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Tyndale University

Listening to God:

The Key to Spiritual Formation for Salvationists and All People

A Research Portfolio
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry
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By

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Toronto, Canada

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ABSTRACT

Having a relationship with God implies communication with Him. How do we communicate with God? How do we know what He is saying?

Through the process of writing her spiritual autobiography during the COVID-19 pandemic, the researcher discovered that communication with God occurs when people 1) intentionally take time to listen to God, and 2) use the disruption of life as an occasion to contemplate their relationship with Him. Researching models of spiritual formation and looking at patterns in literature resulted in the creation of a five-part spiritual formation model of change. This model proposes that the ability to listen to God is a key aspect of spiritual formation. An action learning research project conducted with soldiers of The Salvation Army revealed that meeting biweekly one-on-one with a spiritual director to learn and engage in spiritual practices had a positive effect on the participants' ability to listen to God. This portfolio shows that intentionally spending time listening to God aids in the spiritual formation of the listener and is the foundation of communicating with others about their relationship with God.

DEDICATION

This portfolio is dedicated to my husband Graham, whose faithful partnership has provided me the opportunity to continue studying.

Thank you!!

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EPIGRAPH

Have you heard God's voice? He calls you today.
Have you heard Him before, yet turned Him away?
Still He waits and welcomes you to come
To receive His forgiveness, to experience His love!

*He says, 'Come to me! Come to me!
You who are weary, come to me!
Come to me! Come to me!
You who are weary, come.'*

Did you hear God's voice and answer His call?
Have you followed Him faithfully too?
Still He waits and welcomes you to come,
To have fellowship with Him,
To abide in His love!

*He says, 'Come to me! Come to me!
You who are weary, come to me!
Come to me! Come to me!
You who are weary, come.'*

Still He calls today, can you hear His voice?
With a love that compels, yet He leaves you the choice ...
Will you come?

*He says, 'Come to me!
You who are weary, come!
All who are weary, come.'*

Alison Moore

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GLOSSARY

The following are key terms used in this portfolio that are specific to this project or to The Salvation Army.

Adherent: “A person who regards The Salvation Army as his/her spiritual home but has not made a commitment to soldiership” (The Salvation Army International, “Glossary”, 2021).

Christian Spiritual Formation: A process or journey undertaken in the realm of the human spirit by an individual, empowered by the Holy Spirit and in the context of community, with the goal being an intimate relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

Corps: “A Salvation Army unit established for the preaching of the gospel and service in the community” (The Salvation Army International, “Glossary”, 2021). Also thought of as a church.

Corps Officer: An officer assigned to be the leader of a local corps.

Directee: One who meets with a Spiritual Director

Integrated Ministries Coordinator (IMC): A soldier employed by The Salvation Army who helps people connect to others in the corps and to God.

Junior Soldier: A member of The Salvation Army who is between 7 and 14 years old.

Listening to God: For this project, listening to God can be defined as quieting one’s mind in order to think about God and being open to His thoughts coming into one’s mind.

Officer: “A Salvationist who has left secular concerns at God’s call and has been

trained, commissioned, and ordained to service and leadership. An officer is a recognized minister of religion” (The Salvation Army International, “Glossary”, 2021).

Pathway of Hope (POH): “A high-impact, strengths-based case management approach to providing targeted services to people with a desire to take action to break the cycle of crisis and vulnerability” (Salvationist, “Pathway of Hope Introduction” 2022).

Salvationist: A member of The Salvation Army.

Senior Soldier or Soldier: “A converted person at least 14 years of age who has, with the approval of the census board, been enrolled as a member of The Salvation Army after signing the articles of war (soldier's covenant)” (The Salvation Army International, “Glossary” 2021).

Spiritual Care Representative (SCR): One member of the Pathway of Hope team. “The spiritual care representative provides individualized supports to nurture participant well-being from a holistic perspective. In addition, they provide a link to spiritual and faith communities, including The Salvation Army Corps” (Salvationist 2022).

Spiritual Direction: “[A] relationship that allows one to assist another in discerning God’s activity and presence in his or her life” (Calhoun 2015, 133).

Spiritual Director: “A spiritual director is a companion to the one who is journeying deeper into a relationship with God and learning to listen more attentively to the voice of Jesus in daily life. God expresses his love to the

traveller through the spiritual director. Listening becomes an expression of that love” (Fryling 2003, 3).

Spiritual Formation: “A primal reality of human existence ... (where) every thought we hold, every decision we make, every action we take ... shapes [shaping] us into some kind of being.” (Mulholland 2016, 27-28)

Spiritual Formation Model of Change (SFMC): A framework that describes the process of moving from one stage of faith to another.

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

During the COVID-19 pandemic there was a surge in the use of video chat technology. The company Zoom soared in popularity as people communicated with family, friends, and work colleagues over the internet. At this time the phrases “Can you see me?” and “You’re muted!” became common as people struggled to learn the new way of being visible and audible to their audience. They recognized that the ability to be seen and heard impacted how effectively they could communicate.

Communication is a key aspect of life. Our ability to express ourselves determines whether we can relate to and connect with others. Communication happens through words, spoken or written, but also through physical actions; being able to see someone affords both aural and visual ways to understand the message they are conveying. When one or the other of these two aspects is inadequately functioning, communication can break down.

The following paper seeks to provide tools to facilitate communication in two specific relationships. The first relationship is between a Christian and God. God is invisible, and not often audible; therefore, a unique means of communication is needed. The second relationship is between spiritual care representatives and their clients, who need shared language to communicate about

spirituality. Although these two relationships differ, the common issue for both is communication.

The staff at The Salvation Army Scarborough Citadel have been coaching people who want to make positive life changes using the Pathway of Hope (POH) initiative. As the Spiritual Care Representative (SCR) for POH, I have met with clients to chat about their spirituality in order to help them draw strength from their faith. In these conversations I have found that clients are often more comfortable discussing their finances or physical ailments than their spiritual health. I undertook the Doctor of Ministry (DMin) degree to discover how I could communicate about spirituality in an inclusive and non-threatening way. In the process of studying to improve my communication with clients about God, the aspect of communicating with God came to the forefront. Communicating with God, specifically by listening to Him, undergirds the development of a personal relationship with Him. In the process of listening to God, the Christian is transformed spiritually, giving them the ability and knowledge needed to talk about that relationship with others.

In 1865, Methodist minister William Booth sought to communicate about spirituality in a meaningful way with people who found themselves cast out by society. He went to the taverns and streets to help them physically, and to communicate the good news of God's love to them. Out of this ministry he founded The Salvation Army, which is still at work today in 132 countries, helping people in practical ways and sharing the gospel. In 1986, enrolled as a soldier of The Salvation Army; I wanted to help others come to faith in God

through Christ. With all my energy and desire, I served God through church activities. I prayed to Him about these evangelistic activities, asking for His guidance in planning them and for His blessing on their outcomes.

Throughout my life I have always prayed to God—from early-childhood bedtime prayers to adult prayers crying out to Him with personal requests or intercession for others. Despite this positive connection with God, I have sometimes felt burdened by the feeling that my communication with Him was reliant on my initiation and words. Occasionally I felt pressure to keep up the conversation. Although I believed that God speaks, at those times it seemed that His voice was less active in my life. Communication with God seemed one-sided, and at times, even wondered if I was just speaking to myself.

Despite my sense of prayer as a monologue, I prayed about the problem of creating a way to communicate with spiritual care clients. I soon discovered the DMin program at Tyndale and enrolled in the Spiritual Formation stream. As part of the DMin, was instructed to participate in a personal retreat. While on retreat I sat in silence in the sparsely furnished bedroom, and as I prayed, I fell asleep. Throughout the day, while I dozed on and off, I thought about God, spoke to Him, read passages of Scripture, meditated on individual verses, and rested. In my weary, meditative state I sensed God's presence as a feeling of peace, and truths from the Bible came to mind. These thoughts reminded me of His love for me, of His desire for me to be still, of His invitation to rest in Him; and they alerted me to the fact that God was speaking to me.

When my voice was silenced, my body at rest, and my mind and heart open to listening to God, I heard Him. Over time, and with the instruction I gained from the courses I took in the DMin program, as well as the Tyndale Spiritual Direction internship course, I began to learn ways of cultivating an ability to listen to God. This portfolio document chronicles my process of learning to listen over the past three years. It has five distinct chapters: an introduction, my spiritual autobiography, my understanding of how spiritual formation takes place, an action learning research project report, and a conclusion. Taken together they reveal the ways that God used the DMin to teach me how listening to God enables communication with Him and results in spiritual formation.

