. In all three of these ways, the word of God and my life circumstances have always come together in answer to my prayers.

However, I did not become aware of my deep emotions until I practiced praying with the Scriptures using imagination under the direction of a spiritual director. This method of prayer was different from the Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication (ACTS) prayer method that my Evangelical church had taught me. My spiritual director, Ms. R, introduced me to the practice *Lectio Divina*, which was a slow, meditative reading. When a word, a phrase, or a thought resonated deeply, I began to savor the word and allowed the fullness of it to penetrate my being. Through this method, I began to connect with my emotions and became more and more open to the influence of God's Spirit in my life.

There was another kind of prayer method, called gospel contemplation, that helped me to connect with my emotions greatly. My spiritual director told me

that if the chosen passage of Scripture was a narrative, I should pray with the story as if I was there. This method of praying with the Scriptures involved imagination. I recall that my first experience praying with my imagination was when I was assigned to pray on the Annunciation (Luke 2:26-38). I was thrilled to have a decent three-point sermon rise up out of my prayer. However, my spiritual director was not satisfied with my prayer outcome. She politely praised my cognitive effort, insisting I pay attention to my emotional responses as if I were a maid to Mary during the annunciation event. I found it difficult at first because I had never used imagination in my prayers. My spiritual director assured me that it was not a fantasy I had fabricated with whimsical thoughts, but that it was guided by the Holy Spirit. She told me that if I was worried about being misguided by the devil and my own thoughts, I should pray for protection. When I let go of fear, I connected with the text in a new way. I watched the event, listened to the conversation between the angel and Mary, and felt her fear, confusion, amazement, and trust. When the angel left, I persuaded Mary to reconsider the situation. She was betrothed to Joseph but had conceived a child which was not from him. I asked her: “What will Joseph think when he finds out? You will be stoned to death. What will your parents, relatives, and neighbors say?”

Mary heard all my reasoning, but she was calm and said, “God will take care of all the worries.” I admired her total surrender and her serenity. In the end, I had a conversation with Christ as I poured out my heart and my concern to the Lord. I had a glimpse of my fear and realized that I was afraid of being misunderstood due to the existence of a childhood wound of rejection (see

Chapter II) which I tended to suppress. Veltri, a Jesuit and an experienced spiritual director, says that “touching the imagination means penetrating beyond the intellect and linking with our memory to access data from within” (Veltri 1998, 299). Moreover, O’Brien (2011), points out that:

If reason changes our minds, the imagination changes our hearts. It helps us feel the truth, not just know it. We can know full well what we ought to do. However, touching the imagination can inspire us with a vision of God’s reality that will compel us to act (O’Brien 2011, 4).

This experience of prayer brought a paradigm shift to my spiritual formation and piqued my curiosity to engage in further study and research of how this knowledge could impact those I minister to in my role as a spiritual director, teacher, and pastor.

From then on, Scripture did not stay at my cognitive level only but touched my emotional level deeply too, and it began the process of healing my old inner wounds. It helped me to build up an intimate relationship with God and enabled me to be attentive to God’s presence in my daily life. From then on, I began to have dialogues with God. His answers to my prayers were no longer limited to biblical verses; they became conversations. These conversations occurred both during and outside of my devotions and times of prayer. The funny part is that this communication has always begun with God calling out my name first in order to draw my attention. Gradually, I have been drawn to the silence and have become more contemplation. I have begun to practice the centering prayer every day for twenty minutes. The experience of these spiritual paths will be described more in my spiritual autobiography.

The Importance of Emotional Awareness to Christian Spiritual Formation

Knowledge of the Bible is necessary for Christians to grow. However, if we focus on developing our thinking faculty only, we will be imbalanced in Christian education. Smith (2003) says that “human beings are thinking, feeling and acting being” (Smith 2003, 57). He points out that “Descartes’s statement ‘I think, therefore I am’ is a distorted, one-dimensional view of the human person” (2003, 57). Thomas Gibbs, the founding pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in San Antonio, introduced the spiritual formation program to the congregants, saying that “One of the great temptations of modern Christians is to view ourselves as thinking beings only. There is something appealing about believing that if we can just get our thinking straight, our hearts and lives will follow” (Gibbs 2018). Gibbs’s depiction described my early Christian education. The past paradigm of adult theological education in which I was raised focused on thinking and ministry skills. I was taught that if we had right-thinking (correct doctrines), then the right feelings and right behaviours would follow. In contrast, Kirwin (1996), a licensed psychologist and an ordained minister, says that the emotional component is stronger than the cognitive: “How we feel about ourselves is the driving force behind many of our thoughts and actions in unhealthy ways” (Kirwin 1996, 105). In my twenty years of Christian counselling and spiritual direction, I have witnessed deep emotional wounds that cause distorted thinking and dysfunctional behaviours in many Christians. Therefore, I believe that right thinking alone does not necessarily lead to the right behaviours if we do not address the emotional dimension. Thus, there is the need for exploration of the

emotional dimension in spiritual formation. Smith explains that “we have to attend to some spiritual practices that enable us to integrate mind and heart” (Smith 2003, 71).

Jesus’ Great Commandment in Matthew 22:35–40 and Mark 12:28–34 indicates the foundation of spiritual formation. These two commandments are paraphrases taken from Deuteronomy 6:5, “And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.” The meanings of these three nouns in Hebrew text are explained below (Strong’s Concordance 2009).

- Heart (lebab #3824): inner being, mind, will, heart.
- Soul (nephesh #5315): living being, life, self, person, desire, passion, appetite, emotion.
- Strength (meod#3966): muchness, force, abundance.

In Mark 12:30, Jesus says, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” The meanings of the Greek words are as follows (Strong’s Concordance 2009).

- Heart (kardia #2588): the heart, mind, character, inner self, will, intention, center
- Soul (psyche #5590): breath of life, the human soul, the soul as the seat of affections and will, the self, a human person.
- Mind (dianoia #1271): understanding, intellect, insight, mind
- Strength (ischui #2479): strength, power, force, ability

From both the Old Testament and the New Testament, we see that emotions and affections are involved in a relationship with God. Kirwan (1996) says that “If emotions or feelings are a key part of one’s being to have a relationship with God, they are of vital importance in the life of the Christian” (Kirwan 1996, 51). Yet, the place of emotions has been sometimes misunderstood by some evangelical

Christian communities. Smith (2003) points out that some evangelical Christians judged emotions as “unreliable, secondary and untrustworthy, or even worse – deceiving” (Smith 2003, 57). Smith emphasises that “we must recognize the important place of affect in human experience generally and in Christian spirituality specifically” (Smith 2003, 60). Hagberg & Guelich (2005) explain the experience of the different stages in my spiritual journey and the importance of emotions, particularly the feelings of pain in one’s spiritual growth (Hagberg and Guelich 2005, 92-100). I will discuss this further in my spiritual autobiography.

The Holistic-Body, Mind and Spirit focus within Spiritual Formation

Simon Lee (1998), an ordained pastor, a professor, and a pastoral counsellor, explains that the spiritual disciplines practiced in evangelical churches such as Bible studies, hymn singing, prayers and intercessions, tithing, and all kinds of community services are all very good (Lee 1998, 241). However, Lee warns that if Bible studies only focus on gaining head knowledge about God and neglect the emotional side required to have an intimate relationship with God, then the spiritual life will become very dry. If it goes to the extreme, then there will be a danger of falling into rationalism (Lee 1998, 155-158). Smith (2003) emphasises that “true learning necessarily involves the interplay of intellect and emotion, and must not polarize the intellect and emotions” (Smith 2003, 56 & 117).

Therefore, we have to understand and include our whole selves: mind, emotions, and actions. If churches acknowledge the power of feelings, then emotion and imagination are tools that can help people receive God’s love and

facilitate emotional development and spiritual growth. It is time to consider providing more support for Christians to understand and use their feelings. For example, courses on personality traits like Myers Briggs, Enneagram, family of origin, emotional development, and EQ workshops would help to increase the self-knowledge of church members and make them aware of their emotional responses and feelings.

On the other hand, providing courses and regular workshops to members on how to practice ancient spiritual practices, such as silence and solitude, *Lectio Divina*, and gospel contemplation will help people connect with God's word not only for cognitive information but also for emotional and relational formation. These practices will allow the participants to cultivate their emotional awareness and give them the capacity to listen to God and their own emotions. Smith says that "we respond to truth with heart and mind" (Smith 2003, 22). Thus, heart and mind should not be separate from one another. Edwards (1996) points out that "distinction must be made between the mere notional understanding of a speculative mind, and the sense of the heart where the mind is not speculative but experiences and feels" (Edwards 1996, 108). It is the experiential knowledge that I aim to incorporate in my spiritual formation model.

I began to teach a course on spiritual formation, including exploring the emotional dimension, to facilitate experiential knowledge at the Christian Counselling Center I have served at since 2008. Gradually, different Chinese churches in Toronto have invited me to teach the course in their Sunday School. The experience of teaching Christians of different age groups and backgrounds

has inspired me to do my field research with a variety of participants in a Sunday School setting.

Summary of the Portfolio

The Lord has equipped me with diverse forms of professional training (such as education, theology, architecture, psychotherapy, and spiritual direction) to enable me to answer his vocational call in various fields. The five chapters are connected with a theme of God's presence. The spiritual autobiography (Chapter II) traces my personal experience of spiritual formation in the past forty years has been an invisible journey from my head, down to my heart, embracing my sensations through Bible study, biblical meditations, and imaginations. It has further become enriched by my professional training in sensorimotor psychotherapy (Chapter II). The rich experience of seeing God's presence in my life and hearing Him involves a cognitive and experiential knowledge of Him. I firmly believe that integrating the head, heart, and body requires experiential knowledge to enrich a holistic spiritual life. It highlights a transition I made from helping a God I serve to loving a God I have grown to know.

When I taught a course on "family of origin" in two churches in Panama three years ago, I received enthusiastic responses from the participants. Their responses inspired me to include the psychological dimension in the later development of my spiritual formation curriculum model. From my personal spiritual experiences, and through companionship with my counselees, directees, and students, I developed a multi-dimensional spiritual formation curriculum model to integrate thinking, feelings, and actions to help students grow at the

Bible school. The details are described in Chapter III, which integrates the dimensions of the head, heart, and hands by cultivating the awareness of God's presence in their daily life.

Since our students mainly come from Chinese churches in Latin America, I wanted to test out if there were ways to heighten the church congregants' awareness of God's presence in their lives to build up intimate relationships with Him. This was done with the hope that more Christians would grow spiritually and respond to seminary education. Therefore, I carried out a field research project that implemented a small portion of Module three from the curriculum in the context of a local church (Chapter IV). It was offered as a way of testing the effectiveness of *Lectio Divina* to facilitate prayer encounters through hearing God and experiencing God's presence in the Panamian context.

Finally, the conclusion (Chapter V) summarizes my journey in the doctoral program and shows how it has helped me reflect on the relationship between Christian education and spiritual formation and between getting theological knowledge and character formation. It shows how important it is to include cognitive, emotional, and somatic dimensions in the spiritual formation model in order to cultivate a spirit-filled prayer life. It enables sensitivity to the voice of the Holy Spirit and leads to the personal healing of deep wounds and bearing fruitful ministry to the community.

CHAPTER II:

SPIRITUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

I love Psalm 23, and I meditate on it many times. I feel that the psalm reflected my life story. I have been walking along a journey with God leading me, surrounding me, and protecting me. This chapter describes my life journey with this divine companion and how His presence has strengthened me to experience the ups and downs in my life.

I have been in the habit of writing diaries since primary school. I have also developed the habit of jotting down my life history in a timeline with notes of significant events that happened each year since my family immigrated to Canada in 1995. I have also learned to pray my blessed history in the eight-day directed retreats at Loyola House, Guelph, Ontario. However, writing my spiritual autobiography has given me a fuller sense of God's movements in my life since birth.

Family Background and Growing Up Years

I was born into a non-Christian family in Hong Kong in November 1951. My parents doted on me because I was born when they were already advanced in years. I had a brother who was 13 years older than me, but he went to live with our aunt when I was three years old. I was therefore raised like an only child. I have fond memories of my parents, as well as happy memories of my primary school life. My father owned a small farm in the new territories for a few years during my pre-primary school years, where he raised hens and pigs. He lived

there alone, while my mother and I remained in Kowloon. I went to stay with him in the summer months and played almost all day every day. There was a small creek in front of his house, and my favorite game was soaking in its waters every day. I became so tanned all over that when I went home people called me “an Indian.” Another precious memory of my early childhood was my father carrying me to the village restaurant on his shoulders one day when my mother came to visit us. I remember the happiness swelling in my heart as I laughed and chatted with my parents along the country path. The restaurant was tiny, even to my young eyes, so we sat outside. This did not douse my high spirits, because my parents allowed me to eat all the delicacies I liked. It was one of the happiest days in my early memory. Two years later, my father sold his farm and moved back to the city to live with us. That was also when I began my school life.

I attended three primary schools. The first one was a small school run by Chinese communist idealists because my big brother was and still is pro-communism. I do not have much memory of this school, since I attended it for only a year, but I remember that the teachers were all young, enthusiastic, and loving, but practiced extremely strict class discipline. We needed to sit up straight with our arms folded behind our backs. I cannot remember why I did not remain at that school, but after a year my parents sent me to another one, which I attended for two years. It was also tiny, with fewer than 100 children, but I had a good time there. It was there that my art and craftwork was recognized and praised. That was one of the things I loved to do when I was small (and still do). I did not have any formal art education. The only art and craft lessons I had in primary school taught

us how to color in a drawing according to model pages and cut patterns out of cardboard to make three-dimensional models by gluing the parts together. There were various patterns: a vase, a house, an animal, a bird, et cetera. My favorite design was a variety of homes. I even saved my pocket money to buy cardboard house patterns that I could work on in my leisure time. In those days, I never even dreamed that I might become an architect in my adult years.

I also liked reading storybooks. Back then, when I was in primary school, there was no school or public library. Children could borrow cartoons to read from the street bookstalls by purchasing tokens. There were also new children's magazines, storybooks, and cartoons for sale, but the prices were higher. I liked to save money to buy children's storybooks with beautiful and colorful illustrations, and I had a collection of more than 50 of them. Among them were the children's version of *Treasure Island*, *David Copperfield*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Les Misérables*, and some Chinese fairytales. My favorite was *The Wizard of Oz*. All of these children's books had double-paged color illustrations in the center. These beautiful pictures were extremely pleasing to me and evoked my passion for drawing and painting. Whenever I had a scrap of paper and a pencil, I would copy the pictures I had seen from memory.

During those two years, we were living in a dark room without a window on the ground floor of the residence. Consequently, I liked to stay outside and play in the streets during the rest of my free time, which cultivated my adventurous spirit. After school, my classmates and I explored the public playground and a hill in our vicinity. There was a big, circular, elevated aqueduct

that spanned a shallow valley. We challenged each other to walk back and forth on it. It was such fun! We went there almost every day after school. We also explored a cave with much excitement, although no one was brave enough to journey into its depths.

Life in Hong Kong during the 1950s and late 1960s was plain and simple. The people were poor but friendly and helpful. We moved to our third humble abode when I was 10 years old – perhaps my mother did not want me to grow up on the streets. She was looking for a new school for me, and an older girl who lived in the same residence as us introduced me to her evening school. This school was much more structured than my previous day schools had been. The first time I ever heard about Jesus was at this school. There was a Bible class once a week, and I liked to listen to the stories about Jesus. I went to my classmate's Sunday School with her because I loved the beautiful cards she showed me. They were her prize for her full attendance at the Sunday School the term before. I do not remember much about what I learned there. We sang some songs and heard some stories. They were the same stories about Jesus that I had learned in my Bible class at the night school, so, once I had some of the beautiful cards I wanted, I stopped going.

I was thirsty for knowledge and would read whatever was available to me. In my primary school years, herbal tea shops in the residential areas gained in popularity in Hong Kong. Until the late 1960s, they served as semi-public spaces where the public could go for entertainment. Many of them had jukeboxes, so it was common for members of the public to spend their leisure time in these shops

socializing with friends or just enjoying the music and the atmosphere. There was one near my home. It did not have a jukebox, but it had a radio and many different types of newspapers. I liked to read the newspaper that covered a variety of fields: science, history, geography, and medicine. I absorbed the information like a dry sponge. I went there almost every afternoon when I was between 10 to 11 years old to offer my free service of serving tea to the customers for my free reading of the newspaper, and I kept doing this until we moved to another area.

Childhood Wounds and Deprivation in Adolescence

The memories of my childhood were not all good. My brother suddenly developed a dislike for me when I was about six or seven years old, and I never found out why at that time. I had guessed that I must have had a character flaw that would put people off if they got to know me better. He treated me better when I was older, but our relationship has always been distant. When I was in my 30s, I had an opportunity to have counseling in Hong Kong. The focus was on self-knowledge and self-growth. It helped me to understand that my brother's rebuff had made me sensitive to rejection and had caused me to become a rejecting person to protect myself. The other major wound from my childhood was the loss of my father and our financial stability. He had been ill from when I was 11 years old and subsequently died when I was 13. I missed him terribly and my heart yearned for a father's love.

Due to my father's death, I experienced poverty in my teenage years and learned to be self-sufficient. From 13 to 18 years old, I worked in several small factories in the daytime, seven days a week, and studied at the night school six

nights a week. During those years, I lived with a single goal: to finish my high school education. There was no time to play; it was as if I was walking through a long, dark tunnel until I saw the light at the end. I changed from being a playful and creative child to an industrious and grave adolescent.

I was 18 years old when I graduated from high school in 1970. I taught at primary schools for six years. In the meantime, I took a part-time, two-year course for the certificate of education necessary to become a qualified teacher. When I had saved enough money for a year's study in the U.K., I decided to leave the teaching profession. I did not know how long I would be able to continue my education, but nevertheless, I went to Scotland with a sense of adventure. A new chapter opened up in my life.

My Conversion Experience and Early Spiritual Journey

When I arrived in Aberdeen, Scotland in 1976, I read for the High National Certificate, which was equivalent to the A level of The General Certificate of Education (GCE) in England. Since I could only stay for a year because my money was running out, I had not made up my mind which subject I would take at the university. I was alone in the city and did not have any friends at that time. I subsequently made friends with some girls in the dormitory. One of them was a Christian who brought me to attend her church.

Meeting God in an Unfamiliar Environment

My new Christian friend in the dormitory invited me to the Chinese Fellowship's Christmas party. After the event, when the Fellowship people came to visit my friend, they talked to me too. I began to make friends with them, but I

seldom went to their Sunday Chinese fellowship meetings. My Christian friends shared the gospel with me, but I did not have much interest in it. They persisted and maintained their friendship with me, even though I rejected their attempts to convert me. One Sunday, my friend from the dormitory invited me to go to her Scottish Baptist church. I agreed to go with her because I wanted to practice my English. I also bought the Good News Bible to help me to learn English, and I began to read it from the beginning of the Old Testament. Meanwhile, the Reverend of the Scottish church I attended preached sermons on the book of Matthew. They reminded me of the stories of Jesus I had heard in my childhood.

Despite the fact that my motivation for focusing on Christianity was to improve my English, the Lord bestowed His grace on me. When I read about the 10 plagues in Egypt in the book of Exodus, a sense of awe filled my heart. I did not know how to say a prayer to accept salvation. I just said something like: “If you are the true God, I want to accept you as my God.” No thunder or lightning happened at that moment. It was an uneventful night, despite my change of heart. The next morning, when I woke up, I greeted Jesus, “Good morning, Jesus.” I had never done such a thing before. I was so thrilled to have a heavenly Father after my earthly father had passed away. I did not tell anyone except my Christian friend in the dormitory about my conversion. I kept on going to church and reading the Bible, but I did not have much contact with other Christian friends during that first year of faith. I wanted to be sure that my belief was true. I developed the habit of talking to God all the time about things big and small

during my lonely student days, and the invisible God connected with me by answering my prayers in concrete situations.

Establishing My Roots in the Christian Faith

All applications to UK universities were made through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). In January 1977, I filled in an UCAS application to apply to five universities, filling in different subjects for each one, such as business, hotel management, and psychology. An architecture student from the Chinese Student Fellowship explained the nature and content of the course to me. Although architecture had never occurred to me, I put it in an application form. I remember telling God that I was worried that if I went back to Hong Kong, I would lose my faith, because I did not have any church connection nor Christian friends there. I asked Him to keep me in Scotland longer in order to grow more mature in my faith. As it turned out, only the architectural faculty offered me unconditional acceptance, following an interview. In the U.K., to qualify as an architect, it takes five years of study and a two-year practicum (for which students can go anywhere). So, the Lord kept me in Scotland for six years to establish my roots in Christianity. A year after my acceptance of salvation, I decided to be baptized as a sign of no return in my spiritual journey. I participated in the Chinese Student Fellowship more rigorously and began to serve on the committee to reach out to the small Chinese community in the city.

My six years in Scotland were happy, but they were not without financial hardship. I experienced the truth of God in many different ways. His grace was sufficient for me to meet my financial needs. My image of God at that stage was

Jehovah Jireh (the Lord will provide). Towards the last three months of the first year of my stay in Scotland, my savings had almost run out. One night, I was worried about it and asked God to solve this problem for me. The next morning, a girl in the dormitory gave her weekend job to me because she was busy preparing for her final year exams. The wages of the weekend job were enough for my weekly groceries. The Lord also gave me two summer jobs to earn my next year's tuition fees. In addition to the provision of money, the Lord gave me design abilities to finish my architectural education. Moreover, He gave me a family of Christian brothers and sisters to worship our heavenly Father with. I enjoyed the hospitality of local Scottish Christians. They opened their homes and hearts to welcome me as a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven. The sweet fellowship with Christians and the heavenly Father slowly began to change my character; the protective layer of emotional insulation melted gradually, and I became more friendly and trusting of people.

Pleasant and Unpleasant Surprises

The Lord also provided a life partner for me. When I was in my fourth year of architectural studies, a young man who had just finished his professional accountancy training came to work in our city and joined the Chinese Fellowship. The year before I went back to Hong Kong for my fifth-year practicum in 1981, my mother became a Catholic. I was very happy for her. Although she was illiterate, she did her best memorizing Catholic prayers such as the Hail Mary. I taught her to memorize Bible verses too. My mother tried hard and did an excellent job of it. I also led two of my nieces and a good friend to God that year.

The young man I had met had gone back to Hong Kong to work before I returned there, so we kept in touch and I began to get to know him better. I had waited for three months to find a place for my practicum, and I was getting anxious. He encouraged and supported me all along, both emotionally and spiritually. We got engaged before I went back to Aberdeen for my sixth-year of studies.

When I returned to Aberdeen, the Fellowship was different from the one I had belonged to before. Many of the brothers and sisters had finished their undergraduate courses and had gone home. I felt alone. The worst thing was that the sermons of the beloved pastor of the Baptist Church no longer inspired me even though this same pastor had nurtured my soul after I had become a Christian. This situation lasted for eight months. I examined myself and confessed every known sin and asked the Lord to reveal any hidden sins to remove the blockage. At the end of the eight months, the church held a special meeting for church members. We were informed by the board of deacons that the pastor would be dismissed because he had committed emotional adultery with a female member of the congregation for over a year. The board of deacons had counseled him for the previous eight months, but the pastor had chosen to continue with the woman and leave his wife. This information blew our minds. Some members wept. I was given the understanding that the blockage to my spiritual nurturing was due to the deliverer's sin, not mine. It taught me that one's spiritual condition was tangible and palpable, although invisible to the naked eye.

Marriage and Career

In 1983, I went back to Hong Kong for my last year of practicum. It took me two years to get an internship due to the unstable political atmosphere. I married a year later while waiting for a suitable architectural job. I did not want to have children because I had married at thirty-two years old. I needed to get a practicum and pass the professional examination, and I thought I would be too old to be a mother after that. My husband agreed to this, since he was not particularly fond of children. In the meantime, I applied to be a substitute teacher. Many people thought that I should not worry about getting a job since I was married to an accountant who could support me financially. However, I could not be a full-time housewife because it was not the best use of my gifts. Nevertheless, I was thankful for my husband's financial and emotional support during the waiting period. Eventually, in 1986, I got an architectural job and passed all the necessary examinations to become a qualified architect.

My husband came from a devout Christian family. He was (and still is) loving and patient. My in-laws are loving Christians, and they have been nice to me. However, marriage was not easy for me during the first few years, since I had lived a single life for a long time and had become extremely independent. I needed to make many adjustments. We received marriage counseling, and later I went for individual counseling for my own personal growth. Our relationship improved when my self-understanding increased, and I began to handle the unfinished business generated by my family of origin, namely, the rejection by my brother. Surprisingly, our relationship did not improve through cognitive

therapy, but rather through the daily sharing of our devotions. Because I felt the counseling was not helpful for me personally, I resisted learning counseling in my Master of Divinity program. I never imagined that I would become a marriage and family therapist later on!

My Spiritual Formation from Different Spiritual Influences

Ever since I have come into contact with Christianity, and even after becoming a Christian in 1976, I have drunk of the milk of various evangelical denominations. I have not received my spiritual nourishment from one specific denomination, but from several. When we immigrated to Canada in 1995, I studied at a seminary in Canada a year later. I was drawn to the Catholic spiritual tradition in order to deepen my prayer life. I also had an encounter with the charismatic movement later in 2000, and it gave me a new understanding of God's power. My spiritual formation in different traditions according to Foster's paradigm (Foster 1998, xvi) will be described in the following three sections.

The Evangelical Influences

I was baptized in a Baptist church and became a church member when I was in Scotland. When I returned, I attended a Baptist church until I got married. I then joined my husband's denomination, the Church of Christ in China. Ten years later, we joined the Christian and Missionary Alliance (Hong Kong) and have remained in C & MA (Canada) until today. There was no adult Sunday School or Bible study group available for me in the first six years of Christian life in Scotland. My major model of spiritual formation during those years was mainly from the Sunday pulpit and personal Bible reading.

Although I read the Bible for curiosity before my conversion, I was hungry for God's words after conversion. I kept regular one to two-hour morning devotions, and I did chapter by chapter Bible readings at bedtime. When I discovered I had a lot of waiting time in a country that had a slower pace of life. I carried a small size printed Bible with me. In my student days, I read my Bible when I waited for a bus, when I waited to be served by shopkeepers, and when I waited to pay for groceries. I have faithfully kept this habit of morning devotions each day throughout my forty years of Christian history, even during my dark period of faith. I have finished reading the Bible from cover to cover many times and have memorized some Bible verses.

I discovered a difference in reading the Bible before and after my conversion. Before my conversion, the Bible was like a storybook to me; after my conversion, when I read a passage of biblical text, a word or a passage would jump up and speak to me without involving my analytical mind. It was either an encouragement, admonishment, or a timely piece of advice. At that time, I knew nothing about *Lectio Divina*. However, I had an inner assurance of hearing God through the Scriptures. I never doubted the authenticity of my intuitive listening to God's voice until I took the Biblical Interpretation course at Tyndale Seminary twenty years later.

My learning of new exegetical methods made me suspect the reliability of my past experience of hearing God. They taught me to use available resources to do word studies and to study the context of the biblical passage. A lot of my brainpower was needed to analyze the Bible. I began to doubt if my previous

experiences of hearing God from the Bible without any laborious study was reliable. One morning, I told my husband what I heard from God in my devotional reading regarding a decision to get an operation for my father-in-law. My husband believed it was a confirmation from God. I asked him why he accepted that my hearing came from God and not from myself. He answered that my sharing God's message over the past twenty years had always proven to be true.

This experience taught me that there are two types of Bible reading. Mulholland (1985) confirms that the first type is informational reading. This is either a quick reading to cover as much as possible, or an analytical and critical reading to get deeper meaning cognitively. The second type is formational reading. Usually, this is a slow reading with a quiet heart open to the God of mystery (Mulholland 1985, 47-60). Both types of Bible readings have helped me to grow spiritually.

I gain understanding and insights from the informational reading of the Bible. I like to use Bible commentaries in my free time to obtain background knowledge of the books in the Bible and to receive an explanation of biblical passages. But I have another type of Bible reading. I experience God speak to me directly through the Scriptures without analysis or thinking through a word or a phrase which catches my attention or addresses something deep inside in my heart. It could be encouragement, advice, or correction. This type of formative reading appears to me more like an intuition that has the ability to bypass my analytical mind. The intuitive hearing often happens in the morning when my heart is quiet. It gives me a sense of God's close presence and wisdom; it touches

my heart more than my head. These two types of reading helps me to develop my head knowledge and encounter God in concrete life circumstances.

When I left Scotland and returned to Hong Kong, I discovered that the norm of the evangelical churches of the various denominations I attended was to engage in programs that were filled with activities. The relationships between brothers and sisters appeared to me superficial when comparing my previous church experience in Scotland. Although I still kept doing my daily devotions in the morning, I cut them short to 15 minutes to half an hour. Hearing from God through the Scriptures became less frequent. The exterior religious life left me feeling empty inside; I began to fill the emptiness with materialism, although I found that the abundant material life did not satisfy my soul. Then I had a false alarm about having thyroid cancer in 1990. I was subjected to many tests, but the disease was finally diagnosed as thyroiditis. The treatment, which involved taking steroid medication, took two years.

The sudden cancer scare brought me face to face with my mortality. I began to reflect on the meaning of the rest of my life. One day, when I stood in front of an automated teller machine to withdraw some cash, I realized that I depended more on the ATM rather than on God. I had a sudden yearning to go back to my poor student days during which I had nothing but God. A week after that, we had an interview with an immigration officer to finalize our application to migrate to Canada. This application had been submitted four years ago when Hong Kong went through a period of political uncertainty. Our application was

approved a month later and we were ready to go to Canada. It seemed to me that God was delighted with my choice to choose Him rather than a luxurious lifestyle.

After our applications were approved, we took a year to consider our career development in Canada before we moved there. My architectural profession in Hong Kong rewarded me with a good income and a high social status. If I continued to practice as a licensed architect in Toronto, I needed to do a two-year practicum and pass a professional exam. Whereas my husband was required by the Chartered Professional Accountants Canada to study only two courses and pass the relevant examinations to regain his professional designation in Canada. We took a year to pray for God's direction. I received two promises from God in Deuteronomy 28:1-6 and Philippians 4:11. It helped me decide to leave the architectural profession and rely on God to direct my path to do whatever He wanted me to do. When we arrived in Toronto on October 1995, a chapter closed, and we turned to a new page in our lives.

All my husband's family members had already been living in Canada for many years, so my transition to the new environment was relatively smooth compared to my first year in Scotland. We lived in my in-laws' home for seven months until we could buy our own home in a nice neighborhood. I got to know my in-laws better, and they were loving and supportive. They hoped that we would go to their Gospel Church, but we eventually joined a newly founded Zion Alliance Church (ZAC) of the C&MA denomination close to our new home.

Since we had some savings, we did not urgently need to find jobs. When we had settled down to our new life in Canada, my father-in-law encouraged us to

study at a seminary. In 1996, I enrolled for part-time studies in a Master of Divinity program in the Christian education track at the then Ontario Theological Seminary (now Tyndale University) to equip myself to serve ZAC as a lay leader in the Christian education ministry. However, a calling to be a servant of God came in June 1998 when I did my morning devotions. The vocational call continued for five days until I told God that I got His messages, and then it finally stopped.

Meanwhile, my husband got a freelance accounting job. Sadly, my mother passed away in Hong Kong in April 1996. We went back home to prepare for her funeral. I felt the presence of God around me throughout those two weeks in Hong Kong. The grieving process passed faster than expected, and I gradually grew to love my in-laws as my own parents. We had loving relationships with the brothers and sisters at our church. The Lord also provided me with an outstanding mentor – Pastor C, for my church practicum. She was the model of a faithful and good servant of God. Her life spurred on my spiritual growth. She became my friend and remained so after I had finished my practicum in her church.

The Catholic Spiritual Influences

At the beginning of my theological studies, I was drawn to systematic theology. I also loved to study the Bible, and I soaked up cognitive knowledge. I was attracted to spirituality more because it touched my heart. After taking a course called “Finding Your Way” at Tyndale Seminary in 1998, I began to meet with a spiritual director every month. My first spiritual director, Ms. R., introduced me to Ignatian spirituality. The practice of *Lectio Divina* and Ignatian

gospel contemplation helped me to understand the importance of effect in spiritual formation. Ignatian gospel contemplation, in particular, employed my imagination to pray the Bible stories as if I were there (Puhl 1951, 49). Groeschel (1984), a Franciscan friar, explains that “the imaginary elements of the scriptural event arouse similar events from your memories, which will symbolically represent particular needs which you have” (Groeschel 1984, 44). This helped me to get in touch with my deep emotions, and it healed my emotional wounds through connection with my memories.

