Tyndale University

A Psychospiritual Approach to Christian Spiritual Formation

A Research Portfolio

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by

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ABSTRACT

This research portfolio presents an integrated psychospiritual approach to Christian spiritual formation. It arose from the author's reflection on her own spiritual journey, from her professional experience as a psychotherapist, and from the observation that psychological barriers often impede spiritual progress. While the psychotherapeutic and spirituality literature often exist in separate silos, and the two professions tend to operate in different domains, the author contends that spiritual formation/direction and psychotherapy in combination are often what is needed to bring about Christlikeness. A psychospiritual model of Christian formation is presented that integrates insights from both domains with particular attention to the rich spiritual traditions of Protestant, Orthodox and Catholic understandings of psychological wholeness and spiritual holiness. To test this integrated model, a field research project was carried out to explore the effect of an integrated, eight-session psychoeducational program with individuals whose spiritual lives were affected by trauma and unforgiveness. The findings of the study suggest that attachment theory and trauma-informed principles may help people move forward in the process of forgiveness and spiritual growth. The limitations of the study are discussed, and recommendations are made for further study on how to extend a psychospiritual approach to spiritual formation in the case of similar issues that present barriers to wholeness and spiritual transformation into the *imago Christi*.

DEDICATION

To my family, whom I have come to love and appreciate.

And,

To the glory of God.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I am deeply grateful to the many people who have believed in me, and have been secure and grounding influences for me, over the course of my life. Without them I would be nothing.

I am particularly thankful to Dr. Janet Clark, without whose encouragement and support I would not have arrived at this stage of my DMin.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

GLOSSARY

Attachment styles: Describes an individual's relating style which they develop in the context of their early relationship with their caregivers. (1) Secure attachment and three insecure attachment styles have been described, (2) anxious preoccupied, (3) anxious avoidant and (4) disorganized. These styles are elaborated on in Chapter IV.

Christlikeness: I have used this term generically throughout this portfolio to denote the goal of Christian faith: conformity to Christ. Many other terms occur in the literature on this topic: *theosis,* divinization, deification, sanctification, holiness, sophianization, transfiguration, *perichoresis* and Christification. The literature also speaks of being "partakers of the divine nature", union and communion with God, and the beatific vision to speak of the goal of Christian faith. Spousal and nuptial language is used in Song of Songs, and Revelations refers to "the Bride of Christ" to describe our final face to face encounter with Christ in the eschaton.

Depth psychology: refers to inner dynamics which are the concern of psychoanalysis, such as motivations, desires, resistances, defenses, etc.

Discipleship: The process of Christian spiritual formation has been referred to as discipleship in the literature and also in this portfolio.

Imago Dei: Image of God

Imago Christi: Image of Christ

Psychiatry: The branch of medicine that specializes in mental disorders. Psychiatrists are medical doctors.

Psychoanalysis: Psychoanalysis addresses intrapsychic dynamics, motivations, desires, resistances, defenses and other deeper underlying issues at play in human behaviour. Psychoanalysts are mental health professionals from various disciplines (including some medical doctors) who have undergone further training in psychoanalysis. Many different schools of psychoanalysis have developed since Freud.

Psychology: While psychology is also a professional discipline to which one type of mental health professionals belong (Psychologists), I use this broad term to denote the domain or field of psychology which deals with mental health in general. It does not exclude psychiatry.

Psychotherapy: this is a broad field, with practitioners from different mental health disciplines. Practitioners may have had different types of training and do different types of "talk" therapies which span from "supportive" (e.g., Crisis

Counselling, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), to "depth," which is psychoanalysis).

Wholeness: I limit my use of this term to psychological healing, mental health, and the potential we can attain in our natural beings. Our holiness can be limited by our lack of wholeness.

Transformation: Commonly used in spiritual literature to speak about the change and growth into Christlikeness. However, one can also find this term in the psychology literature on healing. For instance, one might come across this often-quoted mantra among trauma therapists, "What doesn't get transformed, gets transmitted." In this portfolio, I use the term "transformation" to denote lasting change.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The main aim of this Research Portfolio is to present my integrated, psychospiritual model of Christian spiritual formation, which weaves together both psychological and spiritual understandings of human growth, wholeness and transformation. It was born out of my conviction as a Christian psychotherapist that psychological factors can often impede spiritual growth and formation, and thus a deeper understanding of the intersection of psychotherapy and spiritual formation is needed. My model integrates various sources of knowledge and insights into the process of spiritual growth. These arose out of my studies in the DMin program, reflection on my own life story and ministry, biblical reflection, a review and analysis of relevant psychological, theological and spiritual formation literature, and my findings from a field research project on unforgiveness in the context of trauma as a barrier to Christian spiritual formation, the goal or *telos* of which is Christlikeness. That goal is epitomized in what Jesus described as the two greatest commandments: to love God above all else, and others as ourselves (Mark 12:29-31), ultimately being united to God.

In Chapter Two I outline my spiritual autobiography in which I detail the geographical, educational, therapeutic and spiritual self-implicating landscapes I traversed. These occasioned biopsychosocial, relational and spiritual insights, understandings, and developments in my personhood. Testimony and self-knowledge are important in both our faith journeys and in psychotherapy.

Learning about my deepest self was derived through personal experience as a believer and as an analyst, as well as through formal studies and training in spiritual formation, theology, psychotherapy, and psychoanalysis. Finding the words to express one's deepest self is part of the process. It has also made me aware of the role of forgiveness in my life: my own need for forgiveness, my need to forgive others and to cultivate an attitude of forgivingness, in order to participate in healthy relationships with God and others. My intertwined psychological and spiritual development played a role in forming who I am as a person, informing my model of spiritual formation, and inspiring the topic of my research project.

Chapter Three explores my integrative, psychospiritual model, which borrows from both the domains of psychology and spirituality/theology. I am a Christian psychotherapist, with both areas of my life inextricably linked and integrated, as is the model presented below. My understanding of psychospiritual formation therefore, is twofold: (1) developing the practices to accomplish the goal of advancing in the area of one's spiritual growth to Christlikeness, (in response to and collaboration with the Holy Spirit) and (2) the healing of underlying wounds that are hindrances to going deeper in our relationships with God and others, thus progressively increasing our capacity to grow, thrive and flourish. As we are also fundamentally relational beings, and the marker of our growth in Christlikeness is how well we love God, self and others, my model is also about relationships.

From both, my personal my experience, and my practice/ministry, I see the processes of psychological and spiritual growth as being intertwined with each other: they are non-linear, they are not necessarily progressive, and they can be layered, overlap, contingent upon each other, and work themselves out over a lifetime. Progress in psychological and spiritual growth can be hindered by unhealed, underlying wounds and the unforgiveness which can accompany them. If wounds remain unhealed, the individual can come to outwardly exhibit spiritual behaviours while inwardly continuing to experience negative and painful emotions. Spirituality itself can be used as a mask to defensively avoid acknowledging, entering into and processing the pain of trauma. Thus, being aware of unhealed wounds and how they manifest is an important part of spiritual formation and transformation. Hence my model is both integrative and dialogical, as I maintain that psychology and spirituality must inform each other.

Human relatedness is embodied in the two "great" commandments by which Jesus distilled all the teachings of the law and prophets: to love God above all else, with whole heart, soul and mind, and to love one's neighbour as oneself (Matt. 22:34-40). How one holds these two interrelated commandments in tension, and applies them practically is of great interest to me, particularly in the context of human relationships, as they demand that we deal with issues in ourselves that keep us from loving others. Jesus commanded us to forgive, always and categorically. Forgiveness is thus essential to the relationality which is integral to our personhood, and to the domain in which we live, work, play, have

our being and in which we become who we are, and live out our calling in the world.

In Chapter Four I delve deeper into one key aspect of the restorative function of formation, addressing unforgiveness, which can be a major barrier to wholeness and our capacity for healthy relationships. After reviewing the background literature on the topic of forgiveness, I chose to use attachment theory for its usefulness in describing healthy relationships, together with trauma-informed principles due to the ubiquity of trauma, in the design of an integrated, psychospiritual program to help people forgive their wrongdoer. I took four participants through a curriculum which I developed, addressing key areas that act as barriers to forgiveness in individuals who have experienced hurts in intimate relationships. These barriers were recurring topics I identified through my ministry with individuals I have encountered in doing trauma therapy, which are also identified in the literature.

Although the study was small and carried out over Zoom during Covid restrictions, findings suggest that trauma-informed, attachment-based theories and approaches which attend to the dynamics of healthy relationships, can assist people struggling with unforgiveness towards those who have wronged them to move forward in the process. In addition to highlighting the key role that psychology can play in assisting spiritual formation, the project suggests ways to overcome hindrances to growth, and offers some practical, useful and concrete tools that can extend the effort to create safer and healthier communities (families, churches, workplaces) conducive to healing. It has also strengthened my own

ministry: I consider it a privilege to be able to discern this thrust towards

wholeness in my patients' strivings, and to help make it explicit for them,

facilitating their restorative journeys towards God, themselves and others.

Chapter Five of this portfolio concludes with a summary of key themes

and findings, as well as next steps for further research and practice. Having laid

out my map, the following few chapters will give more details on my model of

spiritual formation, beginning with my personal life story.

CHAPTER II: SPIRITUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

No words can adequately capture a life, and my personal abilities are an additional limiting factor. My lack of memories and words symbolize my spirituality, which similarly gravitates to the apophatic, the paradox of negative capability and what it can birth. In some ways, this describes who I am, and is, for me, the very essence of Christianity: life from the dead. Still, this brief snapshot catalogues some of the events that impacted me, and that I feel shed light on the process that birthed the model I present below. This spiritual autobiography is subjective, with a perspective and interpretation of events which may not align with that of other parties who were involved. It is, however, uniquely mine, and describes how I registered and processed my life experiences.

Spiritual Autobiography

I have forgotten far more about my life than I can remember. It is not so much that these events occurred so long ago that I cannot remember them. Rather, it is because I deemed them forgettable. This is hardly surprising: my past was filled with misery, chaos and unpleasantness (yes, I do remember that), and forgetfulness is often the only resource known to a child. My selective amnesia was at first a survival tactic. Subsequently, it became a habit. It has served me well over the years, until now, as I struggle to write my spiritual autobiography. Like many children, even those with well-meaning parents, I was unable to articulate my need for guidance, comfort and soothing, and formed my own,

perhaps erroneous conclusions about my experiences. Now I am faced with the sad reality that my immature and distorted perceptions of what occurred did not just influence what I forgot; they also shaped the way I remember the things that I do. This account records my journey with God, who over the years has worked to correct my skewed perceptions and to heal me. I have felt his hand and influence from my earliest consciousness. And curiously, I do remember his workings in my life. Even if many of the details of my life are distorted, God is always bringing me towards truth, which he wants in my inmost parts. Thus regardless of the incidental particulars of the journey, I am able to trace God's involvement and formation in my life.

The Early Years (until 1974)

Let me begin by giving the reader a sense of the milieu into which I was born and out of which the "I" of today has emerged, in no particular order, geographically, historically, culturally, ethnically, sociologically and most importantly, spiritually. Until I was 11 years old, I lived with my family in a small village, Gundavili, on the outskirts of Bombay (now Mumbai), India. A "village" in Bombay meant a quieter, walled enclave of houses set back from the main road, which, in contrast, teemed with shops, traffic and bodies upon bodies of people hustling and bustling to and fro.

Like all of India which is a place of extremes and disparities, life within and without the walls of the village were like two different worlds. In 2017 CNN reporter Moni Basu (Basu, 2017) described India's wide chasms which divide the obscenely rich and the abjectly poor, where her 16 richest people are wealthier

7

than her 600 million poor, and her educated are at the forefront of some of the world's highest academic achievements, while the rest of her population remains uneducated, barely eking out a living in rural villages.

My life, formed in this environment, reflected these polarizations. My early outer world was seemingly cocooned, small, simple, uncomplicated, while my inner world was tumultuous, complex and contained many extreme emotions and fears. As a child, I accepted this as normal and lived with this inner tension for years. I had no idea one could have peace. In fact, inner peace was so foreign to me that years later when I experienced the Prince of Peace, and the peace the world cannot give, I thought this was the epitome of boredom, and had to be taught what it is, and to learn how to appreciate it. Today, I wouldn't trade it for the world.

In those days, India was very diverse religiously, ethnically and culturally, and tolerant of multiple faiths and lifestyles. Yet great gaps existed. Religious identity was the defining feature, and my world was understood in terms of "Catholics" or "non-Catholics." While Gundavili was predominantly Roman Catholic we came into daily contact with non-Catholics, such as Protestants, different Hindu and Muslim sects, Parsees and Jews. India was so accepting that even individuals who were driven to it by persecution in their homelands like the Parsees, and the various migrations of Jews had so integrated that they had become key and respected members of India's economic and political life.

While there were clear boundaries between groups, India is infamous for its intragroup hierarchy, the caste system. Primarily Hindu in origin, the Brahmins

or priestly caste are prescribed elaborate cleansing rituals if so much as the shadow of someone from the lowest, menial, *dalit* or "untouchable" caste falls on them. The outward absence of tension, despite these differences between castes was almost unnatural. Perhaps this was the Hindu "karma" or "acceptance" of one's fate and lot in life; there was absolutely nothing one could do about it, so one might as well accept it. Of course, that's a great strategy for sustaining the status quo and repressing any rebellion or uprising against it. However, to simply accept one's lot in life when it is less than optimum is an unnatural situation, so it's no wonder there were eruptions and riots every so often. This seemingly peaceful co-existence smacked more of indifference. Regardless, there was little conflict amongst the various groups that were our immediate neighbours, fellow-students, or co-workers. No, the struggles that I knew all too well in those days, took place within myself.

Speaking of conflict, the thirteen-day Indo-Pakistan war occurred in 1971. It remains forever etched vividly in my memory, and its associations evoked strong emotions in me for many years. The fighting ended as quickly as it started. But in that short period I was exposed to the vicissitudes of war. We blacked out our windows with brown paper, and dimmed our lights at night, turning them off altogether during the blackouts which were announced by bomb sirens, for fear it would be seen by the Pakistani planes overhead. People would walk around the village during the air raids to check if lights could be seen from outside, and would bang on the windows with sticks.

Bomb drills took place at school, and astoundingly, we were told that if the sirens went off, we had to crouch under our flimsy desks. To this day I have a visceral reaction whenever I hear an air raid siren go off in war movies. Each evening we would huddle around the radio in the dark to listen to the news, and I remember the announcer screaming on the radio one night that an Indian Naval ship had been bombed in Bombay Harbour.

Although very young, key political names from that intense period of listening to the radio with my family are seared forever in my mind. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, head of Bangladesh had asked Indira Gandhi for help when Pakistan's Bhutto invaded them with a view to annexing their territory. Pakistan was quickly driven out by India, and the war ended, but not before it had touched many lives. Memories and emotions can wield tremendous power over us, and even though several years later two of my closest friends in high school were Pakistanis, and we remain friends to this day, my belly did an unconscious flip whenever I would hear "Pakistan."

Our "Catholic" or "non-Catholic" world was reflective of the era in which I grew up; there were similar in-group, out-group tensions in other parts of the world, too. Marrying out of the group was anathema and rare, and this applied to all religions. Cross-religion unions were even rarer, almost non-existent, and would be accompanied with ostracization from one's family. Sometimes, the reactions were much worse. There were even differences amongst us Roman Catholics, and one of the first questions raised when making introductions was

where a person was from. Was she a Goan, a Mangalorean or an East Indian (natives of Bombay)?

In our world, Protestants were not considered Christians, or perhaps lesser Christians, unlike we Roman Catholics. The "in-group" elitest programming was so strong in me that many years later when I became a believer in Jesus, I experienced a terrible inner struggle when making a break with Roman Catholicism.

When the neighbour's son became engaged to marry a Protestant, the news was received with shock and horror. That kind of reaction was commonplace and instructional in our culture. It served to ensure conformity and keep everyone operating in a certain and unquestioning way to maintain the existing state of affairs. I became especially familiar with these defaulting emotions, as I battled the same turmoil whenever I wanted to go against the grain. I must have been about 8 or 9 years old at the time, and although I lacked a full understanding of the implications, the idea that he had done something shameful did not escape me. Perhaps I also thought him brave to buck the system, because I was also intrigued by this Protestant woman. She was young and beautiful, and I remember stopping my play to watch her coming home from work, walking down the street into the village from the bus stop on the main road. She was always dressed in a sari, something that was also unusual among Roman Catholics of our status in those days. Of course, the neighbour's fiancée had to convert to Roman Catholicism to get married in the Roman Catholic Church and for the sake of the children they might have.

My childhood was defined by Roman Catholicism, and my home and school life revolved around the Church cycle. I was christened as a baby, and made my First Confession, First Holy Communion and Confirmation at our parish church, Holy Family Church. I attended Roman Catholic schools, so I had Catechism lessons and Mass at school. Sundays meant Sunday school and Mass with my family. Each evening, without fail, we prayed the Rosary, because my mother insisted that "The family that prays together, stays together." As we grew older, my siblings and I would time ourselves to see how quickly we could get through it. Thirteen minutes was our record.

I suppose one could call my parents devout, but that would only describe the diligence with which they adhered to a Roman Catholic way of life, not their understanding of the faith. They were similarly painstaking in how, without question, they always sought out Roman Catholic schools for me and my siblings. Roman Catholicism was our way of life, culture and identity. It was all I knew, and yet it was not until much later that I discovered that I knew nothing of what it really meant, nothing of God, and certainly nothing of how to have a personal relationship with him, although I yearned for him.

Each Sunday as a very young child, I watched the same drama that was the Mass unfold at the front of the church, which had something of a magical feel to it and to me seemed like a play on a stage. In the congregation, we would all rhythmically stand, kneel and sit at different points during the ceremony. I would watch a man dressed in long white robes and altar boys in red and white retrace the same ritual steps at the front, lifting up and setting down the host and the

shiny chalice. All of it was accompanied by the sound of bells and the smell of incense. The words of the ritual and liturgy are permanently imprinted on my heart and mind. None of this made any sense to me, but I did not question it: it was just something we did, again and again. One day, I had the sudden realization that the man who came over to our house to drink with Dad was the same man in the white robes in front of the church! It still did not make any sense.

I did pray though, even though I had no understanding of the Gospel. I asked God for help, mainly through repetitious, rote prayers, which was the only way I knew how to and because it was modelled for me. One of my main prayer topics was the growing conflict between my parents, and the atmosphere of hostility in which we lived. I also prayed to do well at school. I believed that God was all-powerful, but rather more like a magician than a father. When my mother had a "special prayer intention" she would pray a novena, that is, she would pray every hour, on the hour for nine hours for days. I also thought that I could influence God to act by how intensely I prayed, or how long I prayed. If things were really bad, I would try and stay up all night, begging God or Mother Mary to help, repeating my prayer again and again.

Syncretism is common in India, with culture and religion being closely intertwined. After my conversion experience as a teen, my awareness was awakened that I had to disentangle Christianity from the hodgepodge of my day-to-day living. Even Roman Catholicism in India, at least how we practiced it, was an admixture of ancient and historical, cultural practices transmitted generationally, which were a combination of animism as well as non-Christian,

Hindu or Muslim practices, and/or superstitions. My mother would think nothing of using some strange practice or other, if, as children we cried a lot and were grumpy, for instance. I realized later that some of what she did was "pouring out libations" to appease spirits she thought were plaguing us. It is very difficult to separate out the two, Christian from non-Christian, and when I eventually became a Christian, I radically expunged my life of these non-Christian ideas, beliefs and customs. However, I now realize that as I did not have the accompanying maturity, the manner in which I went about it brought much pain to my family.

My childhood is overshadowed by memories of my mother's growing unhappiness with two inter-related issues: living in India and living with my father. She had lost her parents early in life, and her siblings had moved to England. It seemed to me that she wanted to be anywhere but India, and I recall a long litany of novenas and prayers, applications to Canada, Australia and England, the repeated let-downs of rejections and the accompanying tension that would ensue. It was a very unhappy time. Nevertheless, my parents were relentless, and we kept trying again and again, pushing different doors, trying other routes. It was always "No," until one day, finally, the breakthrough happened: we would be going to Kenya, of all places.

My father left for Nairobi ahead of the rest of us, and for two months my mother and I would go into Bombay each day to organize our passports and visas in preparation for travel. India is well-known for its bureaucracy, and we spent hour upon hour traipsing from one office to the next, across the city on packed trains and buses in the sweltering heat. We would line up in queue after queue,

only to be told we were in the wrong line, or worse, the wrong office altogether, and we would have to start the process from scratch again. Needless to say, I was co-opted to say novenas with my mother each day as we prayed to get all the details in place before we could leave to join my father.

My mother had worked in the city before my parents married, and she would talk to me about these experiences on our trips there, pointing out landmarks and places that were familiar to her. One of the rare treats from my childhood was being bought an iced coffee with cream at Victoria Station, a huge train terminus in central Bombay.

I was very likely not my mother's first choice of companion during the two months of running around Bombay, but I was not old enough to be left alone with my younger brother who was only 5 at the time. My relationship with my mother was always problematic because she was very controlling and kept us all in check using her "my way or the highway" mentality. Everyone gave in, because she never did, and no one wanted to risk being cut off, something she is famous for. One of her proudly declared mantras is, "I will never forgive." I am, and always have been, acutely averse to being controlled, and consequently, have had numerous run-ins with her. She has cut me off for years on end several times over the course of my life. Once, after several years of no contact, I ran into my parents on a subway platform. I stopped to talk to them and was shocked when my mother ignored me and walked on. My father always intervened to bring those periods to an end, and that evening I received a call and an invite over. Whenever these situations occurred, there was never any conversation about hurts, no

processing of issues, and no apologies or forgiveness. No one asked for forgiveness, and no one forgave. Years later, when I became a believer, experiencing forgiveness and learning how to forgive were valuable lessons. This also became important as a trauma therapist and became the focus of my field research project.

I was closer to my father, and experienced an overwhelming sadness and sense of loss at our airport goodbye and for the ensuing two months until we could join him. For years afterwards, whenever I heard or saw a plane overhead, I re-experienced those emotions. I remember having something of an epiphany one day as an adult, realizing the connection to those emotions, and in an enlightening "that was then, this is now" moment, I was able to cast off that burden permanently.

While my father was no saint, he was a good man and a secure base for me. He was completely devoted and loyal to my mother, always supported her, and never challenged her, choosing to comply. Although it was always my father who initiated the reconciliation between my mother and me, his choice not to stand up for me felt like he was colluding with her, and, in some ways, I felt betrayed by him. I did understand his dilemma. My father developed a drinking problem, and this became the focus of my mother's rage during my teen years and beyond.

I also remember my mother's nurturing and care when I was ill. I suffered terrible and frightening bouts of asthma as a child and remember her holding me upright on her lap because I could not breathe lying down. I still remember the

terrifying feeling of struggling, the immense effort to breathe, gasping, and not being able to draw in enough air. I spent more time sick at home during the first few years of my life, than at school. Miraculously and mysteriously, I never had another asthma attack after I set foot in Nairobi. Although it might, on the surface, be attributed to the lack of dust and air pollution, maybe I was simply breathing with relief that the tension between my parents, fueled by my mother's desire to leave India was finally over.

Life in Africa (1974 – 1984)

The flight to Nairobi was my first ever airplane flight, and my first time out of India. I was very excited, as were we all. My first impressions and feel of Nairobi are unforgettable. Being 6000 feet above sea level, Nairobi is cool all year round. The air was fresh, and it didn't smell bad. The crowds and crowds of bodies, incessant noise from honking cars and the hustle and bustle of Bombay were all gone. It was a feast for all the senses. I loved it!

It was not, however, without its challenges. We had left India on a three-year contract with no intention of ever returning. After just two months my father left the job he had come to, taking another which meant we could stay, but one that sent him to remote parts of East Africa instead. We moved to Mombasa briefly, and our short two-month stint at school there ended abruptly when we headed down to Tanzania. Our first six months were spent in Kigamboni, after which we moved 60 kms away to Bagamoyo, for another 18 months. We were all at different developmental stages, and my older sister, younger brother and I experienced the two-year interruption in our education very differently. We

17

resumed school on our return to Nairobi, although I was put back two years. Of the three of us, it seemed that the move benefitted me the most: no longer limited by asthma, I thrived at school, although I never lived down the fact that I remained two years behind my age cohort.