In reviewing my life to write the spiritual autobiography (Chapter 2), I discovered that music was instrumental in my spiritual formation. Reflecting on key moments in my life, Chapter 2 reveals how God has used music to do four key things in my formation. Through music God has: 1. taught me about Himself; 2. given me an experience of His Spirit; 3. spoken to me; and 4. enabled me to compose music for myself and others. Music became a conduit for me to communicate with God—not only to pray to Him, but also to listen to Him. Music sung in worship services created a pause in my thinking about other things in my life and directed my focus onto Him. The Holy Spirit used both words and melody to draw my attention to God, enabling me to worship Him and, in turn, to sense His presence in my heart. Composing music had a similar effect.

Intentionally taking time to break away from the routine of life to think about God and open myself to hearing from Him resulted in many of the songs

that I have composed. Chapter 2 contains many of these songs, as they give evidence of God's speaking to me and through me. Links in the appendices connect to recordings of these songs, which form the soundtrack for the narrative in Chapter 2.

Composing was often motivated by a jarring emotional experience that caused me to stop and take stock of my current situation. Stopping or pausing to give attention to the present moment was a key element of communication with God, as it enabled me to engage in the process of listening. I discovered, in the second year of DMin studies, that the element of pause, and the time to listen to God it afforded, constituted a crucial aspect of a model of spiritual formation.

In the year that I began the task of creating a model of spiritual formation, we entered the restrictions surrounding COVID-19. Suddenly we were not allowed to gather in groups or even go to public places where we might encounter other people. The province entered lockdown, in essence creating a large-scale, collective pause. Communication with others became challenging. In Chapter 3, I recognize that as humans we are all vulnerable to the effects of the pandemic, because we are all physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual beings. Each of these aspects of our personhood changes throughout our lives. Chapter 3 looks at scholars Piaget and Erickson, who have charted the typical course of progress of physiological and psychological changes. Similarly, Janet Hagberg in *The Critical Journey: Stages in the Life of Faith* (Hagberg 2005) and James Fowler in *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (Fowler 1981) have recorded their findings on how our faith

develops. Hagberg and Fowler's models delineate various stages of faith development and describe the features of each of these phases. My own model, the Spiritual Formation Model of Change (SFMC), looks at these stages as "floors" between which my SFMC is the staircase, or the process of movement, from one floor to another.

In a desire to better understand what happens when someone matures in their faith, I searched historical and contemporary texts. As I looked at contrasting accounts of individuals in two works of fiction, John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (Bunyan 1966) and Janet Fitch's *White Oleander* (Fitch 1999), a pattern emerged that revealed aspects of spiritual change. These aspects included five ways of communication and together formed the SFMC. In both works, the protagonists faced the following actions in their lives:

- Awakening to their situation
- Acknowledgment of the state of their inner lives
- Awareness of spiritual truth
- Acceptance of spiritual truth
- Acting in accordance with the new state

Reflecting again on my past, I discovered this pattern in my own spiritual formation. The first three aspects of the SFMC, awakening, acknowledging, and awareness, contained elements of listening. Listening, more than the act of physically hearing audible sounds, is defined in this paper as being attentive to our physical state, our surroundings, and our inner state of mind and heart in order to be open to God's spirit. Both protagonists matured or developed through this process of listening to God.

The first aspect of the process, Awakening, provided the catalyst for the rest of the process. Awakening occurs spontaneously in life. Recognizing the importance of this aspect in spiritual formation, I created an action learning research project entitled “Listening to God: The Impact of Learning and Engaging in Spiritual Practices with a Spiritual Director on the Ability and Desire of Senior Soldiers (adult members) of The Salvation Army Scarborough Citadel to Listen to God.” The fourth chapter in this portfolio describes the project and its results.

Meeting with someone with the specific purpose of reflecting on God’s activity provides the intentional pause, the focus, and the time needed to listen to God. In the fall of 2021 eight soldiers of The Salvation Army Scarborough Citadel participated in six one-on-one, biweekly sessions with a spiritual director. The purpose of their participation was to determine if learning and engaging in spiritual practices with a spiritual director increased their desire and ability to listen to God. Each session focused on one of the following aspects of listening to God: silence, God’s Word, the role of the Holy Spirit, imagination, questions, and physical posture. The learning component of each session was combined with moments of reflection and sharing, making this a modified version of spiritual direction which typically relies solely on the Holy Spirit’s guidance.

To gather data about the participants’ ability and desire to listen to God, three methods were used. A survey was given at the beginning and end of the project to provide quantitative and qualitative data. Recordings and transcripts of the individual sessions and a group Zoom meeting provided additional qualitative data. The data revealed that all participants enjoyed taking part in the project.

Seven out of eight agreed that meeting with a spiritual director benefited them spiritually, and half included listening to God as one practice they used post-project when spending time alone with God. Seven out of eight participants recorded that the way they listened to God had changed in a positive way as a result of the project. All eight participants recorded that the project resulted in positive outcomes for them personally.

Meeting biweekly with a spiritual director provided the participants with an intentional break from their routine and an opportunity to take time to awaken to their situation. Spending time in silence at the beginning of each session allowed them to acknowledge their state. Learning and engaging in the six spiritual practices enabled participants to experience an awareness of spiritual truth.

Communication happens as we take time to listen. Listening to God is one key aspect of our ability to know God and be in relationship with Him. Intentionally breaking from routine to awaken to our situation, acknowledge our inner state, and become aware of His Spirit allows our relationship with Him to deepen, and ourselves to be formed spiritually. Knowing and understanding this process is the foundation for communicating with others about spirituality.

God has spoken, and He continues to speak, because He wants to communicate with us. Chapter 2 explores one way that God communicates with me: through music.

CHAPTER 2:

COMMUNICATION THROUGH MUSIC

Introduction

Music has a powerful effect on us. Consider the theme of the movie *Jaws*. Its bass notes, slowly rocking back and forth with increased intensity, create a sense of nervous anticipation (YouTube 2011). In contrast, music from the movie *Frozen* causes us to want to sing with confidence, “Let it go! Let it go!” (YouTube 2013). We can be swayed emotionally by a heartwarming ballad. We can even be impacted physically with the urge to tap our feet to the beat. Both the music and the words (if there are words) affect how we feel and what we think.

As I reflected on my spiritual life so far, I discovered that God has used music and its effect on me as a conduit for His Spirit, to help me communicate with Him. I grew up in a musical denomination, The Salvation Army, where my family were active soldiers (members). My father played the trombone in the band, and my mother sang in the Songsters (church choir). Throughout the week they practised their parts for the upcoming Sunday church service where they would participate. My three brothers also learned brass instruments and played in the young people’s band. I started piano lessons at the age of seven and the cornet (similar to a trumpet) a few years later.

As a child I enjoyed music and participated in the Singing Company (children’s choir), band, and music camps. As an adult I sang in the Songsters and

played the piano for the worship team and worship services. In addition to the sound of my family practising their instruments, there was often music playing on the radio or the record player in our home. There were always Salvation Army records or classical music playing while lunch was being prepared on Sundays. Music was intertwined with my faith.

The interconnection between music and faith was also a part of my grandfather's life. As a Salvation Army officer and missionary, he devoted his life to serving and worshiping God. While on mission in India he wrote musical selections for the Songsters; their lyrics reflect an expectation that God would use the songs as a vehicle for praise, prayer, and challenge.

As I have reflected on my life, I have discovered that God used music to communicate with me. In the early part of my life, I heard about God through prayer songs, Sunday school songs, and music played at church and in my home. Through the lyrics of these songs I learned about God and about having a relationship with Him. I accepted Jesus as my Saviour through the singing of a song. Later in life I learned to speak to God as I sang praise songs and prayer choruses. As I sang to God, I felt His Spirit awaken in me a sense of joy or peace, and recognized these sensations as God's interaction with me.

My relationship with God deepened through music, but also through Bible classes and listening to sermons. This teaching became embedded in my mind. As my musical ability improved, I learned to listen to God and hear from Him when I composed my own poems and songs. God used the biblical teaching I received to give me the content for the lyrics. These songs drew me closer to Him and also

helped others by inviting them into a relationship with Him, by bringing them comfort, or by reminding them of Bible passages. As an adult playing the piano for worship services, God has blessed me with an experience of His Spirit alive in me while playing, and has also spoken to others through the music. Throughout my life God has used music as a conduit for His Spirit to form me spiritually, alerting me to His presence as I listened to and composed Christian music.