I continued to see my spiritual director Ms. R for six-and-a-half years until I was in full-time ministry in 2002. In 1999, I received a clear calling to become a spiritual director. Through my own spiritual director, I learned about the silent retreats at Loyola House in Guelph, Ontario. I took several courses in Ignatian spirituality at the retreat center and participated in an eight-day directed retreat once a year between 1998 and 2002 and a 40-day retreat in 2000. I continued to participate in several eight-day directed retreats and art retreats before we went to Panama. At the eight-day directed retreats, I was told to pray with my history in three parts –my light history of happy memories and my dark history of unhappy and painful memories. The last part is my history of grace, an integrated history seen through God’s eyes, to help me see the grace I received from both my good and painful memories. I thought I fathomed enough in my own history, but God revealed more details to me, linking more individual dots to form a complete picture of my life. The repeated prayer of my history provided deep healing for me as I began to forgive people and experience forgiveness myself.

When I graduated from the Master of Divinity program in 2000, I did not attend the graduation ceremony because I was participating in the 40-day silent retreat at that time, where I prayed the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola. I experienced consolation throughout the 40 days. I felt close to Christ and chose to follow him without reservation. During the last week of debriefing, I examined the process of the month-long silent retreat on St. Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises. I received many spiritual gifts from the Lord and was bathed in His love: (1) I was willing to give up the good for the best. Jesus' intimate companionship comforted me and drew me deeper into his love. (2) I no longer had a fear of facing my brokenness. His humility attracted my love to Him more and encouraged me to feel my emotions and sadness. I chose his standard and followed him. (3) The poverty of spirit attracted me greatly, and the self-emptying and utter reliance on God was beautiful. Although I was still afraid of being too rich or poor materially, I prayed for the willingness to live in actual poverty.

The above three factors woven together gave me freedom; indeed, the truth set me free. I was free from the fear of loneliness and the dark. I had the freedom to feel my deep emotions and to express them in front of people. I was also freed from the lies of the enemy, who taught his values through culture, education, and the mass media, i.e., claiming that riches, honor, and power were good. Lastly, I had the freedom to follow Jesus' way. The 40-day retreat was a mountaintop experience for me. My mind was frequently centered on God, and my heart was filled with peace and joy. I felt that I was embraced by Jesus all the time, and the presence of God made me drunk with love.

After graduating from the master's program in 2000, I took a diploma course in Spiritual Formation at Tyndale Seminary to prepare myself to engage in the ministry of spiritual direction.

Encounters with Charismatic Power

A month later, on July 2, 2000, I accompanied Pastor C to Singing Waters Ministries (then Ellet Ministries) in Orangeville, Ontario, to participate in their healing training. I took part one and two of the training courses over four weeks. Pastor C could not extend her vacation leave, so she could only attend part one of the two-week training program. It was quite difficult for me to transition from a silent prayer experience to a charismatic context packed with information. The students were divided into groups and led by a staff trainer. There were new experiences for me in the two-week part one training program.

A memorable event happened at the end of the second week. It was a workshop on finding the gift of prophecy. A staff teacher introduced a piece of piano music to the 82 students. After listening to the music, each of us reported our associations that were evoked by the music; some said that they got a sense of a wedding, others got impressions of a lily field, sheep, or a fountain, etcetera. The teacher drew the pictures on the big whiteboard so that everyone could see them. I got the impression of chapters 3 and 4 from the Song of Songs, but I could not recite the two chapters from memory, so I just gave the few verses I could remember from chapter three of the book. At the end of the sharing, the teacher told us that a Christian musician had composed the piece after meditating on chapters 3 and 4 of the Song of Songs. The staff trainer said that each of us had

received certain images from the Holy Spirit that are found in those two chapters. He concluded that all of us had the gift of prophecy to a different degree. People might get different pictures of the same message from the Lord. Therefore, we needed to be humble in order to draw the full picture together.

After the workshop, part one of the training came to an end. I took a ride with Pastor C for the weekend break. On the way back to Toronto, she told me that she did not hear much in the music. She thought that I seemed to have the gift of prophecy. It was an unexpected discovery! When I had taken the summer intensive course on spiritual warfare taught by Dr. Charles Kraft at Tyndale in 1999, I had discovered during the afternoon ministry sessions that I had the gift of receiving words of knowledge. This is not biblical knowledge accumulated in the head, but a kind of inward hunch, whereby one knows something without having received any previous information.

I returned to the second part of the training program without Pastor C. In my memory, two of the nights during this ministry were particularly phenomenal. One was the deliverance ministry for Chinese people dealing with ancestral spirits. All the Chinese folk and one Korean girl came forward for cleansing and deliverance prayers. Many people fell down and made terrible and painful noises. A woman nearby rolled her eyes and laughed uncontrollably until a staff member prayed for her to cast out the spirit of mockery. Then she stopped laughing. Minutes later, I found that only the Korean girl and I were standing. Everyone else had fallen down. A teacher came to pray for me, but I did not feel anything but peace. It indicated that both the Korean girl and I were clean spiritually. After

this event, I thought I had probably done enough of the right things after taking Dr. Charles Kraft's spiritual warfare course about repenting and casting the demons out by myself. It taught me about the demonic obstacles to Christian spiritual growth, and that confessing sins and cleansing prayers were essential for Christians before taking baptism.

I experienced another jaw-dropping event during part two of the training. I had read many books on miraculous healing, but it was the first time I was an eyewitness to such healing. In this case, it happened to a man and a woman in my group. The man's arms and the woman's legs were of differing lengths. The teacher prayed for the man, and I saw his shorter arm grow to the same length as his other arm. The woman's case was more dramatic; her shorter leg grew a bit but stopped. The teacher implored God to make her shorter leg the same length as the other one. The Lord answered his prayer, and her shorter leg continued growing until it was the same length as the other one.

The next morning, when I had breakfast with other Asian students, I told them what had happened in my group, and I said that the miracle of bone growth was the easiest one according to the books I had read about healing. On hearing this, a Malaysian Chinese girl, Miss X, wanted to have a prayer to heal her shorter leg. She later asked our group trainer to pray for her, but he refused to do so without giving her a reason. So, the girl turned to me and asked me to pray for her healing. I was nervous since I had never done it before, but after praying, the Lord encouraged me to pray for her.

I did so the next day, but I did not feel confident about it. Miss X seemed to have more faith than I did. She took a picture of her legs before prayer. I asked her to sit straight, and I held her legs for eye measurement; her one leg was indeed shorter than the other one. I held her legs and prayed. It seemed as if nothing had happened, but when I asked her to sit straight again to measure her legs, they were the same length. She took a picture of her legs after the healing. We were very joyful. However, I still doubted the result. The next day I asked another woman to measure the length of Miss X's legs again since she had measured them the day before. She confirmed that Miss X's leg was healed.

This miraculous healing has broadened my faith in God. I had acquired a lot of intellectual knowledge about God as an evangelical Christian but knew little of His power. Although I had learned about the power of the name of Christ from my involvement in inner healing and deliverance ministry, I tended to carry out the inner healing by following a set of rules, such as through fasting and prayer before the deliverance. Also, the use of Jesus' name in the praying process could have been used as a tool too. I subconsciously believed that if I did the right things and said the right prayer before and during the inner healing and deliverance, I could secure the result. During the process of physical healing, the new experience stripped me of dependence on prayer words and methods but made me depend on the sovereignty of God. I did not have faith that I could be an instrument of Miss X's healing, but God answered her prayer through me, a timid vessel.

After the four weeks of training, I remained for one more week to practice the deliverance skills. I had some experience in it but wanted to learn the Singing Waters method. At the end of the fifth week, an older lady was enthusiastic for me to receive the gift of tongues and volunteered to pray for me. She kept on earnestly praying for me. Eventually, I got four syllables in my mind. She told me to release the sound, and after doing so, we finished the prayer time. This lady told me to practice my newly received gift. A year later, when I had attended a team-teaching course at Tyndale, I asked Dr. V, who was from a Pentecostal background, how I could tell whether the gift was genuine or not. He said that no one could tell and advised me to receive it with joy and just use it. I was still not sure of having this gift, so I seldom used it.

The experiences in the 40-day prayer retreat on Ignatian Spiritual Exercise and the five weeks of Singing Waters training were radically different; one increased the depth of my spiritual life, and the other broadened my spiritual horizons. Both elevated me to new heights. However, I did not know how to handle the newfound gifts of prophecy and healing. There was no one to mentor me in my evangelical circle. Most Chinese evangelical Christians do not approve of the charismatic movement and worry that the signs and wonders will turn people into lovers of superstition and magic. I turned to my spiritual director for guidance. She encouraged me to trust God, but she did not have any associations with the charismatic experience. The feelings of the mountaintop experience lingered on. I felt God's presence surrounding me.

One evening, my husband and I visited a brother who attended my Sunday school class. During the conversation, I was given a hunch about something that he might have done. The Lord pressed me to say it out loud. Eventually, I surrendered and asked the brother if he had committed that specific sin. To my surprise, he cried and confessed his sins and was restored to God's grace.

However, this combined experience of learning in the Catholic spiritual tradition and the charismatic teaching caused me to stand alone in my evangelical circle because I did not have any mentor or friends to help me make sense of some spiritual experiences. It was hard to communicate with my friends, which included our pastors, who had never had such experiences. I felt that I was an alien in the church. I thought of changing to the Catholic Church for worship, but my husband objected to the idea, so we stayed in the ZAC.

In the 20 years after I graduated with a Master of Divinity degree, the sensational charismatic gifts sank in and imagination in prayers gradually died down for me. I was increasingly drawn to the mystical tradition and silent prayer. I discovered that for me silence and solitude were the foundation of all spiritual disciplines. They were also crucial for receiving God's message. In addition to daily Bible reading, I continued to practice 20 minutes of centering prayer daily and participate in silent retreats regularly each year. These practices helped me to be aware of God's presence in my daily life and turn my thoughts to prayers moment by moment. My spiritual formation in differing traditions and life experiences have formed me into the person I am now. I am grateful for having mentors and spiritual directors who have walked with me along this spiritual

journey. My spiritual experiences contribute to the model design I created for the Spiritual Formation course.

The Wilderness in My Spiritual Journey

The period between 2000 and 2004, after graduating from my Master of Divinity program, was the most challenging time by far in my spiritual life, because God was silent for most of the time. I experienced the dark night of my soul during those five years. I was on the mountaintop spiritually for the first half of 2000, and I wondered how I could go further or higher. I had a clear calling from God to be a spiritual director and had a successful church internship. I had also been led to do inner healing and deliverance since 1999. This had given me first-hand experience of the spiritual world. The Lord had also given me the spiritual gifts of preaching and teaching, words of knowledge and wisdom, prophecy, and healing. Therefore, I thought the Lord would lead me to my inheritance right after graduation, but He had a different plan for me.

Looking for a Pasture

He did not give me a pasture to exercise all these gifts and use my theological education. I found that I did not understand God's plan. I was angry at Him and felt that He did not care for me. I was also angry at myself for not being more sociable and extending my network. "No one knows me. I am a nobody!" I lamented. Then I read Cindy Jacobs' (1996) book *The Voice of God*. She said that "Just because you are anointed does not mean you deserve a position in the church. He is more interested in your character than your anointing" (Jacobs 1996, 122). It gave me a glimpse of God's possible plan for me; it was a waiting

period for my character to be tried. I did not know how long the waiting season would be, and I felt helpless and caged in. Jacobs described her experience of interpreting her own message in tongues at a Sunday worship with 1,200 people in attendance. The essence of the interpretation was as follows:

Some of you are saying to Me that your back is up against the wall. You are in a room with no windows or doors, and everywhere you look there is no way out. I say to you, 'My children, you are looking in the wrong place.' For I say, 'Look up, and begin to praise Me.' For as you praise Me, I will reach down with My strong right arm and lift you out of the circumstance from which there is no way out. (Jacobs 1996, 176)

Tears rolled down my cheeks. I felt that this message was spoken to me by the Lord. The power of this message sustained me throughout the dry, dark waiting season. I learned not to feel depressed by the desperate circumstances, but I looked up and praised God for His goodness. At this same time, there was a split in our church. Half of the people left. I was grieved by the loss of the relationships. We did not have any instruction from the Lord that we should also go. Besides, my husband continued to serve as an elder in the church. If we had left at that time, it would have hurt the church even more, and so we stayed.

Towards the end of 2000, our senior pastor promoted a spiritual gifts quiz, hoping to empower people to serve the church more effectively. As a result, the church affirmed that I had the gifts of teaching, preaching, prophecy, words of knowledge, and words of wisdom. I was encouraged by the affirmation. In early 2001, I was asked to teach the book of Romans for the adult Sunday School. The feedback from the students was very positive. When the Sunday School board invited me to teach spiritual formation in the fall, the pastoral staff was worried

about practicing non-evangelical teaching. The invitation was subsequently cancelled. I did not have a chance to teach Sunday School at the church anymore between 2001 and 2005. I could only sign up to look after the babies and toddlers. The spiritual formation course in ZAC was delayed until 2006 when there was a staff change in the church. At that point, I was asked to teach Sunday School again.

Although I did not have an official duty to serve in the church, I accompanied several sisters on their spiritual journey via the telephone. I helped people work through inner healing and deliverance. In the same year, I had my first experience of meeting two “prophets.” I joined two special prayer meetings with my friends in September 2001. Someone recorded their prayers while they prayed for each one of us. I transcribed the prayers that were said for me from the recording, and I still keep the piece of paper they were written on with me. The prophets did not know any of us, but we knew each other. The first one made a prophecy that I would bring clarity and the depth of God’s word to people and that my missionary heart would grow stronger. She did not know my background or that I did not have a missionary heart at that time. I thought I was called to be a spiritual director, not a missionary. When we met the second prophet several days later, he prayed for me and said something startling: “You talk to people on the phone a lot. You will become a person to comfort, encourage, and build up people. Be careful of your words.” Looking back, part of their prophecies came to pass. I later became a psychotherapist and an overseas missionary.

Experiencing Patterns of the Absence and Presence of God

Between 2001 and 2004, God became silent to me in every situation. I could not discern His voice in the Scriptures, songs, pictures, sermons, or through any of the ways he had usually spoken to me. My prayer life became dry, and I did not have any comfort from anything, spiritual or non-spiritual. Fear began to sweep over me. I begged for His mercy and went deeper into myself to search for any hidden sins I had not confessed. I could find nothing but misery. My soul was in a dark, lonely, fearful state for almost three months. Then one day, I heard His sweet voice again during my morning devotion. My heart was like a parched land, soaking up the rain. The sweetness continued for several weeks. Then, to my dismay, He disappeared again. The absence and presence of hearing His voice became a pattern in my prayer life for the following four-and-a-half years. I did not understand what was going on in my spiritual life. The absences of the Lord's presence became longer, and the periods in which I experienced His presence became shorter. I was distraught about this phenomenon and did not understand the reasons for this experience.

Two doors to pastoral opportunities seemed to open to me in 2000 and 2001, but eventually, they closed. By this time, I had a hunch that it was not the time for me to work, so I stopped striving and began to wait for God's leading. Somehow, I felt I was being directed by Him to take counseling courses, so I enrolled in two classes and entered into the Diploma of Spiritual Formation program. In December 2001, when I wrote a paper on the theology and history of spirituality, I chose a topic on the *Sermons on the Song of Songs* by St. Bernard of

Clairvaux (CSMV 1952, 229-231). The saint's exegesis of the Bible was predominantly allegorical and in line with the approach of the time, but it is out of favor today. St. Bernard tended to penetrate the mysteries of Scripture, not from an intellectual, but from an experiential perspective.

When I read his sermons 73 and 74 about mystical union, it explained my spiritual experience. In these sermons, St. Bernard expounds on the text "Return, my beloved" (Song of Songs 2:17). He explains in sermon 73 how the bridegroom is Christ, and the bride is the universal Church. In sermon 74, however, he states that the bride is the individual. In sermon 74, St. Bernard describes his experience of receiving visitations from the bridegroom. He explains that the reason for the comings and goings of the bridegroom is because He wants to increase our desire for Him. St. Bernard says:

When He is passing on, He wills us to detain Him; when He departs, He wills to be recalled. He goes and He returns at His own good pleasure, visiting the soul, as it were, at break of day and proving it suddenly. His departure is always part of His deliberate dealing with the soul, and His return likewise is of His own will. And both are infinitely wise, though He alone knows the reason why He goes or comes. (CSMV 1952, 229)

St. Bernard explains that God's presence is always with us since He fills all things. Sometimes He gives us a powerful sense that He is here. At other times, He withholds the tangible sense of His presence so that we feel as if He is absent from our lives. The tangible presence of God is a gift of God; He refuses to be manipulated by us, no matter how hard we pray. This phenomenon makes us humble. The saint focuses on the theme of presence and absence and provides an extended description of the personal visitation of the Word to himself. It matched my situation: when God withdrew His presence from me, my life was empty and

meaningless. I was like a lovesick woman yearning for the return of her lover. Since I had found a spiritual master who could write about my experience in such clear statements, I felt understood and relieved. I accepted that the presence and absence of God was not a punishment but a way to increase my love for Him. With an assurance of His return, I accepted this painful emptiness as a gift from God and waited patiently for Him. Strangely, deep down in my heart, there was a hope that was beyond my ability to produce.

The Gift of Quietness in Prayer

In June 2002, I participated in an eight-day directed retreat at Loyola House. I hoped to hear God's voice better and to get wisdom and instruction, as I had before during the silent retreats. On hearing of my experience of total silence in one of my prayers (which had disappointed me), the spiritual director pointed out that it was a grace given by God. He told me not to be concerned with the moral side of the prayer but to just be with Christ Himself. He also said that the silence I had in my prayer was the gold in my prayer. It seemed that God was leading me to a purer form of prayer, which would be a higher level of contemplation. He told me not to try to have a lengthy conversation with Jesus, but to try to feel Jesus' heart and to just be there in union with Him.

My dry and quiet prayer life exposed the reality that the underlying motivation for my zealous practice was to gain wisdom from God. I used to ask many questions in my conversations with Him in order to get instruction on how to do things and how to deal with people. This new experience of quietness made me uncomfortable. I wanted to cling to the old way, but the Lord refused to give

in. I tried to sense His will instead of asking questions, but it was difficult for me. Then I realized that I knew little of my lover's heart. It was humbling. The dryness made me worried that I was not serving God. When I took Professor N's spirituality course, I asked him how a person could serve God effectively if that person did not hear God in the dark night. He answered that the Lord's grace would accomplish His tasks. His wisdom saved me from much doubt and worry in the years to come.

The Experience of the Dark Night of the Soul

My spiritual director, Ms. R, discerned that I might be having a dark night experience since I did not get satisfaction or consolation from the things of God or from the things I used to enjoy. It was not desolation due to laziness or sins committed, and my heart was begging for God's manifest presence to return. She said that it could be a stage of purification through the dark night, and she advised me to read *The Dark Night of the Soul* by St. John of the Cross (1988) to gain a better understanding of the night. I had previously read it for a book review. I learned that there are two dark nights (1988), the dark night of the senses and the dark night of the spirit (St John of the Cross 1988, xi). It was head knowledge then, but this time it made much more sense to me and explained my situation. St. John says that: "In the beginning, the spirit takes no pleasure in the dry spells which come from the purification of the physical senses. This food is the start of contemplation that is both dark and dry to the senses" (St John of the Cross 1988, 27).

St John (1988, 28) advises that “if these souls knew at this point in time how to be quiet and were not caught up by constant activity, then they would have that wonderful experience of this inner refreshment that is free from worry.” It is the dark night of the senses or the dark night of correction “in which the senses’ appetites are curbed” (1988, 51). He (1988, 24) explains that God has led the soul from meditation to contemplation. St. John (1988, 31) elaborates that “they should refrain from all reasoning and meditation. That is not the time for that. They should allow the soul to remain peaceful and quiet, even when they think that when they do this, they are being inactive and just wasting time.” The purpose of entering into the dark night of the senses is to bring about the needed humility to draw closer to God (1988, 35). St. John points out: “The first and most beneficial result of this dry and dark night of contemplation is to have self-knowledge and awareness of our unworthiness.” The dryness exposed my desire to receive wisdom from God; it related to pride and success by spiritual means. The dryness also exposed my sin of anger. I was easily upset and sometimes intolerant. I was quick to point out others’ faults and was angry at myself for doing so. I was also impatient with my spiritual progress. On the whole, all these attitudes and behaviors were contrary to spiritual meekness.

When I discovered that the dryness of my prayer life was a tool that God was using to correct me, I gave up clinging to the old ways of meditation and gospel contemplation. I let go of my desire to have my imagination and long conversations with Christ back. I did not claim to know much about the spiritual theology of St John of the Cross; I just found that the description of his dark night

of the senses made sense of my experience from 2000 to 2004. I did not have any experience of the dark night of the spirit described by St. John in his second book in *The Dark Night of the Soul*, so I will not try to describe it or quote St John's sayings here. However, I understood Mother Teresa's situation of darkness as portrayed in her diary *Come be my Light* (Mother Teresa 2007). Modern people confuse the dark night of the soul with a dilemma in one's life. This idea misses the spiritual meaning of St John's teaching.

From St. John's description, the dark night of the spirit is a severe purification on the account of the imperfection that the soul still has after going through the dark night of senses. When Mother Teresa began to see the intense darkness and severe purification of spirit as the dark night of the soul and gradually accepted the darkness and pain within her, she declared (2007, 222): "The greater the pain and darker the darkness the sweeter will be my smile at God." No wonder there are many people, including Christians, who think that the reason that Mother Teresa had such a long time of darkness and dryness was because she had lost her faith. On the contrary, I firmly believe that it was a severe purgation of her spirit which purified her senses and removed all inordinate attachments remaining in her soul which filled her with the love of God and kept her from clinging to feelings or the tangible presence of God. From my experience in the dark night of the senses, it was indeed a walk of faith in the darkness. However, both the dark night of the senses and the dark night of the spirit are gifts given by God who sees those who are fit to receive this gift. No one can obtain this state on a spiritual journey by striving.

During the dark night, no new road was open to me to change the direction of my life. I had to keep walking along the path before me. I continued to take counseling courses and did the counseling practicum. When I prayed, I heard the name of the LW counseling center three times. This center could not provide the 300 clinical hours that students were required to complete in the year. Therefore, none of my classmates were interested in going there. However, the Lord gave me Isaiah 41:13-20, through which I sensed that He was telling me that this dry land would become abundant later on. I applied to this center and got a practicum placement in 2002 by paying a minimal sum. When I started, I also joined an external evangelical choir with some brothers from our church. We practiced once a week and had evangelical meetings at churches and retirement homes in various cities. I learned to preach evangelistic messages at these homes. In 2003, I also led a senior fellowship at our church to cope with a crisis. Although I did not hear God's voice, I trusted that He would finish His work by His grace. My spiritual director also commented that my ego had been quietened and become more contemplative. At that time, I did not know that the Lord was preparing me to be a clinical psychotherapist, and He arranged a smooth and fast way for me.

After the counselling practicum, in the middle of 2003, I was employed as a contract counselor. However, I had not forgotten the calling to be a spiritual director. Did I get it wrong? I finished my Diploma of Spiritual Formation in 2003 and tried to apply for the spiritual direction practicum. Unfortunately, it was full. I was frustrated and upset, not knowing why God was preventing me from taking the internship. My spiritual director encouraged me to focus on

psychotherapy training first. She said that there was a fine line between spiritual direction and the counseling process. Although I thought that my calling was to be a spiritual director, not a psychotherapist, I listened to her advice and became a part-time staff member at the LW counseling center in 2005. The Lord confirmed my employment in this center through Psalm 16:5-6. I accepted my involvement in the counselling counter as a ministry prepared by God and changed to be a full-time staff member in 2006.

The Fruits of the Wilderness Experience

Although my prayer life was dry and God was silent to me most of the time during those five years, somehow deep down in my heart I knew that all would be well in the end, just as Moses was transformed through his 40 years in the wilderness. I went through a purgation of pride, anger, and self-reliance. Around 2004, I experienced freedom in my service; my preaching and teaching became effortless. It was like floating with the current in a vast ocean and being carried to the destination effortlessly, rather than striving to reach the destination by hard swimming. In 2006, I participated in another eight-day directed retreat at Loyola House. The retreat director confirmed that I was called to contemplation and suggested that I join the weekly Contemplative Outreach group prayer meeting to practice Centering Prayer. I have been practicing this for 20 minutes a day, every day, for the past 10 plus years.

My experience in the wilderness lasted for five years. It was excruciating and fearful in the beginning. However, when I gave up struggling and held fast to God by faith, I began to wait patiently in the dryness and darkness, like a seed

buried in the soil in the winter, waiting for God's presence, not just during the prayer hour, but throughout the day. When the dark night passed and the waiting period came to an end, to my surprise, I had a slight reluctance to leave the dark place where I could feel the closeness of God's presence. My five-year training in the land of wilderness helped me to discern the difference between depression, spiritual desolation, and the dark night of the soul. They look the same superficially, but they are entirely different in nature and essence. It enabled me to discern, together with my directees later on, when the Lord led me to do spiritual direction in 2008 and onwards.

After the wilderness season, I had a harvest in my professional and spiritual life from 2005 to 2010. There were two milestones in those five years. In 2006, I was certified as a clinical member of the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists (AAMFT). I discovered that I got my professional qualification faster than not only many of my classmates, but also some of the students of earlier years. It was ironic that those willing and passionate budding therapists were behind me (a reluctant and less-enthusiastic colleague) in getting the professional qualification. I was employed as a full-time staff member at the LW Counselling Center in 2006. People sought me out to provide them with counseling services as my reputation spread through word of mouth. The ways of God are hard to predict: “‘For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,’ declares the Lord” (Isaiah 55:8).

In 2008, I also started the spiritual direction ministry at the center. The long-awaited calling from God was eventually fulfilled, 10 years after the initial

calling. In the same year, God led me to my second spiritual director, Ms. M, who was in my vicinity. When I started working full-time at the LW Counseling Center in 2006, I stopped seeing my first spiritual director due to a change in working hours and difficulties with transportation arrangements. I resumed my spiritual direction with Ms. M in 2008 and have continued with her up to this day.

From 2005 to 2010, I enjoyed the sweet presence of God and good teamwork at our counselling center. Meanwhile, I engaged in preaching and teaching services at various churches. I experienced a new power in my fourfold ministry (teaching, preaching, psychotherapy, and spiritual direction). The Lord became the focus of my life; my love for a luxurious lifestyle (such as wearing designers' suits, jewelry, fur coats, owning a beautiful and spacious living space with tasteful interior design with crystal glasses, fine bone china tea sets, and vacationing abroad once a year) had vanished. I discovered that all my desires related to the spiritual realm. The Holy Spirit gave me wisdom and discernment to walk with my clients. The Lord also gave me clarity and depth in my messages when I taught and preached. I tasted what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 6:10b: "Poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything."

The Somatic Experience of Spiritual Formation

After taking a year of training in Gestalt therapy in 2007, I became interested in bodywork. Between 2010 and 2013, I attended the Sensorimotor Psychotherapy Institute founded by Dr. Pat Ogden to learn a body-based talk therapy for the level-one training on trauma treatment. I continued to take level-two training about the treatment of attachment and developmental trauma. I

experienced healing of past hurts by releasing the associated muscle memories, and I used the newly learned skills in my psychotherapy practice with good results. The brokenness is not only registered in our emotions but also in our bodies. My training in Sensorimotor Psychotherapy opened my mind to treat not only Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) but also the developmental trauma of attachment injuries and abuses that occur during the vulnerable age of childhood. If untreated, the wounded person's oversensitive body sensations misinterpret the situation and react either in flight, fight, or freeze to protect themselves.

When I led the practice of *Lectio Divina* in a prayer retreat, I checked to see if the participants had heard anything from the passage I read, and I asked them which part of their bodies received the word. It was the first time I had linked body sensations with spiritual practice. It was interesting to hear the responses: someone said that the word stayed in her head, another one said that it stopped at her stomach. Another one said it stayed at her throat; this particular answer aroused my curiosity. I asked this participant if she could freely talk in her family when she was little. She told me that she was the youngest in her family; she seldom spoke because her opinions did not matter. I wondered if she could freely talk to God about her wants and desires. I could not do anything with her in the prayer retreat except to ask her to find out if relaxing her throat muscle could make a difference in the future.

Sometime later, when I taught a spiritual formation class, I asked the students to pay attention to their body sensations after hearing my reading of a passage. One of the students, who gave me permission to share her story,

responded that the word she received from the hearing froze in her chest. According to my understanding of sensorimotor psychotherapy, the sensation in the chest was related to issues of trust. I helped her dissolve the coldness in her chest by using the skills from my training. She reported that the word sank to her gut afterward. She got an Ah-ha moment: “No wonder I could not receive much from the pulpit on Sundays, no matter how ready I was to hear God. It was because the Word of God could not go deep within me!” The deep-seated distrust manifested in the chest muscle made it hard for her to open up to receive God’s love. I remembered Jesus’ teaching, “He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water” (John 7:38, KJV). The experience gave me a new understanding of the importance of muscle memory, which can hold many hurtful memories from developmental wounds.

Moreover, I experienced the body as a channel for creativity. The exercises of muscular relaxation, body scan, and body meditation helped me become aware of the messages from my body. I attended several art retreats and learned to pray with art. Through the process of painting, I heard the desires of my heart and allowed my body to direct my attention to engage with the physical material and to express desires through symbols and images. It was a communication with God involving intention, attention, and action in silence. I must mention that I received great help to recover my creativity through the book *The Artist’s Way* by Julia Cameron (2002). It paved the way for me to pray with my creativity. Praying with art is a tool that enables us to listen to body senses and affect responses. I began to offer a course, “Praying with Art” at LW

Christian Center, in addition to the Spiritual Formation course. Many participants were encouraged to pick up their brushes and to express their prayers in colour. One of these students began to pray for me through their paintings regularly when we became overseas missionaries. Now, when I teach a spiritual formation course at Alliance Bible School of Central & South America (ABSCSA) in Panama, I incorporate artwork into the curriculum of the Spiritual Formation Model.

I firmly believe that spiritual formation has to include cognitive, emotional, and somatic dimensions. In my experience, some evangelical churches fail to recognize that cognitive training alone in discipleship does not bring Christians to full maturity in Christ; we need healing from the emotional wounds too. The Lord gave me the understanding to integrate psychology, theology, and spirituality. I have witnessed a fruitful ministry with all the energy Christ so powerfully worked in me (Colossians 1:28-29).

Adventures in the Mission Fields

When everything seemed to go well in my marriage and professional life, my heart yearned for a new intimacy with God. The Lord knew my heart, and He had a surprise in store for me. We went through a journey from discerning to serve God as overseas missionaries, to searching for mission fields, to finding our destination in Panama.

The Macedonian Call

In April 2010, my husband and I visited the Kuwait mission field with five C&MA missionaries. The local Chinese Christians invited us to stay to pastor them. We were surprised by this invitation and checked with the site supervisor of

the Arabian Peninsula, who confirmed that there was a need in Kuwait. We promised we would pray for God's direction. However, we had some doubts about our abilities to be missionaries, since neither my husband nor I had good linguistic skills. It took us almost three years to discern God's will for us. It was a time of struggling with listening for God's call and holding onto our comfortable, stable lives, even though I had become unsatisfied with the latter. Eventually, the Lord won our trust in His promises, despite the uncertainty.

In 2013, we submitted an international worker application to C&MA. However, the mission field in the Arabian Peninsula was no longer open. It took two years for us to search for another mission field. It was like standing on the threshold. I could not move on but was unwilling to remain in my stable and comfortable life in Toronto. From 2013 to 2014, I had a deep sense of being stuck in a liminal space. It was a time of letting go of my need to control the circumstances and trusting God in uncertainty. Unexpectedly, a prominent Chinese church in Toronto approached us because they were looking for a couple to plant a church in Panama. Our home church supported our idea to go to Panama and encouraged us to go ahead without waiting for the C&MA mission agency's ongoing field search for us.

Overwhelming Experiences in the First Year of Mission Life

In April 2014, we went to a small town in Panama to pastor a new church of 25 people. It was a challenge for us to serve in a foreign culture. Although we had spent a year learning Spanish, we were not able to communicate with the Panamanians. I had a hard time there in the first year. I felt alone. I did not have

any friends in the small town, and I missed our relatives and friends in Canada. Nevertheless, the Lord always gave timely encouragement and comfort to sustain me. In those days, God was my only comfort and shelter. I continued to meet my spiritual director regularly via the internet. After I told her about my spiritual journey, she said that I had “hard consolation,” which means that my heart had moved towards God but with sad feelings. We did a lot of outreach and visitation under the hot sun and, by God’s grace and mercy, the Lord gave new life to eight persons through our ministry. At the end of the one-year contract, we decided not to renew it but instead decided to take a break, since we were emotionally and physically exhausted. Meanwhile, the Alliance Bible School of Central and South America invited us to serve at their school. We decided to go back to Toronto in April 2015 to regain our health and pray about our future direction. Although our experience in the first year on the mission field had been challenging, the fire for missions was still burning in our hearts. We still wanted to labor for God beyond our comfort zone. We decided that we would go wherever God wanted us to go.

Soul Refreshing and Setting Out Again

When we came back to Canada, our church pastor suggested that we go to Aruba to help a missionary couple under the C&MA. Therefore, in November 2016, we visited the Alliance Bible School of Central and South America (ABSCSA) for two months prior to visiting the Aruba Alliance Church, to see which one would be a good match for us. We discovered that it was hard to get a work permit in Aruba; tourists could stay for only six months of every calendar year. It was impossible for us to stay full-time to help the missionary couple.