Kigamboni was an amazing, valuable and fun experience, but it was also problematic. It was an isthmus across from Dar es Salaam, which could only be reached by ferry. My father worked at the oil refinery, and we lived on the second floor of the only two-story structure for miles around. We could hear ships announcing their arrival into the harbor with a loud blast of their horns and would watch them sailing up the narrow inlet. There was no electricity or running water, and my sister and I, whose job it was to draw water from the well in the courtyard below, devised a system in which we tag teamed: one person drawing it up from the well, lugging it to the bottom of the balcony and the other pulling it up over the balcony wall. Each evening, when my dad came home, he lit the kerosene pressure lamps. Our daytime routine involved helping my mother cook and clean. We also played with the African children who were our neighbours, and became proficient in Kiswahili, the local language. Unlike us, the kids went to "shamba" schools where they learned to grow vegetables and farm. Unfortunately, or fortunately, my parents refused to let us attend. They thought it would be better for us not to have our school records tainted with attendance in a shamba school and preferred to keep us out, until we returned to the city.

We occasionally went to church, but it was a big deal going into Dar es Salaam on the ferry, so this was when our once regular attendance began to lapse.

The conflict between my parents intensified, and as children we were quite

isolated, and left to our own devices (I don't mean electronic devices!). We

missed the social involvement in the Roman Catholic Church, and in the absence

of church, school, extended family, and even neighbours (due to language

barriers) all of us, and our relationships with each other, started to unravel. I

cannot recall exactly, but this might have been when we stopped praying together.

There was not a lot to do with ourselves. On one of our trips into Dar, I asked for

a *Teach Yourself French* book, and tried to maintain some routine doing it. I also

found a stack of about 10 story books in which had likely been discarded by the

previous tenants. There were a couple of Enid Blytons, a Nancy Drew, a Hardy

Boys, and Biggles. We would read these repeatedly, sometimes out loud to each

other, and play board games to pass the time.

Tanzania was not as developed as Kenya, and as a socialist country it was

much poorer. It is largely unspoiled and beautiful, even more so in the rural area

where we lived. It was also a Muslim country, and after a few issues, we were

advised by my father's work colleagues that my mother, sister and I should wear

headscarves, long skirts and long-sleeved garb which we donned. It helped us fly

under the radar and have fewer problems with the Police who would stop us

looking for "chai money," or bribes.

When our 6-month term in Kigamboni came to an end, my father got a job

in Bagamoyo with a Canadian construction company that was building a dam in

Ruvu, another remote part of the country. We went along too and this time we

were kept out of school for 18 months. It strikes me strange that my parents

thought nothing of how this might affect us. It did not occur to them to get advice, and of course, in the dead of Africa at that time there was no oversight or laws requiring us to attend. In addition, we were not connected with a church or community, so there was no accountability to anyone.

We lived on a beautiful beach, along with other Canadian expatriates. We drove to Dar every month to stock up on food, ordered food from Canada (my introduction to canned tuna!), and flew to Mombasa every three months for a vacation. My sister and I read a lot. We were exposed to Canadian magazines, newspapers and National Geographic. Sometimes when I am driving through a typical Canadian scene (for instance, north on Woodbine) with the trees on either side, or on a multi-lane highway, I can't help remembering those pictures I looked at and dreamed over, now marveling that I am actually here.

As our time in Tanzania came to a close, my parents decided to make a bold attempt to emigrate to the UK by just going there, hoping for the best. My father hoped he would get a job, and that we could stay. We packed up everything, certain we were making a clean break, never returning to Africa. We were full of excitement as we made that trip.

On our way to London, we stopped in Entebbe on the day after an Air France plane had been hijacked. We had disembarked for a long stop-over and saw it sitting at the end of a runway in a deserted part of the airport. Media reports of the daring rescue in the following days and weeks, and the subsequent documentaries and movies fueled my avid interest in Israel, which continues to this day.

Unfortunately, we were not allowed to remain in the UK, and after two months we returned to Nairobi, where we were to remain until I finished High School and left for England myself. My father started his own business, and for a while everything seemed to be going very well. A dreadful coup in 1982 devastated the economy and peoples' trust, and many expatriates left the country which never quite bounced back. My father's business took a dive, and we lived hand-to-mouth from that point onwards. My sister had dropped out of high school as soon as I began, claiming that the teachers had compared the two of us. My brother and I who were still in school were in limbo until we learned that the nuns would allow me to complete my studies without fees, while he had to go to public school.

My teenage years were difficult and tumultuous, but also the most life changing. I now realize that I grew up with two parents, and possibly a sister, who had fallen apart, but I had no understanding of it at the time. Somewhere, sometime, they had decompensated in various ways, and it spilled over into the family which had become a hotbed of chaos. My father binge drank, and my mother punished him by convincing all of us to stop talking to him for months on end. Neither of them had effective problem-solving abilities, communication skills or the ability to forgive. As my sister had somewhat checked out, I stepped into the breach to solve the problems between my parents. My mother leaned on me heavily, and I felt pressured to save the day.

At night I would hide the house keys to make sure my mother would not leave as she was forever threatening, and living close to school allowed me to run

home during my lunch breaks to make sure she was alright. I did not to realize the emotional burden I was carrying, and the toll it took, until I left home. We had no support or outside intervention, no one to turn to or confide in, because somehow there was a belief that we had to keep our problems behind closed doors. We were forced to cling to each other out of need and desperation, and ultimately, we all grew to hate each other.

In the midst of this disorder and mayhem, I came to know the Lord. My classmates, many of whom were children of either expatriates, diplomats or Kenyan government officials, were well-off and talked about their plans for post-secondary education abroad. They were headed to the US or Europe. I was at a loss: whatever would I do? I felt hopeless. I could not expect my parents to support me, and it seemed like my world was coming to a crashing halt.

I had become very friendly with Sr. Maire the Novice Mistress and the novices in training, and they would often invite me to join them for meals or on some of their weekend activities. It was a welcome break for me. One day, Sr. Maire asked me if I had ever considered becoming a nun! I was stunned. Was this "the call" that nuns and priests talked about, I wondered? Was this my destiny? I had to explore it.

The simple question sent me on a life-changing quest. What did I believe? I found myself critically wondering about everything I had previously taken for granted, determined to think through my faith. I wanted none of the trappings which seemed to me to be merely Catholic inventions and decided I would start reading the Bible from start to finish. In the beginning, before I found my feet,

even Jesus and the cross sounded bizarre and made up. I began to address the God of Israel and asked him to show me the truth. God allowed himself to be found by me, as I dashed home each day, completed my schoolwork and delved into the Bible. My world, previously small and hopeless suddenly took on a new light and became one of possibilities as I communed with the God of the universe. I got to the book of Numbers, and my resolve to work my way systematically through the Bible collapsed. Looking for something more readable, I turned to the book of John and there I discovered Jesus. The Bible came alive, and my life changed irrevocably. Even though I had no one to school me, I had what I later realized were typical Christian experiences: God spoke to me in the quiet recesses of my heart, and brought light and comfort, hope, and healing.

Curiously, this exercise led me to realize that I was not, in fact, being called to the nunnery. While I was discovering new life with Jesus and praying for guidance about the future, the Headmistress Sr. Pauline, another major influence in my life, suggested I think about nursing training in England. This was my way out. Ultimately, however, it would take nothing short of a miracle to get a visa to go to study in England as I still had an Indian passport.

Although I had nine interviews lined up, my visa was denied by the British High Commission in Nairobi, a decision I was told was irrevocable. However, when I wrote to the nursing schools in the UK, all but one, Addenbrooke's in Cambridge, accepted it as final. A nursing tutor in Cambridge with whom I had been corresponding contacted the British Home Office and sent me what I needed

to get a visa. I learned valuable lessons about trusting God's sovereign authority, no matter what the circumstances may be.

Nursing was something that I had not envisioned myself doing, but training in the UK at the time was perfect for me, being unique in that as one worked one's way through the three-and-a-half-year program, students received a stipend. My parents only needed to find the money for my flight, and they supported my decision to go. My mother hoped I would eventually bring her to the UK, and when I left, I fully believed that I would ultimately rescue her. Leaving them was gut-wrenching. I feared for them all. Separating myself from my family psychologically and emotionally was an extremely painful process. I did not understand what was happening to me, and I could not have been able to verbalize the experience if I wanted to. All I knew was I had to leave the past behind to go forward with my own life, which I had been given as a gift. I was filled with what I now understand to be survivor's guilt.

England (1983 - 1988)

Needless to say, after the help they gave me with my visa I chose Cambridge over all the other places where I could have trained. I was to remain there for almost 5 years. In that time, I got to know and moved in with 3 other Christian nursing students who attended the Cambridge Christian Fellowship, part of a growing house church movement in the UK in the 1980s. I most loved the catchy worship and the bible teaching which I was so very hungry for and began to consider making it my home church. The process of leaving the Roman Catholic Church proved extremely difficult and I wrestled with it for a long time

before I finally cut the cord. Many of the key leaders in the church had themselves been raised Roman Catholic, which helped me make the break.

The church in England at the time was vibrant and alive, and I loved being part of it. I was very committed to my newfound faith and lost no time getting baptized in the River Cam. I became involved in a small group, and they became my new family, showing me love, praying for me and my family, and going out of their way for me. I felt very accepted. They showed me what being a Christian meant, and they remain my ideal of Christian life. Truly, I have not experienced such commitment from Christians since. The difference between the Canadian church and the church in England is, to me, very marked. I do not recall Christians in England being so overly concerned about boundaries or that they shut out anyone. It was one of the hardest things I had to get used to when I moved to Canada, and I felt very lonely for my first years in Canada.

I shared my burden for my family with my church and they were very committed and faithful in praying for them. I returned home for a visit once, halfway through my training. I found an Assemblies of God church in Nairobi and introduced my sister to a young woman who befriended her and continued to remain connected to and minister to my family through prayer. My family came to faith in Christ and attended the Assemblies of God church for a while, although it did not last and they stayed connected to the Roman Catholic Church.

I did not experience the British as reserved. I got to know many other families in the church who took me into their bosom. I was invited for meals and sleepovers and was never alone, particularly on holidays. I got involved in

ministry as well, as the church was very active. John and Stella were a couple that I sought out to mentor and disciple me. They had an impressive ministry with young students at the University and hospital. They delighted in teaching me too, and I would come over to their house once a week or so and spend time talking with them and learning from them. My relationship with God grew, as I learned about him through his word, and I grew and changed as I participated in the life of the body of Christ and experienced his work through his people. I never tired of these sessions which involved meals, study, talk, movies, trips as well as sleepovers. We spent a lot of time together, and I loved them dearly. I still quote them today, especially my instruction to patients and students: "Chew the meat and spit out the bones."

John and Stella also had a tremendous love for Israel which encouraged my own interest, and they took me to the London Messianic Fellowship shortly before I came to Canada. I was so entranced by Jews who believe in Jesus that I resolved to seek out a Messianic congregation when I came to Toronto. I was to spend my first eleven years in two different Messianic congregations.

Once I qualified as a nurse, I got a job as a staff nurse on an Oncology ward, at the world-famous Addenbrooke's Hospital, where I had trained. We worked with individuals with tumours from diagnosis, through their various bouts of chemotherapy and radiation, and eventually, palliation, and terminal care. As an Indian citizen though, I had to make a decision about whether I wanted to make my home in the UK or move elsewhere. My parents, still struggling to make a living in Kenya, suggested we all move to Canada. My father's oldest

sister, my aunt Mercie, and her daughter's family were in Toronto and had offered

to sponsor the family. At the same time, I applied for, and got a job at the

Toronto Western Hospital in their Oncology unit. My immigration papers came

through shortly after, and I moved to Canada in October 1988. I spent a month

hanging out with and re-acquainting myself with family I had last seen at my

grand-father's funeral when I was 7. My parents, sister and brother followed a

year-and-a-half later.

O Canada (1988 – Present)

Of all the cross-cultural moves I have made, I experienced the worst

culture shock with my move to Canada. Perhaps it was my age. After all, I was

not coming into a situation with a bunch of other students, in which we could

bond together as a group. I had to make my way and find my niche just like every

other immigrant. Being on my own this was very difficult, especially as I was to

encounter a major handicap shortly after my arrival.

I had come to Canada with a huge contingent of other British-trained

nurses who had been brought over because of a staffing shortage. We soon got to

know each other, sharing common themes of loneliness, cultural differences and,

once the winter drew on, blues about the terrible, terrible weather. There was a

housing problem in Toronto at the time, and it was difficult to find an apartment.

Eventually, I roomed with two other UK nurses who were also working at

Toronto Western, in what was essentially their storage room in a flat above a

hairdresser's shop on College Street. We did not know each other but we

connected on some level because of our shared training and experiences. I

remember the three of us sitting in our tiny living room, watching the 6 pm news together on yet another freezing winter's day, all crying! I acutely felt the loss of my bosom buddies whom I had left behind in England. My long-distance telephone bills were upwards of $600, in those days!

Work was a challenge. I worked in Oncology, and there was a fair bit of palliative care which could involve a lot of physical work, for which I needed the assistance of my colleagues. It seemed that the Canadian nurses were so incensed with the fact that UK nurses had been hired that they would not help us. More often than not I would come home after work feeling dreadful about the standard of care I delivered to my often-dying patients. I was not happy and began to regret my decision to come to Canada. Before very long these feelings were compounded by the deep depression and anxiety which overtook my life.

The Assault

On New Year's Day, 1989, barely two months after my arrival, I was walking to work in the early hours of the morning when I was dragged into an alley and assaulted. It was the defining moment of my life: there is a "before" and "after" the assault, the entire course of my life was altered by this seminal event. All of my career and spiritual ambitions came to a screeching halt, beginning with a progressive deterioration over the next 8 months and then, the healing phase which took the next ten years. Only much later did I realize that I had developed PTSD, with accompanying depression and anxiety. I changed my work environment by moving to the Bone Marrow Transplant unit at Princess Margaret Hospital, but I just could not sustain the pace. I have little memory of

28

1989 – 1991. One day, in 1991, the minister of an Anglican Church I would sometimes attend asked me if I would be interested in working a maternity contract at an Anglican home for emotionally disturbed women. This was to become my haven, and what started as a ten-month stint turned into a ten-year stretch, during which period I gradually healed and came together again in a very different way. Individuals who have been assaulted often state that they are never the same again, and I can attest to this, too.

The Messianic Years (1991 – 2001)

In the midst of this spiritual, emotional and psychological wilderness in which I found myself, I wandered around looking for a church home, attending many different congregations and denominations on Sundays. Every Saturday I would attend Congregation Melech Yisrael, a conservative Messianic Jewish Synagogue. Eventually, though, I realized that I had been coming there consistently. I loved the worship and teaching, and had started to form relationships with the people there. I also realized that I was not the only non-Jewish believer in their midst, and was invited to make it my home congregation, which I did.

I was drawn to Messianic Judaism and was hungry to learn the faith from an Old Testament perspective. The teaching was novel, something I hungered after. The music was vibrant and with Jewish dance, it was a wonderful way to worship. The congregation was alive, and I loved it. I also loved the Jewish sense of humour, and the food! I was to remain there for five years, becoming involved in various ministries along the way.

Melech Yisrael's conservative Hebrew liturgy and service was so very familiar to me, because of its similarity to the Roman Catholic Mass, and I felt very much at home. Now that I have come full circle, and am re-discovering my Roman Catholic roots, I see that the Mass is modelled on the Hebrew synagogue service. Sadly, Melech fell apart and remains just a shell of its former self. Many of us transitioned to other congregations, and I became involved with a new Messianic start-up, the charismatic City of David congregation, where I again became very involved in ministry.

During my years in the Messianic Movement, I made my way down to Harrisburg, PA almost every year for the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America conference. I became very familiar with the Messianic world, theology, customs and lifestyle, and even modelled my year on the Jewish spiritual cycle, observing *Shabbat* and the Jewish festivals and High Holy Days. My closest friends in Toronto are Messianic Jews from this era of my life. Recently, I took a gene test for the medical information it would afford me, and as a bonus, received my genetic make-up as well. I was not altogether surprised to find that it showed I have Jewish roots, although they are from the distant past.

I travelled to Israel on two occasions, the first time with an intercessory group from England, Prayer for Israel, and the second when I represented Canada at an international prayer conference put on by Youth With a Mission, YWAM, although I was not officially involved with them. I feel a strong affinity with and love for the land of Israel.

A Year of Cleansing: 1993

I attended a Pastoral Care Ministry week-long workshop led by Anglican minister Leanne Payne and her team in Montreal. It was an interesting and exhausting week. Each day God had some other deep cleansing to effect in me. It seemed like the purging and deliverance was a prerequisite for ministry because on my return, I embarked on a series of journeys with God, first to study intercession on three weekends in Thorold, near St. Catharines, in the dead of winter. This was followed by a week with YWAM's intercessory prayer team at the city-wide music and arts festival, "Love Sofia" in Sofia, Bulgaria in May, a cardinal point venture to the easternmost part of Canada on the World Day of Prayer in June, and then at YWAM's International Prayer Conference in Jerusalem in July. This was my most packed ministry year to date.

I had many dreams and ambitions prior to the assault, which I had to let go of. One was a desire to serve as a missionary. After my assault it did not seem feasible; I did not feel confident enough to pursue it long-term. Nevertheless, I attended several short-term medical missions, going to Argentina, India, and Guyana, always returning to my life and the slow and deep process of healing that I was undergoing. I thought the Christian life should be packed with ministry, and often felt like a failure because my life had taken on a humdrum, hidden and mundane quality.

I was smitten by the same success-oriented bug in the area of my work. When I would hear news of the great career exploits of my nursing friends in England, I was disappointed and envious that I was too debilitated to keep up with

the pace of work in a hospital. Being out of the running for some 10 years, my future prospects looked somewhat grim, especially as I could hardly make ends meet with the huge drop in salary at the group home I now worked at. Those years were filled with the anguish of feeling forgotten by God.

I started taking one course at a time in Health Administration at Ryerson, which gave me an edge and allowed me to take the lead role in planning the program when our facility was mandated by the Ministry of Health to become an addictions recovery home in the mid-90s. Little did I realize that God would use the very thing that trapped me to catapult me into a key role in the future. My impromptu training in addictions made my experience much sought after, and when I could no longer make ends meet and sent out my resume, St. Michael's Hospital pursued me for a new program serving individuals with psychotic disorders and substance related issues. Despite being out of the nursing union for 10 years, I got a job with a 150% salary increase. I was able to realize another dream when I bought a house in 2002.

Slowly I began to see the Lord restoring to me the years the locust had eaten away. It was like those interim years had never happened! After seven years at St. Mike's, I was recruited by Humber River Regional Hospital to plan and implement an Elective Withdrawal Management Program there. After two years in that semi-management role, I realized that rather than a career in health administration I wanted to become a psychotherapist and left full-time work for a part-time floor nursing position at The Centre for Addictions and Mental Health while I pursued the Master of Divinity in Counselling at Tyndale. On graduation,

I immediately enrolled in a brand new, one-of-its-kind program in the US which integrates Psychoanalysis and Christian Theology, travelling down 4 times a year for the next three years. I finally graduated in December 2015, and the private practice I opened at the same time as studying and nursing finally did well enough for me to be able to stop nursing altogether in 2018.

A Spiritually Key Year: 2001

When I started my new job at St. Mike's, I discovered I had a serious back problem, and in the face of excruciating pain I thought I was becoming disabled. It seemed unreal: just as things seemed to be opening up on the career front, I was being brought to a crashing halt, physically. I was even more panicked, terrified and tormented than I had been with the emotional distress from the assault. I experienced some very extreme emotions, including sheer terror about the future. My life had once more become one, long, internal scream out to God to heal me. All I could do was wake up very early to go through the slow motions of getting ready for work, muster up all my strength at work to hide the intense pain I was in, and then come home, eat, and lie on my side until it was time to repeat the process the next day. This dragged on and on while I was waiting for a rheumatologist appointment.

One day I came to a sudden realization that even if this was the end of my life as I knew it, and even if my life was going to become more and more constricted, I was never going to abandon God or my faith, because he was so very real to me. From that moment on, a profound acceptance of my reality came over me, and my prayers changed: I stopped yelling, and I started telling God that

I loved him, and that I always would, and that nothing would change that. That even if I were to be disabled, I would still love and worship him. Something happened deep within me in my spirit, and I was overcome with worship and thanksgiving. Eight months later, when away at a conference, I realized that for two days I had not taken the painkillers that I had become so dependent on. I decided to try going without them, and have been pain-free, and painkiller-free ever since.

Most importantly, my life and relationship with God changed from that time onwards. Although I have by no means "arrived," I have come to a place where I am no longer dependent on what God does for me, but rather on who he is and that he is, and that is more than enough for me. I have been in this mode ever since. Nothing much happens on the outside —everything I previously counted as indicators of God's blessings are markedly missing for me. I used to think that I had to do great things for God, which would gain me recognition. Now, that's the last thing I want or desire. I have come to understand what St. John of the Cross, well-known for his description of the "dark night of the soul" meant when he said that it is those at the beginning stage of the journey who often have private revelations and religious experiences (Bergstrom-Allen 2014, 211). I would rather be deep in the journey with God where one does not always experience joy and religious fervour, but which is characterized by acceptance and trust (Bergstrom-Allen 2014, 517). I have been in this place for years, with nothing much seemingly happening outwardly, but inwardly feel deeply anchored. Even

my thanksgiving and worship is a wordless place where I am in his presence and where nothing else matters.

I have reflected deeply in an effort to better understand the process which brought about this turning point in my spiritual life. It was not that I doubted and needed to know God's love; rather, I had accepted it, evidenced by the yelling, screaming and demanding I engaged in whenever something did not go my way. Although this, too, needed to be changed, it was not possible until another more foundational distortion was corrected. Clearly, this healing was about my love for God. I settled deep within myself when I realized that there was nothing, "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any creature" (Rom. 8:39), nothing that could stop me from loving God. While it was never God's love I doubted, it was my default conditional love programming that rendered me vulnerable to walking away from God. I couldn't trust myself to be faithful to God if he did not perform for me and come up with the goods. However, by his grace, I realized a shift in myself and suddenly my entire outlook changed. I had learned to love God because he had shown me how to do so by loving me first (1 Jn. 4:19). I also realized that having something go wrong does not mean that God is withholding his love from me. Now I know both sides of the Christian love equation. This spoke to a deep fracture or the "basic fault" (Balint 1968, 16) in my personhood and it was the beginning of a process of profound healing in me which allows the image of God in me to come forth a little bit more. It has had far-reaching

repercussions throughout all dimensions of my spiritual life, and the process continues.

Return to Roman Catholicism: 2018

Of all things, I am the most surprised that I have returned to the Roman Catholic Church and, in the short time since this about-face, my spiritual life has been rejuvenated and transformed. The old symbols, rituals and prayers which were my roots were in me like a deposit and have sprung up and come to life, making me realize how deeply they were embedded in me in my formative years. I am grateful for my Roman Catholic past. Studying Roman Catholic theology and spirituality alongside my current readings for the DMin is proving to be rich, deep and thirst-quenching in a way I never imagined. The Catholic Church has gone through much change in the 34 years I have been away from it, and I find their faith to be alive and deep.

It has not been without its challenges. Having lived the hostility towards Roman Catholicism in the Protestant church, I was not altogether surprised to have some of it blow back onto me. In the process, I lost some friends who have been unable to come to terms with my decision, although thankfully, some of us have resolved and resumed our close connections. Others have gone forever. Some of my more accepting Protestant friends have told me that I must have gone back to teach Roman Catholics the truth, but I am learning so much more from them! Having totally rejected anything and everything that I could not see directly reflected or spoken about in scripture, I am now more open.

My Integrated Spiritual and Ministry/Career Subjectivities to Date

I see Christian spirituality and psychology as sub-disciplines within the large frame of theology, which was once considered the "queen of the sciences." Theology strives to interpret life in its entirety, while psychology seeks to interpret individual lives (Browning and Cooper 2004, 6). My own health and transformation in both these areas (spiritual and psychological) resulted from the combination of my rich and diverse spiritual history and experience as a believer but also from the study I engaged in both fields, and the personal psychotherapy and psychoanalysis I underwent as part of my professional training in the field. As a Christian who is also a psychotherapist and psychoanalyst, I am interested in the intersection and interconnectedness of Christian spiritual formation with mental/psychological health as both "provide concepts and technologies for the ordering of the inner life" (Browning and Cooper 2004, 2). My model (see next chapter) aims to speak from the perspective of each, and to address the role and effects of both.