Looking at significant moments in my life, the following chapter will reveal how God has used music to do four key things in my formation. Through music God taught me about Himself; gave me an experience of His Spirit; spoke to me; and enabled me to compose music for myself and for others. As He has done this for and through me, I have learned to listen to God.

Throughout the chapter there are hyperlinks that connect the text with appendices containing the words and a recording of the music. Clicking on the word “Appendix” will take you to the appropriate piece. In the Appendix, clicking on the word “Appendix” will return you to the place where you were reading. You can listen to the recordings by double-clicking the link below the title. Be sure to listen to the music, like a soundtrack, as you are reading this chapter; it will both enrich the reading and give a taste of how God communicated with me. I am grateful to my friend Deliah Williams for being the vocalist on the recordings. I am the pianist.

Through Music God Taught Me About Himself

In The Salvation Army, parents are invited to make a commitment to raise their child in a Christian home and to teach them about the love of Jesus, a

commitment formalized by a ceremony called baby dedication. As an infant, on Christmas Sunday in 1967, I was dedicated to God by my parents. Although this was the beginning of my spiritual journey, it was primarily a commitment made by my parents to raise me to know and love God.

Part of this ceremony was the hymn “Gentle Jesus, Meek and Mild” by Charles Wesley (Wesley 1742), which had a significant impact on my early spiritual formation ([Appendix A](#)). My mom sang that song to me each night as part of my bedtime prayers. Once I was old enough, we would kneel by my bedside together and sing, “Gentle Jesus, meek and mild, look upon a little child. Pity my simplicity, suffer me to come to Thee” (Wesley 1742). The rest of the prayer time included the daily list of blessings for family members. Singing this song with her is the first memory I have of my life of faith. As I continued to sing it year after year, my concept of Jesus was formed by this little verse. In my understanding Jesus was gentle, meek, and mild; He was kind and would not hurt me. Jesus was a positive figure in my life.

I started attending Sunday School when I was two, and learned more songs about Jesus and the life of faith. “Jesus loves me, this I know” (Warner 1859), “The B-I-B-L-E” (unknown, public domain), and “I’ve got the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart!” (Cooke 1925) were three that we sang quite often. I discovered that Jesus loved me and gave me joy, and that the Bible was a book that was true. Church was a wonderful place to go.

When I was seven years old I became a Junior Soldier (junior member of the church) by signing a declaration of faith and lifestyle. As a Junior Soldier I

recognized that God had saved me from sin, and that through Jesus I was His loving and obedient child. I promised to read my Bible, pray, and live a life pleasing to Him. I also committed to not polluting my body with alcohol or harmful drugs. I learned about becoming a Christian from the classes I took before signing this promise, but also from the songs we sang about our commitment to God. In Sunday School we sang the song “I Have Decided to Follow Jesus” (Marak ca 1935) to affirm our commitment to Christ. As I sang it, prayerfully and then jubilantly, I asked Jesus to come into my heart. This was the terminology I would have used to describe my conversion as I sang, “I have decided to follow Jesus [repeat 3 times]. No turning back, no turning back” (Marak ca 1935). At that age I understood that God loved me, and because I believed this fact I chose to follow Jesus. I believed that the promise I made was serious and remember feeling determined never to break it. I felt that my spiritual life was dependent upon me deciding to follow and not turning back.

**Transition:
From Learning about to Sensing the Spirit**

In the early years of my life I learned about God through the songs I heard and sang. As I got older I continued to learn about God through song, but I also experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit through music. My felt experience of the Holy Spirit, in both emotional and physical ways, reinforced the knowledge I had about God. The Spirit developed in me a relationship with God that involved communicating with Him through speaking in prayer but also through music.

Through Music God Gave Me an Experience of His Spirit

The same year I became a Junior Soldier I also took part in some music activities. I began weekly piano lessons, where I learned the basics of music. I loved these lessons and didn't mind the daily practice required. At church I joined the Singing Company (children's choir) and enjoyed singing about and to God. Every Sunday afternoon the choir would gather in the church basement and learn songs. Even now I remember many of them, and the words still come to mind. "Sunday Mornin'" by Evie Tornquist (Tornquist 1975) was an upbeat song that filled my heart with joy; the words and music lifted my spirit as I sang them at home throughout the week. Sometimes when singing them I would be thinking about Jesus, and I would address the words to Him. At those times I imagined Him looking at me and smiling, and I would smile back. In response to His love I tried my best to live for Him.

At the end of the worship service each Sunday we sang a benediction. Throughout my childhood and teenage years, we sang the same one each week. It was a short prayer incorporating each part of the Trinity. The organ or band would play the introduction and we would sing, "O Father, let Thy love remain" (Ghysen ca 1690). As I sang that first line, I prayed for God to fill each person's heart with His love, including me. As I sang the second line, "O Son, may I Thy likeness gain", I asked Jesus to help me be like Him; to be good and to love others. The third line, "O Spirit, stay to comfort me", brought me a warm sensation of peace and joy as I sang it to God. And as we sang the last line, "O triune God, praise be to Thee!", my spirit soared in praise and adoration. Even at

this young age I worshiped God through this song and prayed these requests. It was a weekly encounter with God where I sang my heart's desire and, in turn, bodily sensed God's promise to answer my prayer.

As life got busier with piano lessons and exams, learning the trumpet, Sunday School, Singing Company, sports at school, swimming lessons, going away to camp, and travelling to England for holidays, I became anxious a lot. At this time in my life, I discovered the verses Philippians 4:6-7 and memorized them. Throughout my childhood when I felt afraid, I would repeat those verses to myself, and I would often experience the peace of God. The real, felt experience of the Spirit was something I couldn't deny and remembered when I felt anxious.

I felt the presence of the Holy Spirit through music, through Scripture, and in prayer. In each of these I experienced the Spirit by myself. Another way I experienced the Spirit was through singing songs and hymns during our worship services. The congregational setting helped me to feel connected to the church; I learned through congregational singing that others also experienced the joy of the Lord and wanted to respond to His Spirit.

The hymns of The Salvation Army are collected in a hymnal that includes traditional hymns of the Christian church, Salvation Army compositions, and, more recently, modern worship songs. Hymns by composers such as Charles Wesley, Isaac Watts, John Newton, and Fanny Crosby were instructional and inspirational in their rich theology. Crosby's "To God be the glory" (Crosby 1875) was one we sang often. It reinforced the gospel and gave me a way to respond in praise. In our congregation (and most Salvation Army congregations)

the chorus was sung exuberantly, with everyone clapping their hands to the beat. The practice of hand clapping was very common and was a way to join in the music bodily by adding rhythm to the voices. In this way worship combined mental assent, emotional experience, physical participation, and a spiritual act.

In addition, the songbook contains songs by Salvation Army officers such as Frederick and Emma Booth-Tucker, George Scott Railton, and Herbert Booth. The most noteworthy of these songs is “Boundless Salvation” (Booth 1893) by Salvation Army founder William Booth. It is a seven-verse testimony of God’s saving grace. Though it is often sung in large gatherings such as congresses, where numerous congregations gather for worship, the congregation at Scarborough Citadel also enjoyed singing it in its worship services. The lyrics speak of the boundless love of God. Booth writes about his sin, his tempers, and temptation, all of which are lost in the cleansing fountain of Jesus’ blood. The final verse is one of triumph:

And now, hallelujah! The rest of my days
Shall gladly be spent in promoting His praise,
Who opened His bosom to pour out this sea
Of boundless salvation, of boundless salvation, of boundless salvation
For you and for me. (Booth 1893)

The sense of God’s Spirit within, stirring emotions of thankfulness, triumph, and resolve, caused the congregation not only to clap throughout the last verse but, on occasion, to march around the sanctuary behind the flagbearer carrying the Salvation Army flag. The experience of seeing and participating in a group response to God’s overwhelming gift of salvation instilled in me that I was part of something bigger than my personal relationship with God. It was more than the shared experience of waving a lit lighter at a rock concert or the baseball fan’s

“wave.” The shared sense of God’s Spirit was palpable and helped me realize and feel that I belonged to the Body of Christ.