After much prayer, we decided to serve at the Bible School in Panama in a full-time capacity, and we have been there since 2017.

The seven months of waiting and praying between April 2015 to November 2016 humbled me. I no longer thought that my theological education and professional training were adequate to enable me to serve in the mission field, but it was (and still is) an honor to serve God in His Kingdom. Later we discovered that because we had stayed in Canada for seven months after a year's leave, we were eligible to apply for the five-year non-residence exemption in Canada to retain our medical benefits. While God kept us waiting, He was actively working out a good plan for us. I was thankful, not only for the unexpected legal exemption, but also that I had found my niche serving God in the Bible School. It had given me a platform to teach and preach in Chinese churches in Panama. I also provided free counseling to our students and to the Chinese community, since I was the only registered Chinese-speaking psychotherapist in the country. Another aspect of my ministry was providing informal spiritual direction to the students at the Bible School through reading their weekly journals and responding to their reflections. I am hopeful that I will be able to provide spiritual direction to more Christians in Panama in the future.

The Benefits of Hindsight Received from My Spiritual Journey

After serving in Panama for three years, I felt there was a need to refresh my learning in spiritual formation and dig deeper into the mystery of God. God nudged me into a doctoral program of spiritual formation when we were in Toronto for a two-month break in 2018. Within two months, I finished all the

necessary enrollment procedures for Tyndale University before going back to Panama. The book, *The Critical Journey-Stages in the Life of Faith* by Hagberg and Guelich (2005), which I read in year one, gave me a clear picture of my own spiritual journey. The authors teach that there are six stages in the journey of faith. The first three stages involve moving from recognising God, to adopting a life of discipleship, to living a productive life. These stages are the outer journey, and they focus on cognitive learning and doing. The fourth stage is an inward journey. The characteristic of the inward journey involved facing our psychological obstacles—the wall. They say, “Our experience of God at the wall takes on different nuances based on our personal needs for healing and renewal. For example, some have strong egos, some have self-deprecator, some are guilt and shame ridden, some hide themselves behind the intellect and achievements” (Hagberg and Guelich 2005, 114-120). Hagberg and Guelich emphasize that “the wall experience is the place where psychology and spirituality converge to the point. When we surrender our will to God, we experience healing and transformation” (Hagberg and Guelich 2005, 115). The wall experience works through pain and grief, and it explains why not too many people welcome this stage. After going through the wall experience, one arrives at stage five. This is another outward journey, but it goes beyond the self-centeredness or self-seeking glory often found in the ministry at stage three. The final stage is a life of love, which is lived consistently.

I discovered from my personal experience that the wall experience does not come only once in a lifetime. One can revisit the wall from time to time, when

“our will meets God’s will face to face” (Hagberg and Guelich 2005, 114). I experienced my first wall experience during my dark period of purgation from 2000 to 2004, and I transitioned to stage five by using the lens of Hagberg and Guelich and had an effortless and fruitful ministry from 2005 to 2014. However, I re-experienced the wall of identity issues in a male-dominant culture in the Chinese diaspora community in Panama. It took me four years to know who I was. The Lord gave me two pictures to sort out my identity crisis. The first picture had a valuable antique vase placed on a dusty shelf with valueless old items in a shop. I realized that even though someone may not recognize the value of an antique vase, this did not diminish its value. The second picture had a large green tree and a barren tree. I had a dialogue with God and received an insight into the fact that the leaves were not the tree’s identity. Instead, the tree had different images in each of the four seasons. My value did not depend on external factors. I had an intrinsic value because I was wonderfully and fearfully made by the creator. I felt free after this prayer with these two pictures. My true identity lay not in what I had or what I did, but who I was in God’s eyes. Only the triune God could satisfy my need for affection and secure my self-esteem: “If people do not recognize my value, they lack discernment” (Reimer 2016, 139). This four-year struggle with identity issues reinforced my belief that emotional wellness was necessary for spiritual growth.

Summary

I am grateful to be known by God and chosen as His daughter. As Psalm 139:13-17 states:

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful; I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them!

My heart is full of gratitude that God took me to the mountaintop to see His glory, and that He also walked with me through the desert and the deep valleys in my life. I am thankful for the good and bad seasons I have had in my life, which have helped me to trust God's goodness and wait in hope for the Lord. I praise God because He has expended so much energy in shaping my soul and molding my character, and that He can use such an ordinary person for His glory and for the blessing of His people.

My personal faith development has been woven of evangelical, contemplative, and charismatic traditions. I have also benefited from the integration of theological education, psychotherapeutic training, spiritual direction training, artwork, and bodywork. It has opened my mind and allowed me to develop a four-year spiritual formation model for The Alliance Bible School in Panama.

CHAPTER III:

MODEL OF SPIRITUAL FORMATION

My husband and I had short term mission trips to five Latin American countries since 2010, and we became long term missionaries in Panama from 2015. Therefore, we acquired a general picture of the culture of the Chinese diaspora in Central and South America. My husband taught church music, and I taught counselling at the Bible School since 2017. We participated in a course on Spiritual Disciplines with our students for two years until I was assigned to teach it in 2019. I had observed the previous students practicing the spiritual disciplines as tasks without understanding the importance of spiritual formation and transformation. I began to navigate a way to cater to the cultural backgrounds of our students in order to enable them to grow theologically, emotionally, and spiritually. This chapter outlines the creation of a new model for the Spiritual Formation course for ABSCSA.

The Context of the Chinese Diaspora in Panama

A spiritual formation model needs to consider the context in order to ground an idea in reality. Since my spiritual formation model aims to serve the Chinese Christians in Panama, I had to understand the historical and cultural context of the Chinese Diaspora in Panama. My understanding of these contexts and my personal lived experience are described below.

The Historical Context

Benjamín (2016) informs us that the first Chinese immigrated to Panama from southern China in 1852 to work on the trans-Isthmian railroad and later the Panama Canal. Many of these laborers remained in Panama after their contracts expired. Benjamin says, “Over time, the Chinese moved away from the hard labor of construction work and began to operate small businesses such as laundries, bakeries, and retail stores. Most of them lived in the capital city of Panama” (Benjamín 2016). Jackson reports that “the adult descendants of the early immigrants of Chinese origin are now generally integrated into mainstream Panamanian society. Intermarriages between Chinese and Panamanians were common among the early immigrants” (Jackson 2004). Juan Tam of the Chinese Association of Panama, which is recognized as the central governing structure of the Chinese community in Panama (Siu 2005, 34), told Jackson in an interview that “Many third or fourth-generation descendants of the early immigrants became professionals; they speak Spanish and have been assimilated into the Panamanian and North American culture, to the point of losing their Chinese language, culture, and identity” (Jackson 2004).

Siu (2005), an Associate Professor of Anthropology and Social and Cultural Analysis at New York University, offers a look at the descendants of early Chinese immigrants’ political involvement in Panama: “a number of Panamanian Chinese have been elected to legislative office, since the first Panamanian of Chinese descent was elected to the Electoral Tribunal in 1964” (Siu 2005, 34). Siu informed that:

...at least nine Panamanian Chinese have been elected or appointed to the posts of minister of public works, minister of immigration, and mayor of Panama City, and vice minister of commerce and industry. In addition to these official forms of political involvement, certain leaders of the Chinese community have served on various occasions as informal advisors to top government (Siu 2005, 51-52).

Apart from the early Chinese immigrants in the late nineteenth century, Jackson notes that several waves of Chinese immigrants followed later. These waves were especially large in the 1980s after President Deng Xiaoping's government instituted the People's Republic of China's (PRC's) open-door policy in 1978 which enabled foreign companies to set up business in China. It also opened the door for Chinese nationals to travel to and settle in foreign lands (Jackson 2004). At that time, Panama did not have a diplomatic relationship with the PRC. Therefore, many people came to Panama from mainland China illegally. "This situation continued throughout the 20th century, with those already in the country assisting them" (Minority Rights Group International. n.d.). Although there is only one written language for Chinese, it has numerous spoken dialects in China. Mandarin is the official spoken dialect taught at schools, but Cantonese is the city dialect in Guangzhou. The new immigrants, who arrived during and after the 1980s, were generally Hakka-speaking people from the Guangdong province, but many could also speak in Mandarin and Cantonese.

According to Juan Tam of the Chinese Association of Panama, "The majority of the new immigrants were neither well-educated nor skilled" (Jackson 2004). The middle-class Spanish-speaking Chinese descendants of the early immigrants seldom mixed with the new Chinese-speaking immigrants due to language and social-cultural barriers (Jackson 2004). The new immigrants spread

to all the major cities and towns in Panama; they operated various small businesses such as mini supermarkets, laundromats, bakeries, hardware stores, gift shops, restaurants, cell phone stores, and auto parts stores (Benjamín 2016). In 2019, Panama had a population of 4.3 million (World Population Prospects 2019, 895). Since many new Chinese immigrants in Panama are illegal, there are no accurate statistics of the Chinese population. In 2019, the estimated number was between 200,000 to 300,000 (The Report of the 6th Pan Am CCOWE, 2019, 2). From the mission lens, the description of the characteristics of the Chinese population are summarized as follows:

(1). The descendants of the early Chinese immigrants: They speak Spanish and have been assimilated into the Panamanian culture. Some Chinese descendants have even been active in mainstream Panamanian politics (Siu 2005, 41). This group of people is not connected with Chinese churches. (2). The first generation: Immigrants who came from mainland China to Panama during and after the 1980s. This is the target group for the Chinese churches in Panama for evangelism. They speak mainly Chinese dialects (Cantonese, Mandarin, and Hakka) and limit Spanish for business (Jackson 2004). In this paper, the terms “new immigrants” and “first-generation immigrants” will be interchangeable. (3). The one and half generation (1.5 G): Those who were born abroad but immigrated as children or adolescents (Rumbaut 2008, 209). This group speaks Spanish and understands Cantonese and Mandarin but has limited knowledge of written Chinese. (4). The second generation: This group contains children of first-generation immigrants who were born in Panama. They speak Spanish and some

Hakka. They have minimal skills in written Chinese and have very little knowledge of Chinese culture. The adults of this category prefer to be identified as Panamanian of Chinese descent rather than Chinese Panamanian (Blake 2019, 183-184).

The Cultural Context

I have experienced Panama as a fairly laid-back country in regard to its manners and lifestyle. However, the Chinese in Panama work long hours with no breaks every day to run their shops. On one hand, Chinese culture views hard work as a virtue. On the other hand, they feel pressure to make better lives for themselves and their family. A global survey was conducted by Ipsos on Materialism, Finances, and Family in 2013 through their Online Panel system which has information on more than 16,000 adults in 20 countries. According to the results (Ipsos 2013, 3-4), Chinese in mainland China were ranked first on the list with 70% measuring success by their possessions. The global average was only 34%. Chinese respondents were also ranked first in feeling the pressure to be successful and make money (68%). This was 22% higher than the global average (46%). The mindset of Chinese immigrants in Latin America also appears to have displayed a single focus on money-making (The 3rd Pan Am CCOWE 2005). Nick Tsang (2009) served in Panama for five years as a missionary. He observes that “the Chinese immigrants came to Panama with the common goal of making better lives for themselves; they work 12 to 16 hours a day, 365 days a year. Money is the key factor considered when making any plan” (Tsang 2009, 30-32).

From my relationships with the Chinese people in Panama over the past seven years, I think there are two subconscious forces in their pursuit of wealth in this particular context. The first one is filial piety, and the second is a deep sense of insecurity. I heard numerous similar stories of people taking on debt for their illegal entry into this country. They had to work for their sponsors for five years with no wages and little pocket money. After paying off their debts, they borrowed money to open their shops. Because it was difficult to look after a shop alone, a man and a woman would, after a few meetings, get married to do business together. Once they finally began to run their own businesses, they would send money back to China to support their parents.

Apart from sending money back home, I heard that many new immigrants were also pressured to visit their parents within the first ten years to show their relatives how good their lives were in Panama. They would be expected to give gifts and red packets (money wrapped in a small red envelope) to their relatives and invite them to a feast. Their parents would have “face” (honour) in the clan. A young man in the church we pastored told us that he did not visit his village within the first ten years because he could not make enough money for the expenditure. It made him feel like he was a failure. After making a glorious return to their hometown, they were then expected to renovate their parents’ existing home or buy a new home for their parents in the village to honor them. From these stories, I sensed that the practices of filial piety were deeply embedded in Chinese culture. Leung (2016) explains that “the filial piety was experienced primarily in the participants' yearning to obey and submit to parents' wishes, to

care for and repay their parents, as well as caring and providing for extended family members” (Leung 2016, 149).

Apart from buying a home for their parents in China, the families I knew in Panama would buy a home for themselves to live in. Then they would invest money in the residential and commercial property for rental income to secure their lives and provide inheritances for their male offspring. Because many of them borrowed money from banks to buy properties, if the rental income was not stable, then they did not have enough cash flow to meet their needs. A brother in the church told me that he was in financial difficulties. He did not have money for his father's medical bills in China or for his son's private university tuition fees. I asked him if he was overburdened with investments, to which he admitted that he was. After our conversation, he said he would consider selling some of his investments to reduce the financial installments to meet his family's needs.

When I talked to many first-generation Chinese immigrants in Panama, Christians and non-Christians alike, they felt as though they had no choice but to make money for a living; the more that they made, the better. With such a tall order, they could only make money by working long hours and living a frugal life to save as much as possible to care for their parents and children. I could not help but feel that this burden of filial piety was expressed in shame or honor.

From my own lived experience, I recognized that the impetus to drive this high work ethic was caused by the fear of scarcity. I heard a striking story from a woman from our church where we pastored in 2015-16. She and her family came to Panama in the eighties. She told me that the family lived in a rural area in

Guangdong province before coming to Panama. Her family of four often shared an insufficient quantity of meat. Sometimes they were able to share a slice of an egg for the family as extra food. I heard similar stories from other people about their lives in their early years. I felt that there was a deep sense of insecurity in their hearts for fear of wanting. When I designed a spiritual formation model, I felt that there was an urgency for them to have an experiential knowledge that the Lord was their shepherd (Psalm 23) and that they did not need to fear and would lack nothing.

Many of the people I spoke with appear to have created a monotonous lifestyle filled with physical fatigue and emotional boredom. The accounts of many of the first-generation immigrants include stories of returning to China for extended medical leaves. Tsang (2009) reports that marriage and parenting problems were a major concern in the church ministries (Tsang 2009, 32). Thus, most of my counseling cases in Panama were for marital and family issues. I heard from my clients and other people I visited that they sent their young children back to their grandparents to take care of them because they did not have time to take care of babies and young children. Some parents brought their children back to Panama at six and seven years old when they could take care of themselves and help with cooking. Some even waited until their children finished their primary school education. Therefore, many parent-child relationships were stressful. Pastors of Chinese churches discouraged parents from sending their children back. C&MA eventually opened a children's daycare center in Panama City to respond to the need of the Chinese Diaspora community (Tsang 2009, 32).

Moreover, from my visitations, pastoral experience, and communication with other missionaries in Panama, I learned that gambling addictions had become the biggest challenge to the Chinese diaspora in Panama and other Latin American countries. Gambling appeared as entertainment that provided excitement and monetary reward with the hope of getting quick money. Many were not aware of its addictive nature. There are many casinos in the towns and cities in these countries. Unfortunately, there is no Chinese community center in Panama for playing sports or other constructive entertainment. However, performances such as folk and lion dances are organized by different Chinese Associations in Panama City on festivals and holidays(Blake 2019, 105, 130).

Therefore, this lack of activities has made it difficult for first-generation immigrants to enjoy leisure activities other than eating and gambling in Panama. When my husband and I pastored in a town, I remember asking some congregants who closed their shops on Sunday afternoon for worship why they did not close their shops in the morning to have more time with their children. Some replied that there were not many places for them to go for recreational activities. Some responded that they had nothing to do other than watch Chinese TV channels. Thus, they preferred to sit in the shops rather than at home as this was able to increase their income.

Michael Liang (2018) was a missionary in Panama for 18 years. I taught “family of origin” in his church in 2019. He states that for those regular church attendees, the messages from the sermons on living different lifestyles helped some people stop gambling. Liang explains, “Over time, the messages from churches gradually began to impact their marriages and family life. For instance, they began to

know the importance of parenting. Recently, more parents have stopped sending babies back to China for grandparents' care" (Liang 2018). However, it is not easy to get Christians to join the Sunday worship regularly, particularly those who operate mini supermarkets. They run their business seven days a week. If both the husband and wife become Christians, some couples might arrange to come to Sunday worship on alternate weeks to keep their shop open all day on Sunday. People engaged in other types of business may choose to close their shops for several hours to come to church on Sunday. If the work ethic for the Chinese diaspora focuses on making money, this may be at the expense of their health and family relationships.

First generation Chinese immigrants tend to generalize and use common assumptions to fuel their beliefs. As such, I have often heard comments from first generation Chinese immigrants that they consider the Panamanians to be lazy. This causes them to resist assimilating into the laid-back Panamanian culture. The new Chinese immigrants do not accept the Panamanian lifestyle. The only parts they adopt are their habits of timekeeping. The new Chinese immigrants adapt well to this Panamanian fluidity of time. We have observed that punctuality is kept only for their shop opening hour. When it comes to meetings, including Sunday worship, they arrive late.

The traditional Chinese culture is male dominant, but this is taken to the extreme in the Hakka culture. The females work like unpaid laborers and lack financial control in the family. Since many of them are illegal immigrants without formal legal identities, they often get married without legal marriage certificates, making the wives feel insecure. Thus, most of them accept their unfair treatment

from both their husbands and in-laws. Their lack of knowledge about marital relationships and parenting has resulted in significant problems in this Chinese community. We have witnessed that the male dominance in the Hakka culture affects the Chinese churches in Panama, both explicitly and implicitly. The ratio between male and female pastors at the time of writing this portfolio is ten to seven, and female pastors have more difficulty leading male deacons. In certain congregations, female pastors are not even allowed to preach.

Religion in Panama

Panama's constitution states that Roman Catholicism is the majority religion and should be taught in public schools. Catholic holidays and festivals are also widely observed and celebrated throughout Panama. The Panamanian constitution nevertheless guarantees religious freedom and tolerance (U.S. Department of State Office of International Religious Freedom "Panama 2019 International Religious Freedom Report," 1). Several Protestant denominations exist within Panama and account for some 18% of religious affiliation. Judaism and Islam also have minority followings, especially within the cities. A Jewish congregation, a Bahai House of Worship, and a Hindu temple in Panama City cater to the spiritual needs of various ethnic groups (U.S. Department of State Office of International Religious Freedom "Panama 2019 International Religious Freedom Report," 2). Most new Chinese immigrants follow the Buddhist tradition, while many indigenous people still practice their traditional religions.

In 2019, there were an estimated 1000 Christians spread out over 20 Chinese evangelical churches in Panama (The Report of the 6th Pan Am CCOWE,

2019). Most of them comprised of both Chinese- and Spanish-speaking congregations and catered to the first and second generation immigrants. Today, the size of a bilingual church varies between 30 to 60 members, except for the oldest church, The Iglesia Evangelica China De Panama (IECDP) in Panama City. We attended its Sunday worship from 2017 and 2019 until the COVID19 pandemic hit. It has a dual-language congregation of about 180 regular members. It is our observation that the attendance of Sunday worship in Chinese churches fluctuates; low ebbs occur in business seasons such as November and December. This low attendance also happens during the Chinese New Year season when mothers bring their children back to China to visit their grandparents and relatives. It also occurred when Panamanian schools have their annual two-month-long summer break. The attendance is maintained by offering more programs organized by short-term mission visitors.

The Vision of Establishing a Bible School in Panama

In 1996, some seasoned missionaries in Central and South America saw the need for a Bible school to train local Chinese Christians to pastor the Chinese churches in Latin America. They shared their vision with the Chinese churches in Canada. Some churches responded to the challenge and a joint committee was formed to explore the possibilities. In 1999, with the support of the Hong Kong Alliance Bible Seminary (ABSCSA n.d.), the committee finally chose Panama due to its convenient and strategic location for a Bible school (ABSCSA n.d.).

In 2000, the “Escuela Alianza Biblica de Centro y Sur America” (Alliance Bible School of Central and South America – ABSCSA) became a legal non-

profit organization that offered a two-year full-time certificate program in a rented premise in the canal zone. In 2004, the school bought the villa of the former president of Panama, located on a four-acre piece of land at Cerro Azul, and this became its permanent premise. In 2009, the ABSCSA became independent of the Hong Kong Alliance Bible Seminary in accordance with the original plan (ABSCSA. n.d.). Since 2016, the ABSCSA has offered a four-year bachelor's degree for high school graduates and returning students to upgrade the standard of theological and pastoral training. The school emphasizes the importance of the students' spiritual formation in addition to the impartation of the necessary biblical knowledge and ministry skills. Subsequently, Spiritual Formation courses in the category of Pastoral Practical Studies have been offered and taught by the local faculty. The Spiritual Formation courses require a total of six credit hours and 12 semesters throughout four years; each course is half a credit. At the time of writing this paper, we have more than 30 graduates who are serving as pastors in 10 Latin American countries. They helped to establish eight new churches in the Central and South American mission fields. Sadly, some graduates have left the ministry for various reasons, mainly due to health and financial challenges.

The Impact of Variables on the Spiritual Formation Courses Design, Delivery, and Reception

The variables discussed in this section include age, gender, and faculty challenges. According to the ABSCSA records, the age group of our students over the past 20 years has been between 40 and 60 years old. The majority of the students are first generation Chinese immigrants in Latin America. The rest are visa students from Canada and China. However, the number of students from

Canada has decreased over the years because an increasing number of seminaries in Canada offer Chinese theological education either in person or online.

The ABSCSA has a small local faculty and thus relies on a large number of overseas adjunct faculties. Therefore, the ABSCSA adopts an intensive teaching methodology facilitated by overseas teachers from Hong Kong and North America. In the beginning, the ABSCSA offered a two-year certificate course with a focus on gaining biblical knowledge and pastoral skills. Because many Chinese immigrants in Latin America have come from the villages in the Guangdong province and have received only the nine years of free education offered in China, many of them did not have a habit of reading, particularly in the liberal arts. Understandably, the academic rigors at the ABSCSA present them with a great challenge at the beginning of their studies. Moreover, the first-generation immigrants in Latin America hardly have the time to cultivate a habit of reflection to process their life experiences. Since our students have a busy lifestyle, quietness is extremely difficult for them. The primary model for their spiritual formation in Chinese churches throughout Central and South America is through fellowship activities and Sunday sermons. Some established churches offer Christian education in the form of Sunday School.

Introducing Foundational truths: What is Spiritual Formation?

Spiritual Formation came to the attention of evangelicals since Richard Foster's *Celebration of Discipline* was published in 1978. In the past 40 years, more evangelical scholars and pastors embraced spiritual formation, including Dallas Willard, James Houston, and Eugene Peterson. I will describe my

understanding of spiritual formation and its application to my ministry in this section.

The Definition of Spiritual Formation

The term “spiritual formation” has different meanings in different faith traditions. For the focus of this paper and due to the vastness of the scope of Christian spiritual formation, I quote only a few well-established scholars’ definitions to establish what spiritual formation means in my ministry context.

Greenman defines spiritual formation as an ongoing process for Christians: “Spiritual formation is our continuing response to the reality of God’s grace shaping [us] into the likeness of Jesus Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit, in the community of faith, for the sake of the world” (Greenman 2010, 23-35). Willard emphasizes that the function of the Holy Spirit is to reshape or redevelop human character into Christlikeness: “The process is a formation of the human spirit as well as formation by the divine Spirit” (Willard 2010, 45-60). Barton focuses on the process of producing Christlikeness in each person. Her definition of spiritual formation is: “The process of Christ being formed in us for the glory of God, for the abundance of our own lives, and the sake of others.” (Barton et al. 2014, 294). Another scholar, Chandler, describes spiritual formation as a holistic personal development in seven primary life dimensions, namely spirit, emotions, relationships, intellect, vocation, physical health, and resource stewardship (Chandler 2014, 4).

In summary, these scholars emphasize four main components of spiritual formation: Namely, (1) the process takes time, (2) there are multiple dimensions

for holistic growth, (3) there are inclusive benefits for ourselves and others, and (4) it increases Christ-likeness. These four truths became the foundation for my thoughts to create a spiritual formation model for my ministry. I included these points in my curriculum design. It takes time to be formed and transformed. The goal of the transformation is to be like Christ through the Holy Spirit. The purpose of spiritual formation is not only for ourselves but for the sake of others as well. This holistic approach to spiritual formation is rooted in Christ-likeness and touches all aspects of a person.

The Theology of Spiritual Formation

The underpinning theological foundation for spiritual formation is that humans have “the capacity, by God’s grace, to experience Him” (Maddix 2010, 239). Russell points out that “from a theological perspective, the redemptive work and life of Jesus Christ stands at the center of our faith” (Russell 2018, 186). The Bible tells us that we cannot form and transform ourselves. It is the power of the Holy Spirit, in other words, that transforms us. In Roman 12:2, the verb “transformed” is in the passive voice. Some people may say that since formation and transformation are the work of the Holy Spirit, then we cannot do anything about it and can just leave it to God to finish the job. Yes, we cannot form ourselves, but we have to cooperate with God to make ourselves available for the Holy Spirit’s carving and sculpting. Spiritual Formation focuses on spiritual practices. By practicing spiritual disciplines, we make ourselves available to God and submissive to the Holy Spirit’s formation.

It is a lifelong process of spiritual formation initiated by the Holy Spirit to reshape our characters and renew our hearts to be more like Christ and become His true disciples. Thus, maturity in Christ or becoming like Jesus is the ultimate goal of Christian spiritual formation. In a conference hosted by Ruth Barton, Chandler points out that the Church plays a crucial role in this process of helping individuals engage in community. Chandler emphasizes that “spiritual formation is not only a biblical and theological perspective, but also a developmental, relational and missional one” (Barton, R. H., D. J. Chandler, S. Y. Tan, J. TenElshof, and J. C. Wilhoit, 2014, 294).

Moreover, Willard stresses that the fruit of Christlikeness is kingdom living because the first indication of regeneration in the individual is her recognition that Jesus is the master of the universe, and this faith then expresses itself in becoming a disciple of Jesus. Willard argues that if we evangelize without making disciples who obey Christ, then there is little prospect for spiritual formation, “*but just a passing fad*” (Willard 2010, 45-60). From this perspective, the purpose of spiritual formation is twofold. It is to make disciples who reflect the glory of God by conforming to the image of Christ in dependence on the Holy Spirit and who carry out the mission of God to bring about reconciliation with God, people, themselves, and creation.

The Goal of Spiritual Formation

The goal of the transformation is to be like Christ through the Holy Spirit. It is not only for individual benefit but also for the sake of the gospel and mission. This is a major difference between Christianity and folk religion. We can see

Paul's model of spiritual formation as aiming at personal, community, and mission levels. Teo (2017) explains that "these three goals move God's influence from the personal level to the community level and thereafter, to the mission level where God's people will influence the greater environment" (Teo 2017, 142). Tang (2012) points out that "spiritual formation requires to engage with the world outside the churches and the seminaries and share the Gospel to where the people are" (Tang 2012, 266). Jesus promises his disciples that they will be empowered to carry out the mission (Acts 1:8). Therefore, the goal of spiritual formation must be to encourage the relationship and connect with one another between the three levels.

Nevertheless, Teo (2017) explains that "transformation at the community and missional levels can take place only when true spiritual formation has taken place at the personal level" (Teo 2017, 142). Reed (2010) also emphasizes that spiritual elements for formation include "a personal, solitary journey with God, faith formed in the community through healing relationships, and a mission call to serve the local church and the wider world through theological engagement" (Reed 2010, 115).

A good illustration of personal spiritual formation is provided by Roy Baumeister who asks the following four questions when he explores the meaning of life (Baumeister 1991, 29-57):

1. The question of identity: who am I?
2. The question of value: do I matter?
3. The question of purpose: why am I here?
4. The question of agency: can I make a difference?

In order to answer the above four questions, we have to establish who God is. The simple prayer of St. Francis of Assisi is profoundly theological and relational. He asks, “Who are you, Lord my God, and who am I?” We must help our students to discover that they are the beloved children of God and are called to be ambassadors of the King of kings. They must realize that by God’s grace, they can indeed make a difference in the church and in the world as they learn to participate in Christ’s work through the Spirit.

Obstacles to Spiritual Formation in the Chinese Churches in Panama

This section represents my personal observations and anecdotal reflections from my experiences on the challenges found in the Chinese Christian community in Panama regarding spiritual formation.

(1). Busyness

My experience of the Chinese culture since I was young has accentuated a tendency to be task-oriented. My husband and I shepherded a new church of 25 adults in inland Panama for a year and joined the Pastors Fellowship once a month. Many pastors, including ourselves, were solo pastors in our churches. Since there were no mature leaders in our church to share the workload at that time, we ended up doing most of the work ourselves. In our church, we did not have Sunday School, but instead, we had weekly Bible study meetings and prayer meetings. These tasks were in addition to our burdens of administration, budgeting, visiting ministries, and evangelism. Since we did not have mature spiritual leaders to share the workload, we were responsible for all the preaching and teaching. These duties took up much of our time, and we were very busy. I

observed and heard from other pastors who were also fully occupied with their church duties. In summary, we dedicate ourselves to our work.

The first-generation Chinese immigrants work seven days a week in the pursuit of money. It became apparent to me that the pastors among the Chinese people in Panama also experience similar levels of busyness, although for different goals. The intentional or unintentional image of a busy and faithful servant affected the spiritual formation of our students and the church members. The worldview of hard work is a virtue in the Chinese culture, but it needs to be explored further and transformed for a healthy Christian life. We as pastors need to demonstrate the virtues of leisure and Sabbath-keeping and their abilities to nurture our souls. The value system on work ethic in the Chinese community in Panama may be transformed with God's grace over time.

(2). The Difficulty of Getting Believers to Worship

The dedication to work in the Chinese community in Panama imposes difficulties on pastoral care in Chinese churches. Liu (2015) writes about these challenges. The first one is “the difficulty to get believers to Worship. This challenge is unique to the Chinese Diaspora culture in Panama” (Liu 2015, Pastor Ray's blog). Although we wanted to raise up more leaders to share the load of teaching ministry, the attendance of the weeknight meetings fluctuated. The attendance at the Bible study and prayer meeting was between zero and eight. At the core, I think it was a problem of priorities and values. New converts steeped in the Chinese work ethic in Panama for the pursuit of money and did not see the value of setting aside time to worship God.

I quickly realized that the North American programs based on inviting people to come to church did not work. We decided to try home visits to do a short Bible study with some willing members in their shops once a week. Since business in the afternoons is slow in Panama, we took three afternoons to take care of six units for a year. Each unit consisted of either one person or a family. This individual Bible study was energy-consuming and took up a lot of time in travelling. However, we were encouraged when a Bible study with a family gradually evolved to a fellowship gathering in their shop after they closed for the night. More Christians in the neighborhood joined in. Two people accepted salvation after doing the Bible study with us. However, this home visit/Bible study method was not cost-effective for a large church. Moreover, it depended totally on the pastors (missionaries) to run, which was not healthy. Therefore, my top priority is to raise more spiritual leaders.

(3). The priority setting

When my husband and I shepherded a church in Panama, the Sunday Service was held at 5:00 p.m. Therefore, many couples other than those running mini-supermarkets could come together after closing their shops. However, the time for Sunday worship competed with other activities. On a few occasions, congregants have told me that they would not be available for the church service because they needed to buy stocks in Panama City on Sunday. Or they said that they needed to take their children to a birthday party. In both situations, they said that the hours during the church service were the only available times for them to close their shops and go somewhere else. If members were invited to join a

birthday party, a housewarming party, or a wedding feast during the week, then they would close their shops and go. This is because giving face to others is regarded as very important in Chinese custom, and therefore priority is given to the family, friends, and relatives. They would accept the invitations and make up the loss of business hours on Sunday, excusing themselves from Sunday worship. Therefore, the Sunday worship attendance fluctuated a lot. The lowest turnout was eight people.

(4). The influence of Chinese folk region upon the Christian faith

Our students also need to understand the impact of Chinese folklore on Christian beliefs. Most of the Chinese in Central and South America have come from the rural areas of Guangdong Province. They are farmers and follow the Buddhist tradition to worship many gods. This is different from the Chinese-educated who are mainly atheists. When they came to Panama, they brought their deities and items of worship with them. It is common to see shrines of idols and other materials that represent good luck in many of the Chinese shops.

The associate professor at Nanjing Union Theological Seminary in China, Dr. Yongtao Chen, says that “folk religion has had a strong impact on Christianity in China” (Chen 2019, 258). He points out that “people in the rural areas have long been immersed in folk legends and histories of pagan deities. They, therefore, recognize similarities between the social behaviors of their folk religion and Christian activities. For example, they do believe in prayer and miracles” (2019, 260). Chen explains that “as the deities in Chinese folklore have differing degrees of powers according to their hierarchy, it is common for the pagan

believers to believe that the prayers of pastors are more effective than those of ordinary believers” (2019, 263).