I have returned to my spiritual roots in Roman Catholicism after spending more than 30 years (including eleven years in the Messianic Jewish movement) in non-denominational churches. I now enjoy and am re-discovering the richness of Catholicism's daily Eucharist and liturgy, sacraments, symbols, rituals, contemplative prayer, theology, traditions, observance of its many feast days, historical continuity and appreciation of the communion of saints throughout the ages. I easily gravitate towards the Catholic concept of our *telos* being ultimate union and communion with God, although I have chosen to use the term

Christlikeness throughout this portfolio to describe the goal of the Christian spiritual formation. However, each of my previous church experiences have enriched my faith journey and left a lasting mark on me, and also influences my model. For instance, I have a deep, enduring love for the Holy Scriptures (*Verbum Domini manet aeternum*) that I developed as a Protestant, and especially for the Jewish Old Testament which I learned in a new way during my time in the Messianic movement, and my model seeks to maintain this rootedness.

The continuity of Roman Catholicism with the Old Testament and Judaism in antiquity is of particular interest, and I have been studying the Jewish roots of Roman Catholicism and learning from Hebrew Catholics. My time in the Messianic Jewish movement has sensitized me to the dangers of Marcionism apparent in its many forms, some very subtle, in the church at large today. Thus, my model of spiritual formation has been shaped by the Jewish spiritual and liturgical year as well as various aspects of Christ's life. For me, it is only in its totality that one can have a robust understanding of the Christian life and *telos*, and thus apprehend the normative, restorative, corrective, descriptive, prescriptive, formative, transformative and predictive elements embedded in its depths, which effect and empower the Christian spiritual journey (Heb. 4:12; 2 Tim. 3:16).

When it comes to my "credo" as a psychotherapist, I am a relational psychoanalytic psychotherapist (please see the Glossary) and trained at a school which integrates Christian theology and psychoanalysis. In my integrative work, I strive for fidelity to my understanding of my Christian faith and at the same time to provide the highest quality of professional clinical service I can. This is easier

38

said than done, as modern psychological theories make assumptions about the anthropology of human persons, contain implicit concepts of normalcy, and reflect religio-ethical dimensions with theories of obligation and systems of ethics which are not always consistent with Christian theology, thought and beliefs (Browning & Cooper 2004, 6-7). In addition, secular studies from the perspective of anthropology, sociology and psychology which inform popular beliefs about human persons are carried out independently of a biblical understanding of personhood (Coe & Hall 2010, 13) and can hold views of what is normative that conflict with Scripture. Chaudhari, an Orthodox scholar with an interest in depth psychology (see Glossary), points out an important specific interface between the two disciplines. Rightly understood, depth psychology is solely about the healing of the God-given being of the person, their nature itself, liberating them from that which keeps them from freely desiring to do God's will (Chaudhari 2019, 33). My model is thus clear about psychology's role in healing wounds and traumas that impede one's spiritual formation and transformation into *the imago Christi*, and how it can contribute towards the relational health within the body of Christ.

A significant part of my spiritual journey has involved profound psychospiritual healing in various aspects of my life and ministry. As a racialized, middle-aged woman who is has experienced violence, I live, work and worship in a Western, North American (though multi-cultural) context, on the margins and intersections of multiple systems of power. I am becoming more and more sensitized to injustice, poverty, racism, mental illness, misogyny, privilege and patriarchy, and their role in keeping humans from thriving as we are meant to, in every aspect of our God-given personhood. For instance, I came into a new

awareness of my selfhood on a trip to India in 1990 when a dear friend who took me to the airport handed me the following verse on a piece of paper: "Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness and who seek the Lord: Look to the rock from which you were cut and to the quarry from which you were hewn" (Is. 51:1). I now have a deep understanding of my identity and a love for the land of my birth, my roots, heritage, and people. This healing of my selfhood has given me a groundedness which is an important part of my transformation towards Christlikeness.

Another important part of my transformation with significance to my life as a Christian woman and my ministry has involved an even more meaningful understanding of how I had been shaped by misogyny and healing from it. This, along with my psychoanalytic training (see Glossary) which fosters the therapeutic mothering function in psychoanalysts through study of the mother-infant matrix, as seen in this summary video (Steele 2022), and Paul's maternal imagery of birthing, nursing and nurture in his Epistles, "My children, for whom I am again in labour until Christ be formed in you" (Gal. 4:19), has led to the emergence of a healthy sense of my womanhood.

I am thus particularly interested as a returned Catholic, in the amazing woman Miriam of Nazareth who, in a socio-cultural and historical era which stipulated that she consult her father, betrothed or priest first, nevertheless showed radical freedom and said "yes" to God. Johnson (2003, 26) notes that her obedience has been interpreted as acquiescence, and used to keep women "submissive, self-sacrificing, silent and deferential, rather than exercising independent, responsible thought and action, especially in the face of social and

40

political evil." In Christ Jesus we are all equal, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female" (Gal. 3:28). My healing in this area of my life has brought about a deep sense of peace and wholeness in my life and ministry, and a desire to see others similarly freed to be formed into the *imago Christi.*

Conclusion

It would seem that I have come full circle, landing back into Roman Catholicism, but that would be too simplistic an assessment. The person who has returned to Catholicism has been more healed and transformed by God through exposure to Protestantism, in its many forms. My years in the Messianic Jewish movement have taught me to ground my beliefs in an Old Testament understanding, looking backwards to go forward. I am finding that Roman Catholicism's roots are grounded in its Jewish history, and that it reflects the Jewish practices from which it has descended. I am better able to assess what it is that I am throwing my weight behind in Roman Catholicism and am more informed and committed than I ever was. While on the one hand, my spiritual life is simpler, on the other, Roman Catholicism's theology and spirituality is rich and deep, and opens up new horizons and depths with its appreciation of mystery and the mystical.

As I look back on my history, and my spiritual journey and faith transformation, there are many recurrent themes that stand out for me and inform my understanding of Christian spiritual formation, such as the need for a psychological-spiritual integrated approach, which attends to healing of trauma

41

and other deep wounds that individuals carry. My own walk also gradually

uncovered how my perceptions of God, self and others are shaped, for better or

worse, by our early childhood stories, and how they must be addressed and

replaced by a healthier view, for us to flourish as we are meant to. Additionally,

over the years I have also gained a fuller understanding of suffering, in the

context of the ups and downs of life, and how God redeems our pain and can use

it to deepen our trust in him. I unfold these themes in the chapters that follow,

beginning with my model of Christian spiritual formation.

CHAPTER III: A PSYCHOSPIRITUAL FORMATION MODELOF CHRISTIAN SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Nicene Creed

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin
Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I laid out my life history. The next chapter elaborates further on my field research project on the topic of unforgiveness resulting from unhealed wounds. The current chapter lays out an integrated psychospiritual model of Christian spiritual formation. The model emerges out of my personal experience in that trauma, woundedness and unforgiveness were recurring themes in my own life which impeded my spiritual formation. It spurred my personal pursuit of healing from psychological and emotional wounds through psychotherapy, and my career/ministry as a psychotherapist and psychoanalyst. The healing of wounds of the self, and relational injuries, play a key role in my understanding of Christian spiritual formation.

After I give a brief summary of the key components of my psychospiritual model of Christian spiritual formation, I elaborate on my understanding of spiritual formation, explaining how it begins, how it progresses, the process involved, and its *telos,* which is Christlikeness. Following this, I discuss how people are wounded, how they heal and the role of suffering in the process of Christian spiritual formation. I then describe the foundational (biblical, spiritual and psychological) underpinnings of the psychospiritual model I propose. For this, I draw from a variety of sources, including the early church writings, Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant traditions, and the literature on spirituality and psychology. Finally, I discuss the role that psychological theories and new understandings of what constitutes relational health can play in the individual

Christian's lifelong process of growth in Christlikeness, as well as the day-to-day life of the church.

Key Components of the Integrated Psychospiritual Model of Christian Spiritual Formation:

The key features of my integrated, psychospiritual model of Christian spiritual formation can be summarized as follows:

(1) It sees the *telos* of spiritual formation as the *imago Christi*, which is ongoing throughout life, and will be completed in the eschaton;

(2) It sees spiritual formation as intentional, and accomplished through a collaboration between the Christian and the Triune God;

(3) It sees Christian spiritual formation as a balance between communing with God (prayer, meditation, contemplation, solitude, retreat), and ministry;

(4) It sees spiritual formation as a process effecting order, health and transformation in all dimensions of a person's life: physical, psychological, spiritual, emotional, moral, intellectual and relational, towards Christlikeness;

(5) Even at its *telos* Christlikeness, the Creator/creature distinction is upheld, and is marked by humility;

(6) It sees spiritual formation as experiential and practical;

(7) It sees the purpose of Christian spiritual formation as being for the service of others: to see others similarly enter fullness through a relationship with God;

(8) It sees Christian spiritual formation as communal, not individualistic, and takes place in the context of one's relationships with God, self and others, and thus entails a healthy self;

(9) It takes into account that unhealed trauma and insecure attachments can impede spiritual formation and that the healing of trauma is vital for spiritual growth;

(10) It suggests that churches can benefit from an understanding of attachment theory and trauma-informed principles to improve relational and spiritual health in the congregation, while recognizing the need for professional psychotherapy in the case of severe trauma.

Context

This chapter on my Christian spiritual formation model highlights the importance of the healing of relational wounds for the process of Christian spiritual formation. Not unrelated, it also looks at the role that integrating attachment theory and trauma-informed principles can play, not only in spiritual formation/direction but also in creating healthier church communities. Christianity is relational, and the body of Christ is a community. We are embodied beings, embedded in communities, as noted by Strawn and Brown (2020). "I am not a Christian," they state, "We are Christian" (Strawn and Brown 2020, 2), explaining that "Christian spiritual life exists primarily (but not exclusively) within a network of relationships that serves to enhance Christian life by extending us beyond what we are capable of as independent, private, solo individuals" (Strawn and Brown 2020, 3). However, for us to thrive and flourish as individuals, our communities of faith must help individuals who have relational injuries heal more effectively. The church must also attend to and change patterns

and systems within which trauma and abuse have existed unrecognized, and in which they continue to be passed on (Bissell, 2022).

The early church took Christian formation seriously, and indeed, had a more wholistic approach to discipleship and formation than is often apparent today. In his foreword to Wilhoit's (2008) book on the recovery of a robust Christian spiritual formation, Dallas Willard points out that in the past, the life and witness of Christians drew people into the church. In much of the Western world today, however, the opposite is true. Zimmerman (2012) advocates for a retrieval of the Church Fathers' view of the gospel, that Christ "recapitulated humanity by affirming, judging and redeeming it through incarnation, death and resurrection in order to restore humanity to its ultimate purpose of communion with God." He calls for a "rethinking of salvation as *deification*, and Christian faith as participation in the divine life, by retrieving a high Christology and ecclesiology," asserting that this is "the most promising source for a common vision of a truly humane society, with the church as ministering for the common good of society" (Zimmerman 2012, 10-14; italics his). If the church is to become all it is meant to be, I suggest we must look more closely at how effectively we are forming individual Christians.

Today, however, church affiliation in Canada and much of the western world is in rapid decline. In the last 50 years, the number of religious "nones" (those who have no religious identification) in Canada grew from 1% to 24% (Thiessen, 2022). Within this group, the second largest category (26%) identify as "spiritual but not religious," believing they find happiness, meaning, and purpose in life in things other than religious activities (families, relationships, work, hobbies, and

volunteering) (Thiessen 2022). Apparently, along with "nones" and "dones" (those who have dropped out of the church scene altogether), there is an emerging group, the "umms" (those who are ambivalent about church). Although there are many complex reasons for this exodus out of the church, Thiessen (2022) notes that people are still desirous of depth, meaning and purpose, but they are finding it elsewhere. In addition, recent disclosures of abuse and trauma being perpetrated in the church has led to many leaving hurt and disillusioned. Individuals who have experienced trauma are also not being ministered to in churches (Wilder 2020, 3). Trauma and the healing of relational wounds is thus the focus of my psychospiritual model of Christian formation.

The recognition that behavioural and information-based approaches to Christian spiritual formation were not always bringing about the life-change expected has been accompanied by a simultaneous interest in models that more effectively address the whole person. Wilhoit, for example, summarizes depth psychologist David Benner (1998) who states that spirituality is our "response to deep foundational yearnings for meaning, identity, connections and surrender" and must encompass every part of our life, "our body, our unconscious, our emotions, our intellect, our sexuality", bringing about wholeness (Benner 1998, 95-108). Wilder (2020) also recognizes that spiritual formation is about spiritual maturity, which involves emotional maturity (Wilder 2020). Indeed, Schore (2017), a clinician scientist in my field of psychotherapy tracks a paradigm shift taking place in all fields of science, from the cognitive and behavioural, to a recognition of the key role that embodied emotional processes play in early social

development, attachment and trauma. A whole-person, relational approach to spiritual formation is thus a much-needed improvement, as is an understanding of how people heal from severe relational trauma which can be a limiting factor in our spiritual growth.

Hoffman (2019), a Christian psychoanalyst, restates a common mantra in psychotherapy, that humans are "formed through relationship, marred by relationship, and transformed through relationship" (Hoffman (2019, 237). In order for trauma and dissociated affect (emotion which is so deep that it is yet to be formulated) to be healed, it needs to be acknowledged and recognized at explicit and implicit levels, which is how healing takes place in the context of the psychotherapeutic relationship. This attained healing can also be framed as "earned" security (see "secure attachment" in the Glossary). Hoffman (2019, 237-238) states that a "loving human relationship is essential to human transformation," and that "personal healing is not merely an individual phenomenon experienced solely for personal relief of suffering, but it embodies transcendence as it becomes a relational enactment of redemption in God's kingdom." Thus, a healthy Christian spirituality is embodied by individuals who have secure attachment which plays out in all of their relationships, with God, self and others.

Securely attached persons embody true freedom. They are able to give God his rightful place as Creator and relate to others with equality, mutuality and recognition as people made in the image of God, without treating them as objects, neither using them for one's own ends nor rejecting them. This is the freedom for

which Christ has set us free (Gal. 5:1). The psychospiritual model that I am putting forward, born from personal and professional experience, acknowledges the need for healing of severe psychological and emotional traumas with the help of a trauma-trained therapist. With this professional help, the Christian can often attain the security and freedom to progress in their spiritual walk. This also can ensure that trauma is not perpetuated by being re-enacted by wounded people, either as abusers or as victims.

I also suggest that trauma-informed principles can be integrated into the day-to-day functioning of the church to enhance relational safety. Rather than shying away from involvement with each other for fear of being hurt, church communities must strive to ensure that their relationships honour Christ. In her article in *Faith Today*, Bissell (2022) stresses ten trauma-informed principles for churches, including a reminder of our call to holiness and to care for the oppressed, and a need to prioritize incarnational discipleship. She advocates for codes of conduct for all pastors and lay leaders, as well as the inclusion of women on leadership teams and boards. I would also suggest that there is a need for regulating bodies with proper channels in place for people to raise concerns and complaints, and a process for investigating them. Bissell is founder of a program called *Plan to Protect*, a five-step safety plan for volunteers and workers in churches and faith-based organizations. I believe it is important for everyone involved in ministry to have this type of training to minister safely and appropriately to each other in the body of Christ. Perhaps our churches could thrive again if they rediscovered and lived out their mission by being safe places

where hurting people were loved back to wholeness and to God, and where those who needed psychotherapeutic help were supported in accessing it.

What is Christian Spiritual Formation?

Holt (2005, 2-3) notes that although originally a Christian term and first used in the Catholic context, unrooted, the word "spirituality" itself has come to mean many different and even conflicting things. Catholic writer Schneiders (2003, 166) gives a broad generic definition of spirituality as the "attempt to relate in a positive way, oneself as a personal whole to reality as a cosmic whole," and lists its four aspects, (1) active and passive dimensions of experience, (2) conscious, ongoing involvement, (3) involving life-integration, with aspects of body and spirit, emotions and thought, activity and passivity, social and individual, in a synthesis of ongoing growth, and (4) self-transcendence towards ultimate value. Holt quotes Schneiders' definition of Christian spirituality as "that particular actualization of the capacity for self-transcendence that is constituted by the substantial gift of the Holy Spirit establishing a life-giving relationship with God in Christ within the believing community" (Holt 2005, 6). Thus, although it shares some commonalities with all spiritualities, Christian spirituality is something distinct from other spiritualities in its content, process and *telos*.

While self-enhancement is the goal of non-Christian spiritualities (and of psychology which I integrate into my psychospiritual model), the *telos* of Christian spiritual formation across the Christian denominational spectrum, regardless of other differences, is Christlikeness, the *imago Christi*. "Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do

51

know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is." (1 Jn. 3:2). However, the two domains (psychology and spirituality) from which I derive my psychospiritual model are not unrelated, and I make the case that psychology has a defined role to play in the formation of the Christian because it can help heal the wounds of one's natural being that impact the self's capacity for relationship which is the heart of the spiritual journey. In speaking of the two domains, Crisp, Porter and Ten Elshof (2019, 3) state, "with psychology we are concerned with the fundamental phenomena of lived, human existence as it is experienced, and with spiritual formation we are concerned with that lived, human existence as it is experienced in Christ Jesus."

My model of Christian spiritual formation into the *imago Christi* acknowledges both a "push" and a "pull" from its beginning until the end. God is always the initiator in his relationship with humans: he draws a person to himself through his grace which precedes human decision, while also enabling them to respond to him. Put differently, the post-Fall remnants of the *imago Dei* in humans is evident in our *teleotic* strivings that thrust us towards God and eternity, even as God simultaneously draws us to himself to be conformed to Christ. (Rom. 12:2). While the *imago Dei* gives all of humanity the same possible *telos,* Christlikeness, only those who respond and open themselves up to the continued call of the Holy Spirit and collaborate with him will reach it in the eschaton. Spiritual formation is a life journey, and our ongoing response and intent are necessary for our spiritual progress. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12-13).

Jesus issued this call to holiness when he declared: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near, repent and believe in the good news." (Mk. 1:15). To respond to Jesus's invitation is to (re)turn to God from the path one has been on, and to begin to live and relate to God and others by the kingdom's radical principles in order to be salt and light in the world, individually and corporately, drawing others to God so that they can be similarly healed and transformed. The goal of the Christian life is Jesus's re-interpretation of the Law and Prophets in the beatitudes (Matt. 5:1-12) and in his two greatest commandments, that is, to love God above all else and others as oneself (Matt. 22:36-40). The process of becoming more and more able to live in accordance with the principles of the kingdom of God involves experiential, practical and relational foci, and I contend, is facilitated by the healing of relational traumas.

Schnackenburg (1971) asserts that these two greatest commandments by which Jesus summed up the Christian life are not just interrelated, they are inseparable: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind," and "Love your neighbor as yourself." (Matt. 22:37-40). He states, "According to Jesus' mind, love of God is to find expression and gives practical proof of itself in the equally important [fraternal] love (Matt. 22:39) and, conversely, [fraternal] love receives as its foundation and support, the love of God" (Schnackenburg 1971, 95). As 1 John 4:20 state, "If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his [neighbour], he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his neighbour, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen." In other words, we are to see nothing less than the *imago Dei* in each other and treat one

another with the love we have for God. "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these sisters and brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matt. 25:40). This love for our neighbour includes our work with the sick, marginalized and the poor, fighting injustice and poverty, and alleviating suffering. Thus, the quality of our relationships, and the freedom with which we give ourselves in ministry and service to others can be key subjective and objective measures of our progress in Christian spiritual formation.

However, our capacity to love, forgive and practice the beatitudes and the love commandments, and to be formed into the *imago Christi,* can be limited by unhealed trauma and its sequelae, like unforgiveness. Spiritually, the growing Christian disciple demonstrates observable subjective and objective changes or phenomena over time, and shows the fruits of the Holy Spirit. This is facilitated by the inner healing of past wounds accompanied by inner peace, change from worldly attitudes to a godly lifestyle, and the cultivation of virtues such as love, joy, peace, perseverance, hope and patience (Gal. 5:22). Psychologically, as believers progress and become more of their true selves, they have a strong sense of a well-differentiated self, characteristic of secure attachment (see Glossary). Christians who are being transformed into the *imago Christi* are able to tolerate the full range of our God-given emotions evoked by life's experiences, have an increasing capacity to repair relationship ruptures and forgive, and are able to serve and give of themselves freely in ministry.

How Christian Spiritual Formation Begins

People who are unchurched often state that for them, the process of spiritual formation begins with the recognition of God, and a moment when they open up to him. An individual may describe this moment of conversion as salvation, when they become spiritually aware of the presence of God and respond to him. This is the beginning of a participatory relationship with God which continues over the course of one's life, and through which one becomes progressively transformed and formed into the image of Christ. This is a process which affects one's personhood and how one relates to God, others and creation Other Christians who are baptised as infants may alternately describe their Christian spiritual formation as a series of conversion experiences over the course of their lives.

As noted in the previous chapter, although I was baptized as a baby and was brought up as a Roman Catholic, a conversion experience that began with a question by a nun inviting me to consider God, marked the beginning of my own spiritual journey towards Christlikeness. While I do not remember the exact date I began my spiritual journey, it was the event that set me off on a starkly different trajectory and way of being. I see this as being transported out of the kingdom of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of light (Col. 1:13), and I began homing in to the Light.

The Progress and Process of Spiritual Formation

Spiritual formation is both individual and communal, and is essentially relational, having inward (self), outward (other) and upward (God) foci.

Depending on the denomination, spiritual formation occurs in many different

contexts in the life of the church, individual and community, including in

services, liturgy, preaching, worship, sacraments, small groups, and one-on-one

formation with a spiritual director or mentor. It comprises learning, reflection and

experiential components that help Christians grow in their relationship with God,

self and others. For Christians to be formed, their church community must be

inclusive and welcoming, foster loving, trusting, safe relationships, be rich in

connections and friendships with others, and must be places where people feel

that they belong (Wong, 2022).

The Christian also must have the willingness, desire and commitment to

grow and be formed into Christlikeness, because this process often involves

significant lifestyle changes and putting off old habits and ways of being. Key

features of Christian formation involve simplifying, ordering and structuring

one's life, and being willing to be accountable to others in the body of Christ. In

Christian spirituality, the upward, inward and the outward life are interrelated. As

one is healed and one's thoughts, feelings and desires become more and more

aligned with God, the more this manifested in a person's life, behaviour and

relationships.

The Christian must make space for God to work in their life as both grace

and faith are involved in their formation. Growth into the *imago Christi* is a

collaboration between the Holy Spirit and the believer (Phil 2:12). The book *The*

Sacred Way (Jones 2005) discusses different practices such as silence and

solitude, the Jesus prayer, sacred reading of scripture, centering prayer,

meditation, the examen, using icons, as well as spiritual direction, to deepen one's

spiritual life and grow as a Christian. All of these activities make space for God to speak into the life of the Christian. Likewise, the book *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* (Calhoun 2015) has an extensive list of disciplines such as worship, opening oneself to God, relinquishing the false self, sharing one's life with others, hearing God's word, incarnating the love of Christ, and prayer. All of these bring the Christian and God's Spirit together for spiritual formation to take place.

Traditional Catholic spirituality synthesizes the progressive process of becoming Christlike as three broad "ways" which emerge in the spiritual literature (Tanquerey 1930, 15). These are the purgative, illuminative and unitive, each taking the person deeper and deeper with God. The purgative way is the beginners' state. It is the stage at which the purification of the soul, mortification or control of the passions, and detachment from sin and its causes takes place (Tanquerey 1930, 303, 305, 457). The illuminative way is where passions are already mortified and Jesus becomes the centre of one's thoughts and affections (Tanquerey 1930, 456-457). The unitive way is the *telos*, or Christlikeness. In Catholic terms, this is described in nuptial language as the mystical marriage or union with God (Tanquerey 1930, 601). Foley (2013), a Carmelite, quotes Blessed Henry Suso in elaborating on the role of these steps for progressing in the deeper life in formation terms: "A recollected person must be unformed of the creature (purgative way), become informed with Christ (illuminative way) and transformed into God (unitive way)" (Foley 2013, 16).