Another element of the Salvation Army worship service that helped me feel part of the Body of Christ was the altar call. At the conclusion of the sermon, corps officers (clergy) often give an invitation to come and kneel at the mercy seat (altar). Typically this occurs during the singing of prayer choruses. Along with full hymns, the Salvation Army songbook contains several one-stanza choruses, many of which are for reflection and are used after the sermon. The chosen choruses are sung multiple times while people pray in the pews or at the mercy seat. As a child and youth, I too prayed while singing these choruses. I realized later in life that these sung prayers were our denomination’s way of corporately meditating. The prolonged time of repeatedly singing the same chorus allowed us to share in a time of focused reflection together.

It was in these times that we prayed prayers of confession, of commitment, and of petition for each other and ourselves. There was sometimes an emotional response from those who were praying at the mercy seat; their tears and the heartfelt singing of the congregation gave evidence of the Holy Spirit moving in people’s lives. Sometimes we sang these choruses acapella; hearing the voices of those I knew and loved singing to God helped me sense the Spirit as we worshiped God together with one heart. In this way, through music, I experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit reaffirming His life in me and my place in the body of Christ.

As a teen I desired to grow my relationship with Jesus and was still captivated by the music and the message of the worship service. Most of the teens sat in the back row of the sanctuary, but I continued to take my place near the front until I joined the Songsters. In these years I found spiritual encouragement from a few university-aged young women. I wanted to thoroughly understand what being a Christian meant. At one point I wondered if I'd missed some important step in becoming a Christian because I'd grown up surrounded by Christians. At other times I wondered why I wasn't as joyful or peaceful as the Bible indicated a Christian should be. Wanting to know what I was doing wrong, I chatted with these older friends. Through their listening and advice I learned more about having a relationship with God. On one occasion, one of our assistant corps officers (assistant pastors) took the time to share spiritual growth booklets with me. She took the time to help me understand that my knowledge of God was right and that my relationship with God was something that would grow as I spent time with Him.

**Transition:
From Learning and Sensing to Hearing God**

As I learned more about God through Bible devotional times, interaction with these older friends, and music, I sensed His Spirit as an individual and as part of the congregation of believers. In addition, I daily played the music of Christian pop artists such as Amy Grant, Sandy Patti, and Evie on my tape recorder in my bedroom. I noticed that it made a difference to my outlook on life if I listened to Christian music rather than a secular station on the radio. The

words and the activity of singing along in praise lifted my spirit and put a song in my heart.

Amy Grant's music especially spoke to my soul, such as her song "In a Little While" (Grant 1982). The truth of the words of the chorus brought me joy. Grant sings, "In a little while we'll be with the Father, can't you see Him smile. In a little while we'll be home forever, in a while. We're just here to learn to love Him and we'll be home in just a little while" (Grant 1982). The thought of Jesus smiling, and of our eventual homecoming in heaven, made the reality of eternity with Jesus tangible. Jesus was a real person with whom I was relating, and one day I would see Him face to face. This real, felt experience deepened my personal relationship with God. I felt that He was communicating with me, and I often spoke to Him in prayer. As I became more deeply connected to God and my ability as a pianist increased, I discovered that God not only would help me feel His presence, but He would also speak to me, enabling me to compose songs.

Through the Composition of My Own Music God Speaks to Me

One of the first songs I composed emerged one summer when I agreed to work at an overnight camp. I had always been anxious when away from home overnight. That year, as a teenager, I sensed God's peace and encouragement to take up the challenge. I ended up loving camp and settled in to being away from home. Once, during the middle of the summer, I went home for a break. My parents were on vacation in England, and the house was empty. This was the first time my parents had left the country without me, and I felt very much alone. Out

of that experience I wrote the song “Secure in Your Love” ([Appendix B](#)). When I returned to camp, I shared it with the staff, and they sang it in one of the Sunday morning worship services. This was the first song I wrote that expressed to God the truths I had learned from the songs of my childhood. The upbeat, contemporary style of the music reflects the joy I felt knowing that Jesus’ love was not only immense, and for everyone, but that it was personal and for me

The process of writing this song involved sitting at the piano while thinking and praying. As a melody formed through my fingers on the piano, my thoughts about what I was feeling began to form into a poem. The music I was playing began to reflect the meaning of the words: the rhythm and melody shifted to accommodate a longer phrase, and the tone of the thoughts impacted the shape of the melody. As I created the lyrics, I was reminded of the truths I had learned as a child, that God is always with me and that He loves me. I meditated on these truths while playing the piano. Writing this song happened because I took time to intentionally connect with God while playing the piano; it was a collaboration that took place during a time of devotional worship. This process became the method of creation of many of my songs.

I also sensed collaboration with God in composing music for school. When I was 20 and in my second year at the University of Toronto, I took a course in music composition. For my final large project, I composed a four-movement piano piece based on the resurrection. The music evoked the feelings of the disciples from mourning (after Jesus died and they were left alone) to

awakening (as they began to hear that Jesus was alive) to jubilation (their celebration of his return) to glory (Jesus' ascension), as listed below:

1. Mourning (based on John 19:5-6a, 16a-18, Mark 15:33-34)
2. Awakening (based on Mark 16:2-6)
3. Jubilation (Matthew 28:8-10, Mark 16:14-16, Matthew 28:19-20)
4. Glory! (Luke 24:50-53, John 3:16)

My faith in God was such an integral part of my life that it felt very natural to use Scripture as the basis for my schoolwork. As I researched the various passages where the Easter narrative is recorded, I remember wanting to use the text in the pieces, not as song lyrics but as narration within and between the movements. I chose the verses imagining that they would help people experience the emotions, especially the jubilation, surrounding the resurrection. The music for each movement mirrored the emotions of the passages.

As I created this technically challenging piano piece, God used the time to enliven my own awareness of the reality of the disciples' experience, further deepening my gratitude for Christ's sacrifice on my behalf. As I was creating the final movement, "Glory!", I imagined Jesus ascending into heaven and the glory of God surrounding Him. The music is loud and majestic, with full chords in both hands played across the whole width of the keyboard to capture the magnificence of the moment. When I practised the piece, the musical contrast between the first and last sections impacted me powerfully as I felt the triumph of Jesus' resurrection and ascension. God gifted me with that piece and deepened my relationship with Him as He helped me imagine the disciples' emotional response to His victory over death.

During this time I kept a prayer journal and read the Bible each morning. I sang in the choir at church and, on occasion, played the piano for the worship services. In addition, I led the Sunday School department for the Primary age group (Grades 1–3); we had about 30 children in that group and 5 teachers. I really loved the kids and loved figuring out interesting ways to help them learn God’s truths, including by teaching them songs about Jesus.

I also enjoyed teaching piano. Working one-on-one with children in this role was a great blessing to me. I enjoyed getting to know their unique learning styles and helping them learn the piano. Sensing that God was calling me to be a teacher, I continued to pursue my degree with the thought that I would graduate and then enter teacher’s college.

A year and a half later, on May 27, 1989, I married my husband. To commemorate our marriage, I wrote the song “Our Wedding Prayer” ([Appendix C](#)) a prayer based on 1 Corinthians 13, asking God to fill us with His love. I remember praying the words and asking God to infuse our marriage with love that is patient, kind, forgiving, and longsuffering. As a young person I had no idea what challenges and blessings God would see us through; but looking back, I see how He answered that prayer over and over, enabling us to have a full married life of 34 years. I was so happy to walk down the aisle in front of our family and friends. I felt secure in God’s love and in my husband’s love.

When my third year of university ended, I applied to teacher’s college. I was hopeful that I would be accepted, but not too surprised when I received a rejection: most people who entered teacher’s college had a four-year degree. I

returned to university, finishing my fourth year with good grades and another year of teaching experience, and applied to teacher's college at two universities in the city. At that time there were 10,000 people applying for 1,000 spots. The odds were not good, but I believed God had directed me to become a teacher, so I waited expectantly to get in. I was very disappointed when I discovered that I was again not accepted.

I got a job as a secretary at The Salvation Army Toronto Grace Hospital in the Accounting department. I really didn't plan to be there very long, as I believed God was still leading me to teacher's college. In the fall I filled out the multi-page applications for teacher's college a third time—and was ecstatic to find a letter in our mailbox from one of the schools! However, when I opened it the letter was not an offer of acceptance. As a consolation, I had been put on a waiting list. Sometime later, as I was making supper one night, the phone rang; it was another university wanting to see me for an interview. I believed that God was finally answering my prayers to open a way for me to pursue His will for my life.