I remember an event when a church sister brought me to visit a man who had been converted during an evangelical meeting a year ago. He went to our church for some time and then changed to another church. He had stopped going to any church by the time of our visit. He told us that he did not receive any help from the god in the first church to sort out his conflict with his wife, so he drove two hours to join the biggest church in Panama in the capital city with the hope that the god would fix his problem. In his mind, the god in a bigger church was more powerful than the god in a smaller church. After some time, the god in the biggest church still did not offer any help to him. Therefore, he stopped going to any church. It was obvious to me that his god(s) was not Christ. This event stimulated my interest to explore the impact of folk religion on the Christian faith.

Chen explains:

for believers in folk religion, if gods can meet their needs, they don't care who they really are. Chinese popular religion is strongly oriented toward success in human affairs and shows little tendency to regard the world of humanity as an insignificant appendage to a spiritual world (Chen 2019, 264).

The Chinese folk religion emphasizes pluralism motivated by seeking personal happiness. They do not mind accepting one more deity to receive more blessings.

The director of the Christian Study Centre on Chinese Religion and Culture at the Chinese University Hong Kong, Dr. F. T. Ying, points out that they try to combine Christianity “with folklore beliefs such as faith in destiny, worship of gods, and ancestor worship. Thus, the theology of the Trinity is beyond the

cognitive abilities of most Chinese country folk, who used to believe in the pluralism of deities” (Ying 2001, 304). Therefore, we must take these Chinese cultural realities into account when teaching the basic doctrines of Christianity and clarifying the uniqueness of the Christian faith. Knowing God both cognitively and experientially is the foundation that must guide evangelism in Central and South America.

(5). Low interest in spiritual growth

Another obstacle in these churches is that some members lack interest in growing in Christ. I believe the aforesaid four factors have influenced the spiritual appetite for transformation to some extent. The generally low interest in transformation (spiritual formation) in the local church has resulted in poor appetites for spiritual disciplines among our students. We believe that authentic spiritual transformation will include both contemplation and action, as Richard Rohr, the founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation, emphasizes: “It does not matter which end we begin with; it cannot be regarded as a healthy spiritual life if only one side is emphasized” (Rohr 2016). Moreover, as one of our students mentioned, Chinese Christians in Panama have probably not been taught about the value of “quiet time.” Silence and solitude are hardly taught and practiced in the church, and silent retreats are unheard of.

The Consideration of Designing a Spiritual Formation Model in Theological Education

Given the theological atmosphere and the Chinese mentality in the Chinese church in Central and South America, I began looking for ways to encourage the transformation of the whole person. I think the Bible School

teaches a solid Bible knowledge and the basic doctrines to our students. Therefore, I will teach spiritual formation to facilitate the students’ experiential knowledge of God and themselves through the integration of spiritual disciplines, psychology, art, bodywork, and roleplay. The hope is that this will help the students to cultivate an intimate relationship with God by hearing Him and becoming aware of His presence. They will then be able to use these skills as resources to cope with the stresses and challenges in life. As McGrath points out, since we cannot hope to produce people of wisdom during a brief time at any Bible School or seminary, “the acquisition of wisdom needs mentors rather than just lecturers” (McGrath 2011). In other words, the students need people to help them make connections between theology and life. Therefore, we are considering providing a two-pronged learning strategy in both the classroom and communal life settings. The formal teaching of biblical-theological education and spiritual formation will aim to correct the faulty belief in cheap grace. The communal life setting will facilitate inner transformation through loving service, suffering, and forgiveness. I aim at helping my students gain wisdom by taking small steps to know God, themselves, and other people while they are living together at the Bible School.

Chart 1 describes my plan for a spiritual formation curriculum to be given in a four-year cycle since the bachelor’s degree takes four years to complete. I want to integrate the thinking, being, and actions into the curriculum.

Chart 1. The Four Modules of the Spiritual Formation Model

Module 1	The Study of the Word
Module 2	The Knowledge of Self
Module 3	The Practice of Spiritual Disciplines
Module 4	The Understanding of Culture in Missionary Context

I created the spiritual formation curriculum model from my teaching experience with my students, the literature of Christian education, and my own spiritual formation in seminary settings. I also researched curriculum design from other East-Asian theological seminaries, as I noticed that there are factors among the Chinese cultures that are nuanced differently and should be catered to carefully. The details of these developments will be explained in the next section.

For the classroom teaching, Mulholland (Mulholland 1985, 22-24) points out that many Christians come to the Bible to search for certain Biblical texts to support their own secular worldview. He challenges students not to read into the text, but to instead set aside “preconceived ideas and thoughts about the text.” Only by setting aside their agendas can someone truly be shaped by the Word. This process means to “allow Scripture to master them rather than trying to master Scripture” (Mulholland 1985, 49-51).

I summarize the differences between the two types of reading approaches from Mulholland’s book (1985, 47-60) in Chart 2.

Chart 2. The Characteristics of Informational and Formational Readings

Informational Reading	Formational Reading
Quick reading to cover as much as possible (p.49).	Careful reading of small portions of the text, reading in-depth (p.51).
Master the Word; control it (p.50).	Become a servant of the Word; receive it (p.54).
Manipulate the text for our intentions (p.50).	Be formed and transformed by the text (p.54).
Analytically and critically read through our perceptions or needs (p.50).	Be with the Word humbly and willingly (p.56).
Use to problem-solve or as an instructional manual (p.50).	Use to be open to the God of mystery who addresses us (p.57).

However, Pazmiño (2010) emphasizes that information is necessary to understand the Christian truth. He expounds that “Christian formation and

transformation rely upon an essential reservoir of Christian truth, knowledge, and wisdom that can be educationally named as information” (2010, 358). Wilhoit (2008) points out that “Spiritual formation needs both informational teaching and formational teaching. The former helps ground one in the facts of the Christian story, the latter helps one live out the truth of the Christian gospel” (Wilhoit 2008, 123). Therefore, spiritual growth needs both informational reading and formational reading. However, Pazmiño (2010, 363) warns that “A focus on information alone in formal education can be sterile.” Thus, we have to pay attention to the danger of getting information from the Bible without an intention to have a relationship with God.

We do not need to re-invent the wheel to engage with Scriptures at a deeper level for formation. There is an ancient spiritual practice of sacred reading, such as *Lectio Divina*, which can help us be formed by the Scriptures. To read in this ancient way is to not get the information quickly but to pray with the Scriptures: “It is to read in such a way that one connects with a presence that is the ultimate source of meaning and an unspoken answer to human questions” (Studzinski 2009, 160). Therefore, I try to integrate the informational and formational readings in my curriculum, and I alert my students to avoid the pitfalls of the informational reading. All Modules will employ both informational and formational approaches. However, Module one will lean on the side of informational reading. Module two and four will use both approaches equally. Modules three will adopt the formational approach. These modules will make up the four-year cycle of the spiritual formation curriculum for ABSCSA.

A Vision of a Combination of Mind and Heart

In the classroom, our goal in spiritual formation is to be able to listen to God with heart and mind and not to polarize the intellect and affections. When I started teaching the Spiritual Formation course in 2019, I taught the Foundation of Christian Spirituality in the first semester. However, I discovered that the students did not understand the biblical text well, so I modified the course content to teach them to learn to fish rather than enjoy a delicious meal of fish prepared by the teachers. In the second semester, I taught the first step of observation in the OIA (Observation, Interpretation, and Application) Bible study method. I incorporated games and drawings to sharpen the students' observation skills. The students responded very well and reported that the skills helped them to have more interest in reading the Bible on their own. In the third semester, I carried on teaching the skills of interpretation and application, incorporating more time for reflection and discussion. They learned very well and were delighted to discover the hidden treasures in the Scriptures that they had not been able to unlock by themselves. It helped me realize that informational teaching was fundamental for beginners. Therefore, the classroom experience stimulated me to develop a Spiritual Formation model with both informational and formational teaching.

In the future, I will focus on teaching Bible study skills in Module one of the Spiritual Formation model. The students will learn inductive Bible study skills in the first two semesters with both intellect and also artwork, games, and imaginations. In the third semester, I will teach the students the skills of leading a Bible study. It will equip them to spread the joy of Bible studies and will help

train church leaders to lead Bible studies with the view of building up healthy and vibrant local churches in Central and South America (2 Timothy 2:2).

Labosier and Labosier's experience in teaching spiritual formation in seminary settings gave me insight into the following four areas as I created my spiritual formation design in my context: (1) Spiritual Formation requires equipping the whole person for ministry (2018, 134), (2) Spiritual Formation requires an integrated curriculum (2018, 135), (3) Spiritual Formation requires a commitment to and from the local churches (2018, 137), and (4) Spiritual Formation requires an active dependence upon God (2018, 139).

Spiritual Formation Requires Equipping the Whole Person for Ministry

This Spiritual Formation model emphasizes the importance of a proper balance of the mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of the human being. Analytical Bible study and praying with Scripture helps students to develop both the mind and the heart. In this model, I also integrate psychology and spirituality to help our students to understand and pray about their personal histories so that God's grace and power can heal their wounds and change what needs to be changed.

The students are instructed to submit their daily devotional journal writings every week. I provide written feedback to their written meditation. Moreover, a free counselling service is also available to cater to the students' needs.

Spiritual Formation Requires an Integrated Curriculum

I am firmly committed to the importance of integrating a curriculum that incorporates thinking, being, and doing. In other words, students will be trained to use their head, heart, and hands. The ABSCSA’s primary curriculum offers seven categories of courses for the bachelor’s degree which require 160 credit hours for graduation, including six credit hours from the courses of Spiritual Formation’s curriculum. The Spiritual Formation curriculum model is designed to inter-relate with the rest of the school’s curriculum, as shown in Chart 3.

Chart 3. The Relationship Between the Primary Curriculum and the Curriculum of Spiritual Model

Category of the Bible School’s Primary curriculum	The Content of the Primary Curriculum	Percentage of each Category	The Curriculum of the Spiritual Formation Model
1	Bible Studies	20%	Module 1
2	Theological Studies	12%;	
3	Christian Education	12%	Module 3
4	Missiology	12%;	Module 4
5	Pastoral Practical Studies	14%;	Module 2
6	Music and Language	12%	
7	Social Science	3%	
Selective	Across Seven Categories	15%	
Total		100%	

Some spiritual disciplines, such as silence, solitude, and spiritual journaling, would be introduced in year one and practiced throughout the four years. Hopefully, the habit of daily devotions and spiritual journaling will continue to help the students to deepen their relationships with God even after graduation. At the end of the four-year program, our students will have begun to

see fresh ways in which spiritual formation is related to biblical studies, theology, pastoral care, and ministerial skills. Our hope is that this will stimulate a ripple effect in the development of person, community, and mission.

Spiritual Formation Requires a Commitment to and from the Local Churches

The vision and mission of the ABSCSA is to train ministers who will effectively serve the churches in Central and South America. Therefore, the school deliberately seeks to reach out and establish vital relationships with local churches. We hope to encourage the churches to provide believers with spiritual and ministry training before entering the Bible school as three to four years of theological education does not always change the effects of a person's background. This task can take several decades. Thus, our goal is to work with the churches to cultivate the student's spiritual life even before Bible school.

If there are more connections between the Bible school and the churches before the students enter the Bible School, it might improve the standard of our theological education. Therefore, we teach courses in a Sunday school format for local Chinese churches and offer overseas theological courses, including the Spiritual Formation, in Jamaica, Mexico, and Costa Rica.

Spiritual Formation Requires an Active Dependence Upon God

Greenman (2010, 23-35) and Willard (2010, 45-60) define Spiritual Formation as being "through the work of the Holy Spirit" and "form[ed] by the Divine Spirit." We recognize that the key to success in any spiritual formation process involves God's grace. Life formation cannot be achieved by human effort; rather, it needs to be passively transformed by the Holy Spirit (Romans 12:2). Tan

(2018) points out that “if practicing spiritual discipline or submitting to a spiritual journal are done for the sake of home assignments, prayer, for the students, would become another action item on their ‘to-do list’ instead of a yearning desire for God.” Tan warns that “it would simply add to their stress as they try to cope with a long list of demands in life and theological education” (Tan 2018, 167). It is a hard lesson for our students, and for many committed Christians, to learn that being holy is not achieved by striving but by surrendering to and depending on God.

The Proposed Alternative Teaching Methodology

In general, the Chinese students that come to us are accustomed to a banking style of learning information. That is, they are familiar with a lecture style, whereby they sit in a classroom and receive information from a teacher without much reflection or communal discussions. For adult learners, however, experiential learning is much more effective than this banking style (Freire 1995, 52). Jarvis explains that “learning is a combination of processes whereby whole persons construct experiences of situations and transform them into knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs, values, emotions, and the body senses, and integrate the outcomes into their own biographies” (Jarvis 2004, 111). Thus, for my model, I have adopted a reflective component alongside practice, artwork, role play, movement, and discussion in the learning process. Lastly, I want them to give me feedback to enable me to modify or improve the contents in the future. I want to learn from them too. I have discovered that the only way to teach Spiritual Formation effectively is to grow alongside our students. Therefore, I plan to

create an extensive method of feedback so that the students can help me improve the curriculum.

The Model of Spiritual Formation Curriculum

In the classroom setting, the designed Spiritual Formation curriculum integrates the three areas of “knowledge, being, and doing” as follows:

The Focus of Experiential Knowledge

As we study the performance of our alumni, we have found that their level of theological education is not directly proportional to the success or failure of their work. This may be influenced by many factors, such as personal characteristics, interpersonal relationships, teamwork abilities, and family responsibilities. If we want to raise up local pastors out of the Chinese congregations in Central and South America, and if we want them to be torches of light, our students must master authentic Biblical knowledge for intellectual understanding and character formation. The students must have a desire for God’s word and be open to the Holy Spirit for transformation. This must combine head and heart knowledge. The Spiritual Formation model will teach them to read the Bible for information and formation to have intimacy with God through hearing Him and becoming aware of His presence in their lives.

I have discovered that many of our new students do not have any Bible study skills. Thus, Module one of the Spiritual Formation model teaches these skills so that they can read and understand the Bible on their own. To do this, the model incorporates games, drawing, and imagination to exercise their affections. This process aims to move them from the traditional banking style of learning to a

self-directed questioning style of Bible study. It can also help them develop an interactive Bible study method that they can use to stimulate the interest of a Bible study group and facilitate genuine learning among the members when they serve the local churches.

The Focus of Being

Palmer (1983) explains in his book *To Know as We Are Known* that the learning method of acquiring objective knowledge through the transmission of facts and reasons turns objects of our learning into something we can master for our own use. The latter affects our personalities, making us self-centered and self-serving (Palmer 1983, 56). Mulholland describes a spiritual journey from the false self (our self-referenced mode of being) and religious false self (our ideal spiritual image) into the true self (a Christ-centered mode of being). He explains that “the ‘false self’ seeks identity, meaning, value, and purpose outside of God” (Mulholland 2006, 218-219).

However, “the true-life, genuine identity, deepest meaning, fullest purpose, and the ultimate value are in an intimate, loving union with God” (Mulholland 2006, 219-220). Paul explicitly points out that zeal for God is not necessarily spiritual. The Pharisees wanted to establish their own righteousness, and they did not submit to the righteousness of God (Romans 10: 2-3); such striving only builds up the false religious self. Mulholland explains at great length in his book that “whenever we attempt to have God in our life on our terms, we are a religious false self” (Mulholland 2006, 455). Thus, having an intimate relationship with God is the core of a healthy spiritual life. An understanding of

oneself and one's own hidden agendas is important for spiritual and personal formation. Since I also teach counselling courses at the school, I am able to integrate the two streams of spirituality and psychotherapeutic knowledge and skills to achieve a holistic character formation.

I strongly support the notion that one-on-one spiritual guidance or spiritual direction is much needed to cultivate the individuals' relationship with God. It counteracts the norm of skimming the surface; that is, growth without depth. I believe that the four-year bachelor's degree is only a means to an end, and that spiritual growth will carry on until our last breath since spiritual growth cannot occur at the speed of mass production (Reese and Loane 2012, 398-484). In the Spiritual Formation course, practicing traditional spiritual disciplines such as *Lectio Divina* and gospel contemplation are used as tools to cultivate one's spiritual life. Last year, the students were instructed to write a daily spiritual journal and submit it to me once a week. The original goal of journal keeping was to help them cultivate the habit of daily devotion. They could choose any style to do it: picking out a book of the Bible for their devotion chapter by chapter or section by section, picking passages freely, or using a devotional app. The by-product of journal keeping was to help them write daily and freely to overcome their fear of writing since many people in the community did not have the habits of reading and writing. A student told me that after writing his devotional journal for a year, he noticed that his attitude towards people changed to be gentler, and he believed that it was the work of the Holy Spirit through his daily devotions. Gradually, I noticed that reading their journals helped me know them more

intimately. It made my teaching to them become more relevant and effective. Throughout the program, they are expected to continue this practice. In return, I ask questions, give encouragement, offer challenges, and provide spiritual guidance when necessary.

The Focus of Doing

Apart from having sound Biblical knowledge, theological training, and solid spiritual disciplines, having good interpersonal relationships is also important for both leadership/discipleship training and effective teamwork. Reese and Loane (2012, 267) point out that leadership formation is an interpersonal investment. They advise mentors to “pay attention to and join in what God is already up to in people’s lives by coming alongside others as a guide and a friend” (Reese and Loane 2012, 152). In my new model of the Spiritual Formation course, I will make use of the communal living arrangement at the college as a training ground for discipleship.

In Panama, most Chinese Christians are engaged in merchandising and operate small to medium-sized shops. Because they are their own bosses and are used to making decisions on their own, it is hard for them to be humble and to serve and submit to their peers and non-authority figures. They do respect teachers and pastors and any person in authority, however. Since I believe that God is more concerned with our characters than with our achievements and productivity, character formation is the aim of the Spiritual Formation course. When the local students come to live together under the same roof as others five days a week

(seven days a week for the overseas students) at the Bible school can refine characters.

Robert Coleman (2010, 21) emphasizes that God uses people, not programs. He stresses that discipleship is not about a functional program for completing workbooks and classes because knowledge itself does not make a disciple. Discipleship requires influence through association with a mentor. Paul wanted Timothy to be an example for believers (1 Timothy 4: 12-13), and Paul himself was an example. My husband and I are teachers and wardens at the school, and we share a communal life with the students at the Bible school. It gives us the opportunity for close association with the students. I believe that Biblical knowledge and prayer are nothing if they are not put into practice. Since coming to live at the school, I have been able to demonstrate how to lead and serve through teaching, manual work inside and outside the school building, consistent morning times of devotions, and regular prayer life.

I will teach my students how to serve a congregation from the pulpit and through a spirit of willing service, using their capable skills for daily challenges. Because the sizes of the Chinese churches in Central and South America vary from 10 to 50 people, the pastors of these churches must be able to perform a variety of duties, from preaching, to cooking, to cleaning. Without a humble spirit and a willing heart, the pastor will not be able to persevere in fulfilling God's calling. Living a communal life is an excellent opportunity to cultivate Christian character because communal life requires forbearing, sacrifice, and forgiveness.

Only by becoming humble servants can the students become servant masters in their ministries after they graduate.

The Model and Curriculum for a Four-year Cycle at the Alliance Bible School of Central and South America

My Spiritual Formation model is formed in the context of the faith community in the Chinese diaspora community. We are not only thinking beings, neither are we feeling beings. Therefore, the model aims at facilitating experiential knowledge with a combination of heart and mind. Below is a concise description of the four Modules, each of which will take a year. For more details, please refer to Appendix 17, which contains the course outlines.

Module One – Word Focus

Gordon T. Smith (1996) points out that spiritual formation comes through the rigorous study of Scripture. He emphasizes that character formation and growth in wisdom are ultimately the fruit of truth. Thus, the role of Scripture is central (Smith 1996, 4). I will use both informational and formational approaches to teach my students inductive Bible study skills by doing numerous exercises in the class, including artwork, reflection, and games to help the students connect the mind with the heart. After learning how to read the Bible, they will learn the skills of asking relevant questions when leading a useful and interesting Bible study. Eventually, they will learn not only how to lead a successful Bible study group, but to also teach others to do Bible study.

Module Two – Self-knowledge Focus

In this Module, I will cover family of origin, emotional growth, basic listening skills, personality development, and Christian formation. I will also provide a brief introduction to developmental psychology and the healing of developmental wounds. There will be artwork, bodywork, and role play for this Module to facilitate experiential knowledge to connect the head and the heart.

John Calvin (The Institutes 2008) says that the double knowledge of knowing God and self is important for Christians' spiritual growth. Many spiritual writers agree that a spiritually mature person is also emotionally mature (Scazzero 2006, 178-179). Indeed, a Christlike person cannot be emotionally immature. Many careers are sabotaged because of unresolved emotional baggage that comes to the surface mid-life or mid-career. Therefore, we need to understand our motivations and learn how to deal with disappointment and failure to be liberated from the entanglement of the false self.

Module Three – Spiritual Disciplines Focus

Historically, spiritual disciplines or practices have been divided into three areas: the inward, the outward, and the corporate domains (Foster 1989). Maddix summarizes the relationship between spiritual disciplines and spiritual formation as follows:

the focus in the inward domain is on the transformation and development of the inner aspects of the human person. Relevant practices include prayer, scripture reading, meditation, silence, artwork, fasting, and journaling. The focus in the outward domain is on the social and behavioral aspects of spiritual formation (Maddix 2010, 261).

We know that spiritual disciplines are helpful to orient a person to God for spiritual growth. The first spiritual practice I chose was silence. When I started teaching the Spiritual Formation course at the school in 2018, I tried five to fifteen minutes of silent prayer at the beginning of each class in the Bible study skill course. Some students responded very well. Others found it difficult at first but gradually welcomed the silence as a tool to help them get in touch with their deeper self and listen to God more clearly. In my model, I will keep the practice of silence throughout the four years of the program. Hopefully, the students will voluntarily choose to practice silence for 20 minutes each day. As spiritual journaling will also be an ongoing practice for four years, my responses to the student journals will be a form of informal spiritual direction. Engaging in spiritual direction is my final goal, and at the moment, I am having difficulty convincing the Principal of the Bible School to allow me to do this with the students since he thinks this is primarily the role of ordained pastors.

In Module three, I will focus on the inward domain. The outward and corporate domains will be dealt with in Module 4. I will guide the students to practice several spiritual disciplines, such as *Lectio Divina*, gospel contemplation, centering prayer, and the prayer of Examen. A reflection paper on their learning experience will be required at the end of the semester. This spiritual practice will provide the participants with an opportunity to encounter God in a new and living way. Hopefully, it will whet the appetite of the students and enable them to establish stable patterns and habits of knowing the grace of God.

Module Four – Mission Focus

We aim to enrich the students' understanding of world cultures and to expand their horizons to see beyond their church walls by teaching them the strategies of evangelism and church planting. In this Module, *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* (Winter and Hawthorne 2006) will be used as a textbook as it covers theology of mission, and the role of culture in mission. This Module will also cover spiritual warfare and the practice of deliverance, since these skills are necessary for understanding how to liberate people on the mission field from demonic influence. Together with the counselling training of inner healing from other courses, our graduates will be an instrument used by God through the guidance of the Holy Spirit to bring healing to the broken world. Prayer practice is critical in this Module; without prayer and a close relationship with God, any human effort would be in vain in the spiritual battle they will face on the mission field.

Summary

Greenman defines spiritual formation as “an ongoing process for Christians” (2010, 24). It addresses character development and personal growth. Our Spiritual Formation course will be designed and taught not only for personal growth but also for the glory of God and the advancement of God's kingdom. I know that it is difficult to achieve significant spiritual and character transformation within the limited time of theological education at the ABSCSA, but I hope I can lay a solid foundation and cultivate good habits in the students.

Spiritual growth requires both head and heart, contemplation and action, theology and experience.

This four-year Spiritual Formation curriculum model aims to help the students to acquire a sense of the “big picture” of life that the gospel offers and to develop a strong sense of identity and purpose and the ability to make a difference to community and mission on behalf of Christ. Therefore, the modules are designed to help the students to grasp the experiential knowledge of God and themselves. Also, the modules will enable them to be aware of God’s presence as an intimate companion in their days as students. They will learn to nurture the intimacy with God in their future to encounter ups and downs over their lifetime of ministry.

I hope to encourage more Christians in Chinese churches to grow spiritually before taking the seminary education by increasing their awareness of God’s presence. I took a small part of Module three’s Spiritual Disciplines Focus for my field research in the Iglesia Evangelica China De Panama (IECDP) to test the effect of *Lectio Divina* within the Panamanian Chinese cultural diaspora context.

CHAPTER IV:
FIELD RESEARCH PROJECT-EXPLORING THE EFFECT
OF PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE OF THE IGLESIA
EVANGELICA CHINA DE PANAMA

According to the report of the 6th Pan Am CCOWE Conference (Gospel Operation International Canada Office 2019, 2), “the number of Christians in Panama was 1,000 in 2019, about 0.3% of the Chinese population in Panama. Chinese churches in Panama have also increased to 20 over 40-plus years, with different denominations. The average number of Sunday worship attendances is about 50 people, including adults and children.” However, some congregations did not have pastors, and many of them were still only shepherded by missionaries (Gospel Operation International Canada Office 2019, 2). The need to raise more committed church leaders and full-time local pastors was a recurring theme during the first to the sixth Pan Am Chinese Congress of World Evangelism Conferences which took place between 2000 and 2019 (Gospel Operation International, 2019).

Opportunity or Problem

A general problem in Chinese churches throughout Latin America is the lack of spiritually mature leaders to lead the local churches (Chinese Christian Mission, n.d.). The members cannot help with the teaching ministry and few

respond to the call to enter full-time ministry to serve God. Therefore, the teaching responsibilities lie heavily on the pastors' shoulders (Lee 2008, 2). The Alliance Bible School of Central and South America (ABSCSA) in Panama was established in 2000 to respond to the call to train Chinese Christians from differing continents to shepherd Chinese churches in Central and South America (The History of ABSCSA, n.d.). However, during my five years of service at ABSCSA, I observed that the school faced the challenge of not being able to attract enough Christians to enroll in our programs. This was partly due to the fact that the majority of congregants were not confident in their ability to serve God in the full-time ministry and partly due to the pressure placed on first-generation immigrants to achieve financial success. These two factors have had a slight causal relationship between them.

The purpose of the field research was to explore whether encounters with God through the practice of praying with Scriptures would facilitate the participants' spiritual growth. The reason for doing the research in a church setting instead of at the Bible School was because I wanted to find out if praying with Scriptures could be a tool to enhance the spiritual formation of believers in the Panama Chinese Christian community. If practicing praying with Scriptures encouraged intimacy with God through hearing God and being aware of His presence, it would be a source to promote spiritual growth for raising church leaders .

Response or Innovation

In order to target the group identified above, I considered that most of the first-generation Chinese Christians in Panama had a junior high school education. However, some had not even completed their primary school education. Therefore, I chose to introduce the practice of praying with Scriptures and utilize *Lectio Divina* as the primary vehicle for prayer encounters with God. This practice addresses the problem because it was developed in ancient monasteries where many monks were illiterate and unable to read the texts, relying instead on hearing the Scriptures. *Lectio Divina* is a form of Biblical meditation. It is a prayer method by which a person listens with their heart to God's Word in the Scriptures (Loyola House n.d.). It requires hearing and interacting with the Word (2 Tim 3:16-17): "It could potentially bring healing to those wounded emotionally or blinded by sin" (Studzinski 2009, 338 & 791). My personal experience of the regular practice of praying with Scripture is that it has enabled me to hear God and cultivate intimacy with Him. It has become important for my spiritual formation and life transformation.

Little study has been conducted on using *Lectio Divina* to enhance believers' spiritual formation in the Panama Chinese Christian community. This study was the first ever formal research project conducted in this context. The research question for this project was: "Will the prayer encounter with God through the practice of praying with Scripture facilitate the participants' capacities to hear God and increase awareness of His presence?" Chart 4 contains the definitions of key terms used in this field research project.

Chart 4 Definition of Key Terms

Awareness of God's Presence	This means that “we pay attention to God in watching over our hearts in terms of our energy, emotions, and life experience that points to God, and waiting upon the slight directive God communicates through the situations of daily life” (Muto and van Kaam 1993, 52).
Biblical Meditation	“The word meditation comes from the Latin word <i>meditārī</i> , which has a range of meanings, including to reflect on, to study, and to practice. Biblical meditation is to come to the Scriptures with the expectation of hearing God speak through His Word since God invites us to listen” (Veltri, 1996, 1). <i>Lectio Divina</i> is one method of Biblical meditation found in the Rule of St. Benedict (Benedict 1949, 48).
Centering Exercises	“Means such as deep breathing, the Jesus prayer, meditative walking, body scan, and meditative music to still the distracted mind to come to quiet before God for meditation” (Green 2000, 62-65).
Descriptive Statistics	“Descriptive statistics are used to describe, show, and summarize what is or what the data shows in a study. They provide simple summaries about the sample and the measures” (Trochim, M.K., Conjoint.ly https://conjointly.com/kb/descriptive-statistics/)
Encounter with God	According to the Cambridge Dictionary, “an encounter is a meeting with someone, especially one that happens by chance.” The Bible indicates that God meets different people in different ways, which leads to a radical change in intimacy with God and life direction.
Hearing God	From the Bible, examples of hearing God are “a sacred experience, a subjective hearing between God and a listener through a variety of means, such as the Scriptures, hymns and songs, the nature, pictures, spiritual readings, life situations, suffering, sermons, prayers” (Huggett 1986, 74- 114, 125, 137). More examples include “angels, dreams, visions, audible voices, hunches, impressions, body senses and the spiritual five senses” (Deere 2001, 48-59).
Intimacy with God	“Intimacy is shared experiences in a variety of dimensions such as spiritual, emotional, intellectual, vocational, creational, recreational and social justice dimensions” (Benner 2002, 72). “There are different degrees of intimacy with God” (Chan1998, 127) Intimacy with God is experienced as a child to Father (Matthew 6:9-13), a brother to Jesus (Mark 3:34-35), a friend to Jesus (John 15:12-15), and a spouse to God as a loving husband (Hosea 2:19). “The contemplative tradition often uses the analogy of lovers to explain intimacy with God” (Chan 1998, 52).

Supervision, Permission, and Access

I obtained access to Iglesia Evangelica China de Panama (IECDP) through the vice-principal of the Bible School, who was also the senior pastor of IECDP. I was familiar with the organization as I had been a guest preacher in the church and occasionally taught at their Sunday school. Additional approvals from the church's board and the permission of both the senior pastor and the teaching pastor to carry out the research project formally were received ([Appendix 10](#)). Classes were held via Zoom rather than in person because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The teaching pastor hosted the ten Zoom meetings and participated in the practice of praying with Scriptures, but she did not intervene in the teaching process nor did she participate in the group discussions or individual interviews.

The Context of the Project

The early Chinese evangelical churches in Panama were planted by missionaries from the Chinese Christian Mission, Baptist, Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA), and Evangelical Free Church Mission denominations. These missionaries brought their home church styles to the mission field, including their worship styles, church structures, and distinctive spiritual formation models. During my six years in Central and South America, I observed that spiritual formation in the Chinese churches was developed through fellowship activities, Bible study groups, Sunday school teaching, and Sunday sermons. The focus of spiritual formation in Chinese churches has been on the cognitive understanding of the Bible, seldom touching the emotional dimension of human beings. However, we learn from both the Old Testament and the New

Testament that emotions, or feelings, are a crucial part of being able to have a relationship with God.

I read that many Chinese Christians in Panama experienced spiritual and psychological insufficiencies caused by work pressure, family responsibilities, marital relationship conflicts, parenting challenges (Tsang 2009, 30-32), socio-cultural challenges (Siu 2005, 33-85), and the high crime rate (U.S. Department of State Bureau of Diplomatic Security; Overseas Security Advisory Council 2020). I also observed how fragmented and distracted people could be due to their perpetual busyness. I felt it was necessary to motivate them to nurture an intimate relationship with God and build resources to cope with the stresses of life. My experience in spiritual direction for myself and my directees taught me that having an encounter with God through hearing His voice and being aware of His presence touched hearts deeply and evoked a grateful response to His love and commands. Encountering God stimulates our desire to know and love Him more; thus, intimacy with God encourages life transformation. Hence, I perceived a need to explore another form of spiritual formation in the Panama-Chinese Christian community, one that would connect the head and the heart.

This research project was conducted in Iglesia Evangelica China de Panama (IECDP). My husband and I had attended this church for Sunday worship for five years. We knew from the church bulletins that the average number of Sunday attendees from the Chinese and Spanish-speaking congregations was 130 and 50 adults respectively. The majority of the Chinese-speaking congregants were first-generation immigrants. There was also a young adult fellowship that

consisted of one-and-a-half generation immigrants. Some of these were university graduates. The teenagers and second-generation Chinese young adults in this church spoke only Spanish; for this reason, they were not recruited for the research.