There is general acceptance that the spiritual formation process is not linear. Hagberg & Guelich (2005, 8) are Protestant writers who describe the formation process as an upward spiral, with six fluid, sequential and cumulative stages

57

(Hagberg & Guelich 2005, 7-8). While the spiritual life is a progressive process, deeply embedded issues can emerge at any time along its course, causing one to stall. In their book they note common points at which individuals can get stuck: behavioural "cages" (Hagberg & Guelich 2005, 9) (e.g., legalism, martyrdom, etc.), and "walls," (Hagberg & Guelich 2005, 115-130) that are different for every believer, denoting crisis points in their faith at which they have to decide whether to submit to God's deeper call, or not. These crisis points can be evoked by life's sufferings which present challenges to one's faith. My personal and work experiences attest that unhealed relational wounds present yet another significant barrier to growing in Christlikeness, as it deforms our self, other and God representations in limiting ways. In the following chapter, I explore further the resulting unforgiveness that can result from unhealed trauma and how it can affect our spiritual formation journey.

Becoming Christlike means that Jesus Christ becomes our example of how to conduct our relationships with God, self and others. Wilder (2020, 2) notes that there is increasing recognition that traumatized people are "not realizing transformation to the degree they expected." He states that churches must go beyond telling people to "Read your Bible and pray every day, Go to church, Stop sinning," (Wilder 2020, 131) and suggests a more robust, whole-person spiritual formation approach to soul care for emotional, spiritual and relational maturity, which encourages thinking of salvation as a new attachment. He points out that change must take place in the areas of the will, mind, body, social connections and the soul (Wilder 2020, 13).

When I began my relationship with God, some things were transformed

instantly, while others took time. There is a "now and not yet" aspect to Christian

spiritual formation. My sin nature changed, and I began to incline from myself to

God, but it also began a lifelong, ongoing process of healing. Deep ways in which

I had been wounded and which made it hard and sometimes even impossible for

me to freely obey God, were progressively identified and healed. This sometimes

occurred by God's grace as I responded to him through prayer to what I learned

from sermons or in bible study, and from involvement in worship services. One

example of this was when I realized that the painful emotions that were evoked at

the sound of an airplane were related to a childhood experience, and I was able to

let it go. However, this was not always the case. I also repeatedly encountered

painful emotional states which I was unable to deal with and which kept me

trapped. The church was ill-equipped to address these situations, often

spiritualizing the issue and suggesting "praying it away," which proved

ineffective. Emotional and psychological barriers and struggles with

unforgiveness challenged my spiritual progress and necessitated a combination of

psychotherapy and psychoanalysis, together with spiritual formation and spiritual

direction, for me to heal and move forward.

Biblical Framework

Although the word "spiritual" itself was coined by St. Paul who used it to

denote the work of the Holy Spirit, in recent years it has come to be used

generically for religious and secular spiritualities (Schneiders 2003, 166). It is

thus important to point out that my model of Christian spiritual formation is

different in that it is characterized by the imitation of Christ, unlike non-Christian spiritualities. Christian spiritual formation rests on a long history of Christian spirituality which comes down from the early church through the ages (Sheldrake 2013, 24). It is found in all Christian traditions, and though it might express itself differently in each, it is derived from Rom. 8:29-30: "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified." Thus, conformity to Christ is considered to express the common goal of our salvation (Jacob 2018, 3) across Christian traditions.

Jacob (2018) did an extensive review of the literature for interpretations of the phrases "conformed to his Son," "those he justified he also glorified," and Paul's theologies of glory, for an understanding of what these terms mean. She summarized the following themes: (1) vague references to being "like Christ," (2) physical conformity entailing receiving the same "form" as Christ's resurrected body, (3) spiritual or moral conformity to Christ's character, (4) conformity with Christ's eschatological glory, and (5) sacrificial conformity where the believer becomes like Christ through her sufferings (Jacob 2018, 3). She also noted that eschatological "glory" means "something *other than* God's splendour/radiance or the visible, manifest presence of God," and that it means that "functional conformity [is] the status, function and vocation of the Son of God who rules over creation," beginning in the present (Jacob 2018, 10, italics hers). Jacob concludes

that Rom. 8:29-30 means that Christians are to function as God's vice-regents not just in the eschaton, but in the here and now.

One key difference between Christian spirituality and non-Christian spiritualities is its *telos,* Christlikeness, which is characterized by the creature-Creator distinction in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Orthodox scholar Chaudhari (2019, 24) states it thusly, "Pantheism is anathema to Orthodoxy – the ontological distinction between Creator and creation can never be crossed. But God is nonetheless present in and to creation" (Chaudhari 2019, 24). While non-Christian spiritualities emphasize non-dualism, in Christianity Jesus's hypostatic union of God and humanity which comprise two distinct, co-occurring and different natures in the same person, cannot be conflated and brought together into some kind of blend or hybrid. Becoming Christlike and glorified for the Christian means becoming fully human, not becoming gods. With "Christ in us" (Col. 1:27), we are made fully alive, although our potentially glorified, fully human state is beyond anything we could ask or imagine (Eph. 3:20).

Christian spirituality is Christocentric, and mirrors the truths of the whole gospel, the incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and Pentecost, which are likewise rooted in and inextricably linked to the Jewish Scriptures. From his study and survey of historical traditional models of Christian spirituality, Sheldrake (2013, 43-44) notes the following distinctive features: trinitarian, incarnational, redemptive, sacramental, communal, reflective of the abiding presence of God in the body of Christ, and reflective of a loving God reveling in his good creation. Christian spirituality is experiential, embodied, practical, and

instructive about how we relate to God, self, others and creation in Jesus'

characteristic self-giving way.

The Role of Psychological Healing in the Process of Christian Spiritual Formation

The field of psychology recognizes that human beings are complex and

multi-dimensional, with biopsychosocial domains, as conceptualized by George

Engel (1977). This understanding has been expanded to include cultural and

spiritual domains. Human beings cannot be reduced to any one area. In my work,

I encounter Christians who spiritualize rather than deal with psychological

symptoms evoked by unhealed trauma. One's mental/psychological health and

spiritual life can be entangled in confusing ways, which needs to be carefully

diagnosed and discerned, so that the person can be treated in the appropriate

domain. Unaddressed, it can impact or hinder a believer's spiritual life and

formation. Thus, an understanding of the nuanced similarities and differences

between spiritual and psychological difficulties is crucial (Dein 2004, 288-293;

Chandler, 2012).

Traumas and wounds are obtained relationally: we are created in

relationship, formed in relationship, harmed in relationship, and healed in

relationship" (Barsness 2023). That humans are primarily relational is

increasingly borne out by neuroscience (Cozolino 2009; Schore 2023). Chaudhari

(2019, 106) too, traces depth psychology's recognition of *eros*, which is the drive

towards relatedness and the desire that motivates our seeking of union and

communion with God, others, and life itself. However, as discussed further in

Chapter IV, we are wounded beings, and humans transmit and perpetuate

wounded patterns of behaviour intergenerationally (Hoffman 2018; Wolyn 2017).

Thus, the essentially relational psychospiritual formation model proposed in this

chapter offers hope not only for the healing of individuals to break this cycle in

lives and in our churches, but potentially in the larger community.

Relational injuries that are unhealed can affect our ability to love and

relate with the freedom which God intended. The most pervasive injuries are

incurred in our early years when universal core needs, which must be met by

caregivers for the formation of a healthy self, are not met (Akhtar 1999, 113;

Balint 1968, 16). It is at this early stage in life that we develop a sense of self, and

our default self, other and God representations (that is, beliefs about our self,

others and God). Our attachment styles (see Glossary) which are the characteristic

ways in which we go on to relate (Brown and Strawn (2012, 59) are also

developed at this early stage in our life. Akhtar (1999, 113), a psychoanalyst, lists

the key needs that must be met in an infant: the need for one's physical needs to

be deemed legitimate (selfhood and personhood), the need for identity,

recognition and affirmation, the need for interpersonal and intrapsychic

boundaries (sense of self, healthy differentiation from others), the need for

understanding the causes of events (meaning and purpose), the need for optimal

emotional availability of love objects (that one is loveable; that one is "good

enough"), and finally, the need for a resilient responsiveness by one's love objects

under special circumstances (that they will stand by one in a crisis; that one is

"worth it"). The enduring beliefs we glean, rightly or wrongly, from the way in

which we are treated at this formative stage, can affect us for the rest of our life.

Balint, a psychoanalyst, describes deficits in one or more of our needs as the "basic fault" (Balint 1968, 16), which acts like the least common denominator to which one can repeatedly regress when we are later triggered by life sufferings, losses or wounds. It is now recognized that when we have unhealed trauma and wounds, we perpetuate the cycle of trauma by inflicting it on people in our relational circle and pass it down intergenerationally (Hoffman 2018; Wolyn 2017). As this also applies in our churches, it is incumbent upon us to become trauma-aware in order to break this cycle (Bissell, 2022). When a Christian repeatedly experiences painful states that impact their functioning and their relationships with God, self and others, they might consider the benefits of seeing a psychotherapist, as severe early wounding may need trauma treatment and professional intervention. The effect of trauma on one's God, self and other representations, (which are the conclusions people can draw from these early deficiencies in their caregiving), and how these can impact one's ability to forgive, was the subject of my field research project (see next chapter). It is also an important aspect of my psychospiritual model of Christian spiritual formation.

The goals of psychotherapy, which are to heal and relieve existential suffering that are the consequences of wounds and traumas, can help the process of Christian spiritual formation. Healed individuals are liberated to act and feel more in congruence with their true selves made in God's image (Chaudhari 2019, 39). Additionally, psychotherapy can heighten one's sense of moral obligation and pursuit of virtue (Carveth 2022). From my training and experience, people seek out psychotherapy for a gamut of reasons, from seeking the remission of distressing symptoms, to the pursuit and development of character traits, moral

virtues, and ethical behavior. Therapeutic healing makes it possible for individuals to engage in loving relationships with others, recognize their creative potential, and be involved in meaningful activities, all of which may be considered markers of generic spirituality. However, for the Christian, there is added salvific significance and is part of (though not the entire) process of becoming Christlike. Thus, psychotherapeutic healing can be of value to the Christian, not only to relieve suffering and help clarify the function of a person's faith, but also to aid them to live life fully, with improved relationships with God, self and others, and to realize their *telos*, which is Christlikeness.

The healing work of the Holy Spirit is always active in nature by common grace (McMartin 2015, 216). Healing takes place spontaneously and progressively as the *imago Dei* and developmental *teleotic* strivings in persons, in collaboration with the Holy Spirit, thrust them towards their potential selves (Chaudhari 2019). In the Christian, psychological wounds can be healed through God's grace, his word, and the work of the Holy Spirit, and can be part of the natural process of spiritual formation that occurs as the Christian walks with Christ. Spiritual formation can take place despite, in spite of, and even as a result of unhealed woundedness and psychological symptoms. Discernment is called for, as sometimes these very wounds and the suffering they evoke act to refine and sanctify the Christian, and are never healed or removed, as was Paul's "thorn" (2 Cor 12:7-9) which he learned to suffer with God's grace.

The Role of Suffering in Spiritual Formation

Suffering emerges as a major theme in my model of spiritual formation, as it has a defined role in the process of sanctification. Wilhoit (2008, 52) explains that suffering can be a catalyst for the brokenness that turns us away from self and towards God and brings about healing. He calls having the right attitude to suffering an "involuntary discipline" (Wilhoit 2008, 93). Church Father St. John Chrysostom said: "Many are offended when they see those who are pleasing to God suffering anything terrible. Those who are offended by this do not know that those who are especially dear to God have it as their lot to endure such things, as we see in the case of Lazarus, who was one of the friends of Christ, but was also sick" (Chrysostom, 62:1).

Although it is often spoken of categorically, I have encountered many complexities and nuances to suffering in my life and practice/ministry which must be teased out for clarity. The Bible, which always tilts towards hope, advocates for the relief of some types of suffering. While suffering in general is viewed as ultimately redemptive by Christians, there is no merit to suffering needlessly. Some suffering is the result of evil and injustice and must be fought and ended. Some suffering can be alleviated, and some can only be palliated. Some suffering must be treated and managed and some is to be simply accepted and tolerated.

We often suffer as a result of our own sins. However, suffering resulting from trauma because of others' sins against us is a specific type of suffering which can add a complication to one's spiritual formation, especially if one has difficulty processing the hurt and gets stuck in unforgiveness. This sometimes

requires psychological intervention. Misunderstandings about suffering and its role in the life of a Christian, discerning its source, how it plays out in the aftermath of unhealed trauma, and the anger and unforgiveness that accompanies it, were thus themes that were explored in the field research project on forgiveness (see Chapter IV).

How People Heal

As a Christian relational psychotherapist, I am interested in the healing and formational role of relationships in both the disciplines of psychology and spirituality. Our negative views of ourselves and the underlying wounds that sustain them can be healed and transformed through healthy relationships. It is commonly accepted that the therapeutic relationship and alliance is responsible for 80% of positive outcomes in the therapy setting (Sharpley, Jeffrey and McMah 2006, 343-356). The therapist's love, warmth, empathy and genuineness, qualities of a secure relationship, regardless of the model or technique used by the therapist, is known to be what heals the client. I believe that the Christian's healing and formation into the *imago Christi* can also be fostered through secure relationships within the body of Christ.

The relationship the individual has with God and healthy others in the body of Christ can in some ways parallel the therapeutic relationship with the psychotherapist. Mulholland (2000, 102-103) points out that we are to make "formational, relational being modes the primary focus of our spiritual formation." He elaborates on the essential role of social connectedness and relationships in healthy spirituality. Relationships that heal and transform change

a wounded person's underlying beliefs about themselves, others and God by repeatedly and consistently giving them a different emotional experience.

That we are embodied beings who thrive when embedded in communities is borne out not only in attachment theory and neuroscience (Brown and Strawn 2012, 55-67) but also through a Trinitarian theology. The Father, Son and Spirit together act in a three-fold, unified way, and we are invited to be partakers in the divine life (2 Pet. 1:4) which is meant to play out in our ministry and in our relationships to each other in the Body of Christ. Attachment theory can advance our understanding of what constitutes healthy, loving, secure relationships and give us concrete steps for creating safe environments. Moreover, the integration of trauma-aware approaches (SAMHSA 2014) can further enhance safety in relationships within our faith communities by focusing on preventing transgressions and repairing relationships (Bissell 2022). Trauma-sensitivity in church-based interventions can also provide a safety guide as an indicator of whether people should remain in relationships where abusive partners have not demonstrated a change in behaviour. In short, in order for us to become whole and mature spiritually, the recovery of a relational, Gospel-centred spiritual formation (Wilhoit 2008, 29), informed by attachment theory and trauma theory, and in which forgiveness plays an integral part, needs to permeate our experience as Christians.

The Role that Psychological Theories Can Play When Integrated into the Life of the Church

Besides assisting individuals who are stuck in their spiritual formation journey, my own psychospiritual transformation experience also interested me in

whether and how psychological principles and theories can be integrated into the day-to-day life of the church. These aims are fueled by the growing awareness that the church does not always minister effectively to those Christians who have suffered trauma (Wilder 2020, 1-2), and by the disclosures of abuse and trauma that continue to be perpetrated within the church.

To be clear, I am not advocating that the church does trauma therapy, but that individual hurting Christians, pastors and spiritual directors who straddle the intersection of spirituality and psychology can learn to identify the need for psychological healing from a psychotherapist sooner rather than later. Recurring intrusive emotional and psychological symptoms which disrupt functioning and relating, and the feedback from others in one's relational circle, can help identify the need to refer to a psychotherapist.

In addition, principles from attachment theory and trauma-awareness are not incompatible with Christianity and the insights that these theories afford can be used in the service of Christian spiritual formation. I also suggest that the principles of attachment theory and trauma-informed perspectives can assist in forming healthy relationships within the body of Christ and can help the church to more effectively break the cycle of trauma, operationalize the commandment to love, and become the beacon of light in society it is meant to be. Most importantly, I hope that this model for understanding spiritual transformation might help the Christian in the pew who may be battling psychological issues and/or unforgiveness to find hope in their journey towards personal and spiritual wholeness.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discuss an integrated psychospiritual model of Christian spiritual formation, the end goal of which is to be transformed into the *imago Christi*. Themes that emerged from my life story, my spiritual history, my varied career, and my own quest for healing and experience of spiritual formation informed the model and have given me a desire to see others transformed. I discuss how a psychospiritual understanding of Christian spiritual formation can also help the church become a healing community. I emphasize that for us to move forward in our *telos* of Christlikeness, attention must be paid to the healing of deep wounds and traumas, which may require professional help to aid the process of healing. I also highlight the need for attachment and trauma-based principles to be integrated into the life of the church in order to make them healing environments. In the next chapter, I present my research project in which I operationalized these principles in a program that incorporated an attachment and trauma-informed approach to forgiveness. The findings contributed to this psychospiritual model of spiritual formation.

CHAPTER IV: FIELD RESEARCH PROJECT – HOW IS AN INDIVIDUAL'S ABILITY TO FORGIVE AFFECTED BY THE IMPACT OF TRAUMA ON THEIR VIEW OF GOD, SELF AND OTHERS?

After I started to grow and go deeper with God following my conversion experience, one barrier that loomed large for me was my lack of understanding of forgiveness. Despite having gone to confession regularly until then, I realized that did not know what forgiveness was and did not know how to do it well. I neither knew how to receive it from God and others, nor did I know how to go about forgiving others. Additionally, it was not just that I did not know how to forgive, my capacity to do so was affected. However, there is simply no justification for not forgiving if one wants to progress in the Christian life. Jesus taught it, lived it, and commanded it. Moreover, the Judeo-Christian tradition places human forgiveness in the context of divine forgiveness (Mt. 6:14-15; Watts and Gulliford 2004, 1). My own difficulties and struggles to work through and understand the root causes of unforgiveness and my subsequent work with trauma victims has taught me that a person's attitude towards God, self and others, and his/her spiritual formation towards Christlikeness can be affected by underlying unhealed relational trauma.

My spiritual formation journey followed an integrated psychospiritual path that included psychotherapy and spiritual healing, hence my integrated psychospiritual model which I presented in the last chapter. In my model, I suggest (1) the use of professional psychotherapy when necessary for the healing

of serious relational wounds in one's natural self, which can impede growth to Christlikeness, and (2) that the church can be aided in its understanding of how to operationalize Jesus's two greatest commandments by integrating attachment-based and trauma-informed principles into its day-to-day functioning. These psychological theories and principles which I elaborate on in the "Models and Other Resources" section below, can help individuals heal and grow and have potential to help the church break the cycle of trauma from being perpetuated. In this chapter, I present my findings from a field research project that I designed to test whether an attachment-based, trauma-informed approach to forgiveness can help Christians move forward in their ability to forgive.

To pursue this further, I sought out a group of Christian participants who self-identified as having experienced relationship injury, with ensuing difficulties in forgiving their wrongdoer(s). Six individuals expressed an interest, and four participants followed through. Each person reported negative consequences in their relationships with God, self, and others. I invited these individuals to participate in an eight-session program which I designed, with the goal of uncovering their underlying beliefs about God, self, and others. Attachment-based, trauma-informed principles provided both the framework for the program as well as guidelines for thinking through possible outcomes in the complex relational situations in which the wound took place. I gathered quantitative data before and after the program, and qualitative data over the course of the sessions, to assess the effects of the intervention. The limited number of participants, together with missing data and participants changing their index events between pre-tests and post-tests, led to modest conclusions in regard to the quantitative

measures. However, qualitative data showed more promise, suggesting that such an attachment-based, trauma-informed approach to forgiveness could be beneficial in helping Christians move forward to forgive their wrong-doers and experience improvements in their relationships with God, self, and others.

Rationale

Forgiveness is a complex topic to study, with "methodological limitations including definitional, conceptual, and measurement issues" (Malcolm, DeCourville and Belicki 2014, xxii). When a violation of existing relationship assumptions occurs, it can cause the victim severe distress. They become preoccupied with trying to make sense of the experience, and to free themselves from being dominated by negative thoughts, feelings and behaviours (Gordon, Amer, Lenger, Brem, Baucom and Snyder 2020, 153). It can be difficult for the Christian who has been wounded and betrayed and who has experienced abuse to be challenged to "love your enemies" (Matt. 5:44) and "turn the other cheek" (Matt. 5:39). Furthermore, for many Christians "leave your gift there before the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift…" (Matt. 5:24) makes forgiveness synonymous with reconciliation. Healthy forgiveness is not a quick process without thinking through the issues, to make peace or to avoid emotional pain (Gordon et al. 2020, 154).

Thus, this study explored if and how psychology's resources can be made more accessible to help Christians struggling with trauma-related unforgiveness work through the pain and think through the issues that keep them trapped, thereby moving through the process. As noted in Chapter III, psychology and

psychotherapy can play a key role in spiritual formation, especially when Christians feel stuck due to unhealed wounds and the resulting unforgiveness. The goals of psychotherapy, to heal wounds and traumas and relieve their sequelae, liberate individuals to act and feel more in congruence with their true selves made in God's image (Chaudhari 2019, 39). Psychology can thus provide a practical lens for operationalizing the scriptural command to forgive, and to love God, self and others.

Psychological theories and principles are experience-near and functional, therefore attachment-based, and trauma-informed principles were chosen specifically for their utility to (1) help individuals understand the source of their reactions and symptoms as trauma-based, (2) emphasize how healthy relationships bring about healing, (3) detail characteristics of healthy relationships and how to cultivate them, (4) help wounded people think through safe outcomes in the kinds of complex situations that are often the subject of forgiveness, and (5) explore the role of unforgiveness in their understanding of God self and others. One key aspect of this project was to explore whether it could be carried out in a non-professional context to aid spiritual formation.

Problem

As a long-time psychotherapist and psychoanalyst specializing in addictions and trauma, I have led Christian retreats on the topic of forgiveness. My work in the professional as well as the lay settings attests that forgiveness is neither well-understood nor well-practiced by many professing Christians, especially those who have experienced severe relational wounds. This is despite it

74

being a key commandment for our own spiritual growth and wholeness (Matt. 6:12).

I have found that some Christians continue to hold their wrongdoers responsible, without forgiving them, and consequently continue to live with negative emotions and the symptoms of trauma and woundedness. In addition, their unhealed relational wounds can cause anxiety about who or what will harm them next (Worthington and Wade 2020, 1). Malcolm et al. (2014, xx-xxi) also note that power differentials play a role in problematic expressions of forgiveness: individuals feel that they "should" forgive those of higher status, and women are assigned passive roles and expected to be accepting and forgiving. Additionally, when people feel pressured to forgive by others, they go through the motions of forgiving prematurely, "role-expected forgiveness," or "expedient forgiveness," (DeCourville, Belicki and Green 2014, 4) types of pseudo-forgiveness (see Glossary).

Of interest to me for my project, Gordon et al. (2020, 155) outlined two empirically evaluated trauma-based models of forgiveness for couples who had experienced the relational trauma of infidelity. One took couples through three stages: the "impact," (uncovering what happened, and containing affective and behavioural disruptions), "meaning," (understanding why the infidelity occurred and using it to determine what is necessary for safety) and "moving" (plan of how to create a healthier relationship, or compassionately terminate). The other model they summarized was a decision-based forgiveness model which covers 13 steps in a single extended 3-hour session. The steps take couples through a process of personal accountability, seeking forgiveness for their own mistakes, exploring

75

reasons underlying the affair, recognizing choice and commitment to letting go, and finally a ceremonial ritual commitment to forgive and let go. Both interventions focused on the recent infidelity itself and not on the historical, underlying, long-standing, pre-existing representations of self or other that were evoked by the trauma, as did my project. Uncovering historical, foundational beliefs about self, God and other has value in helping heal and fundamentally change those beliefs, and thus for the overall goal of spiritual formation.

I have found that individuals who do not work through the painful emotions that are stirred up by the wrongdoing, nor deal with their underlying painful ideas about God, themselves and others uncovered by the wound, continue to live with unforgiveness. This can lead to continued victimization: their thoughts can drive painful emotions, affect their functioning, and ultimately hinder them from thriving. Moreover, their wrongdoers are then not held accountable. Malcolm et al. (2014, xx) point out that a few scholars, and notably Bass & Davis (1988) of *The Courage to Heal* fame, even think forgiveness is maladaptive because it places victims at risk of repeated harm.

Notwithstanding these problems, Jesus is categorical in his teaching that we are to forgive those who have wounded us, primarily because it acts as a barrier to our spiritual growth, our relationship with God and our formation into the *imago Christi*, the *telos* of our faith. Growing in Christlikeness involves a relinquishing of self and our own agendas, in order to increase our trust in God while cultivating humility in our relationships with him and with others. When it comes to forgiveness, the intricate intersubjective matrix of relationships with God, self and others are all implicated. Hence the healing of wounds and traumas

76

of the self which limit one's spiritual progress can free one to move forward in their spiritual formation.