A few months later, when the interview didn't pan out and I hadn't made it to the top of the waiting list, I was very disappointed. I didn't understand why this was happening. I assumed God would open the door for me to become a teacher, but He hadn't. It didn't make sense to me and was very discouraging. As I thought and prayed about it while sitting at the piano, a song came to mind. In it I sensed God saying to me that He was right there with me, and that throughout my life He would continue to guide me. The peace I was longing for would come as a result of being with God, not of getting everything I wanted in life. The song,

whose opening phrase was “Plans of mine” ([Appendix D](#)) never had a title. It was not a song for the public. It was a private confirmation from God to me of His unwavering love and presence no matter what happened in my life.

“Plans of Mine” was the first time I sensed God speaking to me as I wrote the lyrics. The words to the chorus came into my head as if I was hearing them from someone else, rather than working at creating something that made sense and rhymed. As with “Secure in Your Love” (per page 20), I began by sitting at the piano intentionally alert to God’s presence and with a desire to create something that would bring Him pleasure. I had sat at the piano many times before this, pouring out my sadness about the rejections and my confusion over why I hadn’t been able to progress in God’s calling to become a teacher. As I continued to think about God and pray to Him, His words, from Scripture or something that agrees with Scripture, came to mind. As I meditated on that while playing the piano, the verse was formed. After repeating the verse multiple times in order to remember it (since I didn’t write it down right away), I began singing the chorus without much effort as God gave me His answer to my feelings of sadness:

Hold My hand, walk with Me,
Here I am, can’t you see
That I’ve been with you all the way,
I will guide you; I will stay.
Walk with Me on this road,
Let Me lighten your load,
And together you will find perfect peace.

As I studied the Scripture and trusted God with whatever the future would bring, God brought me more songs. One example, “God’s Peace” ([Appendix E](#)), shares what happens in our lives when we are totally abandoned to God. As I

wrote this song I wanted to portray the various aspects of Jesus' life that we worship: how Jesus is the fulfilment of God's promise and our Saviour, and how His Spirit is the means to our peace with God. The words of the chorus are: "God's peace, sweet peace. God's presence living in me, His power meeting my need. My soul, calm and complete, surrounded by God's peace." This song was written to be sung by a choir. The verses are sung confidently, at a mezzo forte (medium loud) volume. The chorus starts after a pause and is piano (soft) in volume to create a feeling of calm. There is a crescendo (increase in volume) at the words "God's presence living in me," and at the climax of the chorus the volume is forte (loud): "His power meeting my need." The following two lines of lyrics are sung at a progressively decreasing volume to create the sense of peace. The music is written to mirror the lyrics in order to help the singer and the listener to experience, not just hear about, God's peace.

As I wrote "God's Peace" I was conscious of my desire to be theologically correct in the lyrics. I remember thinking that others might one day sing this, and that I didn't want to lead them astray. The verses were written very intentionally. When composing this song I thought of the structure of the song before I began, wanting it to cover the birth of Jesus, the life of Jesus, and the resurrected Jesus. The chorus was written as my testimony, and the hoped-for testimony of those who sang it. It was a thrill to hear the Songsters sing this song in church. It was the beginning of God using my music to help others hear Him.

I also continued to benefit spiritually from the music of others. In addition to Amy Grant and Sandi Patti, I began to listen to worship songs. On my way to

work at the hospital I would listen to music in the car and pray as I sang along. I especially remember the song “He is Able” (Chapman 1990). My recording of this was sung by Morris Chapman and the Maranatha Singers.

He is able, more than able, to accomplish what concerns me today.
He is able, more than able, to handle anything that comes my way.
He is able, more than able, to do much more than I could ever dream.
He is able, more than able, to make me what wants me to be.
(Chapman 1990)

Transition: From Learning to Sensing to Hearing to Teaching

This little chorus fuelled my trust in God and reminded me of who God is. As God continued to teach me about Himself through music, I sensed His Spirit and was able to compose music that chronicled His work in my life. God’s work in me, forming me spiritually, gave me a great desire to share my knowledge and experience of God with others. I sensed God calling me to serve Him in various ways, one of which was to encourage and teach others through music. The following section talks about God’s work through me as He continued to develop me both musically and spiritually.

Through My Music God Has Spoken to Others

The job at the hospital provided income and taught me about another sphere of life I had not experienced. While there I heard about a music writing competition in The Salvation Army and decided to try to write something to submit. The competition was created so that Singing Companies in Canada would have new songs to sing. I began the process of thinking about children, and about God. I asked Him to work in me to produce something that would be appropriate.

I thought back to my childhood and different aspects of it, remembering playing outside with our neighbours, running, and hiding in a game of hide-and-seek on a Saturday afternoon, and the days I spent at summer camp up north seeing the millions of stars in the dark night sky. These memories formed the verses. The main thought was that even more amazing than all that God has done and can do is the fact that I and all the children singing this song who believe in Him are His children of the King. “God is so wise and powerful that He knows all these things, yet He still calls me His Child of The King” ([Appendix F](#)). Through this song God continued to remind me of His constant presence. His gift of music and of composition brought me joy.

On March 10, 1994, our first son was born. I found my time as a stay-at-home mom spiritually enriching. I was home with the baby where I had time to write music and pray. I wrote a lullaby and a few other songs. At one point I tried to write a worship song a day. I often prayed or created poems while feeding or holding our son.

When my maternity leave ended in September of 1994, I got a job in the library at The Salvation Army College for Officer’s Training (seminary). I had worked there in the summers between my years at university and was hired again to work three days a week. While working at the library I loved having access to the books on theology and spiritual formation. It was here that I first read books by Henri Nouwen; I was amazed that someone else understood what I was feeling spiritually and could articulate it so accurately, and I was moved by his words of encouragement and comfort. I also found devotional books by Ken Gire. His

works *Intimate Moments with the Savior* (Gire 1989) and *Incredible Moments with the Savior* (Gire 1990) helped me sense that my relationship with God was a spiritually intimate connection. At a time in my life when I was very busy and didn't have a lot of time for spiritual reflection, these authors helped me experience a sense of God's presence through their words.

In addition to these authors, I connected with those who were taking theological education to become Salvation Army officers. Out of these interactions and my experience with God at the library, I wrote two songs about ministry: "Open Your Heart" (June 1994) and "Shine Through Me" (May 1994).

"Open Your Heart" ([Appendix G](#)) was a song inspired by a sermon I heard one Sunday morning at church. The passages 2 Kings 4:1-7 and Philippians 4:19 were the focus of the message. The sermon spoke of how God will meet all our needs just as he continued to provide oil for the widow to make bread for the prophet Elisha. As long as the widow put out jars, God ensured they were filled with oil. I saw this to mean that as I opened my heart to God, He would fill it; He would satisfy all my needs according to His riches. I came home that Sunday and after lunch sat at the piano and wrote most of this song, uncharacteristically in one sitting. As I wrote the lyrics my focus shifted from writing for myself and my specific situation to thinking of those who would hear the music and the message of the lyrics. I had an outward focus and a desire for those listening to hear God's voice.

The second song, "Shine Through Me" ([Appendix H](#)), was written in response to getting to know the cadets (students) in training at the college. The

verses speak of a lonely man amidst the crowd, a grieving woman filled with pain, and a little child full of hope and promise—the kind of people who are often overlooked. The second verse is a prayer asking God to help the singer to be His light and love to those who don't know Him. I wanted to remind people who heard the song, especially the cadets, to reach out to others. At the same time, I prayed these words from my heart. I really wanted (and still want) to be a witness of God's love to others.

As I reflect on the lyrics of “Shine Through Me,” I see how they were also a result of my denominational heritage. The Salvation Army began in a low-income area of London, England. The founders, William and Catherine Booth, felt compassion for those who were overlooked by society and by the traditional church. They went to the people who were homeless to help them physically with food and spiritually with the gospel. Their vision is still the foundation of our denomination's mission statement. I realize too that all people have these core needs to be loved, to be known, and to be accepted. “Shine Through Me” was my prayer: I longed for God to use me to help others come to know His love, while at the same time I was acknowledging that He fulfills my own need to be loved, known, and accepted.

While I wrote with a focus on others, God continued to speak to me personally, giving me songs that ministered to my soul. Our second son was born on August 9, 1996, and after the six-month maternity leave ended I returned to work at the library. During this time, I felt worn-out and spiritually dry. I attended church faithfully and, with my husband, was bringing up our boys so that they

knew the Bible and God. In the busyness of a family with young children, I didn't have much time to read the Bible or think about God in silence. I found I didn't experience God's presence in a tangible way; I felt alone and quite lonely. A few months before our second son was born, I was praying while I played the piano. A little song emerged that starts, "Dear Lord, as I keep my eyes focused on You" ([Appendix I](#)). Although I knew the solution was to stay focused on Jesus, I didn't always feel like it or experience a sense of His presence. Despite this I continued to sing and pray these words, allowing God to make it a reality in my life.