Models and Other Resources

I brought my personal model of spiritual formation to this research, as described in my spiritual autobiography and Spiritual Formation model. Through my past personal spiritual experience of praying with Scripture, such as *Lectio Divina* and gospel contemplation, I deeply experienced God's love and the healing of emotional wounds, and this fostered my development in multidimensional spiritual formations involving my spirit, emotions, relationships, intellect, vocation, physical health, and resource (Chandler 2014, 17). As a practicing certified spiritual director in Canada, I witnessed transformative prayer encounters in the lives of my directees through praying with Scripture. Thus, I wanted to test whether this effect would also apply to the Chinese Christian community in Panama.

Theological and Biblical Foundation of Lectio Divina

When I received my eight-month discipleship training in my younger Christian days in the 1980s, I was taught to pray to God in four steps: adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication (ACTS). It was a common teaching back then for new Christians to learn to pray like this. It is still taught to new believers in many Chinese churches today. This method is good to remind us of the elements of prayer. However, the focus of the four steps is mainly on speaking

to God. In my experience, believers are rarely taught about listening to God in prayer. The Bible tells us that God invites us to listen (Deut. 6:3–4; 1 King 19:11–13; Ps. 32:8–9; Isaiah 30:21; 55:3; Matt. 11:15; John 10:27). In the Bible, prayer is not portrayed as a one-dimensional monologue in which human beings address a deity, as in the idol-worship of the Chinese folk religion. It is rather portrayed as a two-way communication between the Creator and His beloved creatures (Gen. 18:17, 23–33; Exodus 3: 4:17; 1 Kings 19: 12–18). We learn from the Bible that God can communicate with us in many different ways. For example, we can hear His messages to us through dreams (Gen. 37; Daniel 2; 4), visions (Daniel 7; 8; 10), nature (Ps. 8; 19), the events and experiences of our lives (Exodus 3:1–22; Acts 16:6–10), Scripture (Ps. 119: 130, 2 Timothy 3:16), and other people, such as prophets, teachers (Acts 18:26), and people in the Christian community (Acts 9:14–19). God not only invites us to listen to His voice; He also desires to hear us in every situation (Ps. 5:3; 54:2; 55:17; 86:12; 88:13; 138:1–4; Malachi 3:16; Phi. 3:6).

Historical and Literary Foundations

We do not need to reinvent the wheel to engage in two-way communication with God. There is an ancient spiritual practice of praying with Scriptures, *Lectio Divina*, to help us. The primary reference to *Lectio Divina* is found in the Rule of St. Benedict (Benedict 1949, 48). It was developed as a key form of meditation in the monasteries and is translated as “holy reading,” “meditative reading,” or as “spiritual reading” (Casey 1996, vi).

The Ladder of Monks (Scala Claustralium) by Guigo II (ca.1115- ca.1198) is considered the first description of methodical prayer in the Western mystical tradition since the early Middle Ages (Guigo II 2012, 3). Guigo II divided *Lectio Divina* into four elements. Wilhoit and Howard summarize the practice of *Lectio Divina* as a natural process, beginning with listening to the Scriptures with the heart (*lectio*). One then moves to the pondering or reflection of the heart (*meditatio*), to the response of the heart (*oratio*), and finally to the special quiet rest in God (*contemplatio*) (Wilhoit & Howard 2012, 215-218). Hence, *Lectio Divina* is a personal encounter with God through the Scriptures that establishes a dialogue between the reader and God.

John Veltri is of the opinion that “this method would better be called ‘prayer of the listening heart’ because the *lectio* of *Lectio Divina* is a listening with the heart” (Veltri 1996, 40). Veltri teaches that *Lectio Divina* is done slowly, like reading a love letter. We read and re-read the passage lovingly and slowly to allow the words and phrases to wash over us and enter into us. Veltri says, “When we hear a word or a phrase that resonates deeply, we stay with it, savor it, and allow the fullness of it to penetrate our being, we respond authentically and spontaneously as in a dialogue” (Veltri 1996, 40).

The unknown author (1996) of *The Cloud of Unknowing* emphasizes that “without reading or hearing God’s word, a man who is spiritually blind on account of habitual sin is simply unable to see the foul stain on his conscience” (Johnson 1996, 82). For this reason, the author recommends *Lectio Divina* for both beginners and more advanced contemplatives (Johnson 1996, 83). Howard

carries out a historical exploration of *Lectio Divina* to help evangelicals appreciate their heritage in the Word. He concludes that *Lectio Divina* is not alien but kindred to the evangelical faith, and that both the ancient *Lectio Divina* practice and evangelical Bible reading focus on spiritual growth in order to be more Christlike (Howard 2012, 57).

Methodology and Methods

This section comprises a description of the design and procedures used in this study. I aim to explore the effect of *Lectio Divina* on the participants in the Panamanian context of this particular Chinese church.

Field

This research project was held in Iglesia Evangelica China de Panama (IECDP). Most of the Chinese congregants are first-generation immigrants with junior high school education. They speak Hakka and Cantonese dialects, a little bit of Mandarin and Spanish, and no English at all. There is a Youth Fellowship with 30 members in the Chinese congregation who can read Spanish, English, and a little bit of Chinese. However, they can speak fluent Spanish, English, Hakka, Cantonese, and Mandarin. This church is diligent in evangelizing and has planted three churches in other cities in Panama over the past 25 years and recently in Colombia.

This research project was announced with the other Sunday school courses in the church bulletin in August 2020 for the third semester between September and December. (Appendix 1). I had no involvement with the recruitment process. The participants enrolled in the program directly with the teaching pastor. When I

participated in Sunday School as a student in this church a few years prior, I observed the numbers in each class were usually under ten, and the attendance was not consistent. I was worried that I might not get enough participants in the research project. I asked the Lord to give me at least six participants.

In mid-March, the Panamanian government-imposed nationwide movement restrictions to fight against the pandemic. Shops were closed unless for essential services like super-markets, automobile repair, and drug stores. All church activities including worship, Sunday School, Fellowship gatherings, and prayer meetings were conducted online. Since many congregants could not operate their businesses, I thought that I might have more than six participants. I limited the numbers to 12 participants (although I was not sure if I could get that number) to ensure productive interactions between the participants via Zoom and reduce the echo effect when everyone turned on their microphones to pray. I knew the church members, but I was not involved with them intimately.

Scope

The boundaries of my research project were altered by the following limiting factors and delimiters. These limiting factors were those that were not under my control, and the delimiters were controlled by me, as the researcher:

Limiting factors

- The Zoom platform made it difficult to observe body language or interactions because the participants could mute or turn the video off. Moreover, I was unable to see all of them when I screen shared.

- I could not ensure that I would have 12 participants in my class since attendance in many Sunday school classes in IECDP was below ten.
- I could not guarantee that the participants would attend consistently throughout the research project.
- There was no Sunday school on the first Sunday of each month at IECDP.
- If the church had any special program on a particular Sunday, the Sunday school class was cancelled with short notice. The completion date of the ten classes would then need to be extended into December or even later.
- Although the participants were requested to practice *Lectio Divina* at home, I could not control how often they did so between classes.
- The six classes of learning and practicing *Lectio Divina* were not sufficient to effect consistent and marked changes in some participants.
- Most of the members were not good at writing; thus, journaling was difficult for them.

Delimiters

- I limited the class to 12 participants for better intercommunication and to reduce the echo effects on Zoom.
- Each class was limited to one hour and fifteen minutes.
- I set the criteria for completing the discipleship training program before participating in the research project to ensure a relatively good standard of Biblical literacy.

Methodology

I used part of Module three in my spiritual formation model for the research project. I designed the model a year prior to the research, and the participants were involved collaboratively in testing the effect of *Lectio Divina* on their spiritual growth. The data collected from their input helped me to reflect on an action plan to implement modifications for future use (Sensing 2011, 58-59).

I chose a mixed method that involved collecting both quantitative and qualitative data rather than just qualitative research because I thought the Likert scale questions would be easier for the participants to answer than writing paragraphs for qualitative data. Since writing was a challenge to many in this community, journaling was difficult for them to keep. Other qualitative data like observation was difficult through Zoom since the participants were asked to mute themselves and turn off the video. Creswell (2020) explains, “The core assumption of this form of inquiry is that the integration of qualitative and quantitative data yields additional insight beyond the information provided by either quantitative or qualitative data alone” (Creswell 2020, 24). I used three tools for data collection: two questionnaires ([Appendix 5](#) and [Appendix 6](#)) to collect quantitative data, and group discussions ([Appendix 7](#)) and individual telephone interviews ([Appendix 8](#)) to collect qualitative data.

Although the people in this community liked talking, sharing in a large group was intimidating for many of them. Therefore, dividing the participants into two discussion groups with a maximum of six people made them more comfortable to share. The advantage to using three data collection methods was

that they enabled me to see multiple perspectives to my research question. It also helped minimize bias by comparing the reports from different data. This helped to ensure the reliability of the data. It also helped overcome the limitations of any single approach. As Stringer notes, “It allows for cross-checking of the findings and helps develop a more complete understanding of a topic” (Stringer 2014, 93).

The two questionnaires the group discussions, and the interview questions were sent to the participants for their reference. All the data was collected in Chinese, analyzed in Chinese, and then presented in this paper in English. Some of the scripture readings for the six classes during the intervention phase were read in Spanish.

Methods

This research project and all communication between the researcher and the participants were conducted online due to Panama’s Covid-19 restriction orders. The teaching pastor established a WhatsApp group for this project where communications, class materials, Zoom links, and electronic questionnaires were posted for easy access.

The Process of the Ten Classes

I planned to have ten 75-minute classes in the third semester between September and November 2020, although, officially, the third semester ended at the end of December. My previous experience of teaching Sunday school in the third semester in IECDP taught me to be flexible about having classes in December because the number of classes might be cut down to cater to short-term mission team visits and extra Christmas celebrations. Since I did not have a

guarantee that I would have Tyndale's research Ethical board's approval for this research project before September, I designed three classes in September as preparatory classes for the participants to try out before signing the letter of informed consent. The first class was an introduction to the project ([Appendix 2](#) and [3](#)) as it was the first time all the participants had taken part in a research project. The second and third classes consisted of teaching the foundations of spiritual life and the concept of sacred reading. These three classes were designed to enable the participants to decide whether they wanted to engage in the research project. I sent the letter of informed consent ([Appendix 4](#)) to the participants after the third class. Upon receiving their consent in September and the ethical board's approval on October 8, 2020, I sent out the pre-session questionnaire ([Appendix 5](#)) on October 9 and received the responses before the fourth class. The research phase comprised six classes, from the fourth to the ninth classes, between October 11 and November 22 ([Appendix 15](#)). An outline for the process of practicing *Lectio Divina* shown in [Appendix 16](#). I carried out group discussions after the fourth class and individual telephone interviews after the sixth class. The post-session questionnaire ([Appendix 6](#)) was sent out after the ninth class, and I received the responses before the 10th class. The 10th class wrapped up the learning process, and a question-and-answer session followed to address any questions raised by the participants regarding their experiences. The details of these 10 classes are shown in [Table 1](#) below.

Phases and Timetable

The following table indicates the administration phase, the research phase, and the post-research phase.

Table 1. Phases and Timetable

Phase	Action	Time Frame	Who	How
Developing the innovation	Submit REB application	By September 1, 2020	Jacqueline	Written report
	Submit a final action research proposal	By September 1, 2020	Jacqueline	Written report
	Class 1: Introduction to the project.	September 13, 2020	Jacqueline & participants	Jacqueline
	Class 2–3: Foundation of spiritual formation I	September 20 & 27, 2020	Jacqueline & participants	Jacqueline sent out the informed consent forms. They were returned to Jacqueline by October 9
Obtaining the REB’s approval on October 8, 2020	Begin the process of research data collection	October 9–November 29, 2020	Jacqueline	
Gathering pre-intervention work	Fill out and return the pre-session questionnaire	October 10, 2020	Participants	Directly to Jacqueline via Google Forms
Intervention	Classes 4–6: Teaching <i>Lectio Divina</i>	October 11, 18 & 25, 2020	Jacqueline & participants	Via Zoom
	Group discussions	October 14 & 15, 2020	Jacqueline & participants	Via Zoom
	Individual telephone interviews	November 3–7, 2020	Jacqueline & participants	Via WhatsApp
	Classes 7–9: Teaching <i>Lectio Divina</i>	November 8, 15 & 22, 2020	Jacqueline & participants	Via Zoom Jacqueline sent out
Gathering post-intervention data	Fill out and return the post-session questionnaire	November 29, 2020	participants	Through Google Forms
Post-intervention work	Class 10: Wrap-up	November 29, 2020	Jacqueline & participants	Via Zoom
Analysis	Code data for group discussions	By November 15, 2020	Jacqueline	
	Code data for telephone interviews	By November 30, 2020	Jacqueline	
	Descriptive statistics on data from the pre- and post-session questionnaires	By December 13, 2020	Jacqueline	

Phase	Action	Time Frame	Who	How
Interpretation	Review descriptive statistics for paired questionnaires results	December 30, 2020	Jacqueline	
	Interpret coded data for group discussions and interviews	January 17, 2021	Jacqueline	Discerned meaning of data
Reporting	Research report peer review	January 25, 2021	Bob and Jacqueline	Winter Residency
	Final written report	April 15, 2021	Jacqueline	Written report
	Submit report	April 20, 2021	Jacqueline	Written report

Ethics in Ministry-based Research

Although I was a teacher and a pastor at the Bible School, I did not hold an official status in any church in Panama up to the writing of this report. I was invited to preach in various churches as a guest speaker in Panama City, but I joined the Sunday worship in IECDP when I did not have any preaching engagements. I had limited institutional authority over the congregational members, yet I recognized that I did have a spiritual influence within the congregation. The teaching pastor decided that the recruitment should be done via the usual Sunday school procedure in the church (Appendix 1). Therefore, I had little involvement in the recruitment process because it was an open-door policy for the church members to apply for the research study. The teaching pastor acted as the doorkeeper to ensure the applicants' standards, as set in the delimiters.

Our students at the Bible School were free to go to any church in Panama on Sundays. I did not tell my students about my research project beforehand. They enrolled in my class after getting the information from the online church bulletin. It came to my knowledge that two of the Bible School students had enrolled for my course when I received the list of students. Their answers did not affect my impression of them. I was already teaching them at the time of the

research project and had taught them for two years, so I knew them intimately from their daily journaling before they participated in the research project.

Ethically, I had to protect both groups from any harm by observing that the relevant “issues included informed consent, intellectual rigor, and the sensitive handling of personal information” (Sensing 2011, 32). All the participants had opportunities to try the three preparatory classes before signing the informed consent forms. Even after the latter had been signed, the participants were told that they had the right to withdraw from the class without explanation. The identities of the participants were represented by numbers and aliases for confidentiality (see “Findings” below).

My ministry responsibilities did not include the research project; it was a partial requirement for my Doctor of Ministry research project. However, the process of the research project enhanced my understanding of the participants’ strengths and limitations. It was a resource for the future design of the curriculum of Spiritual Formation for this community.

Description of Participants

Five questions were asked in a pre-session questionnaire in order to collect the demographic data of the group. They are summarized in Table 2. The Chinese congregation at IECDP has about 130 adults. The 12 participants in this project represented 9.23% of the congregation. It reflected a general spectrum of age groups in the congregation. Most of the members in the Chinese congregation of IECDP are first-generation immigrants with a high school education or lower. However, we had five university graduates in this class. Three of them belonged

to the one-and-a-half generation in the 25-35 age group. Two of the participants could not read Chinese but could only speak it. A female pastor who was fluent in both Chinese and Spanish also joined in as a participant. She helped read the Spanish passages in the classes.

Table 2. Description of the Participants

Participant	How long have you been a Christian?	Gender	Age	Education	How many times have you finished reading the whole Bible?
1	11–15 years	Female	25–35	Bachelor’s Degree	Once
2	16–20 years	Female	35–65	High School	Twice
3	20+ years	Female	25–35	High School	Four or more times
4	6–10 years	Female	Below 25	Bachelor’s Degree	Less than once
5	16–20 years	Male	25–35	Bachelor’s Degree	Once
6	11–15 years	Female	35–65	Primary School	Three times
7	11–15 years	Female	25–35	Junior High	Once
8	20+ years	Female	35–65	Bachelor’s Degree	Four or more times
9	11–15 years	Female	25–35	Primary School	Twice
10	20+ years	Male	35–65	Bachelor’s Degree	Once
11	11–15 years	Female	35–65	Junior High	Four or more times
12	16–20 years	Female	35–65	Junior High	Once

Findings, Interpretation and Outcomes

This section reports on the findings of the project, which came from an evaluation of, and comparison between, the three data collection tools: the pre-session and the post-session questionnaires, the transcripts of online group discussions, and the individual telephone interviews. The 12 students remained for all the 10 classes. The information collected by the data is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Information about Data Collection

Data	Format	Date Administered	Appendix No.
Pre-research preliminary questionnaire	Google Form	Oct. 9, 2020	5
Mid-research group discussions with participants in Group 1 & 2	Zoom	Oct. 14 & 15, 2020	7
Mid-research telephone interviews with participants	WhatsApp	Nov. 3–7, 2020	8
Post-research questionnaire	Google Form	Nov. 27, 2020	6

Findings

Since the sample size was small, I analyzed individual responses to determine what changes each participant might have undergone between the pre- and post-session questionnaires. The qualitative data was collected from the group discussions and individual interviews. I used the participants' actual words to identify themes for analysis and interpretation.

Questionnaires

The pre- and post-session questionnaires were designed by John Hanna and Jun Ren for their dissertations (John Hanna, 2008; Jun Ren, 2015). They used questionnaires to collect quantitative data to measure the effectiveness of the spiritual practice of *Lectio Divina* on their participants. Therefore, I decided to use their questionnaires for my research. They contained various common types of questions used in questionnaires, such as categorical, open-ended, and seven-point Likert scale questions. Categorical questions collect data such as demographics or habits. “The seven-point Likert Scale is used to allow the individual to express how much they agree or disagree with a particular

statement” (McLeod 2019). The open-ended questions give each individual an opportunity to express his or her perceptions and opinions about a specific topic.

After obtaining the authors’ permission ([Appendix 9](#)), I used the relevant questions and translated them into Chinese ([Appendixes 5 and 6](#)). The pre- and post-session questionnaires contained 21 identical questions: four categorical questions, 14 seven-point Likert Scale questions, and three open-ended questions. The identities of the participants were represented by numerical numbers from 1–12, which were assigned by the teaching pastor of IECDP without my involvement in order to keep their identities confidential so that each participant could feel free to answer the questionnaires without worrying about making a bad impression. Their responses to the 14 seven-point Likert scale questions in the pre- and post-session questionnaires are shown in [Table 4](#), together with the data collected from the four categorical questions ([Appendix 11](#)) and the three open-ended questions ([Appendix 12](#)), which were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The following section looks at each individual’s pre- and post-responses.

Table 4. Results of the Paired 14 Seven-point Likert Scale Questions

Question		Participant’s Identity Number											
		#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	#10	#11	#12
Q5	Pre	7	6	7	7	7	7	4	6	7	4	7	7
	Post	7	7	7	7	7	7	4	6	7	7	7	7
Q6	Pre	5	6	6	7	5	7	2	5	4	5	6	5
	Post	5	6	6	5	6	7	2	5	5	5	6	6
Q7	Pre	6	6	6	6	5	6	3	6	4	5	6	5
	Post	6	6	6	5	6	7	3	6	5	5	7	6
Q8	Pre	6	6	6	6	6	6	3	6	4	5	6	5
	Post	6	6	7	5	6	7	3	5	5	5	7	6
Q9	Pre	6	4	6	7	5	6	4	7	5	5	7	7
	Post	7	6	6	6	5	6	3	6	6	5	7	7
Q10	Pre	5	6	7	7	6	6	3	5	5	5	7	6
	Post	7	6	7	7	5	6	4	6	6	5	7	7
Q12	Pre	7	6	7	7	6	7	6	5	7	7	7	7

Question		Participant's Identity Number											
		#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	#10	#11	#12
	Post	7	7	7	7	6	7	7	7	7	6	7	7
Q13	Pre	4	6	6	6	7	6	4	5	4	3	7	6
	Post	7	6	6	7	5	7	2	4	5	4	7	5
Q15	Pre	4	6	7	6	7	7	3	4	6	7	7	6
	Post	7	7	7	6	6	7	3	6	7	7	3	7
Q16	Pre	5	7	7	6	6	7	3	5	6	7	7	6
	Post	6	7	7	6	7	7	4	5	6	7	7	7
Q17	Pre	7	6	7	7	6	7	7	5	7	7	7	7
	Post	7	6	7	7	7	7	5	5	7	6	7	7
Q18	Pre	5	5	7	7	6	7	3	4	7	3	7	5
	Post	6	6	7	7	6	7	6	6	7	5	7	6
Q19	Pre	6	5	6	6	6	7	3	5	4	4	5	5
	Post	6	6	6	6	5	6	2	5	5	4	6	6
Q20	Pre	5	6	7	7	6	7	5	5	7	5	7	7
	Post	7	7	7	6	7	7	7	6	7	6	7	7

Participant ID#1

This person showed changes in her responses to Q9, Q10, Q13, Q15, Q16, Q18, and Q20. The most substantial change for her was Q15, which indicates that her desire to encounter God rose from 4 (medium desire) in the pre-session questionnaire to 7 (great desire) in the post-session questionnaire. Her other substantial change was her response to Q13 regarding receiving more information from the texts. It indicated her increase and enjoyment in reading the Bible, as noted in her response to Q9 and Q10. In the post-session questionnaire, this participant also had a higher rating for Q18 and Q20 about hearing God and sensing His guidance in her life.

In her answer to the open-ended question 14 in the first questionnaire, participant ID#1 wrote that she did not know the meaning of hearing God because she had not experienced it. She guessed that it might mean receiving guidance from God. However, when she answered the same question in the post-session

questionnaire, she said: “God speaks to you.” It was similar to the positive experience between quantitative and qualitative data in the post-session questionnaire. The participant felt a closeness to God, as shown in her responses to Q7 and the open-ended Q11. Open-ended Q21 asked what kept her from having an encounter with God. She answered in the pre-session questionnaire that it was her worries about life’s difficulties, and in the post-session questionnaire, she answered that it was the noisiness ([Appendix 12](#)). It was not clear if the “noisiness” related to a noisy mind or noisy exterior environment. I did not have a chance to clarify with her, since I did not know her identity. In categorical Q1, participant ID#1 changed from having an unstable devotional schedule to having a regular time in the morning. I was not sure if this was because she put in the effort to have quietness. She also increased her devotional time from “three to four times” to “five to six times” each week ([Appendix 11](#)). The overall results indicate a positive change in her spiritual life after practicing praying with the Scriptures.

Participant ID#2

This participant showed changes in her answers to Q5, Q9, Q12, Q15, Q18, and Q20 (see Table 4). The most considerable change was that her desire to read the Bible had moved from 4 (medium) to 6 (high), as shown in her response to Q9. Her ratings in Q12 and Q15 indicate that she had a stronger belief in God’s desire to encounter her, and her desire to encounter God had increased in the post-session questionnaire. Her capacity to hear God and sense His guidance in her life also increased by the end of practicing praying with Scriptures.

In the pre-session questionnaire, participant ID#2 answered the open-ended Q11 about the meaning of having an encounter with God by describing that she could tell God everything. She provided more descriptions of the meaning of encountering God in her post-session questionnaire. She said, “The meaning of encountering God is to be alone with Him in solitude, to have deep communication with Him, and to tell Him all my feelings. I ask God to transform my soul and to help me understand His will.” For Q14 and Q21, her descriptions were similar in the pre- and post-questionnaires (Appendix 12). The categorical questions about her devotional habits remained the same since she had a fairly stable devotional life (Appendix 11). Participant ID#2 made slight progress in her relationship with God after practicing praying with Scripture. The primary change was that she had a greater appetite for reading the Bible, and her desire to encounter God had increased. Her capacity for hearing God and sensing God’s guidance was heightened. The overall results for Participant ID#2 indicated a positive trend in her spiritual growth.

Participant ID#3

Participant ID#3 rated herself 7 in eight questions and 6 in six questions in the pre-session questionnaire, as shown in Table 6. In the post-session questionnaire, the only change she indicated was her satisfaction with her prayer life (Q8) after practicing praying with Scripture. The other areas remained the same. In the three open-ended questions, her answers showed that she had experienced hearing God often through various avenues such as reading the Bible, praying, listening to people talking to her, or doing chores. Her greatest need was

to receive guidance and assistance from God to solve the problems in her life, as explained in her responses to Q11 and Q14 in the post-session questionnaire. In response to Q21, she expressed that busyness and love of worldly things kept her from encountering God (Appendix 12). Her answer to categorical Q1 indicated that she had reduced her devotional frequency from once a day to five or six times a week. It seems that participant ID#3 had a reasonably stable prayer life before and after learning the practice of praying with Scriptures (Appendix 11). It is difficult to discern her effectiveness in praying with Scripture because there was not much room for changes on the 14 measured items.

Participant ID#4

This participant's results were interesting. In the post-session questionnaire, she rated one point higher in gaining more information from the Biblical text (Q13), but she rated one point lower in four areas: closeness to God (Q7), satisfactory prayer time (Q8), having a desire to read the Bible (Q9), and sensing God's guidance through one's life (Q20). She gave herself two points lower in (Q6): how easy it was to focus on God when she prayed. The data showed that she experienced difficulties after learning to practice praying with Scripture.

The background information of participant ID#4 (Table 2) indicated that she was the youngest Christian in the class in both biological and spiritual age. She had a college degree, was proficient in Spanish, and knew limited Chinese. She had become a Christian within six to ten years before participating in this study and had not completed reading the whole Bible. She focused on

communication with God in her responses to the three open-ended questions. She also indicated in her responses to the open-ended Q11 and Q14 that she received His teaching and understood His will. However, in the post-session questionnaire, she indicated that she moved from understanding to the feeling side, such as “feeling God’s companionship, His comfort, gentleness, and His warmth.” Her answer to Q21 in the pre- and post-session questionnaires showed that her job and poor time management remained obstacles for encountering God (Appendix 12). She included silence in her daily devotions in the categorical questions but omitted writing a journal in the post-session questionnaire. Also, her devotional time was reduced from more than 60 minutes in the pre-session questionnaire to 30–60 minutes in the post-session questionnaire (Appendix 11). The data does not show much change from this course. It shows that the practice of *Lectio Divina* was not effective in helping her facilitate a prayer encounter with God.

Participant ID#5

This participant’s data in the post-session questionnaire remained unchanged in five of the questions. He increased one point in Q6, Q7, Q16, Q17, and Q20 and decreased one point in Q10, Q13, Q15, and Q19, as shown in Table 4. However, his answers were contradictory. For example, he claimed that it became easier to focus on God (Q6) but then said that it became more difficult to quiet down before God (Q19). Despite stating that he increased his closeness to God (Q7), his feeling of God’s presence (Q16), and his sensing of God’s guidance (Q20) in his life, he indicated that his enjoyment of reading the Bible (Q10) and

his desire to encounter God (Q15) had decreased. Since his identity was confidential, I could not explore the contradiction in his responses.

His answers to the three open-ended questions did not change much in the second questionnaire (Appendix 12). His answer on the meaning of having encounters with God changed from seeing God to having a good relationship with God. The meaning of hearing God was to have God's guidance in both questionnaires. The obstacles that hindered his encountering God were caused by work pressure and life responsibilities. These two factors reflect a typical lifestyle in the Chinese community in Panama, as noted in Chapter 3. His answers to the categorical questions relating to devotional habits remained the same (Appendix 11). The participant maintained his daily devotion in the morning. Because his answers to both the open-ended and categorical questions did not show a decrease in rating, the discrepancy in the 14 seven-point Likert scale questions was a puzzle.

According to the background information collected from the pre-session questionnaire (Table 2), participant ID#5 was a college graduate. He was proficient in Spanish and understood English well. He could speak Cantonese but did not understand written Chinese. Therefore, an English version of the two questionnaires was sent to him before he filled in the Chinese electronic versions using Google Drive. The discrepancy was unlikely a language problem. It is difficult to discern whether this participant obtained spiritual growth from the practice of *Lectio Divina*.

Participant ID#6

This participant rated nine statements a 7 and five statements a 6 in the pre-session questionnaire. She showed increased ratings in three areas and a decreased rating in one area. In the post-session questionnaire, she indicated a one-point increase in her closeness to God (Q7), satisfactory prayer life (Q8), and getting more information from the Biblical passage (Q13). In contrast, she indicated a one-point decrease in quieting down before reading the Bible (Q19). Her decrease in Q19 contradicted her response to Q6 since she indicated that it was easy to focus on God in prayer, giving the question a 7 on both questionnaires. Since all her changes were either one point up or one point down, the small changes did not indicate much about the effect of practicing praying with the Scripture in her spiritual growth.

For the three open-ended questions in the two questionnaires, participant ID#6 gave the most extended descriptions regarding the meaning of having an encounter with God (Q11) and hearing God (Q14) (Appendix 12). Her answers indicated that she felt God's presence when she soaked herself in silence. She could receive God's guidance when she had problems. Participant ID#6 seemed to have a better relationship with God when she had quietness in her heart or difficulties in her life. In response to Q21, she said in the pre-session questionnaire that she could not identify the obstacles, but in the post-session questionnaire she indicated that her physical and emotional conditions were barriers. In her responses to categorical questions one to four (Appendix 11), she indicated in both questionnaires that she practiced her devotions once a day at

night. Overall, participant ID#6 did not show much difference after learning the practice of praying with Scripture since there was not much room for change on the measured items.

Participant ID#7

This was the only participant who gave herself very low ratings in both questionnaires. In the pre-session questionnaire, she rated eleven questions between 2 to 4. In the post-session questionnaire, she rated ten questions below 4. This could be a more realistic self-assessment. She gave herself higher rates in five areas and decreased those ratings in four areas in the post-session questionnaire; five areas remained unchanged, as indicated in [Table 4](#).

She returned puzzling results for Q9 and Q10. Her desire to read the Bible (Q9) had diminished, but she enjoyed reading the Bible more (Q10). Her trust in God's desire to have an encounter with her increased (Q12), but her desire to have an encounter with God remained unchanged (Q15). She declined in the area of stillness because she found it more difficult to quiet down before reading the Bible (Q19), but she did not think it was necessary to spend time with God in silence (Q17). The most substantial changes of her responses were hearing God (which jumped from "seldom" to "often" in (Q18) and sensing God's guidance (which jumped from "somewhat often" to "always" in (Q20).

Among the answers to her open-ended questions, Q11 and Q14 remained similar. Nevertheless, her answers to Q21 explained the reasons for her obstacles in encountering God and provided a picture of her spiritual life ([Appendix 12](#)). She said in the pre-session questionnaire that it was her laziness and difficulty

concentrating, but in the post-session questionnaire, she indicated that it was her unwillingness to submit to the lordship of Christ that prevented her from encountering God. She also indicated that her devotional times had changed from five to six times a week to one to two times a week (Appendix 11). The reduction of devotional time could have been caused by either her busy work schedule, which increased when the Panamanian Government lifted the movement restrictions in late October 2020, or by her resistance to draw closer to God. Participant ID#7 provided a picture of a struggle between self-will and submission to God's will. If the identity of this participant had been known, there would have been the possibility of clarifying whether the practice of praying with Scripture helped her grow spiritually.

Participant ID#8

This participant increased her ratings in five areas, decreased her ratings in three areas, and remained the same in six areas, as displayed in Table 4. She increased 2 points in trusting God's desires to encounter her (Q12), in desiring to meet God (Q15), and in hearing God (Q18). However, she contradicted herself in other answers. Her enjoyment in reading the Bible increased one point, (Q10) but she rated her desire to read the Bible (Q9) and to gain information from the Biblical text (Q13) one point lower. Although her sense of God's guidance in her life increased by one point (Q20), she rated her satisfaction in her prayer life one point lower (Q8). The one-point change between her pre- and post-session questionnaires did not give solid proof that *Lectio Divina* influenced this participant.

Her concise answers to the three open-ended questions required elaboration in order to grasp her expression correctly since she gave single-word answers in Spanish for each question in the pre-session questionnaire (Appendix 12). Although she provided a phrase or a short sentence in the post-session questionnaire (Appendix 12), it was hard to tell whether there were any changes since her answers to each question were short. Participant ID#8 maintained a stable devotion time every day in the morning. Her devotional habits remained the same, except that she indicated in the post-session questionnaire that she included meditation on the Biblical passage (Appendix 11). With a little help from the qualitative data in the questionnaires, the contradictions generated by the quantitative data make it difficult to ascertain whether she benefitted from learning to pray with Scripture.

Participant ID#9

This participant increased one point on eight questions, as shown in Table 4. It was easy for her to focus on God in prayer (Q6), to feel a closeness to God (Q7), to have a satisfactory prayer life (Q8), to desire to read the Bible (Q9), to enjoy reading the Bible (Q10), to get more information from Scripture (Q13), to desire an encounter with God (Q15), and to quiet down before God (Q19). Nevertheless, her ability to feel God's presence (Q16), hear God's voice (Q18), and sense God's guidance (Q20) remained the same. In this sense, the practice of *Lectio Divina* did not help her to have a prayer encounter with God. The importance of prayer (Q5) and her awareness of God's desires to encounter her

(Q12) also remained the same. She rated all five of these questions a 7 in the pre-session questionnaire.