Response

Henri Nouwen is well-known for presaging the integration of psychology and theology/spirituality and all its component facets for soul care. Hernandez (2008, 2) describes Nouwen's trilogy of coinherence: the "inward, outward and upward thrust" of the spiritual life. He notes that this schema "defines the nexus of spirituality with psychology (love of self), with ministry (love of neighbour) and with theology (love of God)." Nouwen's model of integration interests me as a Christian psychotherapist committed to the process of spiritual growth in myself and others: I see it as being inextricably linked with psychological healing, the healing of the self, necessary for healthy relationships.

Wilhoit (2008, 23) describes formation as "the intentional, communal process of growing in our relationship with God and becoming conformed to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit," which involves self in relation to God and others. Learning how to forgive is thus a key part of spiritual formation. Moreover, in the context of trauma, a theme of my own Christian journey, forgiveness is fraught with additional challenges. I found that my own spiritual formation could not have progressed without an integrated approach: the psychotherapeutic healing of trauma freed me to forgive.

For this study, I created an eight-session program using attachment theory and a trauma-informed approach, specifically because both emphasize and foster safety and security in relationships—the primary areas of disruption when trauma

77

has occurred. Likewise, these theories provide the language to name and legitimize the relationship wound that occurred, while also giving practical guidance in determining a safe outcome following the process of forgiveness. The content of the program was informed by three common themes I have encountered in my ministry settings (therapeutic and retreats), which can act as barriers to forgiving and moving forward. These may be categorized as the following: (1) a belief that the individual's suffering originated with God, simultaneously with a need to broaden their understanding of how to discern its source; (2) conflating forgiveness with reconciliation, excusing, condoning or forgetting (Gordon et al. 2020), and fearing having to put up with ongoing abuse by their wrongdoer if they forgive; and (3) a lack of understanding of the steps to forgiveness.

Context: Why Is This an Issue?

I am interested in helping individual Christians in their spiritual formation, and also in promoting the formation of healing relationships within the church as a whole. After becoming the victim of a serious crime, I struggled with PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) and unforgiveness for several years, despite being a committed Christian and having much inner healing prayer. I am glad that the church is recognizing the need for an integrated approach in spiritual formation especially for those who have been affected by trauma and who are not realizing Christlike transformation (Wilder 2020). My traumatic event was the catalyst that uncovered unexamined, long-standing beliefs about myself and others which impacted and limited my growth and relationships, including my relationship with

God. I became a psychotherapist primarily in search of my own healing, and I deliberately pursued education and training programs that integrated psychology and theology/spirituality because of my interest in how psychology can assist the process of spiritual formation. The emotional and psychological barriers from old wounds were hard to overcome through spiritual means alone and well-meaning individuals in the church were not equipped to help me.

Our churches have not always been safe communities, either, and those in authority have sometimes misused and abused their power and even the very concept of forgiveness. In their review article, Gordon et al. (2020, 156) note that religious community members have pressured women who were victims of intimate partner abuse to forgive their abusers and maintain their abusive relationships. Key concepts from psychology such as the understanding of how to cultivate secure attachments (in which the healing of relational ruptures is key) and implementing trauma-informed principles, can help create healthier faith communities where abuse is prevented and wounded individuals can heal and grow spiritually.

The need to understand this gap in the process of spiritual growth has led to recent dialogue between the domains of psychology and theology/spirituality, and there is some apparent wrestling with terminology in the literature. Coe (2019, 19) lands on the term "spiritual theology" for the integration of "pastoral-psychological-spiritual theology" to express and close this chasm which he describes as (1) scriptural teaching on sanctification and spiritual growth with (2) observations, reflections and experience (an empirical study) of the Spirit's work in the believer's spirit and experience. In the same vein, I use the term

"psychospiritual" to describe my integrated project which deals with a specific area, the healing of relational wounds, that can present a barrier impeding one's spiritual formation.

I wanted to test whether a user-friendly, attachment-based, trauma-informed approach to forgiveness could benefit Christians who are struggling with unforgiveness. My hope was that this study would contribute to the Christian community's better understanding of the complexity involved in the process of forgiveness and how to practice it more effectively, fostering psychological healing and spiritual wholeness in those who have been wounded relationally. It could also help in more promptly identifying the need for adjunctive therapy in more serious cases. My project was driven by the belief that the psychological healing of trauma is a key contribution that the field of psychology can make in helping Christians realize genuine spiritual transformation.

Models and Other Resources

This project tested the effectiveness of a psychoeducation intervention designed to address the initial stage in the process of forgiveness. The project evaluated two areas: (1) whether the program aided individuals in the process of forgiveness; and (2) whether it impacted their relationships with God, self and others. The program used trauma-informed principles and attachment theory, as well as Christian and psychology-informed understandings of forgiveness, in an eight-session series which was run as a small group.

Trauma Principles

Trauma-awareness is now at the forefront of mental health programs. The growing recognition of the prevalence of unhealed trauma in those seeking services and in the general public, has led to the new "trauma-informed" gold standard paradigm of care (Berliner and Kolko 2016, 168; SAMHSA 2014). Trauma that was incurred in childhood (known as "adverse childhood experiences") puts one at risk for ongoing trauma (AAP 2014). Trauma-informed practices are implemented at all levels of organizational functioning and are distinct from trauma therapy and clinical interventions for the treatment of trauma. It assumes that everyone seeking services is a trauma survivor and is sensitized to danger in relationships. Trauma-informed approaches and trauma awareness encourages programs, institutions and providers to implement strategies at the policy and practice level which prevent wounded individuals from re-victimization and re-traumatization. To accommodate this need, mental health programs and agencies are moving towards making all levels of their services and practices user-friendly and trauma-informed. Indeed, in the wake of disclosures of sexual abuse by clergy, pastors, and those in leadership in churches, there also is now a call for churches to become trauma-informed (Bissell 2022). Being trauma-informed dictates that the following system-level principles be built in to at all levels of service provision: (1) safety, safe-ness and care, (2) autonomy, (3) collaboration, and (4) recognition of the need for intervention, healing and counselling (SAMHSA 2014). These principles guided and laid the

framework of both the process and the content of the program that was designed, implemented and evaluated in this project.

Attachment Theory

Attachment theory was initially developed by Bowlby in the 1960s, and emphasized behaviour, scientific observation and research as an alternative to Freud's focus on instincts, unconscious drives and processes as drivers of behaviour. Bowlby's attachment theory is about the sequelae of maternal (or caregiver) deprivation at a developmentally significant stage of a child's life, which he elaborated on in his classic trilogy, (Bowlby 1969, 1973 and 1980). The theory has since been repeatedly affirmed by research and asserts that humans' interpersonal relational motivation is as strong as their biological drive for survival. Relational psychotherapy today draws from both traditions, Freud and Bowlby, in understanding relational processes as intrapsychic and intrapersonal, as well as interpersonal and intersubjective, all of which also are of significance for a Christian's relational health and spiritual formation, as well as relationships within the body of Christ.

Warren Brown is a neuroscientist and Brad Strawn is a Christian theologian with an interest in depth psychology and the integration of the two domains. In their book (2012, 59), they present new findings from neuroscience and modern psychological theories to help update, inform and enhance Christian life and formation in the body of Christ. They summarize attachment theory this way: our ideas about self and others are formed early in life and are affected by our experiences with caregivers with whom we develop an attachment, and who

bequeath us their attachment style. Our attachment style with how we view self, our view of how others view us, and how we relate to others in general has come to be known as our "inner working model" or the template we operate from in all our relationships (Brown and Strawn 2012, 59). They describe attachment theory's secure and three insecure attachment styles in relationships as follows:

A secure attachment style is developed by fairly consistent parent availability and reliability. Securely attached children experience their parents as attuned, responsive, and sensitive to them. Their children attain an expectation of responsiveness. Securely attached adults are characterized by trust, confidence and resilience. Brown and Strawn (2012) also describe attachment theory's three insecure attachment types, anxious preoccupied, anxious avoidant and disorganized. Inconsistent parenting, where the child is unsure of the parent or their reliability and anticipates disappointment, demonstrates a preoccupied style of relating. Children exposed to even more unreliable parenting and disappointment develop a self-protective avoidant style. Severe abuse or inconsistency as a result of parental mental illness brings about the more serious disorganized form of non-attachment (Brown and Strawn 2012, 60).

Attachment to God

Attachment theory has also become prominent in the literature and research on religion and spirituality. Beck (2006, 125) notes that Kirkpatrick (1999) first suggested that the relationship with God can be seen as an attachment bond, with the understanding of God as not merely an attachment figure, but the attachment figure par excellence. Additionally, there was initially a question of

83

individuals with insecure attachment styles superimposing their pattern of relating and their representations of the other upon God in a compensating style or corresponding manner to that of their attachment figures (Beck 2006, 125). Hall (2007, 21) notes that this was later revised and further broken down by Granqvist (2002) to "social correspondence" and "emotional compensation," with social correspondence being displayed by individuals with secure attachment to their parents, having the same degree of religiosity to God as their parents, and those with insecure attachment using God for emotional regulation and a felt sense of security.

Thus our inner working model, with its representations of God, self and other, becomes the default stance from which we live life. This understanding ultimately affects how we relate to God and others, due in large part to underlying beliefs and conclusions we draw about ourselves and others that can often affect us (e.g., that we are unlovable, that we are not good enough, that we are powerless, etc.) Moreover, early developmental trauma can make individuals vulnerable to ongoing trauma which further reinforces these limiting beliefs and representations. The earlier in life these beliefs are formed, the more entrenched and habitual the thinking patterns become. They are then harder to treat and more resistant to change.

Individuals with an insecure attachment style due to past wounds, can heal and attain an "earned" secure attachment style through repeated healthy interactions and relationships. Secure relationships are characterized by safety and the ability to seamlessly repair ruptures between individuals—key skills for forgiveness. This deep healing can and does take place by pure grace, in the

presence of God, who is love himself. It can also occur in psychotherapy, if it is severe and professional help is deemed necessary, and in other contexts where secure attachment and trauma-informed principles are operating (churches, couples, families, friendships, workplaces, etc.).

For enduring healing and transformation to take place, this template itself needs to change at a deep level. Besides the "how" (procedural memory), the "what" itself (declarative memory) needs to be re-configured (Fishman 1999, 378-379). Healing requires more than talk and information, but a re-coding of the emotional memory itself, something Fishman calls "symbolic representations." This emotional new experience is what a therapist gives the trauma patient through healthy, alternative, intersubjective interactions, with different, healthy accompanying emotions. These kinds of healthy and reparative relational experiences must be brought back and recovered in the body of Christ, in the context of a wholesome spiritual formation, which attends to past trauma and forgiveness. For this reason, attachment theory principles were also used in formulating the structure and the content of my program on forgiveness.

<center>Forgiveness</center>

Worthington and Wade (2020, 1-3) and Malcolm et al. (2014, xxvi) note that forgiveness is not an easy topic to study, although there is much interest in doing so. Research on forgiveness was initially spurred by Lewis Smedes's book, *Forgive and Forget: Healing the Hurts We Don't Deserve* (1984), and began in earnest in 1998 with studies carried out by people from a number of different disciplines all over the world, and from a variety of different religions.

Worthington and Wade (2020) note that various angles of forgiveness have been explored since their first edition in 2005, and now consists of over 2,500 empirical studies and articles. Lack of consensus about the definition of forgiveness, including confounding outcomes and ambivalent views about its utility, add to the difficulties and complexities when studying forgiveness. How one's capacity to forgive is affected by developmental deficits as a result of childhood trauma, unhealed wounds, and/or one's resulting self and other representations, is an as-yet little known factor which I sought to explore in this study. I attempted to design a study which would investigate this aspect, although it was not easy to construct. Despite the difficulties which confirmed the complexity of the topic, I was nevertheless able to draw some meaningful observations and conclusions.

Studies of relevance to my topic examine the relationship between religion/spirituality and forgiveness (Choe, McLaughlin, McElroy-Heltzel and Davis 2020, 107-116), anger towards God and divine forgiveness (Exline 2020, 117-127), those dealing with forgiveness in intimate relationships, in cases of infidelity, violence and divorce (Gordon et al. 2020, 153-163), forgiveness in marriage (Fincham 2020, 142-152), and self-forgiveness (Cornish, Griffin and Morris 2020, 288-298).

Forgiveness is intrapersonal and interpersonal/intersubjective in its experience and sequelae (Worthington 2020, 12). In other words, forgiveness is relational. We are relational beings, called to relationship with God, others and creation. Moreover, the goal of Christianity is to love God above all else and others as ourselves, and we are only able to love God and others well insofar as

we are healed within ourselves. This puts forgiveness, attachment and trauma front and centre in the frame of Christian spiritual formation.

Despite our difficulties forgiving there is a recognized, unconscious imperative to forgive for the healing of the self. Chaudhari calls this the vestiges of God in us, the *imago Dei*, which gives humans their developmental thrust towards God and fulfilling their potential. Siassi, a psychoanalyst (2013, 57) states that forgiveness is motivated by an unconscious wish to repair the injury to the self, "the hope to restore and renew the self through the renewal of a positive bond, in order to find a sense of rootedness in the world." She quotes Fonagy and Akhtar who assert that attachment is both the seed and product of forgiveness (2013, 56) but herself asserts that this wish to heal the self is self-serving: in the service of one's healthy narcissistic needs (reinforced by religion and society) and is not altruistic. The Christian *telos* of communion with God and the journey there that we are all on requires deeper soul-searching of one's motivations.

Many individuals with unhealed relational traumatic wounds live with unforgiveness and need help navigating this barrier. Barsness (2022, 2) lists three variants of forgiveness: (1) confession – forgiveness - restoration;(2) no confession-forgiveness- no restoration and (3) no confession-forgiveness-restoration, with most psychotherapy for (2) and (3). He states that the individual is helped to shift focus from the perpetrator to the trauma and wound itself, and to let go of negative emotions.

Siassi points out (2013, 78) that unforgiveness and the accompanying symptoms of anger, bitterness and resentment are self-protective defences against being re-traumatized, and against the painful intrapsychic processes of mourning

87

the unfulfilled expectations of the relationship, managing the hurt and trauma, and letting go of victimhood and the grudge. This constitutes the first phase of forgiveness. Siassi (2013, 79) also makes important distinctions between forgiveness, acceptance and reconciliation. Forgiveness entails significant psychological work in the form of grieving and mourning and involves re-establishment of the internal bond with the wrongdoer. Acceptance (which she equates with intrapsychic reparation and giving up of fantasies about the relationship) is psychologically rather than practically motivated and involves the mourning of losses and giving up of victimhood but does not involve the re-establishment of the bond or reconciliation. Whether reconciliation is possible is determined by the severity of the wound or by the nature and reality of the history of the relationship with the wrongdoer, as well as the capacity of the wrongdoer. Additionally, forgiveness and reconciliation are separate processes: one can forgive and not reconcile and, likewise, reconciliation can occur without the need to forgive (Siassi 2013, 82-83).

Christian forgiveness enjoins us to search ourselves more deeply and to clarify the nuances between forgiveness and reconciliation. We read in scripture, "Leave your gift at the altar; first be reconciled to your sister/brother, then come and offer your gift" Matt. 5:34. Of particular importance to Christians, furthermore, is Siassi's recognition that the conscious demand to forgive put upon oneself is "spiritual utility" which can serve as a kind of pseudo-forgiveness, and which may not be reality-based (Siassi 2013, 79). These nuances of underlying motivations and that forgiveness is a process, add to the difficulties in assessing, evaluating, measuring and studying forgiveness.

With a focus on those aspects of forgiveness mentioned above, I chose to describe forgiveness as being intrapersonal and interpersonal, having decisional (cognitive or thinking) and emotional (affective or feeling) components, with behavioural outcomes. Decisional forgiveness is "making a behavioural intention statement to treat the transgressor as a person of value, to forswear revenge, and to act in ways that forbear expression of anger about the transgression." (Worthington and Sandage 2020, 11-12), whereas emotional forgiveness is a move from negative and unforgiving emotions to some improved state (defined as less negative, neutral or positive). Thus, attention was paid to cognitive, affective and behavioural aspects of forgiveness in the content of the sessions of the program, and when evaluating the journal material.

Session content included Smedes's (1996, 5-12) description of forgiveness, which comprises (1) rediscovering the humanity of the person who wronged us, without diminishing the wrong, knowing they could do it again, knowing they are a flawed human as we are; (2) giving up our right for vengeance and to get even; and (3) a shift from hating and desiring bad things to happen to them to neutral feelings about them, to wishing them good. Smedes (1996, 23-29) also notes, helpfully, that some people forgive everything, and others forgive nothing, that we have to repent to be forgiven by God, and that we are to forgive, even if the wrongdoer does not repent. Smedes also gives important instruction about forgiveness and reunion with the wrongdoer which was also covered in the sessions. Re-establishing a relationship between the hurt person and the transgressor: (1) requires that the person is truly sorry; (2) can only happen if we are sure the wrong will not be repeated; (3) has strings attached; (4) is sometimes

89

impossible; (5) is sometimes harmful; and, (6) the threat of reunion with someone violent keeps people from forgiving. This material which is congruent with attachment theory and trauma principles, was used when looking for themes in journals, and to determine shifts in thinking, feeling and behaviour towards forgiveness.

The goals and outcomes of forgiveness are determined by how healed the individual is and also on the ability of the offender to change their behaviour. A person's capacity to forgive is determined by developmental trauma (in early childhood) and the healing attained since. Akhtar (Akhtar 2002, 175) points out that individuals with developmental deficits because of childhood trauma are prone to difficulties with forgiveness. He lists "those who cannot forgive, or forgive too readily, constantly or never seek others' forgiveness, cannot accept forgiveness, or show an imbalance between their capacities to forgive themselves and forgive others."

The eight session psychospiritual program I designed focused and elaborated on the initial phase of the forgiveness process, that of "uncovering." By identifying specific painful self, other and God representations the person gains an understanding of the offense and the consequence of the injury to their life. This could then lead to the necessary mourning and grieving which is the work of true forgiveness. The program aims to shed some light on the intrapersonal and relational processes involved in forgiveness, which the stress-and-coping theory of forgiveness, the best supported in the literature (Worthington 2020, 14, 63-73), does not explain. Aspects of virtue theory, one of

the emerging theories of forgiveness (Worthington 2020, 16), also emerged and were highlighted in the conclusions.

Ethics and REB, Permission and Supervision

I am a registered member of two regulated health professional colleges governed by the Regulated Health Professions Act (RHPA, 1991): the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO) and the College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario (CRPO). Both have designated scopes of practice, controlled acts, and directions for conducting research and codes of ethics. I am also a member of the Canadian Association of Registered Marriage and Family Therapists, and the Ontario Association of Mental Health Professionals. I am accountable to these colleges and associations and acted within the boundaries of my professional designations and was governed by the codes of ethics of both the colleges.

From Sensing (2011, 33), key ethical principles that are applicable are "respect for persons and beneficence." Applicable ethical values from the CRPO's Code of Ethics are the following: "autonomy and dignity of all persons," "integrity," "justice" and "responsible research (to conduct only basic and applied research that potentially benefits society and to do so safely, ethically and with informed consent of all participants)." From the code for Nurses, "safe compassionate, competent and ethical care," "promoting health and well-being," "promoting and respecting informed decision-making," "honouring dignity," "maintaining privacy and confidentiality," and "being accountable" are all relevant standards.

I also followed the ethical guidelines in the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans and obtained permission prior to beginning the data collection and intervention by applying to Tyndale's Research Ethics Board for approval to proceed (see Appendix A).

I provided my participants with a letter of information about the project and gave them time to consider their response before giving consent or refusing to participate. Participants were informed at the outset that they could experience distress as they recalled past wounds and that they may identify the need for further psychotherapy to address this. They were informed that they would be provided with resource numbers for agencies where they could explore further treatment if needed (Letter of Information and Consent, Appendix B).

Although this was not a psychotherapy-related project, my training as a psychotherapist and psychoanalyst put me in a position of power over the participants, as did my role as researcher. Therefore, had they any concerns about the research project, they were provided with the option to contact Dr. David Sherbino, head of Tyndale Seminary's Doctor of Ministry Spiritual Formation Track who provided oversight and supervision. His contact information was included in the Letter of Information and Consent as well.

Field, Scope, Methods and Data Collection

I wanted my sample to reflect the Christian in the pew, so I approached Christians who previously attended my retreats on forgiveness and met the inclusion criteria. They were invited to participate in an eight-week online group. I sent out two email invitations to a list of retreatants informing them of the

upcoming opportunity to participate. The limitations due to the Covid lockdown in force at the time mandated online participation, for which individuals needed the technology and know-how for online internet access and privacy in which to take part.

Field

I was looking for a small group of six to ten adults (allowing for a few possible dropouts). Although I started with a group of six individuals, one could not make it at the decided time, and one dropped out after the first session, leaving four participants. This had implications for the usefulness of the quantitative data.

Scope

Participants were adult Christians who, (1) self-identified as having experienced a hurt, wound or trauma anywhere along their developmental lifespan; (2) had difficulty forgiving the wrongdoer; (3) had difficulty relating to God, self and others due to unforgiveness; (4) were willing to commit to all eight sessions online and engage in small group work; and, (5) were willing to do the required measures, questionnaires and journaling.

Individuals were excluded if they were, (1) currently suicidal, had suicidal ideation, active addictions or self-harm behaviour; (2) unable to engage online via zoom; (3) unable to engage in small-group work during sessions; (4) unable or unwilling to do the required measures, questionnaires and homework journaling

exercises; and, (5) non-English-speakers (since this project was carried out in English).

Methods

Due to the pandemic restrictions at the time, this entire study was conducted remotely and online, from recruitment to completion. I designed an eight-session curriculum which involved small group discussions. The intent was to help people understand the link between trauma's effect on their pain-evoking beliefs about themselves and others, in order that they could reflect on this. The group also reflected on their understanding of suffering and reviewed practical steps to forgiveness. Participants were taught grounding and anxiety-management exercises in the first session to contain any distress they might feel as a result of thinking about past trauma and their wrongdoers. An outline of the sessions can be seen in Appendix C.

Three quantitative standardized test instruments were used pre- and post-intervention, the (1) Attachment to God (AGI), see Appendix D, (2) Enright Self-Forgiveness Inventory (ESFI), see Appendix E, and (3) Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI-30), see Appendix F. Being standardized testing tools, the AGI, EFI-30 and the EFSI were used in their original form and were not modified. I obtained permission to use all the tools, (Permission to use AGI, Appendix G; Permission to use EFI and ESFI, Appendix H) which was submitted along with the Research Ethics Board application for approval. Packages of the quantitative tools were mailed to participants in self-addressed, pre-stamped envelopes before the start of the project. A brief description of each tool is found below.

In addition, qualitative subjective reports and journals were also collected from the participants on a weekly basis. A subjective anger rating form was included in the mailed package. Participants rated their anger with reflections on their ratings, during the week. They mailed these back to me at the end of the program, along with their post-intervention measures which were also mailed to them with pre-stamped, self-addressed envelopes, at the completion of the program. Participants also emailed a weekly journal to me following each session, over the course of the eight weeks.

I describe above how an individual develops secure and insecure attachment, and the characteristic features of each. It was also noted that Kirkpatrick presented the idea that one's relationship to God can be described as an attachment bond. The AGI is a psychometric tool which operationalizes and measures the individual's attachment to God, which can either correspond to one's inner attachment style or be opposite and compensatory. The AGI has two subscales, Avoidance of Intimacy and Anxiety about Abandonment, which display "good factor structure, internal consistency, and construct validity." (Beck and McDonald 2004, 92)

The EFI-30 is the "interpersonal forgiveness measure of choice for research professionals" since its creation in 1995. It tests positive and negative affective, cognitive and behavioural changes in the stance of victims who choose forgiveness towards their offenders. The tool notes that it is sensitive to "differentiate accurately people with different degrees of forgiveness and good psychometric properties of internal consistency." (Enright, Rique Neto, de Melo and Song 2021)

The ESFI is also deemed "a reliable and valid scale ready to use in research and mental health practice." (Kim, Volk and Enright 2021) The ESFI also measures positive and negative affect, cognition and behaviour changes in those who choose self-forgiveness, abandoning self-resentment and self-loathing, "responding to themselves with compassion, unconditional worth, generosity and moral love." They note that there is a "disingenuous form of self-forgiveness, marked by self-excusing or self-exonerating without acknowledging or taking responsibility," a "pseudo self-forgiveness," PSF, which is also measured by the tool. Self-forgiveness can also be linked to divine forgiveness: Exline notes that people will have an easier time forgiving themselves if they believe themselves to be forgiven by God. (Exline 2020, 121)

Participants were also asked to track their subjective level of anger (an emotion common with unforgiveness and easy to identify) towards their wrongdoers. Anger, resentment, bitterness, revenge fantasies, vindictiveness, contempt, and grudges often accompany unforgiveness. These symptoms are understood as defenses against the vulnerable feelings of loss and mourning of the relationship, a necessary step to forgiveness (Siassi 2013, xii-xiii). Thus measuring the participant's level of anger was a clear and easy measure of the state of unforgiveness. They were asked to self-rate their anger towards self, other and God with a simple question: "On a scale of 0-10, where 0 = *none* and 10 = *enraged*, where would you rate your anger towards the self, other and God? (see Appendix E) Participants were also asked to comment on their anger ratings. Exline (2020, 118) highlights that there are no standardized measures of anger

96

towards God. She states that to date: "[r]esearch on human/divine anger and forgiveness has relied on self-report measures."