In 1997 there were changes at the training college. Due to financial constraints my job was cut, and I was let go. Although this had nothing to do with my performance, I felt quite sad that I had been let go from the library. The loss of position, and the subsequent long days at home as a full-time stay-at-home mom, made me depressed. One evening as I was stirring a pot of spaghetti sauce on the stove, I sensed a melody and poem come to my mind. I was thinking about God, and He seemed to say to me, "Think about Me; don't dwell on the negative things." Philippians 4:8-9 were in the back of my mind, especially the last line: "If there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." The following little chorus came to my mind:

Think on Me, I love you dearly, more than anyone can love.
Pray to Me, each moment nearly, lift your thoughts to heaven above.
More than a father loves his children, more than a shepherd knows his lambs,
I long to draw you to Me, and to hold your hand. ([Appendix J](#))

I was thinking about God and about His personal love for me, and as I was thinking about these things He spoke to me.

I don't often hear God's voice as clearly as I did that day; however, because music has the ability to remind us of something we learned or heard years ago, I hear Him years later through this song. Often when I'm stirring another pot on the stove, God reminds me of this chorus and I hear Him again through its words. I'm also reminded of my choice to turn my mind and heart towards Him. Time spent praying and listening to God with an open heart, even while cooking spaghetti sauce, resulted in God prompting me to think of these words, to hear the melody out of the blue. I am not able to explain it scientifically, but I know that before I started cooking I was feeling sad, alone, and without a song, and after the meal was prepared I felt loved and hopeful and had a song.

Another song of comfort emerged a year or so later. Soon after the loss of my job I became pregnant, and at the end of 1999 our third son was born. Again I had time to think and pray and compose. As a mother of little ones I was often very exhausted; I felt very much in need of someone to look after me. God filled that role as my shepherd. As I rested in His presence I found strength and love to give to our sons and my husband. A song based on Psalm 23 emerged and reminded me of God's care for me ([Appendix K](#)).

When our youngest son turned 6 months old, I felt that God wanted me to do more than clean the house and play with our boys. I started to volunteer at the church, and having learned about the Alpha course at the training college, I brought it to the attention of our corps officer. After much prayer and consideration, I agreed to co-lead the course. I was excited about the prospect of

God bringing unchurched people to our congregation. I sensed God guiding me and giving me His joy in this leadership ministry.

Still sensing God's call to engage more fully in ministry, in the spring of 2000 I decided to go to a Coffee Break ladies' meeting. That Wednesday there was a guest speaker who shared her experience about working in a church. She wasn't the pastor of the church but was on staff. She spoke about her past and how God had spoken to her and led her into the role she was fulfilling. I felt something inside me say, "You could do that!" When the meeting concluded I went home feeling elated. I shared with a friend, "I don't know what this means exactly, but I really feel like God is leading me to work in a church. I don't feel called to be an officer, it isn't that, but it's something like that. I am so happy!"

I searched for possible careers or ministries in a church setting and found Tyndale University online. I connected with Tyndale's Admissions department to discover what programs were available and to see if this was where God was leading me. In my meeting at Tyndale I felt that the Master of Theological Studies (MTS) was the best way for me to be used by God. I applied and was accepted.

In response to this direction and the acceptance at Tyndale, I wrote an upbeat song called "It's Gonna Be All Right!" ([Appendix L](#)). I really believed and felt that it was finally going to be all right, and I wanted to let anyone else feeling lost to know that God was going to help them too. It felt as though all the disappointments of my past were working together to create the perfect life that God had planned for me. I was hopeful that I had learned all the life lessons I

needed to learn and that I was finally mature in Christ. I was elated as I sang this song in my heart.

Rhythmically this was a difficult song to write. Despite repeated attempts I just couldn't figure out the rhythms. I wrote the words down and jotted a few melody notes without the rhythm, trusting that God would one day help me learn how to notate it. God kept this song in my mind and heart and kept bringing it back to me over the years until I needed to write it out for this document. As I worked on this document He used the extra piano knowledge I had gained over the years to enable me to write it down.

As I studied at Tyndale, I was amazed at all I was learning and the privilege it was to be studying there. It was miraculous to witness God providing the funds for the courses through just the right number of piano students and seasonal jobs at the church. It was also such a blessing to have my parents come over once a week to look after our boys during the lunch hour so I could be at school on time. In grateful adoration I sat down at the piano one afternoon, longing to just worship God, not study Him or teach about Him to others, but just to commune with Him. I wanted to create a beautiful piece of music that I could use myself in worship. Out of this time of prayer and worship I wrote a little chorus called "Draw Me Close" ([Appendix M](#)). I prayed, "Draw me close to You, draw me close to You, that I may feel Your love and know Your power! Draw me close to You."

Several months later our corps officers asked me to write a theme chorus for an upcoming sermon series on prayer. They gave me some key ideas to

include and freedom to compose. I had never been commissioned to write a piece of music and wasn't sure exactly how it would turn out. I thought and prayed and played the piano, came up with a few ideas, and wrote one down. They liked it for the most part, but encouraged me to keep working on it. I continued to pray and work until the chorus "I come before You Lord" emerged.

As I was playing it over and over, it seemed unfinished. It did a good job of describing the process of prayer, but I sensed it needed something that would actually help people pray. Trying to come up with something that would work, I reworked the original music and adapted the words, but nothing seemed to fit. One day, as I was playing and praying "Draw Me Close to You," I discovered that this little chorus was in the same key and tempo as "I Come Before You, Lord." God had already prepared the way we should lead the people in prayer! I joined the two little choruses together into one. God had given me this part first as I sought Him with all my heart, and He used it to become a chorus that our whole congregation could pray.

The combined piece of music ([Appendix N](#)) was used as the theme chorus for the prayer series. Since then God has used it in miraculous ways both in our own congregation and beyond: as we used the song in our prayer series, people told me they were singing it at the beginning of their private devotions, and people who heard it when visiting our congregation took it back to their own. I heard from people in Newfoundland and Alberta asking if they could use it. The answer was always "Yes!" I was amazed at the fact that people so far away had heard of this song even though it had not been published. The internet was not as

accessible or widely used as it is today, and as a result the song was only travelling to new places via people taking it from one place to another.

A few years later I heard from an officer who was at a holiness conference in England. Those leading the conference wondered if they could use “I come before You, Lord.” Soon after that I had another request, this time from South America. An officer who had been in England had taken the chorus back to her congregation and wondered if it would be all right if she had it translated into Spanish. It was exciting for me to see how God used His gift of music to spread His desire to communicate with us. I was honoured and thrilled to be part of that process.

The MTS degree at Tyndale took me ten years to complete, and I found this pace allowed me to enjoy each course fully. I continued to teach piano privately to pay for courses, and also took on a paid role at the church at Christmastime, organizing the volunteers for the Christmas Kettle (fundraising) program. In addition to this I taught Sunday school, played the piano for the worship services, and co-led the Alpha course.

Each year I seemed to add something else to the list of things I was doing, and, in the end, I overextended myself. Despite experiencing arthritis-like pain and exhaustion, I continued to press on. It was a hectic time with a young family at home. All these activities, though good, took over my life so that I was not able to be present to my family. It happened very subtly and over such a long time that I didn't realize it until one year, before I resumed the Christmas job, I felt overwhelmed. The church's needs seemed to call me to give more of myself than

I should; to be there too often and to make church a priority above my family. At this point I realized that what I was doing was wrong and I needed to stop. I committed to God to put Him first, my family second, and everything else after that. In order to do this, I had to back away from the church in a significant way.

To back away from the church to be obedient to God seemed counterintuitive, but it was the right thing. In doing this I sealed my desire for God to lead me completely, and I sensed His grace meeting me at that time in a powerful way. In an uncharacteristic but life-giving move, I quit the Christmas job. Most significantly, though, I recommitted my heart to God in a type of conversion: I turned from the way I was living my life (for the church) and instead lived again for God and His priorities.