In her response to the three open-ended questions, participant ID#9 indicated that her obstacles to encountering God (Q21) were a difficulty in quieting down. In the pre-session questionnaire, she indicated that a lack of sleep hindered this encounter. In the post-session questionnaire, she stated that her busy life got in the way (Appendix 12). Her devotional habits remained mostly the same, except that she changed her devotional time from no specific time to mornings. She also increased her devotional time from 15–30 minutes to 30–60 minutes (Appendix 11). Participant ID#9 made a slight change overall after learning to pray with Scripture. Her busy lifestyle meant that she did not get enough sleep. This is common in the Chinese community since they work long hours every day. A busy day with a tired body may have affected her ability to quiet down before God and focus on Him in prayer.

Participant ID#10

This participant displayed changes in Q5, Q13, Q18, and Q20. He showed the most change in his perception of the importance of prayer life, which changed from a 4 (medium) to a 7 (very important) (Q5). The second substantial change for him was Q18 about hearing God. Here he rated himself a 3 in the first questionnaire and a 5 in the second. He showed minor changes in getting more information from Scripture (Q13) and sensing God's guidance (Q20). However, he indicated a decline in his evaluation of God's desire to have an encounter with him (Q12) and his need to have a quiet time with God (Q17).

In the categorical questions, (Appendix 11) this participant increased his devotional times from less than once a week to 1–2 times a week. The timeframe for his devotions remained the same– 15–30 minutes in the morning. However, he included silence and prayer in addition to reading a passage from the Bible. In his answers to the three open-ended questions, he stated that his sins, personal problems, and busy mind prevented him from having an encounter with God (Appendix 12). His answers to Q11 and Q14 were more or less the same in his pre- and post-session questionnaires. It seems that the experience of hearing God through the practice of praying with Scripture encouraged participant ID#10 to pray more and give more time to God.

Participant ID#11

This participant rated herself a 7 in nine questions in both of the questionnaires, thus indicating no change in those areas. She rated herself a 6 in Q6, which also remained the same in the post-session questionnaire. Only three of her responses changed by one point. She felt a closeness to God (Q7), had a satisfactory prayer life (Q8), and was able to easily quiet down before God (Q1). However, her desire to encounter God (Q15) dropped from a 7 (extremely desire) to a 3 (little desire). No negative experiences of encountering God were reported by any participant in the individual interviews between classes 6 and 7, so it is not clear what happened in her life during the last four classes.

Participant ID#11's answer regarding the meaning of hearing God (Q14) in the pre- and post-session questionnaires were similar. It seems that she had a concrete experience of hearing God's voice. She explained that there was a voice

heard in the depth of her soul that touched and enlightened her heart. Her answer to Q21 in the pre-session questionnaire was that the obstacles to encountering God were hatred and jealousy, and in the post-session questionnaire, she listed irritability ([Appendix 12](#)).

The devotional habits of participant ID#11 increased from three to four times a week to five to six times a week, and she included silence in her devotions ([Appendix 11](#)). It is unclear why her desire to encounter God decreased so much even though she felt closer to God. Her desire to read the Bible (Q9), her enjoyment of reading the Bible (Q10), her awareness of God's presence (Q16), her ability to hear God (Q18), and her sense of God's guidance (Q20) all remained the same at a 7. It is difficult to tell whether the practice of praying with Scripture was helpful to this participant since her rating in nine questions remained at a 7 in both questionnaires.

Participant ID#12

This participant gave five questions a rating of 7 in both questionnaires. Eight questions received an increase of one point. Only Q13 received a one-point decrease. Her answers to the open-ended questions Q11 and Q14, namely the meaning of encountering God and hearing God, were similar in both questionnaires. Her answer to Q21 in the pre-session questionnaire about the obstacles to encountering God was her job and herself. However, she changed this to "nothing" in the post-session questionnaire.

Her devotional habits remained the same, as she had devotions once a day in the morning for 30–60 minutes. Overall, she indicated a small amount of positive growth after learning to pray with Scriptures.

The Summary of Findings from Research Questionnaires

The summary of the effectiveness of praying with Scripture to facilitate the spiritual growth of each participant in the above data is indicated by the comparison between the pre- and post-session questionnaires, as shown in [Table 5](#) below.

Table 5. Summary of the Effectiveness of Praying with *Lectio Divina* for Spiritual Growth

Participant ID	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	#10	#11	#12
Hard to discern			X		X			X			X	
Not effective				X		X						
Slightly Effective							X		X	X		X
Effective	X	X										

The 12 participants were inclined to rate themselves at the higher end of the 14 seven-point Likert scale in the pre-session questionnaire, as shown in [Table 6](#) below.

Table 6. Quantities of Rating 6 and 7 at the Pre-session Questionnaire

Participant ID	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	#10	#11	#12
Nos of 7 ratings in the pre-session questionnaire out of 14 seven-point Likert scale questions	3	1	8	8	3	9	1	1	5	4	10	5
Nos of 6 ratings in the pre-session questionnaire out of 14 seven-point Likert scale questions	4	11	6	6	8	5	1	3	2	0	3	4

It was hard for me to discern the effectiveness of praying with Scripture to facilitate spiritual growth for participants #3, #5, #8, and #11. This was because participants #3 and #11 gave themselves the top rating of 7 for more than half of

the Likert scale questions. This left no room to show any changes in the areas related to those questions. It was also difficult to discern the effectiveness of *Lectio Divina* for participants #5 and #8 since they gave contradictory answers.

Given the information listed above, when I look at the quantitative data (Table 4) as a group, it shows that six participants of the group increased their capacity to hear God (Q18) and their ability to sense God's guidance in their lives (Q 20) after learning the practice of *Lectio Divina*. Five participants found that the practice of *Lectio Divina* helped them change in four areas: their satisfaction in their prayer life (Q8), their enjoyment in reading the Bible (Q10), their ability to analyze the Scriptures to gain more information (Q13), and their desire to encounter God (Q15). I would say that close to half of the group experienced the effectiveness of *Lectio Divina* in their spiritual growth.

Responses from the Group Discussions

I knew the identities of the participants in the group discussion and individual interviews, but I used the letters A to L to represent them to maintain confidentiality in the report. However, I do not know the participants' identities for the questionnaires. Therefore, the numerical representation 1–12 does not correspond to the alphabetical identities A–L, which means participant ID#1 is not necessarily the same person as Participant A.

The group discussions ([Appendix 7](#)) were conducted to collect information about their experiences of practicing praying with Scripture after the first practice in class 4. The 12 participants were split into two equal groups over two evenings. One session was conducted in Cantonese and the other in

Cantonese and Mandarin. Both discussions were audio and video recorded with the participants' permission. They were later transcribed into Chinese and translated into English for this report. These transcripts were reviewed many times before coding to identify categories (Saldana (2021) agrees with Merriam (2016) and Tisdell (2016) that for analytic outcomes, “the fewer the categories, the greater the level of abstraction, and the greater the ease with which you can communicate your findings to others” (Saldana 2021, 38).

According to the discussions, three themes relating to praying with Scripture arose from the discussion: (1) their previous learning, (2) their sacred experience, and (3) their ability to quiet down before prayer. The details of their responses are shown in Appendix 13. The logic of having the theme of “Sacred Experience” is explained as follows. When participants were asked what settings they experienced encountering God before this study, twelve items appeared from the conversation. At the top of the list, five participants listed “reading the Bible.” Prayer appeared four times. Silence, worship, and difficulty appeared three times (Appendix 13).

When I transcribed the list and read it, I grouped the following items into the two categories of “Spiritual Discipline” and “Life Situations.” The first sub-category of Spiritual Discipline was: (1) Reading the Bible, (2) Prayers, (3) Silence, (4) Dreams, (5) Worship, and (6) Singing hymns. The second sub-category of Life Situations contained: (7) Unhappiness, (8) Daily activities, (9) Strolling, (10) Happy time, (11) Difficulty, and (12) In danger. I later split the category “Spiritual Discipline” further into “Through Scriptures” and “Through

Other Spiritual Disciplines” for a clearer indication of having encounters through praying with Scripture. During the second coding process, I thought these three categories should be sub-categories under the category “Means of Encountering God.” I got three other categories from the answers to the discussion questions: (1) Knowledge of *Lectio Divina*, (2) Hearing God through *Lectio Divina* in class, and (3) Easy to quiet down before prayer. When I looked at the four categories, I grouped the categories of “Means of Encountering God” and “Hearing God” under a theme of “Sacred Experience.”

Of the twelve participants, eight had learned *Lectio Divina* before, either from the teaching pastor of IECDP or from other people. Participant F had previous knowledge of *Lectio Divina*, but she reported that she did not hear anything because she was too tired on that day and fell asleep when listening to the scripture reading. Participants B, C, and E had not learned *Lectio Divina* previous to the study, but they heard God in the class practice, and all eleven participants told me the word or phrase they received from *Lectio*.

The practice of silence was difficult for eight of the participants. It was most difficult for Participant B, who expressed that quieting down her mind was extremely difficult, particularly at home. She requested more practice of silence in the class. Four participants, A, D, G, and L, reported that it was habitual for them to be silent before God in the morning ([Table 7](#)). After hearing the discussion from the groups, I incorporated centering exercises such as body scans, deep breathing, grounding, and meditative music at the beginning of each class to help the participants to quiet down. Participants reported that these exercises were

helpful, particularly the deep breathing and body scan. Table 7 indicates the results of the discussion about their experiences.

Table 7. Results of the Group Discussions

Theme	Previous Learning	Sacred Experience			Easy to Quiet Down	
Category	Knowledge of <i>Lectio Divina</i>	Means of encountering God before			Hearing God through <i>Lectio Divina</i> in the class	Easy to quiet down before prayer
Sub-Category		Through Scriptures	Through other spiritual disciplines, e.g., singing hymns, worship	Through life situations		
Alias						
A.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Not mentioned	Yes	Yes
B.	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Very difficult
C.	No	Not mentioned	Yes	Not mentioned	Yes	Difficult
D.	Yes	Not mentioned	Yes	Yes	Yes	Habitual in the morning
E.	No	Yes	Yes	Not mentioned	Yes	Difficult
F.	Yes	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Yes	No	Difficult when feeling tired
G.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Not mentioned	Yes	Habitual in the morning
H.	Yes	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Yes	Yes	Difficult
I.	No	Not mentioned.	Yes	Not mentioned	Yes	Difficult, but getting easier
J.	Yes	Not mentioned	Yes	Yes	Yes	Depending on mood
K.	Yes	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Yes	Yes	OK. Unless something happens
L.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Not mentioned	Yes	Habitual in the morning

Individual Telephone Interviews

The individual interviews were carried out between classes 6 and 7 after practicing *Lectio Divina* three times in the class. These conversations were based

on the questions in [Appendix 8](#) and were conducted in Cantonese and Mandarin. They were audio-recorded, transcribed in Chinese, and translated into English. Each participant told me that they practiced at home between classes, and they gave me details of their prayer experiences at home and in class. I used their exact words to identify seven categories: (1) increasing closeness to God, (2) hearing God, (3) easy to quiet down before prayer, (4) encounter with God, (5) awareness of God's presence, (6) spiritual growth, and (7) emotional well-being. The seven categories were grouped into three themes: (1) easy to quiet down before prayer, (2) sacred experience, and (3) transformation (See [Appendix 14](#)).

The qualitative data collected from the interviews indicated positive results in terms of hearing God, being aware of God's presence, and encountering God. However, quieting down before prayer remained the greatest challenge for half of the group. Six participants reported that they could hear God in the class practice every time, but they could not always hear Him at home because they could not quiet down at home ([Appendix 14](#)). However, participants G and L, who had habitual morning quietness, preferred practicing at home so that they could have longer time for prayers.

Participant A expressed that *Lectio Divina* provided her with a deeper encounter with God than her usual devotions. The words she received from *Lectio Divina* "dug deeper in her soul for deep cleaning." Participants A, G, and K expressed that they would continue the practice after the course. Two of them even said that they would form a small group to practice praying with Scripture to

encourage others to encounter God. Table 8 shows the summary of these results.

Table 8. Responses from Individual Interviews

Theme	Easy to Quiet Down	Sacred Experience			Transformation		
Category Alias	Easy to quiet down before praying	Hearing God	Presence of God	Encountering God	Increased closeness to God	Spiritual Growth	Emotional well-being
A.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
B.	No. Noisy at home	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Not mentioned	Yes
C.	No. Busy mind	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
D.	Yes. Habitual in the morning	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
E.	No. Difficult	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
F.	No. Many wandering thoughts	Sometimes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
G.	Yes. Habitual In the morning	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
H.	No. Not quiet enough at home	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
I.	Yes. In the morning	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
J.	Yes. In the morning or after lunch. But affected by mood	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
K.	Yes. In the morning	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
L.	Yes. Habitual in the morning	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Interpretations

There were differences between the results of the quantitative and qualitative data. The results from the quantitative data indicated that only participants ID #1, #2, #7, #9, #10, and #12 found that praying with Scripture helped facilitating prayer encounters in order to hear God and experience His presence (Table 5). Nevertheless, the results of the qualitative data collected from the group discussion and individual interviews ([Table 7](#) & [Table 8](#)) indicated that eleven participants had positive experiences of encountering God through the practice of praying with Scripture after the first lesson ([Appendix 13](#)). Twelve participants reported having a positive experience of encountering God after three practices of *Lectio Divina* ([Appendix 14](#)). A possible interpretation for the discrepancy among participants with positive experiences could be because some participants rated questions at the highest possible number in the pre-session questionnaire, which left no room for changes in the post-session questionnaire ([Table 6](#)). I did not have any data to indicate why they gave themselves top marks. This should be investigated at some point if and when the identities are made known. It could be because they did not know what spiritual formation was about, or that they had little self-knowledge since few psychoeducation and Spiritual Formation courses were provided by the church.

Although life transformation was not the focus of this project because of its short length, the results from the qualitative data show that the participants claimed to have experienced spiritual growth, emotional wellness, and increasing closeness to God through the practice of praying with Scripture ([Appendix 14](#) and

Table 8). There was a definitive positive change in their capacity to hear God. The qualitative data from the group discussions and the interviews support these findings. Eleven out of the twelve participants indicated that they had experienced hearing God through *Lectio Divina* (Table 7 and Table 8). Participant J told me that she had gained more confidence in hearing God's voice from the practice in the past three weeks than she had before and during the telephone interviews. Participant C told me that the words she had heard during class and her home practice would come back to her during the day. She said that this had happened to her occasionally in the past, and it had begun to happen frequently after learning *Lectio Divina*.

I actually witnessed the electrifying presence of God through prayer encounters in the class. When we opened up the class to *oratio*, participants responded to words or phrases received from God with adoration and deep emotion. It was a spirit-filled moment each time. I felt that they were touched by God's love and benefited from the practice. This response was also supported in the telephone interviews. Twelve participants reported having encounters with God through praying with Scripture in class (Table 8). The experiences of encountering God through *Lectio Divina* helped the participants to have a closer relationship with God. When I asked the participants to describe their relationships with God after three classes of *Lectio Divina* practice, participants A, B, and K reported that they felt "extremely close" to God. Others reported "close" or "somewhat close." All twelve participants expressed that their relationship with God was better than before (Appendix 14).

How did the practice of praying with Scripture facilitate spiritual growth and transformation? The participants reported that, after the practice of praying with Scripture, the sacred experience of encountering God and hearing Him and the increased awareness of His presence in their lives touched their hearts rather than touching their cognitive faculties alone. The effects of the sacred experiences were reported in the interviews ([Appendix 14](#)) as follows: Participant B said, “I have more passion for my life and take the initiative to approach people.” Participant C reported that his heart was touched when he heard God speak to him. Participant L said, “I feel I am accepted by God and enjoy His embrace.” Five participants reported that “I am less irritable.” This indicates that the practice of praying with Scripture connected with the person’s emotional dimension and facilitated emotional wellness. In open-ended Q21 in the questionnaires, the participants reported that the obstacles to having encounters with God boiled down to busy work schedules and restlessness. Although this project indicated that praying with Scripture is helpful for spiritual growth, there were challenges, which I discuss in the next section.

Challenges Raised by the Research

Three challenges arose during the project. The first was the problem of some participants’ comprehension skills. It occurred to me that some participants did not quite understand the meaning of some of the discussion questions during the group discussions. For example, some of them misunderstood questions like their previous experiences with *Lectio Divina* or practicing quietness. They talked about when and how they accepted Christ or their home and work life, but they

did not explain their experience of learning *Lectio Divina*. I needed to explain the questions with examples to help these participants understand the focus and the meaning of these questions. Therefore, the questionnaires should have been administered in person or via a separate Zoom meeting in order to walk through each question with the participants to make sure they understood the meaning. Without explanations, the participants might have interpreted the questions differently. Secondly, some questions in the questionnaires could have been revised or refined. For example, for question 5, instead of asking “How important is prayer to you?” I could have asked “How often do you pray?” or “Usually, how long do you pray??” This could have gotten a better idea of their motivation for prayer. Thirdly, writing remained a challenge for many participants. They answered the open-ended questions with phrases or even single-word answers which did not give adequate explanations for their ideas or perceptions. Oral answers would have been more suitable for this community, but they would have needed to be administered by a research assistant to keep the identities of the participants confidential.

Outcomes

Susan Muto points out that “practicing Biblical meditation like *Lectio Divina* is a way to develop one’s graced potential for communion with God” (Muto and van Kaam 1996, 30). This research project indicated that the Holy Spirit speaks to us all despite the differences in gender, age, and educational background. It also showed that the effectiveness of *Lectio Divina* was not limited

to languages because the participants could hear God in Chinese and Spanish versions of the Bible.

The outcome of the questionnaires indicated that six out of the twelve participants found the practice of *Lectio Divina* effective in terms of facilitating prayer encounters with God, increasing their capacity to hear God, and enhancing their awareness of His presence in their daily lives. However, two participants did not show any changes, and four of them provided contradictory reports of their experiences. Nevertheless, the qualitative results indicated that eleven participants found that the experience of encountering God, hearing God, and being aware of His presence through *Lectio Divina* touched their hearts and led them to a closeness with God, spiritual growth, and emotional well-being (Table 8). This experience gave the participants concrete experiences of the depths that are possible in their prayer lives and enabled them to develop an intimate relationship with God.

This project confirmed that having an experience of encountering God, hearing God, and becoming aware of God's presence resulted in positive change in the participants' lives (Appendix 14). The emotional dimension in a Spiritual Formation Module connects the head and the heart in order to facilitate a holistic Christian spiritual formation program. It is a process that helps Christians "reach unity in the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13). Nevertheless, the challenge of practicing quietness remains a major obstacle to spiritual growth for Chinese Christians in these Latin American countries. The

work ethic of the Panamanian Chinese makes it difficult for many Christians to have a Sabbath each week for the rest of their body and soul. The continuous long work hours each day and their family responsibilities leave little room for them to enjoy silence before God. It was encouraging to hear that some participants had made adjustments to their devotional time after discovering that they could have quieter minds in the mornings before opening their shops for business.

Lessons Learned from Doing the Research

When I reflected on the process of the field research, I learned several lessons from the experience. First, in order to help participants combat the challenge of writing, I chose seven Likert scale questions adopted from two researchers' dissertations ([Appendix 9](#)) to collect data. However, the quantitative data collected from my participants indicated incremental changes of mostly one point in the post-session questionnaire. These small changes gave me little information to me about their spiritual conditions. It appeared to me that the quantitative research that worked for the two researchers in their church contexts was not necessarily the most appropriate for my context. Secondly, spiritual conditions are hard to measure for accuracy. Moreover, the numerical changes on an item over a time period can be caused by many internal and external variables, such as the participant's health condition and relational stress experienced at the time of answering a questionnaire. Thirdly, the confidentiality of the participants' identities made it difficult for me to clarify the seemingly contradictory answers with the participants. My original intention of keeping their identities confidential

was to give the participants freedom to answer the questions without worrying about giving me a bad impression.

However, from my experience, the participants in my research welcomed individual interviews. Since as a guest pastor in the church I did not know the congregants intimately, I decided to call them (between classes 2 and 3) to make connections before the actual research phase began. Each participant talked to me for 45 minutes to an hour over the phone about anything they wanted to talk about. They openly told me about their life situations and their relationships with God. I was thankful for their trust in me. The experience told me that making connections with the participants before the research began helped to build relationships with them, and it paved the way for the individual interviews to run smoothly without the interviewees feeling pressure to please me or give me a good impression. Therefore, if I do action research in the Panamanian Chinese context again, I will try qualitative research or ethnographic research to collect qualitative data from their oral expressions.

Conclusions and Implications

Many Chinese immigrants in Latin America who originated from the villages of Guangdong province had a dream of living a better life. The first-generation immigrants in Latin America made their living by operating small shops or working in the merchandise sector. The Chinese Diaspora community's lifestyle was characterized by hard work without enough rest to nurture physical health and relationships. I heard my participants talk about the difficulties of having quietness in their prayer life due to the stresses of their work, the fatigue

caused by long work hours, and their lack of enough sleep. One of the participants even fell asleep during the first session (class 4) when practicing *Lectio Divina*. She explained that she was tired because she was extremely busy. It is quite common to hear that people are physically tired and emotionally drained in this community.

However, there are Christians who are hungry and thirsty for spiritual food. They attend worship every Sunday and participate in the weekday fellowship and other programs offered by their churches. Although this research project's data (Tables 5, 7, and 8; appendixes 13 and 14) gives me a window to see that praying with Scripture, such as *Lectio Divina*, helps to facilitate prayer encounters with God in the Panamanian context, it is difficult for individual Christians to fight against the social norms of perpetual busyness and to maintain their spiritual growth by practicing silence and hearing God through the Scriptures alone. Spiritual formation needs time to develop and might be more effective through the mutual support and encouragement of a group setting. Therefore, I plan to work with the teaching pastor and have regular group meetings with these twelve participants. I plan to help them continue the practice of praying with Scripture and to further assess their progress after six months. I also want to encourage them to journal about their process. After six months, we can practice *Lectio Divina* by reading the same passages at home daily, sharing our journal reflections, and then praying. I plan to organize a silent activity to allow church members the opportunity to taste a half-day silence and solitude

retreat in an outdoor setting in order to whet their appetites for quietness with God.

Implications

My project was the first investigation of spiritual formation in the Panama Chinese churches. Although it was small-scale, the findings were encouraging. It helped me to understand and confirm what should be the direction of teaching spiritual formation in this community. For example, what will help them to pray with Scriptures? What is the essential preparation for biblical meditation? What are the significant blockages for people in this context to practice *Lectio Divina*? When I taught Module three at ABSCSA in 2021, I coached my students step by step and asked them to write a journal to report the process and the contents of the steps. It gave me a clear picture of their heart movement and progress.

These findings will help me in my ministry at the Bible school by showing me how to guide the students to pray with Scriptures for longer periods in order to get deeper experience with this prayer method. This will hopefully help them maintain the practice of praying with Scripture and have a lasting effect on their spiritual formation.

Hopefully, over time, more mature Christians will be raised up to lead these churches and take care of them instead of leaving this all up to the missionaries. In the end, the individual Christians will grow to spiritual and emotional maturity by having sacred experiences and encounters with God as part of their spiritual formation.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

This chapter concludes what I have learned in the doctoral program. When I started Tyndale's Doctor of Ministry program, I wanted to refresh my learning in spiritual formation and dig deeper into the mystery of God. My experience in the doctoral program has been wonderful and enriching. The process has also brought challenges that have broadened my horizon and stretched me to enjoy many perspectives to serve God in my ministry. God's presence has been felt throughout the journey of the doctoral program as it was a constant formative experience in my life.

My journey of spiritual formation has been one of interweaving theology, psychology, the arts, and spirituality, supported by informational and formational readings. All these modes have served to integrate the head, heart, and hands. As I look back at the past three years of learning in the Doctor of Ministry program, I see that I have benefited from the many readings in all of the different courses. The assignments pushed me to think in a direction I would not have taken myself. For example, the Spiritual Formation course in my first year taught me to study the relationship between spiritual and emotional maturity. I learned that a spiritually mature person would demonstrate emotional maturity as shown by the fruit of the Holy Spirit. However, an emotionally mature person does not necessarily show spiritual maturity nor is automatically a Christian. This stimulated me to investigate

the importance of emotional health in spiritual formation during the following years of my doctoral program.

A great textbook that I read in my first year was *The Critical Journey: Stages in the Life of Faith* by Janet Hagberg and Robert Guelich (2005). It gave me a better understanding of my own spiritual experience. I realized that I had not reached the final stage. Hagberg and Guelich described this stage as “Christ-like living in total obedience to God, gaining wisdom from life’s struggles and living compassionately for others. It is a life of love and detachment from things and stress” (Hagberg and Guelich 2005, 159). In my spiritual autobiography, I reflect on the fact that I have been blessed to come across some saints at this stage of my life; some are monks and nuns, and others are lay Christians. Their simple speeches manifest God’s love greatly, and their keen sense of God’s presence in the ordinary happenings of life enlightens me. It is a wonderful and stimulating life model that encourages me to grow to spiritual and emotional maturity. In my eyes, they truly integrate the head, the heart, and the hands. I have observed the spiritual practices of these saints and learned from them. They have taught me the value of spiritual disciplines, particularly silence and solitude, praying with Scripture, the prayer of Examen, and spiritual discernment.

The biggest assignment for me has been writing my spiritual autobiography. It was a blessing for me to write. It refreshed my memory of God’s presence in my life and his actions in many events that have happened to me. He was with me in the meetings with both pleasant and unpleasant people that I have encountered in my life. The way that God used these events and people shaped me as a person. Although unworthy, I have been called by God to be His

servant. Moreover, my spiritual autobiography traced the development of my relationship with God, highlighting the influences of different spiritual traditions. It affirmed that praying with Scripture in the contemplative tradition has been a treasured tool for enhancing my relationship with myself and God; it was a venue that helped me get in touch with my deep emotions, enhanced my self-acceptance, and caused me to experience God's acceptance.

The practice of praying with Scripture brought psychology and spirituality together to heal my wounds and transform me into a holistic person. I have come to realize how important it is to include emotional and somatic dimensions in the spiritual formation model in order to cultivate a spirit-filled prayer life, which enables sensitivity to the voice of the Holy Spirit. This has led to my own personal healing of deep wounds and now bears fruitful ministry to the community. I introduced the centering exercises of deep breathing, muscular relaxation technique, and body scan to my students to get familiar with their body sensations at the beginning of each class. They liked these exercises. When I tried free movements to pray the Lord's prayer in the class, the students were shy and self-conscious about their movements. It will take time and patience to introduce dance as a spiritual practice to the students.

In my second year of the doctoral program, I read Mulholland's (1985) *Shaped by the Word* assigned by the course Engaging Scriptures. Two terms summed up my experience of reading the Bible in the past forty years: the informational and formational reading modes. During the first twenty years of my spiritual journey, I mainly engaged in the informational reading mode to gain

biblical information. I still use it a lot to do exegesis. I use it as the first step for sermon preparation and doing analysis for leading a Bible study group. I was engrossed in this formational reading mode in my personal devotions when I came across the Catholic spiritual tradition twenty years later. Mulholland (2001) describes the formational reading: “It is by setting aside our agendas can the reader truly be shaped by the Word” (Mulholland 2001, 22-24). The meditative technique for the formational reading suggested by Mulholland involved the imagination. It follows the same stream of the ancient spiritual disciplines of praying with Scripture.

The major project in my second year was to design a spiritual formation model based on my own spiritual formation experiences and my relationships with my counselees, directees, and students. I designed a spiritual formation model for ABSCSA based on a four-year cycle and incorporated the informational and formational modes of Bible reading, with consideration given to the historical and cultural context of the Chinese diaspora in Panama. The aim was to gain experiential knowledge involving information and formation of the Word, self, God, and the different perspectives of cultures and spiritual warfare to integrate the dimensions of the head, heart, and hands.

The curriculum of the four-year cycle of spiritual formation model was part of the major curriculum of the theological education of ABSCSA. In addition to ABSCSA's original goal to equip students with sound biblical knowledge and practical ministry skills for pastoral duties, spiritual formation aims at the necessary character formation to help them fulfill their vocation. Bramer explains

the relationship between Christian education and spiritual formation: “spiritual formation has always been a part of Christian education, and Christian education has always included and been a means of spiritual formation” (Bramer 2010, 335). Pazmiño points out that we have to be careful not to underestimate “the importance of sharing Christian truth, or information in spiritual formation, because it is essential for the emergence of formation and transformation” (Pazmiño, 2010, 359). Therefore, all four modules involved informational and formational approaches to involve different dimensions of a person. I agreed with Bramer that “education and formation are inseparable. Practices are at the heart of spiritual formation and pedagogy is foundational to Christian education” (Bramer 2010, 336).

Notably, the curriculum of the four-year cycle spiritual formation program emphasizes an integration of cognitive and emotional elements with a more personal-experiential approach that includes a four-year daily devotional journal writing submitted to me weekly for informal spiritual direction. It is an intentional spiritual practice for spiritual growth and personal development across the entire spiritual formation curriculum.

In my third year, I was required to do a field research project. I implemented a small portion of Module three of the curriculum with a small group of congregants in the Sunday school setting at the Iglesia Evangelica China De Panama (IECDP). It was offered as a way of testing if *Lectio Divina* could facilitate prayer encounters through hearing God and experiencing God’s

presence. Chapter four described the purpose of this research and the methodology and methods I used.

I encountered numerous challenges during the process of this research. It was the heaviest workload in my doctoral program. For instance, apart from the application for the ethical board approval in Canada according to the instruction from the Research Council of Canada (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2018), I had to check the ethical requirements in Panama and find out whether or not I needed to apply for ethical board approval there as well. Since my research project in a Chinese church was the first formal research project among the Chinese churches in Panama, no one knew the answer, and I did not know who I could approach. After many prayers, I had the idea to search the websites of the three top universities in Panama. Only the University of Panama – the largest university in Panama – offered detailed information about research procedures. To reduce the chance of misunderstanding caused by Google Translate, I asked a graduate of the University of Panama from IECDP about the relevant sections. He, in turn, asked his supervisor to clarify that the ethical board approval at the University of Panama involving human beings was only needed for biomedical research. I was relieved to be exempted from submitting the application in Panama because the language translation from Spanish to English and back to Spanish would have taken much time and resources.

I experienced God's blessing by having the trust of the church board which granted me the approval to do the research for the first time in their church. I was worried that I might not get enough participants for the research project since my class required the participants to do home practice, and I knew that the Chinese immigrants were caught up in a very busy lifestyle. Usually, the Sunday school classes in IECDP were under 10 people, but I prayed to have six to twelve participants for the research project. The teaching pastor was responsible for recruitment without my involvement and told me that when she got the twelfth applicant, the applications stopped. For me, this was a sign that God was with me and was taking care of me.

Taking care of the language issues with the data collection tools doubled my workload. The original pre-session and post-session questionnaires were in English. I had to translate them to Chinese and back to English when writing the report. Likewise, the group discussions and individual interviews were conducted in Chinese, the data was collected and analysed in Chinese, and the report was translated into English. However, I enjoyed the teaching process of the ten classes. I was moved when the class responded in *Oratio* openly, and I sensed the Holy Spirit freely moving among us. It was an experience of grace as a researcher and facilitator to work together with the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, I found the process of data analysis and the interpretation of the research project extremely challenging since I had never done this before in either my academic or professional life. This course was entirely different from the other eleven courses in the doctoral program, and it taught me to be humble and to persevere.

The field research project results showed that praying with Scripture was helpful for participants to learn to hear God's voice and gain an awareness of His guidance in their lives during class. However, the challenges of the Chinese work ethic with a high value placed on hard work and a perpetually busy lifestyle made the practice of praying with Scripture at home difficult for at least half the group. Therefore, a group practice of *Lectio Divina*, which offered mutual support, would enable the participants to encourage each other to continue the practice better than they would by themselves under the pressure of the social norm in the Chinese diaspora community in Panama.

The research results caused me to reflect on the influence of the larger cultural context outside of the church context. Leung's findings (2016, 136-138) on the negative effect of the lack of recreational activities on the Chinese diaspora in Latin America regarding physical, emotional, and spiritual wellness resonated with me. Chinese churches in Panama may need to think about building community or connection centers for the first-generation Chinese-speaking immigrants. In addition, they may need to consider church planting for holistic living. It would go beyond the scope of this project to consider if a lifestyle balanced between work and rest would help Chinese Christians change their work ethic and money-focused value system or if having choices of different lifestyles would help Chinese Christians spend more time praying with Scripture and pursuing an intimate relationship with God. Further investigation and a completely new research study would be required to address the possibility of changing the work ethics and value system of the Chinese diaspora.