Data Collection

With each session being two hours long over a period of eight weeks, the program gave individuals time to reflect on, work through and digest the material. Baseline measures were collected prior to the sessions beginning, and participants rated their anger and commented on what they noticed about their shifts in anger over the course of the sessions. They also journaled between sessions and emailed this to me so I could track process while it was taking place. Post-intervention quantitative measures were also taken (AGI, EFI-30 and ESFI). The results of the standardized tools were statistically analyzed. I obtained help with this from a research assistant. I also made ethnographic observations of the participants throughout the course of the eight sessions. I used these subjective narrative accounts to explore themes and to identify shifts in forgiveness in the participants over the course of the project. I was also interested in whether such a program could be carried out by non-professionals. For a summary of the tools, data collection methods and process involved with analysis, see Tables 1-3 below.

Table 1: Phases and Timetable

Phase	Action	Time Frame	Who	How
Developing the Intervention	Submit REB application	4 Nov, 2021	Researcher	Researcher filed app
	Informal advertising to recruit participants	10 Dec, 2021	Researcher	Researcher emailed previous retreat participants
REB Approval		17 Dec, 2021		
Obtaining consent	Obtain signed information/consent letters	17 Dec, 2021	Researcher and participants	Researcher emailed letters/consents to be signed by participants and scanned and returned by email
Gathering Pre-Intervention Data	Email out pre-intervention package	18 Dec, 2021	Researcher	Researcher mailed packages to participants to be mailed back to me before 2nd session
	Fill out and return pre-intervention questionnaires		Participants	Participants filled out and mailed questionnaires to Researcher
			Topic	
Intervention	Session #1	18 Dec, 2021	Info Session	Researcher
	Session #2	8 Jan, 2022	Self-Reps	Researcher
	Session #3	15 Jan, 2022	Self-Reps	Researcher
	Session #4	22 Jan, 2022	Other Reps	Researcher
	Session #5	29 Jan, 2022	God Reps	Researcher
	Session #6	5 Feb, 2022	Suffering	Researcher
	Session #7	12 Feb, 2022	Forgiveness	Researcher
	Session #8	19 Feb, 2022	Forgiveness	Researcher
Gathering Post-Intervention Data	Email out post-intervention questionnaires	19 Feb, 2022	Researcher	Researcher mailed out post-intervention packages
	Fill out and return post-intervention questionnaires		Participants	Participants filled out questionnaires and returned directly to Researcher via mail
Interpretation			Researcher	
			Researcher	
			Researcher	Discern meaning of data
			Researcher	Discern meaning of data
Complete Report	Write and submit final report	18 June 2022	Researcher	

Table 1: Data Collection Methods and Purpose

Type	Method of collection	Purpose
Group participation	In-session sharing	Participants interacting with the concepts, sharing and processing their hurts
Direct observation	Researcher observations, personal reverie, participants' reflections	Observe effect of the content on participants
Written documentation	Participants' emotion scale, anger journals and weekly journals	To assess shift in emotion, thinking and behaviour To allow participants to reflect and process their hurts
Standardized tests	Participants mailed these to me before commencing and after completing the eight sessions	To evaluate changes in attachment styles to God, changes in forgiveness and changes in self-forgiveness

Table 2: Data Collection Sources

Source	Instrument	Format	Type	Analysis
Participants	AGI	Likert	Quantitative	Research Assist
Participants	EFI-30	Likert Descriptive	Quantitative	Research Assist
Participants	ESFI	Likert Descriptive	Quantitative	Research Assist
Participants	Anger Scale	Numerical Rating	Quantitative	Research Assist
Participants	Anger journal	Written	Qualitative	Researcher
Participants	Weekly journal	Written	Qualitative	Researcher
Researcher	In-session observations	Written	Qualitative	Researcher

Findings and Interpretation

This section summarizes all the quantitative (AGI, EFI-30 and ESFI) pre- and post-session data gathered over the course of the sessions, and qualitative data (anger ratings, anger journals and weekly journals). It also includes relevant information about the participants. The intent is to assess the effectiveness of the program in moving the participant forward in the process of forgiveness. The small number of participants rendered the quantitative data of less value than those from the qualitative sources, which proved to be rich in content. Some

helpful conclusions about each participant's process could be drawn by juxtaposing their journal material against the before and after ratings on the AGI. Two participants wrote profusely throughout the week, tracking their thoughts and feelings as they processed the material covered in group sessions.

Sections on the findings, interpretation, limitation and next steps follow below.

Findings

The following section presents demographic information of the group, and results from the quantitative measures, (AGI, EFI-30, and EFSI) albeit minimal. Their anger ratings, and the content of their anger journals and weekly journals were also evaluated.

Demographic Information

One male and three females ranging in age from their mid-40s to late-70s participated in the study. All were committed Christians: three were Roman Catholic and one was a Protestant. All the participants believed in the importance of forgiveness. English was the second language for one participant, although their spoken English was fluent. The participants were numbered for anonymity: 004, 006, 007, 008.

They were asked to identify the index relational trauma event on their EFI pre-measures, though, not surprisingly several other similar remembered hurts came up over the course of the sessions. I surmise that this likely occurred because these wounds were associated with the same or similar emotional states and self-representations, which were the focus of the sessions. By the end of the

program each participant had recalled numerous painful events that had occurred over their lives, and all had changed their index trauma event. This impacted the findings on the EFI-30 and the ESFI, where thee index pre- and post-event similarly changed.

Over the course of the eight sessions, present and past issues and traumas written about in the journals included childhood sexual abuse, parental abandonment and neglect, parental mental illness, alcoholism and suicide, medical trauma as a child, spousal neglect, emotional abuse, sibling abuse, co-worker conflicts and injustices and clergy and institutional (church and workplace) abuse. Issues for self-forgiveness included lashing out at others, quitting their job in anger and other self-indulging and self-abusing behaviours. While two of the participants' abusers were deceased, two still had ongoing contact with their wrongdoers who were family members.

Quantitative measures

Each section below presents the findings for each of the instruments, Attachment to God (AGI), Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI) and the Enright Self-Forgiveness Inventory (ESFI).

AGI

The AGI measured two subscales: (1) avoidance of intimacy with God; and, (2) anxiety over abandonment by God. Ratings above four are considered high. High ratings on avoidance of intimacy with God indicate an avoidant attachment style, and high ratings on anxiety of abandonment by God indicate an anxious attachment style. Low avoidance and low anxiety ratings indicate that

101

individuals have a secure attachment to God. At pre-intervention, none of the participants showed an avoidant attachment style to God and one of the participants had an anxious attachment to God.

Table 3: Change in Avoidance of Intimacy with God, Before and After

Participants	Av. Before	Level	Av. After	Level
004	2.714286	Low	2.714286	Low
006	2.642857	Low	2.285714	Low
007	3.000000	Low	3.214286	Low
008	2.285714	Low	2.428571	Low

Avoidance of intimacy with God ratings range from 2.29 to 3.00; all the ratings are considered low. Anxiety about Abandonment by God ratings range from 2.29 to 4.07. Only one participant had a rating of 4.07 which is considered high.

Table 4: Change in Anxiety about Abandonment by God, Before and After

Participants	Anx. Before	Level	Anx. After	Level
004	3.714286	Low	2.928571	Low
006	2.285714	Low	1.285714	Low
007	4.071429	High	3.857143	Low
008	3.214286	Low	2.785714	Low

Avoidance ratings after the intervention range from 2.29 to 3.21. The anxiety ratings after the intervention range from 1.29 to 3.86. All ratings are considered low.

Tables 4 and 5 above contain the data for the two subscales, avoidance of intimacy with God and anxiety about abandonment by God before and after the eight-session intervention. Although avoidance of intimacy with God increased

for three participants, and remained the same for one, post-intervention, they were in the low range for all participants before and after the intervention. Only one participant's anxiety over abandonment by God score was high (4.07) before the intervention, and this went down afterwards.

Since post-intervention scores for avoidance of intimacy with God and anxiety over abandonment by God ratings were all low, participants' attachment to God generally showed improvement.

Figure 1 is a bar chart which visually compares each participant's pre- and post-intervention avoidance of intimacy with God ratings, and Figure 2 compares anxiety over abandonment by God ratings before and after the intervention. avoidance ratings went up for two participants, remained the same for one and went down for the other. An increased avoidance of intimacy with God score, taking into account the journal entries, may indicate that participants were engaging in honest dialogue with God and processing their hurts without fear that God would abandon them. This may be borne out by the anxiety ratings which went down for all participants post-program.

The low number of participants precluded more detailed analysis being carried out on these data.
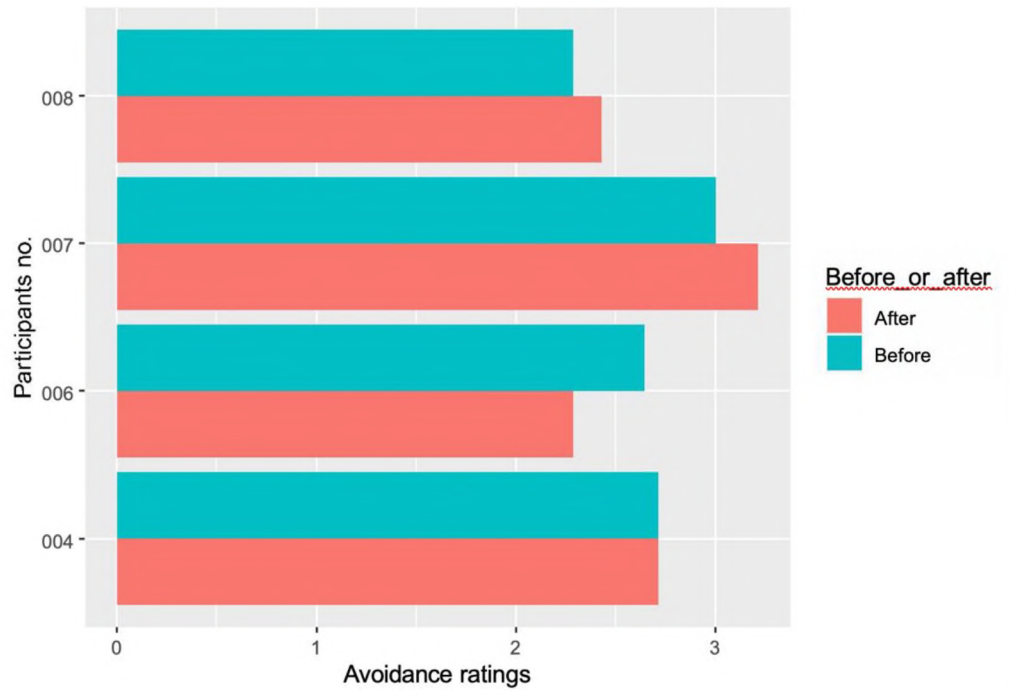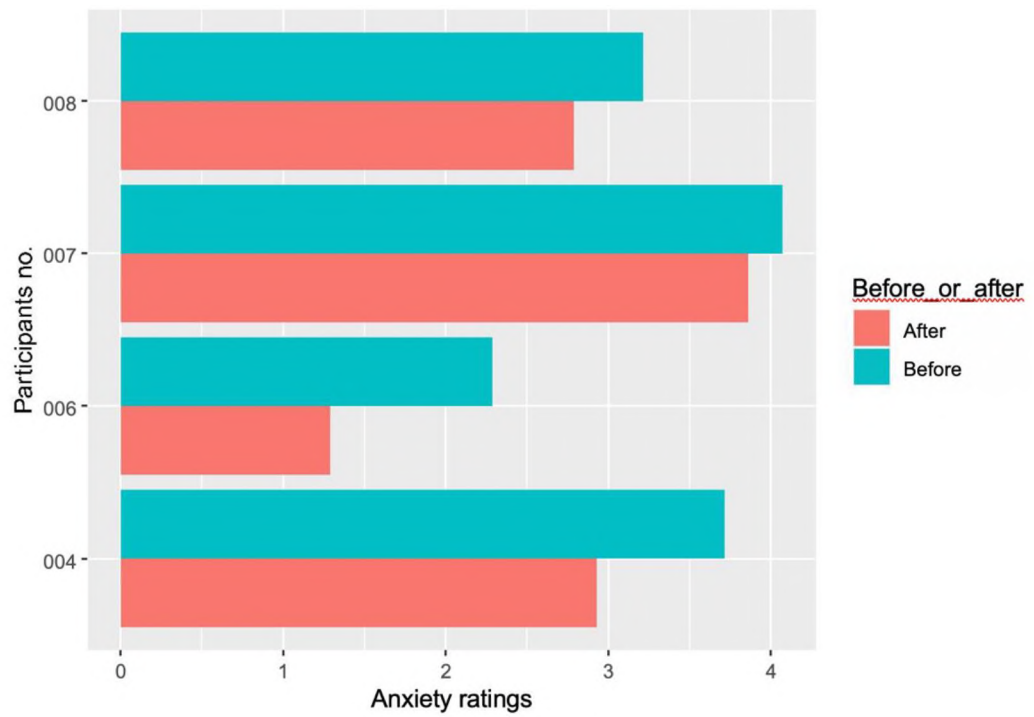
Figure 1: Avoidance of Intimacy with God

Figure 2: Anxiety about Abandonment by God

Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI-30)

Please see Appendix F for a copy of the EFI-30. Data bugs were noted in

one participant's responses (Q4 "repulsed" had non-single entries; Q7 "caring"

had non-single entries; and Q14 "neglect" was missing an entry). This was fixed

using responses to similar questions from the ESFI. However, since participants

focused on different index events over the course of the intervention (as reflected

in their journals) and on their pre- and post-EFI-30, and also changed the

identified wrongdoers, the analysis of the data is of questionable value.

Nevertheless, EFI (forgiveness) scores (30 questions) increased in three

participants and went down for one after the intervention. Similarly, no attempt

was made to extrapolate the results, as this would be meaningless with such small

numbers.

Table 5: EFI Scores Before and After

Participants	EFI Before	EFI After
004	101	83
006	69	91
007	78	140
008	95	109

Figure 3: Overall Forgiveness Ratings
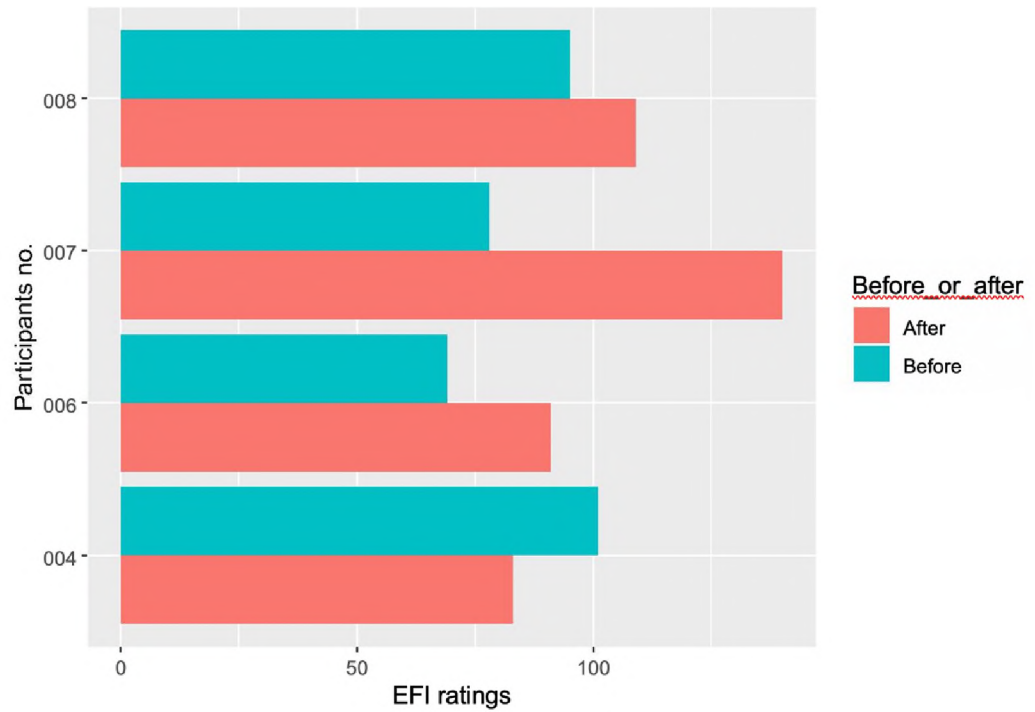
Subcategories of the EFI-30 measured changes in total affect (emotions), total behaviour and total cognition, before and after the intervention (refer to Figures 4-6 below). All participants reported an increase in positive affect after the intervention. Three participants reported increase in positive behaviour and increase in positive cognition towards their wrongdoer after the intervention.

Figure 4: Change in Total Affect
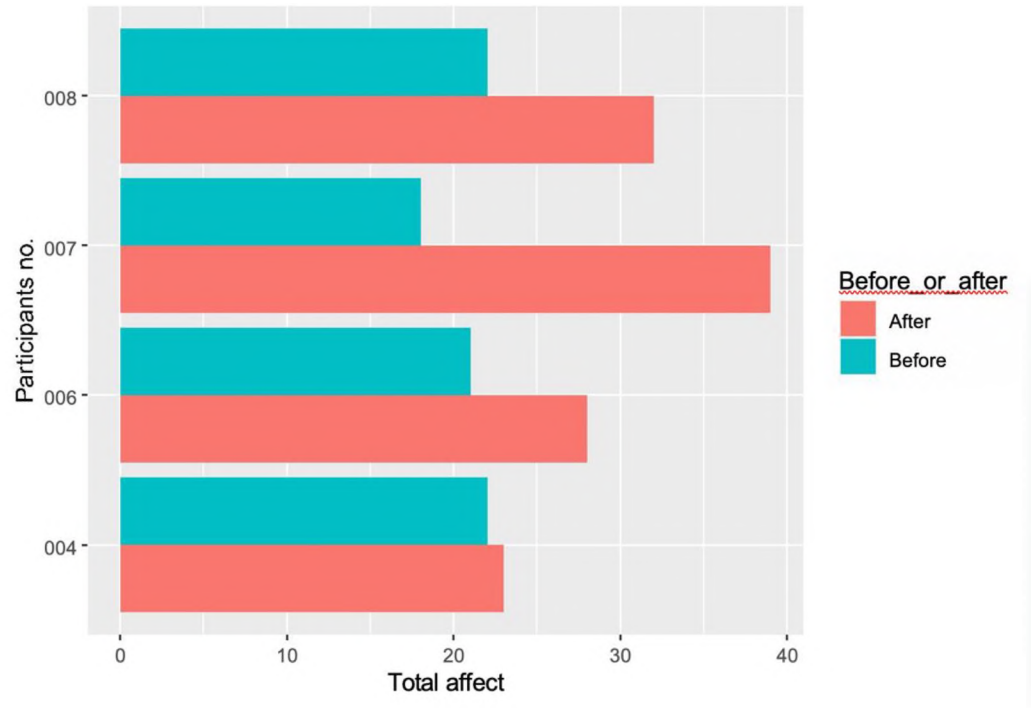
Figure 5: Change in Total Behaviour
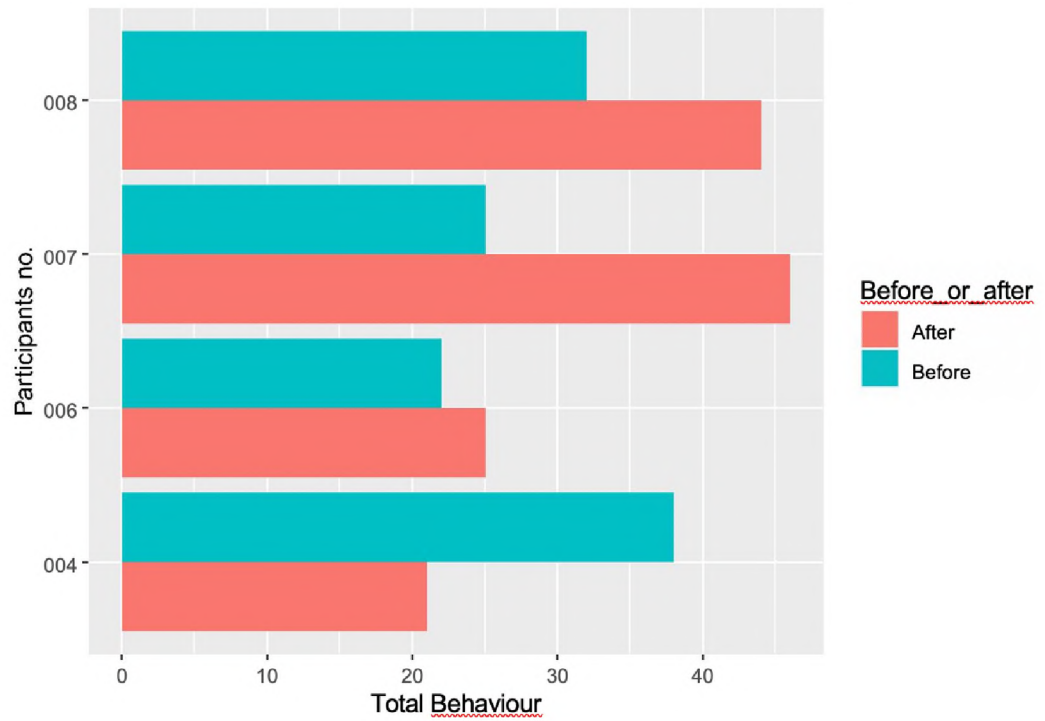
Figure 6: Change in Total Cognition
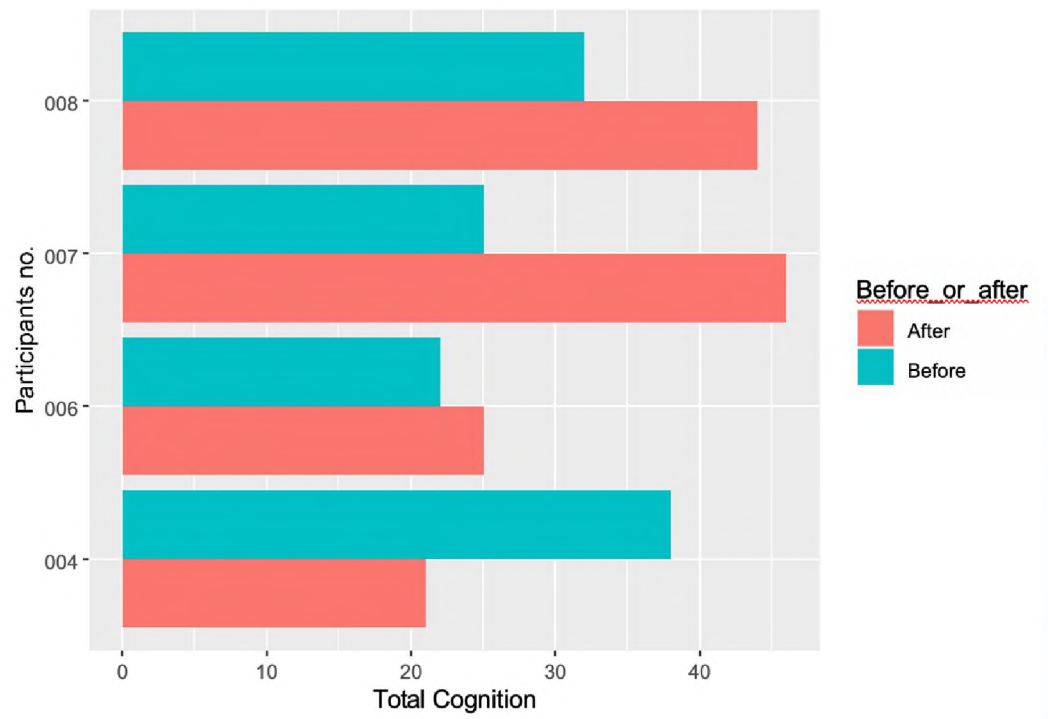
Enright Self-Forgiveness Inventory (ESFI)

This tool takes two measures: the individual's forgiving response to the self in the context of one specific wrongdoing committed and pseudo-forgiveness (see Appendix G). Before and after session changes were assessed. However, while I report on the results, I note that their value is questionable: besides only having a small number of participants, individuals also reported on different events pre- and post-intervention, which confounded the results.