When I was overextended I was less able to compose music. My mind was too full of children's schedules, church responsibilities, and school assignments to be available to think and create. As I made time by backing away from this one job at the church, I found time to sit at the piano and borrowed words from Charlotte Elliott which spoke to me at that time. I remember thinking it was significant that I needed to borrow words for a song, as it indicated that I hadn't been intentionally meeting with God and had lost the words I used to speak to Him. I didn't see this as God's fault; I recognized that my past actions had resulted in this disconnect within me. As I sat at the piano and played, I prayed the text, "Renew my will from day to day. Blend it with Thine and take away all that now makes it hard to say, 'Thy will, Thy will, Thy will be done.'"

I was learning that following God's will could be difficult, but it was better than following my own will. In 2010 I graduated from Tyndale with a Master of Theological Studies. Soon after I graduated, I heard about a secretarial position in a corps (church) a few minutes from my home; the single female officer needed support. I applied for the job. I hadn't been working outside the home, other than at temporary jobs, since the job at the library. The secretarial opportunity seemed like a good fit because of its location and flexible hours, enabling me to remain available for our sons. But as I drove to work the first day, it was soul-destroying to realize that I was going to be a secretary again despite having just completed my master's degree. I prayed that God would help me be of use for His glory and to be content wherever He placed me.

God answered my prayer: I found not only contentment but enjoyment in ministry while working at the secretarial position. The corps officer included me in many of the plans for the congregation and involved me in activities outside of work hours. Over the year I became so invested in the ministry at that church that I began to feel torn between the congregation for which I worked and the one which was my spiritual family. When a pastoral position became available at my home church (Scarborough Citadel) a year later, I applied and was hired. I was thrilled to be in ministry as the Integrated Ministries Coordinator (IMC), helping people connect with the corps and ultimately with God.

After I had served four years as the IMC, the officers who hired me were transferred. The couple assigned to be our new corps officers were suddenly unable to come to Scarborough, leaving us without leaders. As a result, the corps

hired a retired officer to lead part-time, and me to serve as his Assistant Ministry Director (AMD – Associate Pastor) full-time, for one year.

During the year as AMD, working with the retired corps officer, I grew in my faith. He was sensitive to the work of the Spirit, thoughtful in his presentation of the gospel each Sunday, creative in ministry, and pastoral. Under his leadership I came to realize that previously, as the IMC, my worship at the corps on Sundays had become more focused on the tasks related to that role; connecting with people had become my priority. Now, as the corps officer led us in worship on Sundays, I began to refocus my heart and mind on God, by intentionally desiring to worship God, with an open mind and heart to the work of the Holy Spirit in me. This intentionality replaced the thoughts about what I was going to do after the service that had previously prevented me from worshipping God with all my heart. My new focus allowed God to speak to me through His Spirit.

Throughout that year I was given the opportunity to preach a few times. As I was preparing for one such occasion, I felt a strong desire to see people come to God. I spent time praying about the sermon and the worship service, and for those who would hear the message. As I played the piano at home, the song “Come to Me” ([Appendix O](#)) emerged. I realized that music was a significant way in which God spoke to me, and I believed that if sung after the sermon, this song could be a means of God speaking to the congregation. I recognized that there might be a few who weren’t yet Christians, so I wrote the first verse for them. The majority in our congregation are Christians and have been serving God for many years; I wrote the second verse for them, wanting them to remember that they too

were loved by God and that He desired to spend time with them. I had hoped that there would be a physical response to this song, with people coming to the mercy seat to pray. No one came forward that day, but I believe that people still heard the invitation that God offered.

Before, during, and after my role as the Assistant Ministry Director, I experienced the grief of losing several close family and friends. In 2013, on the night after one of our meetings, one of the leaders had a massive heart attack and died. He was vibrant and jovial in the meeting. My husband and I chatted with him after the meeting, and he appeared to be healthy. It was a difficult experience in many ways. As I sat at the piano grieving the loss of this leader, and praying for his wife, the melody to “Be Still” ([Appendix P](#)) came about. I connected with the lady via email and shared the message I sensed God saying to me and to her. Months afterwards she shared that the song had helped her in her grief. God had used the music to minister to her soul.

The accompaniment for this simple melody conveys a sense of swirling; the bass line, played by the left hand, is made up of quick arpeggios, and in the second verse, the right-hand plays both the melody and chords in a higher register, making for a complex accompaniment. I imagined that the widow was feeling as though she was in a whirlwind of emotions and activity following her husband’s death. Around me as well, at that time, the world seemed chaotic and moving quickly. I felt uncertain, yet I was aware of God’s presence and the truth that He is our refuge. The melody of the song is sung in the middle range of the piano and is based on long, slow, drawn-out notes. The sustained tone and calm

rhythm of the melody represent God who, amid the swirling above and below, is stable. The lyrics too echoed the theme that during the storm God invites us to be still and know that He is God (Psalm 46:10), and that because of this truth we can trust in Him (Proverbs 3:5-6). In this situation music provided a means of sharing grief and offering comfort. God spoke to me in composing, and to the widow in hearing, reminding us both that God was with us in our pain.

Pain and death continued to plague my family for the next few years. That same year, my aunt was diagnosed with cancer and my parents struggled to take care of her. In addition, my mother-in-law's cancer returned, and we experienced the loss of her characteristic upbeat engagement in our lives. The following year, in January, my mother-in-law and another close family friend died. My father was diagnosed with lymphoma that spring and I took on the role of support and chauffeur.

By the summer of 2014, after fulfilling the role of the Assistant Ministry Director, I was required to give it up. Although I had always known the role was only temporary, I was sad to relinquish it and it felt like a huge loss. I struggled with this while walking with my parents through my father's illness. In February of 2015, after a good doctor's visit the day before, my dad suddenly died. The traumatic shock of the way he died, coupled with the weight of becoming my mother's primary caregiver, was emotionally heavy. Within the first year of my dad being gone I realized my mom was unable to live on her own, and a short while later she was diagnosed with Alzheimer's. Taken together, this was a season of enormous loss that impacted me greatly. I took my grief to the piano

and, meditating on the words to “I Know a Fount” by Oliver Cooke (Cooke n.d.), I was inspired to write another melody.

In this season I was feeling very weary and heavy laden, and burdened with sorrow as the first verse describes. This verse rolled around in my mind, reminding me of Jesus’ words, “Come to Me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28) At lunchtime one day, when I was at the corps for work, I sat at the piano in the sanctuary meditating on this verse. Thinking about the words to the song, I composed a new melody. Again, God ministered to me through the words of the chorus, reminding me of His “wonder-working power” (Cook n.d.) and giving me renewed hope and strength for that day.

Work itself was not a stress-free situation at that time; the transition back to my role as IMC was not as easy as I thought it would be, and I sensed that I needed God’s guidance and wisdom in discerning whether I should stay at Scarborough Citadel or go and serve Him elsewhere. I took the month of August to pray in a focused way about this decision. I began to open my heart to God again and sought to desire His will, whatever it would be, about this choice. With an open heart I prayed daily that I would hear from God, and intentionally read Scripture through that lens. I read the books of Hebrews and then James as if mining for gold; I wanted to know God and to know what He desired for me in this specific situation. The passages about fixing my eyes on Jesus and living in peace with everyone struck a chord with me.

That August my husband and I spent a week at a Christian summer camp. Twice daily we listened to the speaker, who was speaking from the book of James; each morning I prayed for wisdom, and each morning after the speaker preached, I went back over my notes and spent time just being quiet before God. Over the course of that week I began to catch a new vision of the Integrated Ministries Coordinator position. Along with the Scripture I had been reading a book called *The Art of Neighbouring: Building Genuine Relationships Right Outside Your Door* (Pathak 2012). As I read through this book, God directed my thoughts to see how I could encourage corps members to reach out to families who were marginally connected with the corps. The idea grew into a visual display, as well as an Excel file of data that I called the Block Map.

When I returned to work, I mounted this display on my bulletin board and began to write a proposal to share with the corps officers. As a result of my praying and intentionally seeking God's will with a humble heart, He heard me and gave me a vision for the future. I knew in my heart that I should stay at Scarborough Citadel, because God had a ministry for me there and I wanted to fulfill His will. It is amazing how God has used the Block Map—not only at Scarborough Citadel, but around our division to help people at other corps connect families with each other and with God.