During the three years of my doctoral program, I had the opportunity to review my life experiences, enlarge my view of God, experience God's loving presence at

every step of the study, and receive fresh blessings along the journey. After completing my doctoral program, I plan to promote the four-year cycle spiritual formation curriculum model to a large Chinese Christian diaspora community. The model framework offers the flexibility to revise the contents and adapt them to suit the levels of the congregants. Moreover, I hope to train up some teaching assistants (1 Timothy 2:2) to teach different Modules in the near future. It is my hope that they can eventually become responsible for teaching the spiritual formation model even better than I can.

In conclusion, I offer the following prayer from Ignatius of Loyola.

TAKE, LORD, AND RECEIVE (SPEX.235-237)

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty,

my memory, my understanding,

and my entire will,

all I have and call my own.

You have given all to me.

To you, Lord, I return it.

Everything is yours;

do with it what you will.

Give me only your love and your grace,

that is enough for me.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: 2020 The Third Semester Sunday School Course (September to December) at Iglesia Evangelica China

1. Romans: by Luisa Baoxing Hou
2. Restructuring of values: by Deacon Bailian Shun and Brother Zhihao Zhong (suitable for brothers and sisters who have been baptized/have completed the baptismal class)
*Those who wish to participate in the following courses must register with Paster Lifen Huang *
3. Baptismal Class: by Pastor Lifen and Sister Luo Jinyi (suitable for those who intend to receive baptism)
4. Encounter with God-Praying with the Bible: by Pastor Jacqueline Siu Yin Lam
 - a. Limited to 12 people
 - b. Registration requirements: (1) has completed the discipleship training course; (2) desire to get closer to God; (3) willing to commit to active participation and not absent
5. Sunday school teacher-training (Only suitable for existing Sunday school teachers and those who are invited)

2020 年第三期主日學課程(9 月至 12 月)

1. 羅馬書：侯保行傳道
2. 價值觀重整：岑柏煉執事及鍾智浩弟兄 (適合已受浸/已修畢浸禮班的弟兄姐妹)

如欲參加以下課程者，須向黃麗芬傳道報名

3. 浸禮班：黃麗芬傳道及羅金意姐妹 (適合有意接受水禮者)
4. 與神相遇 - 用聖經來祈禱：司徒林少賢傳道
 - a. 限收 12 人
 - b. 報名要求：(1) 已完成門徒訓練課程；(2) 渴望更深親近神；(3) 願意承諾積極參與不缺席
5. 主日學導師訓練 (只適合現有主日學導師及受邀人士)

Appendix 2: Welcome letter

Dear brothers and sisters,

Thank you for showing interest in the Sunday School course “Encounter with God through praying with the Scriptures.” Praying with the Scriptures is a spiritual exercise handed down from the early church. It can help us hear the voice of God in the Bible, thereby establishing a close personal relationship with the Lord. I want to do a study to see if prayer with the Scriptures is also helpful to the believers in Panama.

In ten lessons, in terms of learning, I will give lectures and guide the practice in class. In terms of research, I will ask you to do three things to help me understand the experience and opinions of each participant.

- (1) Two simple questionnaires. The content is the same: the first one is done at the beginning, the second one is done at the last session.
- (2) A group discussion. (Use zoom)
- (3) An individual WhatsApp phone interview.

The results of the research will help me plan the spiritual formation models for believers in the future. Therefore, I invite you to help me to complete this research together.

I will give a detailed introduction to the research on this topic in the first class on September 13. Please be reminded that the Class time is 9:15a.m.-10:30a.m. Due to the epidemic, it is possible to use Zoom for all classes.

Looking forward to having a wonderful journey with you!

Pastor Jacqueline Lam (Seto C-Mo)

歡迎信

各位親愛的弟兄姊妹，

歡迎你們有興趣參加這個《與主相遇 - 用聖經祈禱》的主日學課程。用聖經祈禱又叫做「經禱法」，是早期教會流傳下來的屬靈操練，能幫助基督徒在聖經中聽見上帝的聲音，從而與主建立親密的個人關係，靈命得以成長。我現在想做一個研究看看經禱能否一樣幫助到巴拿馬的信徒與主建立親密的關係。

在十堂的時間中，

在學習方面，我會有課堂讲解，亦有堂上練習。

在研究方面，我會請你們做三樣東西以便幫助我了解每位參加者的經驗和意見。

- (1) 兩個簡單的調查問卷。內容一樣的：第一個是開始時做，第二個是最後一堂做。
- (2) 一次小組討論。（用 zoom）
- (3) 一次個別 WhatsApp 電話訪問。

研究的結果幫助我們將來計劃栽培信徒靈命成長方面具有參考價值。因此我邀請你們幫助我一起來完成這個課題研究。我會在9月13日第一堂對本課題研究作詳細介紹。上課時間11:15am.-12:30p.m. 進行。於疫情關係，有可能全部課程用Zoom學習。

謝謝你們的參與！

林少賢傳道

Appendix 3: Information Letter

The research topic, “Encounter with God-Praying with the Scriptures” is part of the Doctor of Ministry research project. This research explores whether the prayer method can help today’s Christians, like many ancient saints, who can hear God’s voice in the Bible and establish a close personal relationship with the Lord. That they could be aware of God’s guidance and strength in their daily life, you will learn *Lectio Divina* - one method of praying with the Scriptures. There are four stages in *Lectio Divina*: listening to God’s words, receiving God’s words, praying with God’s words, and resting in God’s words.

There are 10 lessons in this research project conducted from September to December 2020. The learning part will be as follows: the first lesson introduces the content and the requirements of this topic, the second and third lessons explain the process of spiritual life, the fourth to ninth lesson practice *Lectio Divina*, the tenth lesson summarizes the course. All classes will be through zoom due to the COVID19.

The research part has three elements (1). You are requested to fill out two questionnaires, which will be sent to everyone at the third and tenth classes through WhatsApp. You are also expected to submit the questionnaires through Google Forms, the questionnaire data will be retained for analysis and evaluation. (2). There will be a focus group discussion between the fourth and fifth classes through zoom. (3). A telephone interview: During the week between the sixth and seventh classes, there will be an appointment time for individual WhatsApp telephone interviews, which will take about 30-40 minutes each time. Both telephone interviews and group discussions will be audio recorded for analysis.

Your identity will be kept confidential with a code number for answering questionnaires. I will store this information on my laptop that is password-protected, and I will back it up on a flash drive kept in a locked file cabinet in my office. In the completed dissertation, I will never connect a name to specific responses or their analysis. The library of Tyndale University will collect the final report as part of my project. However, you need to know that total anonymity is impossible since Iglesia Evangelica China de Panama is an intimate congregation; church members will know who participates in the research.

There are benefits and risks involved in participating in this research. Anticipated benefits for the participants will have a personal encounter with God and hear the voice of God in the Bible when you learn how to pray with *Lectio Divina*. You will develop a greater sense of peace through the centering exercises at the beginning of each class. You will grow in a relationship with Jesus and be more aware of God's presence in their daily life. You will also build a spiritual friendship with other participants at a level that you have never had before. The foreseeable risks will be that you may know more about your shortcomings or feel

embarrassed to expose your vulnerability to your peers. To prevent the leakage of shared information, participants must keep the confidentiality to not disclosing any sharing with people outside of the group.

Participation in this research project is voluntary. If you cannot continue for some reason, you can withdraw during the project. It will not affect my relationship with you. If you have any questions, please contact me through my phone number _____, or to my Email address: _____. You can also contact my project advisor, Dr. Mark Chapman, Assistant Professor of Tyndale Research Methods. His office phone number is _____ and his email: _____. While Dr. Chapman is on his Sabbatical leave from July to December 2020, you can contact Dr. Narry Santos, Assistant Professor of Practical Ministry and Intercultural Leadership at Tyndale University. His phone number is _____ email: _____. I have submitted this research project to the Tyndale Research Ethics Board for a review and approval. If you have any questions about the ethics of this research topic, please contact the Ethics Department of Tyndale University, email: _____.

Thank you for your interest in this subject. May the Lord bless you with His abundant grace!

Pastor Jacqueline Siu Yin Lam
September 13, 2020

《与主相遇 - 用聖經祈禱》，课题介绍，

本研究主题“与上帝相遇-用圣经祈祷”是本人博士研究项目的一部分。这研究旨在分析经祷法是否能帮助现今的基督徒，像许多古代圣徒一样，在圣经中能听见上帝的声音，从而与主建立亲密的个人关系，敏锐上主的同在，在日常生活中得着指导和力量。你将会在本课程中学习经祷法，经祷有四个过程，聆听神的话、领受神的话、用神的话祷告、安息在神的话语中。

本课题学习共十堂由2020年9月到12月举行：第一堂介绍本课题须知，第二到第三堂讲解属灵生命的进程，第四到第九堂练习经祷，第十堂总结。研究部分需要参与者(1). 填写两份调查问卷：分别用电邮在第三堂和第十堂寄给大家。(2). 在第四堂和第五堂中间有小组讨论。(3). 电话访问：在第六堂和第七堂中间的一周，将会约时间进行个别WhatsApp电话访问，每次大约需时30-40分钟。除非巴拿马政府到时准许实体上课，目前由于疫情关系，所有上课暂时决定用Zoom进行，其余研究都在线上进行，例如WhatsApp，或电邮。

电话访问和小组讨论都将被录音，问卷资料亦被保留下来，便于分析及评估。你的身份会用代号保密，身份不会外泄。课题研究的所有资料会保存在我办公室有锁的文件柜中，和有密码保护的个人电脑内。最后报告将会被天道大學的图书馆收藏，作为我课题的一部分。

参与这项研究会涉及利益和风险。预期的利益是当您学习用经祷法祈祷时，你将会经历与神相遇，并在圣经中听到神的声音。在每堂课的开始时，您将通过练习安静获得平安感，您将与耶稣建立关系并更加觉察上帝在日常生活中与你同在。您还将会其他参与者建立前所未有的属灵友谊。可以预见的风险是，您可能会更多地了解自己的缺点，或者可能因向别人展示自己的软弱而感到尴尬。为了防止分享的信息外泄，参加者必须要签订一个文件，保证不泄露小组内分享内容。

所有参加者都是自愿的，在课题进行过程中，如果参加者因为某种原因不能继续，有权退出，这不会影响我和你们的关系。如果有任何问题，请联系我，我的电话号码 _____ 电邮地址： _____，也可以联系我的课题导师，**Mark Chapman**博士，天道研究方法助理教授，他的办公室电话 _____ 电邮 _____。Chapman博士安息年休假由本年七月到十二月底，期间由Narry Santos 博士暂代研究课题导师，他的办公室电话 _____，电邮地址： _____。本课题已呈交天道大學伦理委员会审核，如果你对这个研究课题的伦理性有问题，请联系天道大學伦理部门，电邮 _____。谢谢你对这个课题的兴趣，愿主用这个课题祝福你！

林少贤传道
2020年9月13日

Appendix 4: Informed Consent Form

Research Study Consent Form

Name (please print):

-
1. I have read and understood the attached “Information Letter of “Encounter with God through praying with the Scriptures.”
 2. I understand that my participation in “Encounter with God through praying with the Scriptures” is actually part of the Doctor of Ministry research Project entitled “Facilitating Prayer Encounter with God through Praying with the Scriptures at Iglesia Evangelica China de Panama.”
 3. I am willing to practice at home at least once a week during the six lessons of praying with the Scriptures.
 4. I accept to fill out a pre-session questionnaire and a post-session questionnaire, a telephone interview with Jacqueline Lam, and I am willing to share my experience in a focus group. I understand that the content of my phone interview and group sharing will be recorded and used for analysis and research along with the two questionnaire materials.
 5. I give permission to Jacqueline Siu Yin Lam to use the material and the scores of the pre-session and the post session questionnaires in the written report, knowing that it will not be included if I am not comfortable with it.
 6. I understand that every effort will be made to safeguard confidentiality of data and personal information. I further understand that complete anonymity will not be possible due to the intimate nature of the congregation.
 7. I understand the risks and benefits of the proposed study.
 8. I understand that my participation in this research project is completely voluntary, and that I may withdraw at any time without consequences.
 9. I agree to keep all personal information, comments, and responses confidential.

I have read the above statements and freely consent to participate in this research project at Iglesia Evangelica China de Panama.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

参与《与主相遇 - 用聖經祈禱》同意书

名字（请用正楷）：

1. 我已经阅读明白了《与主相遇 - 用聖經祈禱》的课题介绍。
2. 我明白《与主相遇 - 用聖經祈禱》的课程，是一个在巴拿马基督教华人教会内进行的一项“通過經文禱告與神相遇”部分博士研究项目。
3. 我願意在学习用聖經祈禱的六课期间，每周在家中練習最少一次。
4. 我接受填寫一分课前问卷及一分课后問卷，和林少贤的一次电话访问，同时我願意在一次小组分享我的领受。我明白我的电话访问内容和小组分享会被录音，和两份问卷材料一起被用于分析研究。
5. 我许可林少贤把我的资料写进最后报告，我知道如果我不同意的话，我的资料不会被用于最后报告。
6. 我明白林少贤会尽一切努力妥善保管资料和我的个人信息。我也清楚完全的匿名是不可能的，因为会友之间非常的熟悉和了解。
7. 我明白参加这个课题研究有益处也会有风险。
8. 我明白我参加这个课题研究是出于完全的自愿，我有权随时退出而不会有任何的后果或付任何的责任。
9. 我同意对我们分享的内容保密，并且不会透露别人的分享与非参与者。

我阅读了以上的声明，同意参与在巴京堂进行的主日学《经禱》课题研究。

可以口頭准許或書面准許。

签名：_____，日期：_____

Appendix 5: The Pre-session Questionnaire

(Based on Jun Ren and John Hanna's designs as a template)

ID Number: _____ Date: _____

Background Information

RH I. How long have you been a Christian? (Check one)

- _____ Less than 5 years
- _____ 6 - 10 years
- _____ 11-15 years
- _____ 16-20 years
- _____ More than 20 years

RH II. Gender: (check one)

- _____ Male
- _____ Female

RH III. Years of age: (check one)

- _____ 25 and younger
- _____ 25-35
- _____ 35 – 65
- _____ 65 and older

R IV. Education: (check one)

- _____ Primary School
- _____ Junior High
- _____ High School
- _____ Bachelor Degree
- _____ Master degree and above

V. At present, how many times have you finished reading the whole Bible? (Check one)

- _____ less than 1 time
- _____ 1 time
- _____ 2 times
- _____ 3 times
- _____ 4. times
- _____ 5 times
- _____ More than 5 times

Questionnaire

RH 1. Usually, how often do you have your devotional time? (Please check one)

- less than 1 time a week
- 1 to 2 times a week
- 3 to 4 times a week
- 5 to 6 times a week
- 1 time a day
- more than 1 time a day

2. Usually, when do you have your devotional time? (Please check one)

- In the morning
- At night
- No specific time
- Other (Please describe)

3. Usually, what do you do during your devotional time? ? (Please choose any applicable item.)

- Silence
- Watching a devotional video
- Reading devotional materials
- Singing hymns
- Reading a passage from the Bible
- Meditation of the passage
- Prayer
- Writing a journal
- Other (Please describe)

R4. At present, how long on average is your personal devotional time? (Please check one)

- Less than 15 minutes
- 15-30 minutes
- 30-60 minutes
- More than 60 minutes

RH 5. How important is prayer to you? (Circle one)

- | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|---|---|---|---|---|--|---|---------------|
| No | | | | | | | | Indispensable |
| value | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | | 7 | |

H 6. Do you find it difficult to focus on God when you pray? (Circle one)

- | | | | | | | | |
|-----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----------|
| Extremely | | | | | | | Very easy |
| difficult | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |

H 7. How close to God do you feel? (Circle one)

Very distant							very close
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

8. How would you describe your prayer time? (Circle one)

Dry							Deeply satisfying
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

H 9. Why do you read the Bible? (Circle one)

Because I should							Because I want to
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

10. How do you feel reading the Bible? (Circle one)

Boring							Enjoyable
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

H 11. What does it mean to “encounter” God?

H 12. How strongly do you believe that God wants to have a personal encounter with you? (Circle one)

He does not desire this							He desires to touch my
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

R 13. When you read a bible passage, do you tend to analyze it and try to get as much information as possible? (Circle one)

Never							Frequently
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

《与主相遇 - 用聖經祈禱》

第一次问卷(根据Jun Ren and John Hanna 的蓝本改编)

身份代号: _____ 日期: _____

RH I. 你信主多久? (在适合的地方打个X)

- _____ 少过5年
- _____ 6 - 10 年
- _____ 11-15 年
- _____ 16-20 年
- _____ 多过20年

RH II. 性别: (在适合的地方打个X)

- _____ 男
- _____ 女

RH III. 年龄: (在适合的地方打个X)

- _____ 25 岁以下
- _____ 25-35 岁
- _____ 35 - 65岁
- _____ 65 岁以上

R IV. 教育程度: (在适合的地方打个X)

- _____ 小学毕业或以下
- _____ 初中毕业
- _____ 高中毕业
- _____ 大学毕业
- _____ 硕士或以上

V. 整本聖經你已看完了幾多次?

- _____ 少過1次
- _____ 1 次
- _____ 2 次
- _____ 3 次
- _____ 4 次
- _____ 5 次
- _____ 5次以上

RH 1. 現時你通常靈修的次數？(在適合的地方打個X)

- 少過一星期一次
- 一星期一次1-2次
- 一星期一次3-4次
- 一星期一次5-6次
- 一日1次
- 多過一日1次

2. 你做靈修的時間是

- 早上
- 晚上
- 不固定
- 其他 (請描述)

3. 那些是你做靈修的內容？(可以選多個適合的內容)

- 安靜
- 唱詩歌
- 讀經
- 默想經文
- 禱告
- 寫靈修札記
- 其他 (請描述)

4. 每次靈修一般用多少時間？

- 少過15分鐘
- 15-30分鐘
- 30-60分鐘
- 超過60分鐘

以下的題目請選一個適合你目前的心靈狀況的號碼

RH 5. 禱告對你來說有幾重要？

沒價值

不可缺
少

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

H 6 你是否覺得禱告時很難集中在神的身上？

極度困
難

極度容
易

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

H 7 你和神的关系怎么样？

十分遥远

十分亲近

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

H 8 你会怎样形容你的祷告生活？

十分枯燥

深深满足

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

H 9. 为什么你要读圣经？

因为我应该

因为我很想

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

10. 你读经的滋味如何？

觉得沉闷

觉得享受

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

H 11. 与主相遇是什么意思？

H 12. 你有多相信上帝渴望与你相遇？

祂不渴望

祂很渴望

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

R 13. 当你读圣经时，你是否喜欢分析经文以便得到愈多资料愈好？

从来没有

时常

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

14. 听到神的声音是什么意思？

H 15. 你有几渴望與主相遇？

没有渴 望							迫切渴 慕
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

16. 在日常生活中，你有没有感觉神的同在？

从来没 有							时常
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

H 17. 你认为花一段安静的时间和神在一起是否必要？

极度不同 意							极度同 意
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

R 18. 当你读圣经时，你能否听到神在字里行间对你说话？

从来没 有							时常
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

R 19. 你是否觉得在灵修前安静下来很困难？

极度困 难							极度容 易
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

20. 你有没有觉察到神在你的生命中引导你？

从来没 有							时常
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

21. 你认为有什么事物拦阻你与神相遇？

Appendix 6: The Post-session Questionnaire
(Based on Jun Ren and John Hanna's designs as a template)

ID Number: _____ Date: _____

RH 1. At present, how often do you have your devotional time? (Please check one)

- _____ less than 1 time a week
- _____ 1 to 2 times a week
- _____ 3 to 4 times a week
- _____ 5 to 6 times a week
- _____ 1 time a day
- _____ more than 1 time a day

2. At present, when do you have your devotional time? (Please check one)

- _____ In the morning
- _____ At night
- _____ No specific time
- _____ Other (Please describe)

3. At present, what do you do during your devotional time? ? (Please choose any applicable item.)

- _____ Silence
- _____ Watching a devotional video
- _____ Reading devotional materials
- _____ Singing hymns
- _____ Reading a passage from the Bible
- _____ Meditation of the passage
- _____ Prayer
- _____ Writing a journal
- _____ Other (Please describe)

R4. At present, how long on average is your personal devotional time? (Please check one)

- _____ Less than 15 minutes
- _____ 15-30 minutes
- _____ 30-60 minutes
- _____ More than 60 minutes

RH 5. How important is prayer to you? (Circle one)

No value Indispensable

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

H 6. Do you find it difficult to focus on God when you pray? (Circle one)

Extremely difficult							Very easy
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

H 7. How close to God do you feel? (Circle one)

Very distant						very close
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

8. How would you describe your prayer time? (Circle one)

Dry						Deeply satisfying
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

H 9. Why do you read the Bible? (Circle one)

Because I should						Because I want to
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

10. How do you feel reading the Bible? (Circle one)

Boring						Enjoyable
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

H 11. What does it mean to “encounter” God?

H 12. How strongly do you believe that God wants to have a personal encounter with you? (Circle one)

He does not desire this						He desires to touch my life
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

R 13. When you read a bible passage, do you tend to analyze it and try to get as much information as possible? (Circle one)

Never						Frequently
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

14. What does it mean to hear God?

H 15. How much do you desire to have an encounter with God? (Circle one)

No desire							Great desire
1	2	3	4	5	6		7

16. Do you feel God's presence as you go through your days? (Circle one)

Never							Frequently
1	2	3	4	5	6		7

H 17. Do you think it is necessary to spend time with God in silence? (Circle one)

Strongly disagree							Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6		7

R 18. When you read the Bible, do you hear God speak to you personally through some words or sentences in the biblical passage? (Circle one)

Never							Frequently
2	3	4	5	6			7

R 19. Do you find it difficult to quiet down before you read the Bible in your devotional time? (Circle one)

Extremely difficult							Very easy
1	2	3	4	5	6		7

20 Do you sense God guiding you through your life? (Circle one)

Never							Frequently
1	2	3	4	5	6		7

21. What do you think might keep you from having an encounter with God?

《与主相遇 - 用聖經祈禱》

第二次问卷(根据Jun Ren and John Hanna 的蓝本改编)

身份代号: _____ 日期: _____

RH 1. 你通常靈修的次數? (在適合的地方打個X)

- _____ 少過一星期一次
- _____ 一星期一次1 - 2 次
- _____ 一星期一次3 - 4 次
- _____ 一星期一次5 - 6 次
- _____ 一日1 次
- _____ 多過一日 1 次

2. 你做靈修的時間是

- ___ 早上
- ___ 晚上
- ___ 不固定
- ___ 其他 (請描述)

3. 那些是你做靈修的內容? (可以選多個適合的內容)

- ___ 安靜
- ___ 唱詩歌
- ___ 讀經
- ___ 默想經文
- ___ 禱告
- ___ 寫靈修札記
- ___ 其他 (請描述)

4. 每次靈修一般用多少時間?

- ___ 少過15分鐘
- ___ 15-30分鐘
- ___ 30-60分鐘
- ___ 超過60分鐘

以下的題目請選一個適合你目前的心靈狀況的號碼

RH 5. 禱告對你來說有幾重要?

沒價值

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

不可缺
少

H 6 你是否觉得祷告时很难集中在神的身上？

极度困
难

1 2 3 4 5 6

极度容
易

7

H 7 你和神的关系怎么样？

十分遥
远

1 2 3 4 5 6

十分亲
近

7

H 8 你会怎样形容你的祷告生活？

十分枯
燥

1 2 3 4 5 6

深深满
足

7

H 9. 为什么你要读圣经？

因为我应
该

1 2 3 4 5 6

因为我
很想

7

10. 你读经的滋味如何？

觉得沉
闷

1 2 3 4 5 6

觉得享
受

7

H 11. 与主相遇是什么意思？

H 12. 你有多相信上帝渴望与你相遇？

祂不渴
望

1 2 3 4 5 6

祂很渴
望

7

R 13. 当你读圣经时，你是否喜欢分析经文以便得到愈多资料愈好？

从
来
没
有

1 2 3 4 5 6

时
常

7

14. 听到神的声音是什么意思？

H 15. 你有几渴望與主相遇？

没有渴 望							迫切渴 慕
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

16. 在日常生活中，你有没有感觉神的同在？

从来没 有							时常
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

H 17. 你认为花一段安静的时间和神在一起是否必要？

极度不同 意							极度同 意
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

R 18. 当你读圣经时，你能否听到神在字里行间对你说话？

从来没 有							时常
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

R 19. 你是否觉得在灵修前安静下来很困难？

极度困 难							极度容 易
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

20. 你有没有觉察到神在你的生命中引导你？

从来没 有							时常
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

21. 你认为有什么事物拦阻你与神相遇？

Appendix 7: Focus Group Discussion (after the first trial of *Lectio Divina*)

This will be a semi-structured discussion.

1. How well do you know *Lectio Divina*?
2. Describe your experience of practicing *Lectio Divina* last week?
3. Probing: Was it difficult to quiet down beforehand? Which part of *Lectio Divina* touched your heart most? What was a difficult part in your practice of *Lectio Divina* apart from coming to the quiet?
4. What does it mean to “encounter” God? Did you ever have an encounter with God before?
Follow-up question: What setting would be most conducive for you to have an encounter with God?
Examples given if necessary: In a worship service, reading the Bible, in a Bible study, listening to music, in prayer, dreams, in quietness, etc.

焦點小組討論（在經禱第一次學習之後）

這將是一個半結構化的討論

1. 您對經禱有多了解？
2. 請描述您上週練習經禱的經歷？
3. 探索：事先很難安靜下來嗎？經禱的哪一部分最讓您感動？除了安靜之外，您在經禱的練習中有什麼困難的部分？
4. “相遇”神是什麼意思？你以前有沒有遇到過神？
後續問題：什麼環境最適合您與上帝相遇？
如有必要，可以舉一些例子：在敬拜中，閱讀聖經，學習聖經，聽音樂，祈禱，做夢，安靜等。

Appendix 8: Individual Interview Questions (In the middle of the six sessions of practice)

1. How would you describe your relationship with God?
Probing: How close do you feel God to you? Say: very close, close, somewhat close, somewhat distant, distant?
2. What were your experiences in practicing *Lectio Divina* in the past three weeks?
Probing questions: Did you hear God when you practiced *Lectio Divina*?
If yes. What was the effect of hearing God on your life?
If no. Did you expect to hear God? What would help you to hear God?
3. Did *Lectio Divina* help you have an encounter with God?
Probing questions:
If yes. How did it happen? How did you feel in the encounter? What was the effect of having an encounter with God afterward? How often have you had a personal encounter with God?
If no. How was your preparation (5 P: Passage, Place, Posture, Presence of God, Peace) before practice *Lectio Divina*?
How much do you desire to have an encounter with God? Say Great desire, average desire, no desire.
Probing questions:
If the answer is having a great desire: What needs to change for you regarding preparation?
If the answer is having an average desire: How would you do to increase the desire?
4. Did practicing *Lectio Divina* help you more aware of God's presence?
Probing questions:
If yes. How did it affect your daily life?
If no. What challenges have you found in practicing *Lectio Divina*?

個別訪問問題（在六個練習的中間）

1. 您如何形容您與上帝的關係？
探索問題：您覺得上帝對您有多近？比方說：非常接近，接近，有點接近，有點遙遠，遙遠？
2. 在過去的三周中，您在練習經禱方面有哪些經驗？
探索問題：練習經禱時，您聽到神了嗎？
如是。聽到上帝對你的生活有什麼影響？
如果不。您是否希望聽到上帝的聲音？有什麼可以幫助您聽到上帝的聲音？
3. 經禱是否幫助您與上帝相遇？

探討問題：

如是。這是怎麼發生的？你在相遇中感覺如何？之後與神相遇會有什麼影響？您多久與神有一次個人相遇？

如果不。在練習經禱之前，您的準備工作（5 P：經文，地方，姿勢，神的存在，平安）如何？

您希望與上帝相遇多少？比方說：極大的渴望，……平均的渴望，……沒有渴望。

探討問題：

如果答案是一個很大的渴望：關於準備工作，您需要改變什麼？

如果答案是一般渴望：您將如何增加渴望？

4. 練習經禱是否有助於您更多地感到神的同在？

探討問題：

如是。它如何影響您的日常生活？

如果不。您在練習經禱時發現了哪些挑戰？

Appendix 9: Permission from Jun Ren and John Hanna and Their Original Questionnaires

On Tuesday, July 28, 2020, 12:00:36 PM EDT, JS wrote:

Dear Pastor Jun,

Thank you so much for your permission. I will definitely cite your dissertation as reference in my research project and the future dissertation.

Thanks again.

Take care.

May God bless you and your church!

Jacqueline

On Monday, Jul 27, 2020 at 10:53 PM, Jun Ren wrote:

Hi, Jacqueline,

Sorry to get back to you late! Yes, you are welcome to use the pre-session and post-session questionnaires! But please cite my dissertation as reference.

May God give you wisdom and strength to finish your dissertation!

Jun Ren, Lead pastor

Rockland Chinese Alliance Church of C&MA

31 Main Street

Tappan, NY 10983

On Wednesday, Jul 29, 2020 at 04:51PM, JS:

Dear Dr. Hanna,

Thank you for your quick response. Your kindness is deeply appreciated. If I have any further questions, I will sure seek your help.

Blessings to you, your family, and your church.

Jacqueline

On Wednesday, Jul 29, 2020 at 2:28 PM, John Hanna wrote:

Jacqueline,

Absolutely! Thank you for reaching out, and if I can help in any other way, let me know. Blessings on you, your research and your ministry!

On Friday, July 24, 2020, 07:44:48 PM EDT, JS wrote to Jun Ren:
And On Wed, Jul 29, 2020 at 11:39 AM Jacqueline Lam wrote to John Hannah:

Hello Brother Jun Ren/Dr. Hanna

My name is Jacqueline and I have been serving in Panama as a missionary for five years. I am currently doing a Doctor of Ministry Program in Tyndale University, Toronto.

My research project is about the effectiveness of Lectio Divina to the spiritual formation of the Chinese diaspora in Panama in the setting of Sunday School class. I find your pre-project and post-project questionnaires are very good and relevant to my study. However, The Chinese believers in Panama are generally low in literacy, I would most likely delete the open-end descriptive questions in the questionnaires.

I plan to use electronic media such as Google Forms to collect data. Since many of them do not have computers at home, they are not used to communicating through emails. Therefore, I would send the questionnaire to the participants through WhatsApp which they could use very well, and they will return the responses to me through WhatsApp too. I would translate your English questionnaires to Chinese and type the questions into Google Forms. The research will be carried out in September 2020, and I am in the process of applying for approval from the Board of Ethics Review.

May I have your permission to use part of the pre-project and post-project questionnaires ?