Self-forgiveness levels increased in two of the four participants, remained the same for one, and went down for one participant, after the intervention.

Figure 7: Change in Self-Forgiveness
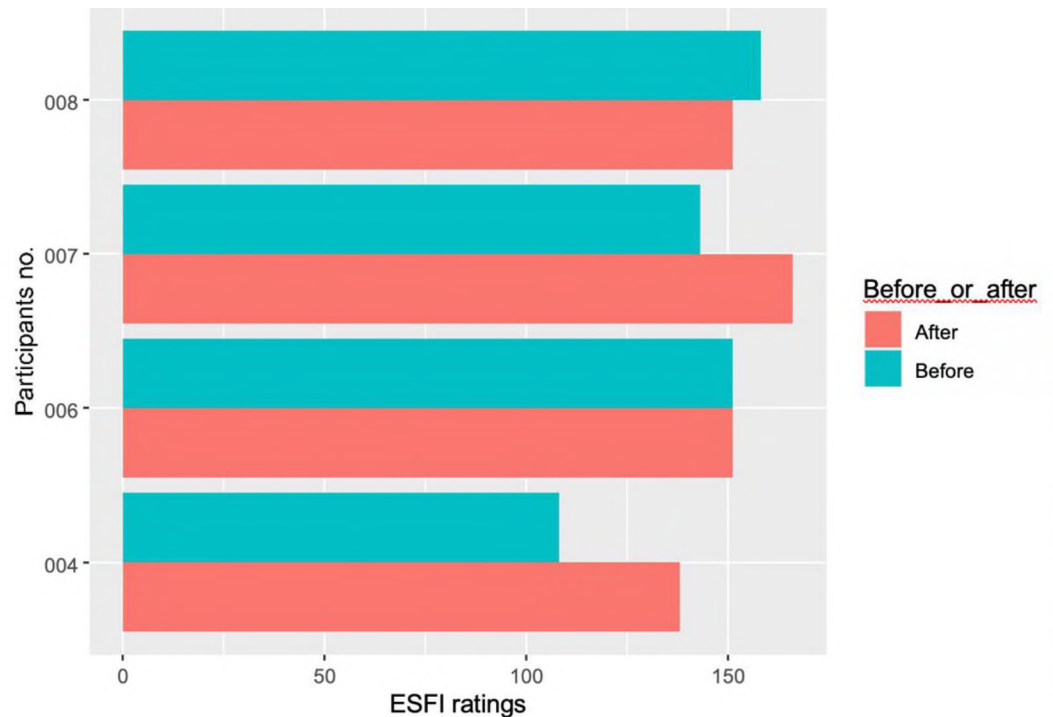
Regarding pseudo-forgiveness, after the intervention one might expect the scores to go down, as "true self-forgivers begin the process of self-forgiveness with an understanding that they have done something wrong and ought to experience positive changes towards the self without ever downplaying their culpability for wrongdoing" (ESFI). However, the pseudo-forgiveness ratings of two participants dropped, while the scores went up in two.

A final note, the same two participants whose pseudo-forgiveness-scores went down scored increases of total affect, total behaviour and total cognition on the EFI-30 post-intervention (see Figures 4-6 in the EFI section above).

Figure 8: Change in Pseudo-Forgiveness
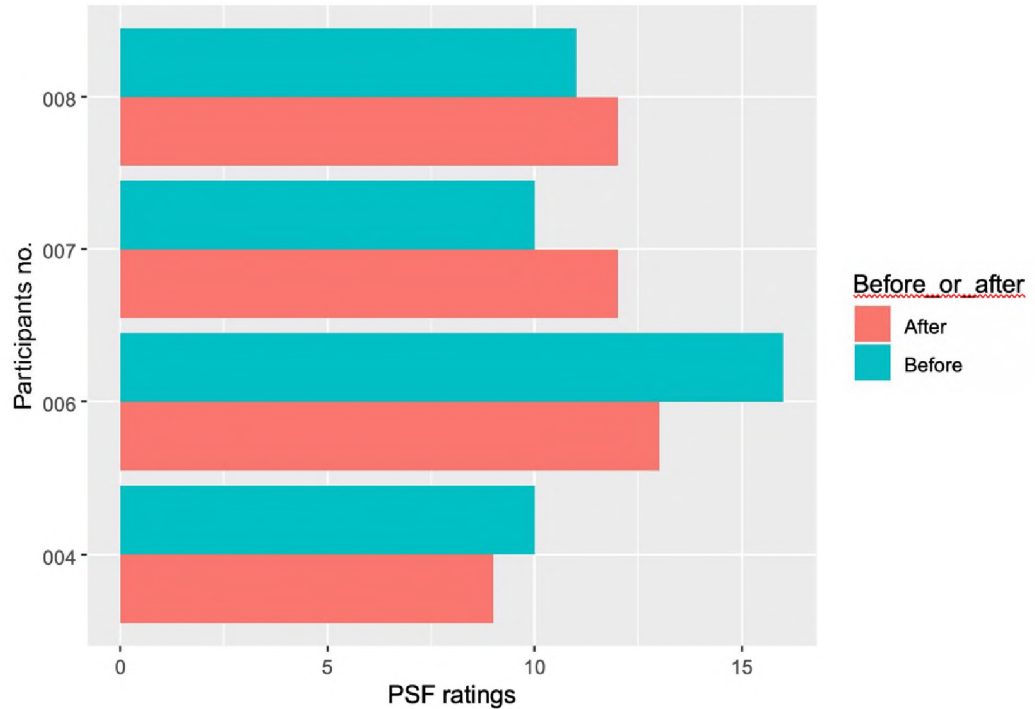
Self-reported anger ratings and anger journals

Relinquishing anger is a necessary step towards mourning and coming to terms with the wrong done to an individual and can be characterized by sadness and crying. Participants generally showed reluctance about owning anger towards God, although there were some shifts, as noted in their narratives below. Self-reported anger towards God remained low while anger towards self was consistent and low for all but one participant who rated themselves consistently high early in the process. This participant gradually reduced their self-anger rating as the sessions progressed. Anger towards others began consistently high for all participants and dropped in intensity, although it did not disappear entirely. Participants became more open about feeling anger towards God, and as observed

above in the AGI, this was accompanied by less anxiety about abandonment by him.

Participants noted that they began to recognize the direction of their anger more clearly: rather than identifying a global feeling of anger, they were able to distinguish when it was directed towards self, others or situations. One participant noted that focusing on the anger rating each week helped them become more aware that their anger was connected to the wrongdoer rather than God. It also made them grieve "lost opportunities and lost chances to be loved." Another participant noted subtle changes as they tracked their anger, and they were able to notice its ebbs and flows.

Participants also made observations about the changes in the quality and intensity of their anger. As sessions progressed, in week three this person stated, "I feel some separation of the anger in a good way, a bit of letting go." Also, "My anger is different; not rage, but determination." In week five, they commented, "This week I don't feel angry, but just saddened by the hurts." The anger re-emerged in weeks seven and eight as they realized they were "holding onto trying to dictate the 'punishment' [against the wrongdoers]." They also shared that "I find myself stubbornly holding onto the anger, but it is not escalating into inner drama and stories, for the most part." This participant also stated that they came to understand Jesus' command to forgive "seventy times seven" to mean that they were to repeatedly forgive the wrongdoer and that whenever they thought of the incident or the person, they needed to develop a forgiving attitude.

A third participant stressed a progression in their anger over the weeks. They were able to allow themselves to be more honest about their anger against

111

God and admit they blamed God for the trauma they had experienced as a child. They also stated that they noticed less self-blame and self-anger as the sessions progressed. After the last session, this participant wrote a letter of forgiveness to their deceased abuser. The fourth participant observed being intensely angry towards themself and the wrongdoer, wanting to lash out at them, and replaying angry conversations in their mind. They shared, "I am reliving my hurt." Characteristically, an individual who has unhealed trauma re-lives, rather than remembers the event. A re-experienced trauma means the individual is being re-traumatized. This person demonstrated anxiety about abandonment by God before the intervention. They were reluctant about expressing anger towards God, confessing rather that they were "perplexed" by him, how he acts and what he wanted from them. They stated that "My plea to him is for justice." After the session on God representations, they shared "The thought has always been with me that if I am angry with them [my parents], they won't love me anymore. When I was young, I got angry at my mom. She was indignant and started to cry. My father was angry with me because I made my mother cry. I remember saying I was sorry." This individual, notably, had less anxiety about abandonment by God and increased avoidance of intimacy by the end of the sessions.

Weekly journals

The unedited material was compiled and sorted for recurring themes according to whether it demonstrated that participants were gaining insight into how the wound they had incurred affected their sense of self, other and God, their understanding of their losses as a result of these relational wounds, and if they

were coming to a place where they could mourn these losses. Themes also reflected their processing of the sessions, and for shifts in emotion and thinking, of value for movement through the steps of forgiveness and movement towards forgiving their wrongdoer.

Sessions two and three incorporated experiential components in which participants were taught how to identify and name the cluster of emotions (usually more than one) that they were feeling. The cluster of emotions is a "feeling state." Everyone has a number of familiar "feeling states." Not all feeling states are associated with traumas. As a person becomes more familiar with their internal world and their inner life, they can recognize these distinct feeling states. Participants were helped with expanding their emotion language by being provided with a Feelings Wheel. They identified and named the clusters of emotions that they were feeling during the sessions and in their written weekly journals. When speaking in-session and writing about their experiences with the wrongdoer in their journals, participants named and expressed the following negative emotions: fear, suspicion, anger, resentment, bitterness, hatred, shame, self-blame, contempt, despising, sadness and regret.

Participants were then taught how to identify the underlying beliefs about themselves associated with the feeling state, which constituted one or more of their self-representations in the area of Identity, Value/Worth, Agency/Power/Efficacy, Meaning/Purpose, Ability/Competence, Belonging. Table 7 below shows their self and other representations at the start of the sessions. Self, other and God representations are interrelated, in that we develop our self-concept in relationship with others. "I am unloved," "others are

113

unloving," and "I am unlovable" are distinct, but related. These can then be projected onto God: "God does not love me." Participants learned to identify their other representations by sitting with their emotions and their self-representations. They then gave voice to how they felt others view them. Generally, they felt they were viewed negatively and that they were unsafe with others, misunderstood, put down, and that they had to be vigilant and look out for themselves.

Table 7: Self and Other Representations at Start of Sessions

Category	Self-representations	Other representations
Identity	I don't know who I am. I'm unloved. I'm hated. I'm despised. I'm ugly.	How you define me is not who I am and is not who I want to be. They think that the good in me is stupid. They think I am a hypocrite. Those in my family have defined me. God may be the only one who sees me as 'I' clearly.
Value/Worth	I'm not good enough. I'm unlovable. I'm forgotten. I'm garbage. I'm discarded. I'm poor. I'm worthless. I'm used and abused.	They don't want good for me. I feel raped by people.
Agency/Power/Efficacy	I'm insignificant. I'm stuck. I'm not heard. I'm not seen. I'm powerless. I'm in danger. I'm taken advantage of. I'm weak.	
Ability/Competence	I'm misunderstood. I'm unsuccessful.	They think I'm incompetent.
Belonging	I'm replaceable. I don't belong.	The world is cold, lacking in compassion.

As the sessions progressed and participants processed the material, reflected on it, and talked about their feelings, their journals captured the changes in their self and other representations. These are depicted in Table 8, below.

Table 8: In-Process Self and Other Representations

Category	Self-representations	Other representations
Identity	My belovedness is rooted in God, not others. My heart has become softer now. I am starting to feel softer and more forgiving towards my self.	They are not able to love me because of their emotional inability, immaturity.
Value/Worth	I sense a new clarity about the fact that the lack of love is not because I AM UNLOVEABLE [emphasis theirs]. It does change my feelings about me, and my worth to be loved. I am God's beloved.	They are unable to love; they are not doing this out of meanness. I am standing up for a healthy relationship.
Agency/Power/Efficacy	My peace is my responsibility. I am not powerless. I choose to stay in the relationship and not walk away.	
Purpose		I know GOD [emphasis theirs] wanted me to receive love through this person. It was not possible – OK [emphasis theirs] . . . that's the fact . . . but not the end. Now we go on to the next step.
Meaning	I can say goodbye to false hope and come to terms with and accept reality.	

Two key processes occurred which advanced the participants towards being able to forgive which will be explored further in the next section, (1) participants were able to distinguish the past events from current happenings, and how the past representations were influencing the present; and, (2) they were also able to connect and assign responsibility for bad behaviour to their wrongdoer and so were able to experience some control over their current feelings.

Separation of past events from present events

Importantly, three participants reported that they began to separate past events from the present, and original trauma from ongoing events in the present, while identifying similarities and differences. In separating the past from the present, they noted how the unhealed past wound affected the present situation, keeping it alive. One participant recognized, "I am on a new level. I am aware that my wounds in the current relationship are so intertwined with my Mom. I don't know who I have to forgive more. The wound is the same it seems. Both have added to the wound of abandonment and neglect." They recognized that they were now able to exercise choice, if they wanted to, and realized they are not powerless as they had been in the past. This participant shared that choosing not to walk away from the current situation helped them to mourn their losses, "say goodbye to false hope," and come to terms with and accept reality: that the past is what it is, and that they have agency in the present.

Separation between self and wrongdoer's responsibility

Participants' responses demonstrated movement in understanding themselves as separate from the abuser and their actions, identifying the abuse with the abuser and their deficits and not feeling responsible for evoking their abuser's behaviour. This resulted in the participants' self-concept improving as they saw themselves worthy of being loved, but not being loved because of others' inability to love. One person explained that this meant they could choose a response not tied to the abuser's actions. Another participant stated that recognizing that their abuser was incapable of loving because of their own inadequacies made them feel freer. This also expressed more humility and a new

understanding of their self as compassionate and strong yet at the same time able to stand up for themselves and not accept bad treatment.

Separation between self and trauma

The theme of freedom from being tied to the trauma also emerged in the qualitative findings. One person stated:

> What is also new is I start to talk about the ways I was hurt. I can talk about it with a lightness. In the past I could not talk about it at all, because I needed to protect people, and I didn't want people to 'know' how they failed in loving me, and how they abandoned me. I think I protected them, but also maybe me and my bad choices. I can talk about it. YES, [emphasis theirs] things were wrong, but this was not the end. The redemption part of the story starts to stand out.

This led to a move towards appreciating that true forgiveness is a process that takes working through painful emotions and letting go of fantasies about the relationship.

Process of forgiveness

Pseudo-forgiveness is measured on the ESFI, and as noted is self-excusing and self-exonerating without taking responsibility for one's wrongdoing. Siassi (2013, 58) observes that self-imposed, religiously motivated pressure to forgive others can give rise to a premature forgiveness without entailing the necessary steps of mourning and grieving the losses incurred by the trauma for true forgiveness. In this case the underlying wound is not healed and the individual continues to struggle with its painful effects. True forgiveness involves honesty and coming to terms with the wound. From key statements in their anger ratings and reflections together with the weekly journals, participants' stages from

pseudo-forgiveness towards true forgiveness, acceptance of the events and what occurred, changes in God representations and their relationship with God and processing of their thoughts on suffering were all tracked. I present these in the section below.

From pseudo-forgiveness towards truer forgiveness

As the sessions progressed participants were able to be truthful about their reactions, take responsibility and admit that they sometimes played the transgressor and not just the victim role. They saw themselves in the complementary role, similar to that of their abusers, which also made them less angry, more compassionate, and brought them closer to forgiving. They pointed out that the weekly reflections in session and in the journals helped them become more honest about their own behaviour. Various ones shared: "I am violent. My knee jerk is to inflict pain." "I wish for suffering in their lives." "This week I noticed that I stepped deeper into honesty. I found it for the first time doable to name things for me as they are, and not to find excuses." and "I found I have turned a corner. I think I am coming back up, being more realistic. What is my part – what is the other's part?" As noted above, this was also reflected in the decreasing pseudo-forgiveness scores on the ESFI with accompanying increases in total cognition, affect and behaviour.

Mourning and grieving losses

A necessary part of forgiveness involves individuals mourning and grieving the loss of the relationship, relinquishing anger, bitterness, resentment

118

and hurt. In the analysis of the qualitative data all of the participants showed shifts

in this area, some with new insights into why they came to be affected in the way

they were and lamented those losses. They shared it in their journals and also felt

safe to share this in the group. "This week was painful and raw. I hit 'rock

bottom' with the awareness of the lack and unwillingness and inability of love –

from the two people I wanted to be loved [by] the most." "I think maybe the

resistance or inability to forgive has to do with the loss that has not been

recovered yet." "I continue to cry a lot . . . I kind of think that I am crying for

myself. I had a lot of reasons to cry in my life; but whenever I thought about

doing that, I remembered my mom told me to cheer up. We never cried in my

family."

Insights on forgiveness

Participants demonstrated new insights on forgiveness. The fears involved

and the cost of letting go are displayed in the following comments: "The

forgiveness may come when I take responsibility for my own peace."

> Maybe there is no such thing as a full forgiveness and it's over. What may
> be more realistic . . . is to transform ourselves into more of an attitude/an
> orientation/an openness (as Jesus says to forgive 70X7) where the pool of
> hurt or trauma is healed and forgiven over a long period of time, perhaps
> over a lifetime with tiny shifts and transformations in my own self and
> how I love the world with each letting go.

"I am getting close to being there, knowing that the behaviour I am

forgiving will probably continue and the forgiving will likely be seventy times

seven. I am beginning to feel lighter, more at ease, less volatile." "Joseph's life

worked out ... what if your life did not work out? What if the person(s) doing the

harm are the winners? What if the brokenness caused by the trauma leads to a

downward spiral?" ". . . take it to the cross. I really didn't understand this until I listened to *The Little Way* audio presentation by Richard Rohr – the final step in this forgiveness journey is the way of powerlessness. Aha!" "The trauma and anger are still in my body. The revelation has been good. I just need to know the next steps."

Acceptance

Recognition of what occurred and acknowledgment that the past could not be changed was another theme that emerged. Acceptance is coming to terms with the reality of the relationship within oneself, giving up fantasies and giving up the hope of something different: "I have come to a place of peace to accept the pain from the past, and even the present in a way." "It feels good in some way, not to wait anymore for anything to happen, not to expect anymore, but accept." "It's important to accept that I will never have a better past. OK [emphasis theirs], it sucks, but I accept it. I accept I simply will not have it. This is my will to forgive." "It is like the wound has closed." "I feel reconciled with my life story."

God

Participants' relationship with and understanding of God also emerged in the analysis of the data: "Perhaps my inability to forgive is a symptom of a weakness in faith/trusting in God to take care of the situation/people in his own way and to also heal me?" "I noticed this week that there is a layer of fear towards God in me, that is there, but not what I really think. I'm wondering if this fear is rooted in a belief that God does not really want good for me . . ." "Although I deeply believe in God's abundant mercy, I still have this layer of fear." "I should be angry about God, but I am only aware of his presence throughout." "I ask God

120

why and I know there is no answer." "I realize I oversimplify. I have no problem with my relationship with God. Then I started to ask questions and realized God was part of it too." "Trust in God is hard. I doubt the goodness." "Could it be that we are fearing that justice will not be done?"

Suffering

Participants also reflected on the suffering they have experienced in their lives. Sample quotations include: ". . . and that there is a lot of suffering required for good to come out, that I am not really trusting God's way, that there is a reckoning required." "I had an epiphany (although it is very obvious [that] it seems to me the first time I've seen/understood this about myself) that I make life decisions out of my suffering rather than what I really want at the soul level, what I really need, or what God wants for me." "I'm in a constant stuck state/cycle of suffering/alleviating, and the epiphany is that I am feeling called to go beyond the suffering." "My way of praying changed this week . . . in God's presence I turn my focus onto my suffering . . . I acknowledge/name my suffering . . . I hold the suffering up to God and together we go deeper into the meditation . . . and we watch the suffering and what emerges out of it . . . I ask God for what I need . . . I open to God's healing . . . I then move 'under' the suffering to a place of contemplation where I am with God alone . . ." "My suffering is a chain of suffering in the world. People throw balls (of suffering) at each other. The temptation is to throw it away . . . for the first time I found courage to face the biggest ball in my life."

Interpretation

In analyzing the findings, one thing that stands out is the link between forgiveness and the person's spirituality. Unforgiveness and its sequelae affects how the person feels about themselves, and the individual's capacity to obey the commandments to love God above all else and one's neighbour as oneself, and is a barrier to spiritual formation. In addition to its impact on one's views of self, other and God, it also affects the wounded Christian's ability to make sense of the real suffering that has been inflicted on them, God's role in it, and the negative feelings evoked as a result, notably measured in my study by anger with God.

From her review of research on anger with God, Exline (2020, 119) notes that one predictor of anger with God is when people hold him responsible for events outside of human control. Individuals can also hold a sovereign, omnipotent God ultimately responsible for allowing human injustices, believing that he is not intervening on their behalf. She also notes that God is sometimes held partly responsible for their own personal transgressions if they see God as responsible for creating them with the vulnerabilities that predispose them to commit transgressions. Anger towards God can also be related to traumas perpetrated by people in their lives, which is inextricably linked to how individuals make meaning of suffering, and whom they hold responsible. These intricate and nuanced interrelationships are worthy of future study and/or could be incorporated into future iterations of my program.

Additionally, Exline (2020, 119) observes that anger towards God has rarely been studied in relation to interpersonal forgiveness. One important result

of my study was that participants became aware of how their God and "other" representations can sometimes be conflated and attributed to him in a corresponding way (Kirkpatrick 1999). They became more aware that their "other" representations were sometimes being projected onto God and thus became better at identifying the true subject of these thoughts and feelings. Although they still had to resolve the issue of whether they held God responsible for their trauma, this awareness helped them understand their anger towards God differently and they were more open, honest, and more expressive with him. This could make their lived experience of God more congruent with their intellectual understanding of him, also known as the "sanctification gap" (Coe 2019, 17).

While cautious about reading too much into the results of such a small cohort of participants, one observation was an overall drop in anxiety over intimacy with God by the end of the sessions, as noted by the AGI (Tables 4 and 5). Moreover, one individual who endorsed an anxious preoccupied style in their relationship with God, characterized with anxiety about abandonment by God, showed an increase in avoidance of intimacy and a decrease of anxiety of abandonment by God after the intervention. This individual was open to admitting their anger rather than denying it, a shift towards becoming more secure in their relationship with God. This was manifested in post intervention increased (riskier) avoidance of intimacy and less anxiety about the consequences (abandonment). This individual could benefit from either further therapy or spiritual direction, which would help them get in touch with their anger towards God and express it, and so move forward.

I observed that the group, based on attachment and trauma-informed principles, functioned as a safe and secure healing space for participants to openly share their previously unvoiced, "taboo" thoughts and feelings. The reduction in anxiety over abandonment by God could be a result of the explicit encouragement to reflect upon and talk about their feelings of anger towards God. As conversations occurred in the small group setting, participants benefitted from each other's openness and support. Exline (2020, 120) explains that people may benefit from being "open and assertive about their feelings of anger towards God" and "by disclosing them to God or supportive people while remaining engaged in the relationship." This was indeed borne out by the participants reports.

There were some modest, but interesting shifts in self-representations and self-understanding, although the ESFI failed to indicate a shift in pseudo-self-forgiveness after the intervention (Fincham 2020, 145). One reason for this could be that the index event kept changing. However, participants' journal reflections demonstrated that as they became aware of their own questionable, and sometimes retaliatory thoughts, behaviour and complementary reactions, they were able to make an honest appraisal of their own self and behaviour. This in turn made them more compassionate and less rigidly unforgiving. A longer intervention and a larger sample size may have yielded a more definitive result.