Respectfully,
Jacqueline Siu Yin LAM

Pre-Session Questionnaire by Jun Ren

ID Number: _____ Date: _____

I. How long have you been a Christian?

1. _____ Less than 5 years
2. _____ 5 - 15 years
3. _____ More than 15 years

II. Gender:

4. _____ Male
5. _____ Female

III. Years of age:

6. _____ 30 and younger
7. _____ 30 – 60
8. _____ 60 and older

IV. Education:

9. _____ Bachelor and under
10. _____ Master
11. _____ Doctorate

V. How often have you attended Sunday school classes or training sessions on spiritual formation?

- _____ More than once a year
_____ One a year
_____ One in a couple of years
_____ Only occasionally

1. Usually, how often do you have your devotional time?

- _____ less than 1 time a week
_____ 1 to 2 times a week
_____ 3 to 4 times a week
_____ 5 to 6 times a week
_____ 1 time a day
_____ more than 1 time a day

2. At present, how long on average is your personal devotional time?

- _____ less than 15 minutes
_____ 15 to 30 minutes
_____ 30 to 60 minutes
_____ Other (describe _____)

3. How long do you think that one needs on average for personal devotional time?

- _____ less than 15 minutes
- _____ 15 to 30 minutes
- _____ 30 to 60 minutes
- _____ Other (describe _____)

4. How often do you read Bible passages prayerfully for spiritual health and growth?

- _____ less than 1 time a week
- _____ 1 to 2 times a week
- _____ 3 to 4 times a week
- _____ 5 to 6 times a week
- _____ 1 time a day
- _____ More than 1 time a day

5. How often do you believe that you should read Bible passages prayerfully for spiritual health and growth?

- _____ less than 1 time a week
- _____ 1 to 2 times a week
- _____ 3 to 4 times a week
- _____ 5 to 6 times a week
- _____ 1 time a day
- _____ More than 1 time a day

Please circle the number on the right corresponding to each of the following statements that best represents your agreement.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Disagree Strongly	Disagree Moderately	Disagree Slightly	Neither Disagree nor Agree	Agree Slightly	Agree Moderately	Agree Strongly
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

6. I often apply in my life the principles I learn from the Bible. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

7. I have an intimate relationship with God. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

8. I have good relationship with people around me. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

9. I often reflect upon what God has done in my life while reading the Bible. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

10. The discipline of prayer is very important in my spiritual life. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

11. It is necessary to spend long time in silent awareness of God's presence, to be just with the Lord.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

12. Whenever I read the Bible, I often think about how I can apply it to my daily life. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

13. Reading the Bible alone, I often read out the verses aloud. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

14. There is much spiritual value of silence. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
15. After I read a Bible passage, I often wait upon the Lord, doing nothing outwardly.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
16. When I read a Bible story, in my imagination I often talk with people in the story.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
17. It is easy for me to quiet down before I read the Bible in my devotional time.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
18. When I read the Bible, I often pause and pray to God because some words or sentences have big impact upon me.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
19. When I read a Bible passage, I tend to analyze it and try to get as much information as possible.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
20. Is there any comment you would like to make about this Doctor of Ministry project?
-
-

Post-Session Questionnaire by Jun Ren

ID Number: _____ Date: _____

1. Usually, how often do you have your devotional time?
 _____ less than 1 time a week
 _____ 1 to 2 times a week
 _____ 3 to 4 times a week
 _____ 5 to 6 times a week
 _____ 1 time a day
 _____ more than 1 time a day
2. At present, how long on average is your personal devotional time?
 _____ less than 15 minutes
 _____ 15 to 30 minutes
 _____ 30 to 60 minutes
 _____ Other (describe _____)
3. How long do you think that one needs on average for personal devotional time?
 _____ less than 15 minutes
 _____ 15 to 30 minutes
 _____ 30 to 60 minutes
 _____ Other (describe _____)

4. How often do you read Bible passages prayerfully for spiritual health and growth?

- _____ less than 1 time a week
- _____ 1 to 2 times a week
- _____ 3 to 4 times a week
- _____ 5 to 6 times a week
- _____ 1 time a day
- _____ More than 1 time a day

5. How often do you believe that you should read Bible passages prayerfully for spiritual health and growth?

- _____ less than 1 time a week
- _____ 1 to 2 times a week
- _____ 3 to 4 times a week
- _____ 5 to 6 times a week
- _____ 1 time a day
- _____ More than 1 time a day

Please circle the number on the right corresponding to each of the following statements that best represents your agreement.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Disagree Strongly	Disagree Moderately	Disagree Slightly	Neither Disagree nor Agree	Agree Slightly	Agree Moderately	Agree Strongly
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

6. I often apply in my life the principles I learn from the Bible. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

7. I have an intimate relationship with God. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

8. I have good relationship with people around me. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

9. I often reflect upon what God has done in my life while reading the Bible. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

10. The discipline of prayer is very important in my spiritual life. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

11. It is necessary to spend long time in silent awareness of God's presence, to be just with the Lord.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

12. Whenever I read the Bible, I often think about how I can apply it to my daily life. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

13. Reading the Bible alone, I often read out the verses aloud. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

14. There is much spiritual value of silence. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

15. After I read a Bible passage, I often wait upon the Lord, doing nothing outwardly.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

16. When I read a Bible story, in my imagination I often talk with people in the story.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

17. It is easy for me to quiet down before I read the Bible in my devotional time.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

18. When I read the Bible, I often pause and pray to God because some words or sentences have big impact upon me.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

19. When I read a Bible passage, I tend to analyze it and try to get as much information as possible.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

20. Is there any comment you would like to make about this Doctor of Ministry project?

Pre-Project Questionnaire by John Hanna

Thank you for participating in this project. Your participation, input and evaluation are important. Please answer the following questions as you currently perceive them according to your current understanding

- a. What is your gender? ----
- b. If you are a Christian, how long have you been a Christian? (Check one)
0-5 years__ 16-20 years 6-10 years__ 20+years__ 11-15 years__

1. On average, how much time do you spend in prayer weekly? (Circle one)
hours 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 or more hours
2. How would you describe your prayer time? (Circle one)
Meaningless 1 2 3 4 5 6 Deeply Satisfying 7
3. Who taught you how to pray? (Check all that apply)
No one taught me Prayer seminar__
I taught myself__
Church__
A parent__
Books/Bible
Other-----
4. How important is prayer to you? (Circle one) No value 1 2 3 4 5 6
Indispensable 7
5. Do you find it difficult to focus on God when you pray? (Circle one)
Extremely difficult 1 2 3 4 5 6 Very easy 7
6. How confident are you in your ability to teach someone else how to pray? (Circle one)
Not at all confident Very confident 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
7. How often do you read the Bible? (Circle one)
Never Everyday 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8. On average, how many hours do you spend reading the Bible weekly? (Circle one)
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 or more
9. How close to God do you feel? (Circle one)
Very distant Very close 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
10. Does God ever communicate with you? (Circle one)
Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 Frequently 7
11. Why do you read the Bible? (Circle one)
Because I should Because I want to 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
12. How well do you know *Lectio Divina*? (Circle one)
No knowledge 1 2 3 4 5 6 Understand it well 7
13. How probable is it to have a personal encounter with God? (Circle one)
Never for most people Very probable 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
14. How often have you had a personal encounter with God? (Circle one)
Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 Regularly 7
15. If one were to have a personal encounter with God, what setting would be most conducive to have that encounter? (Check all that apply) I

- In a worship service
- Reading the Bible
- In a Bible study
- Listening to music
- In prayer
- Meditation
- In a dream
- Being alone
- Other-----

16. If you were to set aside time to wait on God, how likely is it that He will meet you? (Circle one)
 Very unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 6 Very likely 7
17. How strongly do you believe that God wants to have a personal encounter with YOU? (Circle one)
 He does not desire this 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 He desires to touch my life
18. What do you think might keep you from having a personal encounter with God?

19. What does it mean to "encounter" God?

20. How much do you desire to have an encounter with God? (Circle one)
 No desire 1 2 3 4 5 6 Great desire 7

Post Project Questionnaire by John Hanna

Thank you for participating in this project. Your participation, input and evaluation are important. Please answer the following questions as you currently perceive them according to your current understanding

- a. What is your gender? _
- b. If you are a Christian, how long have you been a Christian? (Check one) 0-5 years__ 16-20 years__ 6-10 years__ 20+years__ 11-15 years__
1. On average, how much time do you spend in prayer weekly? (Circle one)
 hours 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 or more hours
2. How would you describe your prayer time? (Circle one)
 Meaningless 1 2 3 4 5 6 Deeply Satisfying 7
3. Who taught you how to pray? (Check all that apply)
 No one taught me__ In a Prayer seminar__ I taught myself__ A parent__
 Books/Bible__ Other _
4. How important is prayer to you? (Circle one)
 No value 1 2 3 4 5 6 Indispensable 7
5. Do you find it difficult to focus on God when you pray? (Circle one)
 Extremely difficult 1 2 3 4 5 6 Very easy 7
6. How confident are you in your ability to teach someone else how to pray? (Circle one)
 one)
 Not at all confident Very confident 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

7. How often do you read the Bible? (Circle one)
 Never Everyday 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8. On average, how many hours do you spend reading the Bible weekly? (Circle one)
 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 or more
9. How close to God do you feel? (Circle one)
 Very distant Very close 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
10. Does God ever communicate with you? (Circle one)
 Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 Frequently 7
11. Why do you read the Bible? (Circle one)
 Because I should Because I want to 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
12. How well do you know *Lectio Divina*? (Circle one)
 No knowledge 1 2 3 4 5 6 Understand it well 7
13. How probable is it to have a personal encounter with God? (Circle one)
 Never for most people Very probable 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
14. How often have you had a personal encounter with God? (Circle one)
 Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 Regularly 7
15. If one were to have a personal encounter with God, what setting would be most conducive to have that encounter? (Check all that apply)
- In a worship service
 - Reading the Bible
 - In a Bible study
 - Listening to music
 - In prayer
 - Meditation
 - In a dream
 - Being alone
 - Other-----
16. If you were to set aside time to wait on God, how likely is it that He will meet you? (Circle one)
 Very unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 6 Very likely 7
17. How strongly do you believe that God wants to have a personal encounter with YOU? (Circle one)
 He does not desire this He desires to touch my life 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
18. What do you think: might keep you from having a personal encounter with God?
-
19. What does it mean to “encounter” God?
-
20. How much do you desire to have an encounter with God? (Circle one)
 No desire 1 2 3 4 5 6 Great desire 7

Additional Post Project Questionnaire Questions not in the Pretest

21. How many of the eight sessions did you attend?
-

22. How many of the eight phrases of the Lord's Prayer

23. How many weeks did you journal?

24. What has changed for you regarding prayer?

25. What has changed for you regarding Scripture?

26. What has changed for you regarding your experience of God?

27. What rewards have you found in practicing *Lectio Divina*?

28. What challenges have you found in practicing *Lectio Divina*?

29. How has your perception of God changed through this course?

Appendix 10: Approval from Iglesia Evangélica China de Panamá



MISION CRISTIAN CHINA DE PANAMA

Apartado Postal 5451 Panamá 3, Rep. de Panamá
#19 Avenida centenario, Costa del Este
Telefono (507) 271-4616 Fax (507)271-4617

August 20, 2020

Dear Jacqueline,

Permission for Conducting Research

I am pleased to inform you that the Deacon Board of The Iglesia Evangélica China de Panama already approved your request to conduct research in respect of your research on “The Effect of Practice Praying with Scriptures” during our 202-2021 Sunday School setting.

We will try our best to assist you in regards to this research. Please feel free to let us know if you have any needs that the church can help in this area.

We wish you all the best in your research. May God Bless and help you as you try your best to do it for the kingdom of God!

In Christ,

Philip Ngo
Senior pastor

La Misión Cristiana China está inscrita en el Registro Público, Ficha C-000443, Rollo 98, Imagen 0179

Appendix 11: Results of Categorical Question no. 1 to 4 (Part 1)

ID#	1. Usually, how often do you have your devotional time?		2. Usually, when do you have your devotional time?	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
1	3 to 4 times a week	5 to 6 times a week	No specific time	In the morning
2	1 time a day	1 time a day	In the morning	In the morning
3	1 time a day	5 to 6 times a week	In the morning	In the morning
4	1 time a day	1 time a day	In the morning	In the morning
5	1 time a day	1 time a day	In the morning	In the morning
6	1 time a day	1 time a day	At night	At night
7	5 to 6 times a week	1 to 2 times a week	In the morning	In the morning
8	1 time a day	1 time a day	In the morning	In the morning
9	5 to 6 times a week	5 to 6 times a week	No specific time	In the morning
10	less than 1 time a week	1 to 2 times a week	In the morning	In the morning
11	3 to 4 times a week	5 to 6 times a week	In the morning	In the morning
12	1 time a day	1 time a day	In the morning	In the morning

Appendix 11: Results of Categorical Question no. 1 to 4 (Part 2)

ID#	3. Usually, what do you do during your devotional time?		4. At present, how long on average is your personal devotional time?	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
1	Silence, Reading a passage from the Bible, Meditation of the passage, Prayer	Silence, Meditation of the passage, Prayer	15-30 minutes	15-30 minutes
2	Silence, Reading a passage from the Bible, Meditation of the passage, Prayer	Silence, Reading a passage from the Bible, Meditation of the passage, Prayer	30-60 minutes	30-60 minutes
3	Silence, Singing hymns, Reading a passage from the Bible, Meditation of the passage, Prayer,	Silence, Singing hymns, Reading a passage from the Bible, Meditation of the passage,	30-60 minutes	30-60 minutes
4	Reading a passage from the Bible, Meditation of the passage, Prayer, journaling	Silence, Reading a passage from the Bible, Meditation of the passage, Prayer,	More than 60 minutes	30-60 minutes
5	Silence, Reading a passage from the Bible, Meditation of the passage, Prayer	Silence, Reading a passage from the Bible, Meditation of the passage, Prayer	15-30 minutes	15-30 minutes
6	Silence, Reading a passage from the Bible, Meditation of the passage, Prayer	Silence, Reading a passage from the Bible, Meditation of the passage, Prayer	Option 5	30-60 minutes
7	Silence, Reading a passage from the Bible, Meditation of the passage, Prayer	Reading a passage from the Bible, Meditation of the passage, Prayer	15-30 minutes	15-30 minutes
8	Singing hymns, Reading a passage from the Bible, Prayer	Singing hymns, Reading a passage from the Bible, Meditation of the passage, Prayer	15-30 minutes	15-30 minutes
9	Silence, Reading a passage from the	Silence, Reading a passage from the Bible,	15-30 minutes	30-60 minutes

ID#	3. Usually, what do you do during your devotional time?		4. At present, how long on average is your personal devotional time?	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
	Bible, Meditation of the passage, Prayer	Meditation of the passage, Prayer		
10	Reading a passage from the Bible	Silence, Reading a passage from the Bible, Prayer.	15-30 minutes	15-30 minutes
11	Reading a passage from the Bible, Meditation of the passage, Prayer	Silence, Reading a passage from the Bible, Meditation of the passage, Prayer	30-60 minutes	30-60 minutes
12	Silence, Reading a passage from the Bible, Meditation of the passage, Prayer	Silence, Reading a passage from the Bible, Meditation of the passage, Prayer	30-60 minutes	30-60 minutes

Appendix 12: Answers of three open-ended questions between the pre-session and the post-session questionnaires.

Q11.What does it mean to “encounter” God?

Q14. What does it mean to hear God?

Q21.What do you think might keep you from having an encounter with God?

The following is a translation from the participants’ Chinese replies to English by the researcher.

ID#	The pre-session questionnaire	The post-session questionnaire
1	Q11.To be with a special person like a couple. Anything you can share with Him, someone you can rely on, someone you can trust.	Get close to him.
	Q14.I don't know because I had no real experience. But I think, to be present with God and can hear his words for guidance?	He speaks to you.
	Q21. Frequent worries about life difficulties.	Noisiness.
2	Q11. Heartfelt Communication	Alone with God in solitude. Having deep communication with God and ask God to correct my soul, helping me to understand God's will. I can tell Him about my feelings.
	Q14. Comfort, rebuke, exhortation, reminder, guidance, and direction.	Warmth, kindness, reminder, admonishment.
	Q21. Busy at work, lazy.	I am afraid that I have not developed a habit.
3	Q11. I can feel his presence.	It is the indescribable joy and satisfaction when I have any questions answered or difficulties solved after prayers.
	Q14. I got his instructions or response	Sometimes it is heard directly from God, and sometimes it is through the subtle voice of reading the Bible or praying. Sometimes through sermons, publications, radio, and even the words of family members, brothers and sisters... whoever knocks, He will open the door for him.
	Q21. Busy at work, when things are troublesome	When I am busy, or over-valuing worldly things.

ID#	The pre-session questionnaire	The post-session questionnaire
4	Q11. Communicate with Him and tell Him what I am grateful for and all my troubles. Feeling his love, peace and joy more.	I can feel his company and his comfort his teaching and His will more.
	Q14. I can hear his teaching and reflect if I have done right or wrong. Accept new challenges and follow His will.	He communicates with me and I can feel his gentle and warmth.
	Q21. At work	At work, time arrangement.
5	Q11. Can see Him anytime.	Having a good relationship with God.
	Q14. God's guidance.	God leads me.
	Q21. When I am upset.	Responsibilities from work and life.
6	Q11. When I have quiet time before the Lord and meditate the Scriptures, I feel God's presence and his guidance like seeing him face to face. I enjoy this feeling and soak myself in this kind of atmosphere. Whenever I do this, I often receive new things or reminders. Another situation is when things happen, I call on God and He answers me. I suddenly realize that God is by my side. In fact, He has always been there, and I didn't know it when my life was smooth.	While taking a walk, we meet and greet each other on the road, and start a conversation.
	Q14. When I have a problem, there is a voice in me telling me what to do and how to do. Sometimes I have the Scriptures in my mind, it means that God is talking to me within me. But sometimes there are two voices, I think this is what Paul said, there are two laws fighting in me.	Hearing God speak to me through people, things, various media, or reminders to encourage, or teach me.
	Q21. I don't know, I can't remember what it is.	Feeling tired, restless.
7	Q11. Appointment	Knowing God, communicating, and connecting with God.
	Q14. I am touched by different things and the Scriptures.	Understand his mind.
	Q21. Unable to concentrate, laziness.	Unwilling to submit to the Lordship of Christ, unable to let go of my own will.
8	Q11. Adoration.	Talk to God, wait for God to speak to me.
	Q14. Communion.	What God wants me to do.
	Q21. Lack of faith.	I am busy.
9	Q11. Meet with the Lord.	Get close to the Lord.
	Q14. Understand God's will.	Know what God wants to tell me.
	Q21. Can't quiet down, lack of sleep.	busy
10	Q11. Stay with God and enjoy His Love	Feeling God's presence and He is around me.
	Q14. God answers me and the Holy Spirit watches over me.	Through His Words make me know Him.
	Q21. Our sins, our personal problems.	Think too much.

ID#	The pre-session questionnaire	The post-session questionnaire
11	Q11. Meeting and seeing each other at the same time.	Seeing each other face to face and be very happy.
	Q14. It means that the ears cannot hear, but there is a feeling in the depths of the soul. This feeling is often moved or inspired by the Holy Spirit, which makes people feel or enlighten in the heart.	There is a voice talking to me in the depths of my heart.
	Q21. Hatred... and jealousy.	Irritability.
12	Q11. I get to know God. I trust and depend on Him, and establish an intimate relationship with the Lord.	Seeing God.
	Q14. When God chooses me, the Holy Spirit often speaks to me in daily life to help me distinguishing good from bad and lead me forward, so that I can understand his will and fulfill his mission.	Revelation from God
	Q21. My job and myself.	Nothing.

**Appendix 13: Coding Information for Focus Group after the First Learning
of *Lectio Divina***

Discussion Questions	In vivo code	Frequency of the word repeated	Sub-Category	Category	Theme
Previous learning of Lectio Divina	“I learned it before.”	8		Knowledge of Lectio Divina	Previous Learning
	“I did not learn it before.”	4			
Previous Experience of encountering God	“Yes.”	12		Previous experience of encountering God	Sacred Experience
Settings for encountering God	Reading the Bible.	5	Spiritual discipline	Means for encountering God before	
	Prayers	4			
	Silence.	3			
	Dreams.	2			
	Worship	3			
	Singing hymns	2			
	Unhappiness	1	Life Situations		
	Daily activities	1			
	Strolling	1			
	Happy time	1			
	In danger	1			
In difficult time	3				
Hearing God from the practice of Lectio Divina in the class	Yes	11		Hearing God	
	No	1			
Silence before prayer	“Habitual quite down before Prayer.”	3		Quite down before prayer	Practice of Silence
	“No problem to quiet down.”	1			
	“Getting easier to quiet down.”	1			
	“Depending on.....”	3			
	“Difficult to quiet down.”	3			
	“Very difficult to quiet down.”	1			

**Appendix 14: Coding information for Individual Interviews after Three
Classes of *Lectio Divina***

Interview Questions	In vivo codes	Frequency of the word/phras e repeated	Category	Theme
1a. How close do you feel God to you?	“Very close.”	3	Increasing closeness to God	Transformat ion
	“Close.”	6		
	“Somewhat close.”	3		
1b. How did it compare your relationship with God from before?	“Better.”	12		
2a. Did you hear God when you practiced Lectio Divina?	Yes.	11	Hearing God	Sacred Experience
	Sometimes	1		
2b. How was the preparation for practice	“No problem to quiet down before prayer.”	6	Silence preparation	Practice of Silence
	Tried to quiet down, but found it difficult	6		
3a. Did Lectio Divina facilitate your encounter with God?	“Yes.”	12	Encounter with God	Sacred Experience
4a. Did Lectio Divina facilitate your awareness of God’s presence?	“Yes.”	11	Awareness of God’s presence	
	“No.”	1		
2c, 3b.& 4b. What were the effects of hearing God, encountering God, and being aware of God’s presence in your life?	“Increasing faith in God.”	11	Spiritual growth	Transformat ion
	“Knowing oneself more deeply.”	2		
	“Gaining wisdom.”	3		
	“Prompting from God.”	6		
	“Experience more of God's love.”	3	Emotional well being	
	“Intimacy.”	2		
	“Being comforted.”	2		
	“Having a new hope.”	1		
	“Not so irritable.”	5		

Appendix 15: Contents of Spiritual Disciplines for Class 4 -9

Class No.	Date	Teaching Content	Centering Exercise For silence practice		Class Practice	Home Practice
			Music	Visio/Body		
4	Oct.11	Teaching the spiritual discipline of silence.	Listen to “The Lonely Shepard.”	Focusing on one object in the picture “Jesus with lambs.”	Ps. 23	Imagery exercise: putting a chair beside you and imagine Jesus sitting beside you. Be quiet for 10-20 minutes
5	Oct.18	Teaching <i>Lectio</i>	“Christ be near at either hand” by Keith Duke	Deep breathing	Matt. 6:9-13. The Lord’s prayer	Ps. 103: 1-7; Ps. 103:8-18
6	Oct.25	Teaching <i>Meditatio</i>	Listening to music “My Tribute.”	Deep breathing	Luke 12:22-32. Do not worry.	Luke 12:22-32
7	Nov.8	Teaching <i>Meditatio</i> with imagination	Hymns singing 靜靜聽	Deep breathing	Mar 10:13-16. Jesus blessed little children	Mark 10:13-16
8	Nov.15	Teaching <i>Oratio</i>	Listening to “Fireflies” by Timbre	Body Scan	Luke 18:35-43. Jesus healed the blind man.	Luke 18:35-43, or Proverb 3:3-12
9	Nov.22	Teaching <i>Contemplatio</i>	Listening to “My heart is not Proud” by Margret Rizza’	Wrapping a cushion as a baby and hold it tenderly in your arm. Imagine you are the child in God’s arm. while	Ps.131	John 5:1015

Appendix 16: An Outline for the Practice of *Lectio Divina*

Attitude

The attitude of doing any biblical meditation remains the same: we must allow scripture to master us rather than trying to master scripture, in order to be conformed into the image of Christ for the sake of others (Mulholland2001, 54). *Lectio Divina* is done slowly like reading a love letter, we read and re-read the passage lovingly and slowly, to allow the words and phrases to wash over us and to enter within us. When a word, or a phrase, or a thought resonates deeply, we stay with it, savour it, and allow the fullness of it to penetrate our being. We become more and more open to the influence of God's Spirit (Veltri 1996, (1), 40)

Preparation

According to John Veltri, I chose 5 “P”: Passage, Place, Posture, Presence of God, Peace to prepare the prayer period. I pick a Passage of scripture and have it ready at the beginning. Though biblical meditation is best done in silence and solitude, if in a group setting, choose a Place where participants feel safe and can be uninhibited in their responses to God’s Presence. The participant is advised to adopt a relaxed Posture and be humble to listen to God’s voice (1 Samuel 3:10).

Passage: Psalm 23

The setting: dim lights, candles, flowers, no draft, proper temperature, etc.

Time: 45 minutes

I would invite people by saying:

“Please relax and sit comfortably, but do not be too comfortable, lest you fall asleep. Remember, Jesus says that where two or three are gathered in my name, I am with them. So, prepare yourself to encounter the divine presence and open your heart to receive the gift from God. Let us do three deep breaths.”

Silence

Lectio (holy reading):

“I will read the Psalm slowly with pauses two times. Please listen to the words with your heart and see which words or phrases especially catch your attention. Stay with the words, absorb them the way the thirsty earth receives the rain.”

1st and 2nd reading.

Silence

Then each person is invited to repeat a word or phrase that strikes her/him personally.

3rd reading

Meditatio (meditation):

“I invite you to keep repeating the word or phrase within you. Please be aware of the feelings that are awakened. Occasionally you might want to ask yourself questions concerning this passage: Why? How? When? How might

this apply to me now? Let the word received sink deep down within you, just like a womb receives a sperm and forms a life within.”

Silence

Oratio (prayer)

“Now relish the word received. You are invited to speak aloud spontaneously, directly to the Father, or to Jesus, or to the Spirit. e.g., ‘My Lord, I am grateful...’ Please note that it is not a time for intercession.”

(Note: For the beginners, I feel obliged to explain to them that it is not an intercession time; it happened more than once in my experience.)

People feel free to take turns to offer their prayers to God. When the time of prayer ceases naturally, I would say: “You are invited to enter into the silence with a grateful heart. This is the time to taste the goodness of God among us.”

Contempatio (contemplation)

Silence

Resting in the Lord and enjoying His sweet presence.

Then end the practice by striking a singing bowl with a wooden mallet gently three times.

Appendix 17: The Course Outline for Four-year Spiritual Formation Model for ABSCSA

There are three semesters each year. Each semester has six classes equal to a half credit hour.

Each student is required to keep a daily devotional journal and submit it weekly throughout four years.

Module One – Word Focus

Module One focuses on learning and doing exercises of Observation, Interpretation, and Application of the inductive Bible study skills in the class to master the inductive Bible study skills. We have a textbook for this Module throughout the year:

Textbook: Grace Chiu. 2016. *Bible Study OIA*. HK; FES Press. (趙穎懿. 2016. *研經 OIA*, 香港基督徒學生福音團契有限公司)

The breakdown of the course outline of the three semesters are as follows:

- 1st semester: Learning the skill of Observation. Doing the relevant exercises from the book in the class. At the end of the semester, each student is required to use the method of OIA to do an outline for the book of Colossians.
- 2nd semester: Interpretation. Doing the exercises from the book in the class. At the end of this semester, each student is required to use the method of OIA to do an outline for the book of Philippians.
- 3rd semester: Application. In addition to the class practice of the textbook, the students are required to do weekly homework by using a *Bible Study Guide of Philippians*, 2011. Published by Campus Evangelical Fellowship Press, Taiwan. At the end of the third semester, the students are required to submit a lesson plan for a Bible study group for a chapter of a chosen epistle by using the OIA skills. Two classes are dedicated to learning the skills of leading a Bible study group.

Module Two – Self-knowledge Focus

The breakdown of the course outline of the three semesters are as follows:

- 1st semester. Textbook: 高偉雄, 2003. *我為什麼是我?* 橄欖出版社。(This book does not have any English translation for the author and the title of the book.)
- Class One. My family of origin
Class Two. Family system: rules
Class Three. Family system: the concept of boundary

- Class Four. Family system: space and intimacy
- Class Five. Family system: birth order, power distribution and decision making
- Class Six. Family system: the communication pattern in the family of origin

Term Paper: Book report of *我為什麼是我?* 1200-1400 words.

2nd semester. Textbook: Raymond Au. 2001. *Ten Keys to Help People Grow*. HK: Breakthrough Ltd. (區祥江 2001. *生命軌跡-助人成長的十大關鍵*。香港: 突破出版社)。
 A movie clip: *日日好日子 (Every Day Is a Good Day)*, <https://youtu.be/5faH869bYZc>.
 A movie: *那山那人那狗 (Postmen in The Mountain)*. https://youtu.be/IL30PsJ_7xE

- Class One. The formation of personality from the early childhood experience
- Class Two. The impact on personality formation by lack of parental love
- Class Three. The impact on personality formation by parental indulgence.
- Class Four. Introduction to attachment theory
- Class Five. The emotional wounds
- Class Six. The developmental experience affects the image of God and self-image

Term Paper: Reflection of the second semester's learning journey. 2000 words.

3rd semester. Textbook: Cloud, Henry. Townsend, Cloud. 1992. *Boundaries*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan (亨利·克勞德、約翰·湯森德. 2001. *過猶不及: 如何建立你的心理界線*。香港: 道聲出版社)。

- Class One. The check list of present belief system. Homework: A description of beliefs on the following eight items: success, self-worth, ideal, satisfaction, happiness, fun, security, and peace
- Class Two. The biblical teaching of the above eight items
- Class Three. The importance of self-acceptance
- Class Four. The healing of the past emotional wounds
- Class Five. Do not lead us to into temptation-know your fear and desire
Home work: self-examination checklist of your fears and desires
- Class Six. The importance of forgiveness in healing

Term Paper: Reflection of the third semester's learning journey. 2000-2500 words.

Module Three – Spiritual Disciplines Focus

1st semester: Textbooks: (1). 盧雲), 2017. 譯者: 徐成德, *浪子回頭*. 臺灣: 校園書房(Nouwen, Henri J. M. *The Return of the Prodigal Son*. NY: Doubleday). (2). 梁家麟. 黎民 *Café 02*. 香港: 宣道出版社

- Class One. Who am I?
- Class Two. Salvation and sanctification
- Class Three. Whom do I belong to?
- Class Four. The seasons of life and the spiritual growth
- Class Five. The vocational call
- Class Six. To build a sanctuary in the heart

Term Paper: (1). Book Report of 黎民 *Café 02*. 1000 words. (2). Reflection of the first semester's learning journey. 2500 words.

2nd semester. Textbook: 梁家麟. 2015 黎民 *Café 03 (Doubts about Faith)* . 香港: 宣道出版社

- Class One. Christlikeness. Homework: make a list of friends whom you would bring to the battle field to fight together
- Class Two. Confession of sin. Homework: Take two to three hours to confess your sin completely. Afterwards, offer yourself to God and ask to be filled with the Holy Spirit
- Class Three. Silence and Solitude. Homework: practice 10 minutes of quietness by focusing on breathing each day
- Class Four. Introduction to prayer of praise. Class practice of praises to God
- Class Five. Written prayers from the Bible. Homework: choose a written prayer from the Bible and send it to one or more classmates through the WhatsApp group
- Class Six. Introduction to non-discursive meditation of the Scriptures. Class exercise: Read Col.3:12-17, focusing on meditating v. 12 in class. Homework: drawing of the five garments of v.12; this is an exercise moving from abstract thinking to concreteness using the imagination rather than doing an analysis of the verse. Explain why you do what you do

Term Paper: (1). Book Report of 黎民 *Café 03*. 1000 words. (2). Reflection of the second semester's learning journey. 2500 words.

- 3rd semester. Textbook: 傅士德, 1993. *禱告真諦*. 周天和譯, 香港: 基道書樓 (Foster, Richard J. 1993. *Prayer-Finding the heart's true home*. Translated by Daniel T.W. Chow. HK: Logos Book House Ltd.).
- Class One. *Lectio Divina* (1): Introduction of the four stages of *Lectio Divina*: lectio, meditatio, oratio and contemplation. Class practice Col: 2:6-7; 3:1-4. Homework: practice Col: 2:6-7; 3:1-4 three times at home and write about the process of the practice in your regular weekly journal
- Class Two. *Lectio Divina* (2): Practice of silence, lectio, meditatio and oratio in class through Eph.4: 1-3, 13-16. Homework: practice Eph.4: 1-3, 13-16 three times at home and write about the process of the practice in your regular weekly journal
- Class Three. *Lectio Divina* (3). Class practice silence, lectio, meditation, oratio and contemplation through Ps. 90:1-12. Homework: practice Ps. 90:1-12 three times at home and write about the process of the practice in your regular weekly journal
- Class Four. Gospel Contemplation (1): Introduction to gospel contemplation and the function of imagination in praying with the Scriptures. Class exercise of imagination with five senses. Homework: Contemplate John 2: 1-11 two to three times at home and write about the process of the practice in your regular weekly journal
- Class Five. Practice of Gospel Contemplation (2). Class practice: Mark.10:13-16. Homework: Practice Mark.10:13-16. three times at home and write about the process of the practice in your regular weekly journal
- Class Six. Introduction to Prayer of Examen. Class practice of the past 24 hours. Be aware of God's presence and his/her responses to the events that happened during the day
- Term Paper. (1). Book report on the textbook. 3000 words. (2). Reflection of the third semester's learning journey. 2500 words.

Module Four – Mission Focus

- 1st semester. Textbook: *普世宣教運動面面觀 Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* (Winter and Hawthorne 2008).
- Class One. Israel's missionary call by Walter C. Kaiser. P.11-18
- Class Two. The Bible in World Evangelism by John Stott. P. 19-24
- Class Three. The Story of His Glory by Steven C. Hawthorne. P.37-53
- Class Four. Prayer: Rebelling Against the Status Quo by David Wells. P.137-140
- Class Five. Strategic Prayer by John Robb. P.141-147
- Class Six. Prayer evangelism by Ed Silvano. P. 148-152

- Term Paper: Reflection of the semester's learning journey. 2500 words.
- 2nd semester: Textbook: *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* (Winter and Hawthorne 2008).
- Class One. The church is bigger than you think by Patrick Johnstone. P. 203-208
- Class Two. The two structures of God's Redemptive mission by Ralph Winter. P. 209-220
- Class Three. Understanding Culture by Lloyd E. Kwast. Pp.371-373
- Class Four. Culture, Worldview and Contextualization by Charles H. Kraft. Pp. 397-405
- Class Five. The Role of the Culture in Communication by David J. Hesselgrave. P.406-410
- Class Six. Three Encounters in Christian Witness by Charles H. Kraft. P. 419-425
- Term Paper: Reflection of the semester's learning journey. 2500 words.
- 3rd semester. Textbook: 傅蘭吉, 1991. 三重戰場. 臺灣: 橄欖出版社 (Frangipane, Francis. *The Three Battlegrounds*)
- Class One. The first battleground: Our Thought
- Class Two. The first battleground: Our Thought
- Class Three. The second battleground: The Church
- Class Four. The second battleground: The Church
- Class Five. The third battleground: The Dark Force
- Class Six. The third battleground: The Dark Force
- Term Paper: Reflection of the semester's learning journey. 2500 words.

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