Pseudo-forgiveness is also important from the perspective of Christian spiritual formation, in which we are enjoined to desire truth in our innermost beings (Ps. 51:6). Unless we properly grieve and mourn our losses, forgiveness is premature, and is neither thorough nor true. Psychology can help Christians gain

124

this nuanced perspective which can aid progress towards healing and spiritual transformation into the *imago Christi*.

Participants' journals and anger reflections revealed a growing awareness of their emotions and how these affect their underlying self, other and God understandings. It showed that reflecting on their emotions as the sessions progressed helped them to make more sense of their trauma events. For instance, they were able to separate key aspects that had become entangled and conflated (e.g., past and present, others and God). Participants' journals also showed some movement from being stuck in how they felt about forgiveness toward the person who had wronged them, and that there were even small changes forward in the process of forgiving. They also came to understand that forgiveness is a process and that healing of the underlying wound through mourning and grieving allows them to gain a healthy, wholesome sense of self, others and God, which can free them to move towards Christlikeness, the *telos* of our faith.

Limitations, Next Steps and Conclusion

This study had limitations in its sample size and unanticipated variables. It was apparent that in future I would need to give better instructions about filling out the quantitative data tools to ensure that the index event reported on was the same before and after the intervention. The study also relied on self-reports of whether participants had forgiven their wrongdoer or not. It only spanned a period of eight weeks, and I did not do a longitudinal follow-up to see where in the process participants were after the study ended, which could have yielded other beneficial avenues for consideration. Nevertheless, in light of the analysis, I can

make some tentative conclusions: that an attachment-based, trauma-informed lens may be of value for further study. It could shed light on the relational processes and barriers to forgiveness, as well as provide practical interventions that could assist in moving individuals further along in the process of forgiveness.

Forgiveness as a trait, or an attitude of "forgivingness," may be a lifelong quality that is to be cultivated and nurtured like any other virtue. Like the other beatitudes it may never be fully realized in this lifetime. As noted by one participant, it is developed through repeatedly forgiving "seventy times seven." This reminds me of Fosha (2000, 64) who cites Gianino and Tronick, (1988) who demonstrated that securely attached dyads only spend about 30% of their time in a state of attunement, and the rest of the 70% repairing ruptures. Admittedly "seventy times seven" is not equal to 70%, but the point remains that most often, even in interactions where both parties are securely attached, reparative skills and the capacity to forgive are called for. Indeed, securely attached individuals have both: the skills to repair ruptures and the quality or attitude of "forgivingness."

There is renewed interest in understanding what it takes to realize a truly life-transforming spiritual formation. While both the means by which it occurs and the ends for which it takes place are relational and involves God and others, it is contingent upon the healing of the self. Thus how healing occurs is also a focus. Forgiveness, the skills to repair relationships and the capacity to do so are also a key part of spiritual formation. This study has sought to draw attention to these issues, in addition to exploring some promising avenues for interventions that could greatly help in the process of healing and transformation into the *imago Christi*, as individuals and as the *corpus Christi*, the Body of Christ.

One key question I wanted to explore was whether such an attachment-based, trauma-informed approach to forgiveness could be delivered by a non-professional in a non-professional setting, to make it useful and more accessible to ordinary Christians. Besides the professional knowledge I used to analyze whether participants experienced shifts in cognition, affect and behaviour towards forgiveness, the content of the sessions was delivered as psychoeducational material, and no therapy took place in the groups. Any sharing that took place did so as relationships of trust formed, and individuals felt comfortable to do so. Indeed, this is a testimony of how healthy relationships function within the Body of Christ, the God-ordained context for our healing and transformation.

To extend this research further, different iterations of the material could be tested in different settings, including with non-professional co-facilitators. Future studies could test its efficacy and effectiveness with larger cohorts, with specific traumas, or even in gender-based groups for gender-specific issues. Other modifications could also test a "train the trainer" model, for facilitated groups. Most importantly, while this study specifically tested an integrated psychospiritual approach to forgiveness in the context of trauma and shows promise, I believe that my integrated psychospiritual model of Christian spiritual formation could be extended to address other issues that present barriers to spiritual formation.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

This portfolio is a summation of my time, work, and study in the Doctor of Ministry Program in Spiritual Formation. It has been everything I hoped it would be, and much more. After much deliberation, I specifically chose the Spiritual Formation track for its fourfold foci of: (1) spiritual growth and formation; (2) the scholarly study of spirituality; (3) the ministry of spiritual formation; and, (4) the integration and application portfolio. All fit my personal and ministry goals which were to deepen my spiritual life and formation, and to bring about a greater degree of integration of my spirituality and vocational calling as a psychotherapist.

My faith and spirituality have indeed deepened and illuminate every aspect of my life and ministry. Additionally, over the course of the program, the *telos* of Christian faith—growth in Christlikeness—not only came more sharply into view, but it has also become the lens through which I live and minister. Most importantly I have greater clarity about how psychological barriers can affect and impede spiritual formation, and how psychological resources can inform us how to overcome these. I had the opportunity to explore this area of interest, which was also an emerging theme in my personal life, through my research project in which I explored the role of unforgiveness in the context of trauma and its effect on spirituality. The principles I gleaned gave rise to my integrated psychospiritual

model of Christian spiritual formation, which could be adapted and extended to address other similar barriers to spiritual growth.

In Chapter Two I looked back on my life story from my beginnings to date, and my parallel spiritual autobiography. My default representations of God, self and others, formed in the context of the challenges I encountered in my early life, were simultaneously offset by that God-given inner drive in all of us to seek wholeness and the recovery of the God image, even as I was being drawn to God by him. My initial quest for God became even more compelling after I suffered an acute trauma: my underlying core beliefs about my self, others and the world in general could not be ignored or suppressed by superficial spiritual practices and routines. This forced me to consider psychotherapeutic healing as an adjunct approach to Christian spiritual formation. Although I first sought healing from the Church, it was soon apparent that it was ill-equipped for the task. Thus my spiritual journey and career/ministry converged, and so began my lifelong pursuit of the integration of psychotherapy and depth healing with Christian spirituality.

The developmental thrust in us towards wholeness is also, from a Christian perspective, the thrust towards holiness and the ultimate recapitulation of all things back to God, in Christ (Col. 1:20). It drives and motivates us towards God, who at the same time, draws us to him. My pursuit of Christian spiritual formation, the ultimate goal of which is nothing less than the *imago Christi*, was integrated with key theories and concepts from psychology and psychotherapy to form the basis of my psychospiritual model which I present in Chapter Three. The model emerged out of various strands in my own life: my personal quest for healing to overcome the effect of unhealed trauma and unforgiveness which were

129

stalling my spiritual life, and the desire for a greater, more effective integration of the professional and personal dimensions of my life. My journey towards wholeness involved integration: deep healing of wounds and traumas as well as training, counselling and the development of new skills. The discerning differentiating and re-integrating of multiple domains and perspectives of my life, ultimately bringing together the psychological and spiritual in new ways for me, has brought about deep healing. The process is ongoing.

It has become apparent to me that growth in Christlikeness involves and embraces all domains of our complex make-up, including our psychological health. Psychology explains the causes behind human behaviour and how to treat disorders, through observation and study of empirical phenomena. However, it does not tell us how we are to act. Christians who are disciples of Jesus must thus be instructed by the radical ethics of Jesus.

In my integrated psychospiritual model of formation I recognize that the deep psychological and emotional healing of traumas and wounds through psychotherapy can free the Christian to go beyond mere outward adherence to lawful and right behaviour, and to be healed and freed to operate in the spirit, in accordance with the New Covenant's law of love. My experience of healing has made me aware of the difference between a spirituality engaged by rote versus one from the heart. Equally, my studies have sensitized me to the unhealthy expressions of spirituality that can traumatize or re-traumatize hurting individuals, and which can impede spiritual formation and progress towards the ultimate goal, Christlikeness. Thus dialogue between the two disciplines, integrating new psychological knowledge into our spirituality while looking through a theological

lens and remaining grounded and anchored in scripture, is both necessary and invaluable, as I have discussed in Chapter Three.

In Chapter Four I presented the findings of my research project on forgiveness. I studied this topic to explore the premise that unhealed trauma and concomitant unforgiveness is a barrier to wholeness and spiritual growth and formation. In my project, I designed an eight-week program, drawing from psychology's attachment theory and trauma-informed principles, and evaluated its usefulness in moving Christians who had experienced trauma and woundedness and accompanying unforgiveness forward in the process of forgiving their wrongdoer.

Findings indicated that there was some movement towards the overall goal of forgiveness, and that forgiveness itself is a complex process with many strands, some of which were uncovered in the study. Some of the functions of forgiveness that participants experienced, such as processing anger towards God and greater clarity in unpacking previously conflated feelings between wrongdoers versus God/others, as well as previously conflated past events with present happenings, became apparent.

My personal and professional life has been immensely touched and changed by the knowledge and insights I gained through the Doctor of Ministry in Spiritual Formation. My desire and motivation for the goal of wholeness and communion with God is less impeded even as it is in view with greater clarity and direction. Moreover, I will continue this process personally as well as in my ministry, as I have a renewed interest in helping churches grow in their

understanding of the value of integrative psychospiritual approaches in order for meaningful spiritual formation and transformation to take place.

In Christ is our identity, our purpose and our destiny. He is the beginning and the end, the first and the last, the alpha and the omega. It seems fitting to close with a look forward to our final goal, union and communion with God. Now we see only dimly, but then we will be enlightened, knowing fully, and we will see him face-to-face (1 Cor. 13:12).

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Certificate of Ethics Review Clearance

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Certificate of Ethics Review Clearance for
Research Involving Human Subjects

Primary Investigator:	Adrianne Sequeira
Faculty Supervisor:	Doctor of Ministry
REB File Number:	2021-00019
Title of Project:	How is one's ability to forgive affected by the impact of trauma on one's view of God, self and others?

Status of Approval

☒ Approved

☐ Revisions Required

☐ Denied

December 3, 2021

_____   _____
Chair, Research Ethics Board   Date

Appendix B: Letter of Information and Consent

Letter of Information and Consent to be involved in a Research Study
Introduction
Before agreeing to being involved in this research study, it is important that you read and understand this research consent form. This form presents information I think you need to know about this study. With this information, you can decide whether you want to be involved. If you have any questions after you read this form, please send me an email at the contact information listed below.
By completing and signing this form you will be giving your consent to be involved in this study. You will not be identified in any way in any documentation or report. The information you provide for this study will be collated along with the results of other participants in the study.

Title of Research Study
How is one's ability to forgive affected by the impact of trauma on one's view of God, Self and Others?

Principle Investigator
Adrianne Sequeira, RP, RMFT, RN, DMin Candidate
Associate, Institute of Family Living,
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Toronto, ON
M4N 3N1

Email

Purpose of the Research
The purpose of this study is to investigate whether a trauma-focused intervention assists Christians in the process of forgiveness towards their wrongdoers.
You will be asked to fill out questionnaires before and after the 8-session intervention.
They will measure changes to aspects of your relationship with God, forgiveness towards yourself, and forgiveness towards wrong-doer(s),
You will also be asked to journal about your experience and how you process the material, after each session.
Your results will be collated, and your journal (narrative) responses will be coded for themes, along with other participants' responses, and analyzed to assess the effect of the intervention.

Description of the Research
You will attend 8 sessions of a trauma-focused Christian teaching / small group discussion / reflection / prayer intervention, over zoom. The sessions will be facilitated by the principal investigator. Each session is 2-hours long, once per week over 8 weeks.
You will engage in reflective journaling during the week following each session.

The total number of group members who will respond to the invitation to take part are not known but will be no more than 10.

Potential Harms
The potential harm to you could include distress as you recall past hurts over the course of the 8-week intervention. The first session will include a discussion on safety and coping strategies for dealing with any negative feeling that arise as a result of recalling past hurts. I am a trained psychotherapist and can direct you to good organizations that provide psychotherapy, if needed.

Potential Benefits
There may be a direct benefit to you for participating in this study. The benefit that may arise is that participating in this study may potentially improve your understanding of forgiveness and your capacity to forgive those who have hurt you. You may also experience positive changes to your spiritual life, and your relationships with God, yourself, and others.

Confidentiality and Privacy
All your answers will be confidential. The responses will be coded and will not contain any identifying material. All completed questionnaires will be destroyed two years following analysis. No identifying information about you will be used.

Publication
The results of the study will be published and will be available to you.

Participation and Withdrawal
Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from this study at any time without consequences. Completing, or choosing to not complete these questionnaires will have no negative effect on your relationship with the investigator.

Research Ethics Board Contact
If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Tyndale's Research Ethics Board:
reb@tyndale.ca
If you have other questions related to this research, please contact Dr. David Sherbino, who is providing oversight and supervision:

Consent Statement
The research study has been explained to me, and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. The potential harms and benefits of being involved in this research study have been explained to me.
I know that I may ask now, or in the future, any questions I have about the study.
I have been told that records relating to me, and my care will be kept confidential, and that no information will be disclosed without my permission unless required

by law. I have been given sufficient time to read the above information. I understand that I am not waiving any legal rights.
By completing and signing this form, I consent to participate in this study. I will be given a copy of this consent form for my records.

Signed_____

Date_____

Appendix C: Session Topics

Sessions
1. Introduction
2. Self-representations I
3. Self-representations II
4. Other representations
5. God representations
6. Suffering
7. Forgiveness II
8. Forgiveness II

Appendix D: AGI

Attachment to God Inventory (AGI) Scoring Sheet: Transfer each item rating to the appropriate box. Reverse score those with an R (1=7, 2=6, 3=5, 4=4, 5=3, 6=2, & 7=1). Add up the sum for each column. Then compute the column average by dividing by 14.

Question/Item	Anxiety Over Abandon-ment (Odd Items)	Avoidance of Intimacy with God (Even Items)
1. I worry a lot about my relationship with God.		
2. I just don't feel a deep need to be close to God.		
3. If I can't see God working in my life, I get upset or angry.		
4. I am totally dependent upon God for everything in my life.		R
5. I am jealous at how God seems to care more for others than for me.		
6. It is uncommon for me to cry when sharing with God.		
7. Sometimes I feel that God loves others more than me.		
8. My experiences with God are very intimate and emotional.		R
9. I am jealous at how close some people are to God.		
10. I prefer not to depend too much on God.		
11. I often worry about whether God is pleased with me.		
12. I am uncomfortable being emotional in my communication with God.		
13. Even if I fail, I never question that God is pleased with me.	R	
14. My prayers to God are often matter-of-fact and not very personal.		
15. Almost daily I feel that my relationship with God goes back and forth from "hot" to "cold."		
16. I am uncomfortable with emotional displays of affection to God.		
17. I fear God does not accept me when I do wrong.		
18. Without God I couldn't function at all.		R
19. I often feel angry with God for not responding to me when I want.		
20. I believe people should not depend on God for things they should do for themselves.		
21. I crave reassurance from God that God loves me.		
22. Daily I discuss all of my problems and concerns with God.		R
23. I am jealous when others feel God's presence when I cannot.		
24. I am uncomfortable allowing God to control every aspect of my life.		
25. I worry a lot about damaging my relationship with God.		
26. My prayers to God are very emotional.		R
27. I get upset when I feel God helps out others, but forgets about me.		
28. I let God make most of the decisions in my life.		R
SUM FOR EACH COLUMN	/ 14	/ 14
AVERAGE FOR EACH COLUMN (Divide Column Sum by 14)		

ENRIGHT SELF-FORGIVENESS INVENTORY

Attitude Toward Self Scale

Name: _____   Date: _____

We sometimes violate our own sense of justice and subsequently develop resentment or hatred **toward ourselves. We will call that violation of one's own sense of justice "self-offense." We ask** you now to think of the most recent experience of self-offense that made you feel regretful and disappointed in yourself. For a few moments, visualize in your mind that specific self-offense. Try to remember what you did and experience what happened.

1. How serious was that self-offense that you committed? (circle one)

   Not serious at all   A little serious   Somewhat serious   Very serious   Gravely serious

2. Did the self-offense involve another person?

   Yes   No

   If you answered "Yes" go to item 3; if you answered "No" skip to item 5.

3. Please specify that person <u>without</u> giving his/her name.

   _____ (e.g., spouse, parent, employer, friend, God, colleague, etc.)

4. Is the person living?

   Yes   No

5. How long ago was the self-offense? (Please write in the number of days, weeks, etc.)

   _____ days ago
   _____ weeks ago
   _____ months ago
   _____ years ago

6. Please briefly describe what you did when you offended yourself.

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

Now, please answer a series of questions about your personal attitudes toward yourself. We do not want your rating of past attitudes, but your ratings of attitudes right now. All responses are confidential so please answer honestly. *Thank you.*

This set of items deals with your current feelings or emotions right now toward yourself. Try to assess your actual feeling on each item. For each item, please check the appropriate number matching your level of agreement that best describes your current feeling. Please do not skip any item. *Thank you.*

I feel _____ toward myself.
(Place each word in the blank when answering each item.)

I feel...	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1 warm	1	2	3	4	5	6
2 kindness	1	2	3	4	5	6
3 happy	1	2	3	4	5	6
4 positive	1	2	3	4	5	6
5 unloving	1	2	3	4	5	6
6 repulsed	1	2	3	4	5	6
7 resentment	1	2	3	4	5	6
8 dislike	1	2	3	4	5	6
9 caring	1	2	3	4	5	6
10 bitter	1	2	3	4	5	6

-

141

This next set of items deals with your current **behavior** toward yourself. Consider how you do act or would act toward yourself in answering the questions. For each item, please check the appropriate number matching your level of agreement that best describes your current behavior or probable behavior. Please do not skip any items. *Thank you.*

Regarding my own behavior toward myself, I do or would _____.
(Place each word in the blank when answering each item.)

I do or would...	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
11 keep good hygiene	1	2	3	4	5	6
12 avoid health risks	1	2	3	4	5	6
13 eat irresponsibly	1	2	3	4	5	6
14 try to stay physically fit	1	2	3	4	5	6
15 ignore personal needs	1	2	3	4	5	6
16 pay attention to stress symptoms	1	2	3	4	5	6
17 treat poorly	1	2	3	4	5	6
18 care for own well-being	1	2	3	4	5	6
19 punish	1	2	3	4	5	6
20 hurt	1	2	3	4	5	6

142

This set of items deals with how you currently <u>think</u> about yourself. Think about the kinds of thoughts that occupy your mind right now regarding who you are. For each item please check the appropriate number matching your level of agreement that best describes your current thinking. Please do not skip any item. Thank you.

I think I am _____.
(Place each word or phrase in the blank when answering each item).

I think I am...	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
21 wretched	1	2	3	4	5	6
22 evil	1	2	3	4	5	6
23 horrible	1	2	3	4	5	6
24 of good quality	1	2	3	4	5	6
25 worthy of respect	1	2	3	4	5	6
26 dreadful	1	2	3	4	5	6
27 loving	1	2	3	4	5	6
28 worthless	1	2	3	4	5	6
29 nice	1	2	3	4	5	6
30 a good person	1	2	3	4	5	6

Finally, in thinking through your attitudes toward yourself and self-offense, please consider the following statements:

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
31	There really was no problem now that I think about it.	1	2	3	4	5	6
32	I was never bothered by what I did.	1	2	3	4	5	6
33	I do not feel responsible for what I did.	1	2	3	4	5	6
34	I did not feel any remorse.	1	2	3	4	5	6
35	What I did was fair, and no justice was violated.	1	2	3	4	5	6

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144

Appendix F: EFI-30

EFI-30 - Attitude Scale

We are sometimes hurt by people, whether in family, friendship, school, work or other situations. We ask you to think of the most recent experience of someone hurting you unfairly and deeply. For a few moments, visualize in your mind the events of that interaction. Try to see the person and try to experience what happened. Now, please, answer the following questions about that event. (Mark an X in your answer).

How deeply were you hurt when the incidente occurred?

( ) No hurt   ( ) A little hurt   ( ) Some hurt   ( ) Much hurt   ( ) A great deal of hurt

Who hurt you?

( ) Child   ( ) Spouse   ( ) Relative

( ) Friend of the same sex   ( ) Friend of the opposite sex   ( ) Employer

( ) Other, please, specify:_____ .

Is the person living? ( ) Yes ( ) No

How long ago was the offense?

( ) Days (less than a week)   ( )Weeks ago (less than a month)

( ) Months ago (less than a year)   ( ) Years ago

Please, briefly describe the offense:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Now, please answer a series of questions about your current attitude toward the person. We do not want your rating of past attitudes, but your ratings of attitudes right now. All responses are confidential so please answer honestly. Thank you!

1

This set of items deals with your current feelings or emotions right now toward the person. Try to assess your actual feeling for the person on each item. For each item please check the appropriate line that best describes your current feeling. Please, do not skip any item. Thank you!

I feel _____ toward him/her. (Think about each word filling this sentence when answering each item).

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Warm	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Tender	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Unloving	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. Repulsed	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. Cold	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. Dislike	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. Caring	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. Affection	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. Friendly	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. Disgust	1	2	3	4	5	6

Please, continue on next page.

This set of items deals with your **current behavior** toward the person. Consider how you do act or **would act** toward the person in answering the questions. For each item please check the appropriate line that best describes your current behavior or probable behavior. Please, do not skip any items. Thank you!

Regarding the person, I do or would _____ . (Think about each word or phrase filling this sentence when answering each item).

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
11. Show friendship	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. Avoid	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. Ignore	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. Neglect	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. Not attend to him/her	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. Lend him/her a hand	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. Establish good relations with him/her	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. Stay away	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. Do a favor	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. Aid him/her when in trouble	1	2	3	4	5	6

Please, continue on next page.

3

This set of items deals with how you **currently think** about the person. Reflect on the kinds of thoughts that occupy your **mind right now** regarding the particular person. For each item please check the appropriate line that best describes your current thinking. Please, do not skip any items. Thank you!

I think he or she is _____. (Think about each word or phrase filling this sentence when answering each item)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
21. Horrible	1	2	3	4	5	6
22. Of good quality	1	2	3	4	5	6
23. Dreadful	1	2	3	4	5	6
24. Worthless	1	2	3	4	5	6
25. A good person	1	2	3	4	5	6
26. A bad person	1	2	3	4	5	6

Regarding this person I _____ (Think about each word or phrase filling this sentence when answering each item)

27. Wish him/her well	1	2	3	4	5	6
28. Disaprove of him/her	1	2	3	4	5	6
29. Think favorably of him/her	1	2	3	4	5	6
30. Hope he/she succeeds	1	2	3	4	5	6

4

In thinking through the person and event you just rated, please consider the following final questions:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
31. There really was no problem now that I think about it.	1	2	3	4	5	6
32. I was never bothered by what happened.	1	2	3	4	5	6
33. The person was not wrong in what he or she did to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
34. My feelings were never hurt.	1	2	3	4	5	6
35. What the person did was fair.	1	2	3	4	5	6

We have one final question:

To what extent have you forgiven the person you rated on the Attitude Scale? (Mark an X in your answer).

(1) No et al	(2)	(3) In progress	(4)	(5) Complete Forgiveness

Thank you!

Appendix G: AGI Permission

M Gmail   Adrianne Sequeira

request to use the AGI

Richard Beck Jr. ·   Sun, Jul 11, 2021 at 8:31 PM
To: Adrianne Sequeira

Hi Adrianne,
Yes, please feel free to use the AGI for your research.
Grace and peace,
Richard
[Quoted text hidden]

--
Richard Beck, PhD
Abilene Christian University
ACU Box 28011 Abilene, TX 79699

Appendix H: EFI Permission

---------- Forwarded message ----------
From: **Dennis**
Date: Sun, Jul 11, 2021 at 2:40 PM
Subject: Re: Forgiveness Research Tools
To: Adrianne Sequeira ·
Cc: Eric Crowther ·

Adrianne,

Wow! That's fabulous. I am so pleased that Dr. Enright's forgiveness research tools may play a role in helping you achieve your Doctor of Ministry degree. You should be so proud of choosing to pursue that doctorate which you can use to help so many people. Thanks for taking the time to let me know.

As I wrote in my original email, please let me know if Dr. Enright or I can help in any way. You may also wish to contact our International Forgiveness Institute representative in North Bay:

Eric Crowther, M.S.W., RSW

Dennis
Dennis Blang | Director

International Forgiveness Institute

www.internationalforgiveness.com

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On 07/11/2021 12:47, Adrianne Sequeira wrote

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