The way God worked in my life through this situation caused me to reflect on His faithfulness throughout my life. I realized that whether I am in the depths of sadness or having a mountaintop experience, God is the same. He is always faithful in being with me, in loving me, and in guiding me. Memories of my

studies at Tyndale came to mind at this time, especially the courses in systematic theology where I learned about the faithfulness of God. I recalled learning the truth that God is holding my hand securely, like a parent holding a child's hand when crossing the street. In a sermon preached by the same professor illustrating this point, he observes, "Because God's grip on him (the psalmist) is stronger than his grip on God, he knows that his times are in God's hand." (Shepherd 2017)

"You are faithful" ([Appendix Q](#)) is a song I wrote to thank God for His faithfulness and to remind myself of His constancy. It is God's faithfulness, His grace, that keeps our relationship intact. He is the one who lifts me up out of sin or darkness and enables me to soar. I am the willing recipient of His faithfulness throughout my life, and this makes me sing a song of victory. Once again God spoke to me through prior teaching, through life circumstances, and through an awareness of His Spirit inspiring me to compose. His work throughout my life and in that moment resulted in a song to bring glory to Him.

In 2017 we were assigned new corps officers. Through their ministry I began to sense God's presence alive in me again. Their witness to God's sustaining power, and my ability to see His life in them, revitalized my experience of the Spirit within me. This renewed sense, combined with the launching of two of my adult sons as they left the family home, resulted in me seeking God's direction afresh for how to serve Him in this season of my life. I became aware of the Doctor of Ministry program at Tyndale and sensed God leading me to commence studies again, with the goal of becoming a spiritual director. My personal ministry calling has been to support corps officers; already when young I

had sensed God wanted me to do that, and I was still feeling the same call. With that in mind, I stepped out in faith to undertake this program.

Throughout the DMin program and spiritual direction internship course, despite not recognizing my own need for spiritual renewal and support, I have learned new ways of listening to God that have impacted my spiritual formation in a positive way. The teaching about spiritual care and the spiritual disciplines has stirred my desire to know God more intimately. During this time He has used the music of others to speak to me. In particular, during one chapel service with other DMin students, the leader shared a song with us. Composed by Margaret Rizza using the words of David Adam, “Calm Me, Lord” (Rizza 1998) affected me deeply as I listened to it in the stillness of the chapel:

Calm me, Lord, as You calmed the storm
Still me, Lord, keep me from harm
Let all the tumult within me cease
Enfold me, Lord, in Your peace.

As we sat in the presence of God and each other, I was stirred not only by these words but even more by the purity and clarity of the voices, which brought me a sense of God’s peace. The sixfold repetition of the stanza provides time to meditate on the words, allowing God to bring calm to the mind and soul. I experienced this in the chapel service, and when I later shared this song with others, it had a similar effect on them.

During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the busy activities of church life, school, and travel were halted for several months as everyone was encouraged to stay at home except for necessities. This lockdown afforded time to reflect upon my life and to remain in the quietness of God’s presence. The shock

of the pandemic and the fear of its unknown consequences drove me to cling to God, and the inability to meet in person for worship led me to seek connection by listening to groups of people singing. Groups around the world recorded worship songs and posted them on YouTube. One of the most popular of these was “The Blessing” (Elevation Worship 2020), recorded first by Kari Jobe and Elevation Worship. The song quickly went viral and served to unite Christians all over the world: the initial recording by Jobe and her group introduced the piece, and then others made further recordings of it in many languages. Since performers and worshipers could not meet in person, “The Blessing” was recorded using a technique called overdubbing or layering. The UK Blessing included the participation of over 65 churches from various denominations in the UK. The result was a unified, though physically separated, choir of voices (UK Blessing 2020). Over the ensuing months, subsequent versions were created by people in other countries and languages, comforting and encouraging those in the online world with a reminder of God’s blessing. Praying this prayer alone in my home allowed me to worship God, to feel His protection over us, and to experience an awareness that I was part of the church universal.

Throughout the last few years I have continued to be grateful to God for His faithfulness, for His gift of grace, for the music He has given me, and for the plan He has for me. I have learned that when the path ahead of me is not clear, and even when it seems completely obvious, the best course of action is to commune daily with God to hear His leading. In those times of fellowship and stillness, it is possible to hear His voice.

Conclusion

Until I wrote my spiritual autobiography, I did not realize how often and how deeply God had communicated with me through music. Upon reflection I see that God regularly used music as a conduit for his Spirit to speak to me, giving me a heartfelt connection with Him. Throughout my life as I sang in worship to God or experienced His presence through a band or Songster selection, music was like a telephone wire joining my spirit with the power of the Holy Spirit as we communicated back and forth.

Some of the most profound experiences of communicating with God through music happened as I composed. The process of taking a break from routine activities to reflect upon life and God created the heart posture in which I could listen to God. Spending uninterrupted time to meditate on a Bible passage or open myself to receiving a thought from God was another key feature. The time spent thinking, being open to God, and wanting to hear from Him enabled me to experience His peace, truth, and message for me at that time. This experience in turn led me to trust Him more and allow Him to guide me further. As I took the courses for the DMin degree, I realized that this pattern could be used apart from composing: I learned how to listen to the Spirit when I was not sitting at the piano.

The key elements in the process of composing included taking time to be silent, intentionally thinking about God, and allowing His Spirit to bring His truth to my mind; all of these allowed communication with God. Throughout my life, as I followed this pattern of connecting with God, I was spiritually formed. I

moved from knowing about God to accepting His plan of salvation, to having a relationship with Him, and then to serving others for Him while at the same time continually growing closer to Him. These four aspects (knowing about, accepting, being in relationship, and serving) could be seen as my personal model of spiritual formation. The following chapter will look at the change that occurs from one aspect to the next, providing further insight into the issue of communicating with God in order to develop a means of communicating with others about Him.

CHAPTER 3:
LISTENING TO GOD: THE KEY TO A
SPIRITUAL FORMATION MODEL OF
CHANGE

Introduction

At the time of writing (2020-2022), the world was experiencing life in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many Canadians living in Ontario will remember March 13, 2020 as the day when social isolation began. In an attempt to protect the healthcare system from being overwhelmed with cases of COVID-19, people were encouraged to stay at home. Schools, from elementary to university, closed, and teachers started teaching online. Stores were also closed, unless they provided essential products such as food, electronics, or medical supplies. Churches, restaurants, daycares, and gyms were shut down to prevent people from gathering in large groups.

For the rest of 2020, and on and off throughout 2021, Ontarians were involved in some form of lockdown. During this time we experienced a loss of social interaction unprecedented in this century. Communication became restricted to video chats, phone calls, written messages, or in-person visits with all parties standing or sitting six feet apart and wearing masks. The sudden change in social interaction, along with the loss of work for a large number of people,

resulted in a change in the way people viewed life. For many, the impact of isolation resulted in increased depression, anxiety, and stress (Best 2021).

At Scarborough Citadel, where I work as the Integrated Ministries Coordinator (IMC), I discovered through informal conversation with congregants that the lockdown had resulted in a change in perspective. During the stay-at-home order, congregants were unable to keep their weekly routine of going to church, causing some of them to feel cut off from the community and causing others to rethink the purpose of attending worship services and church activities. Those who had been heavily involved in ministry awakened to the fact that, in some cases, the routine was the only thing driving them to continue serving. Others awakened to the fact that the hectic pace of service had deprived them of time to be quiet in God's presence; the prolonged time at home due to the lockdown allowed them to deepen their relationship with God. Pastors, unable to preach to a live crowd of people, discovered the blessings and pitfalls of online ministry. For one, the loss of immediate feedback from a live congregation caused him to realize that this interaction had helped him feel like his message was making a difference; his faith had to grow as he trusted God for the impact of his words. The food bank staff at Scarborough Citadel reported that the number of people needing food had increased as those living in the neighbourhood found their resources becoming unstable. COVID-19 restrictions brought about a time of change and awakening.

Pandemics are not the only way to experience an awakening. Throughout life there are other things that cause us to stop and take stock of the direction in

which our life is headed. Dire circumstances such as battling cancer or grieving the death of a loved one, or more positive situations such as getting engaged to be married or achieving a life goal, can cause us to look at the deeper questions of life from a fresh perspective. It is in these moments that we are poised for spiritual transformation. Recognizing that transformation often happens as a result of a sudden awakening caused me to wonder if this experience is something that could be intentionally produced. It also caused me to wonder what other elements were necessary for spiritual formation, and whether the process could be described so that others could grow spiritually from it.

As mentioned earlier, in working with Pathway of Hope clients I have found that discussing spiritual transformation can be difficult. The words people use to describe spiritual experiences often hold different meanings from mine because we come from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds. Past negative experiences with the church sometimes result in a cautious or defensive attitude in speaking about spirituality. In addition, sometimes people try to avoid such conversations altogether for fear of condemnation or punishment.

In The Salvation Army, the understanding of spiritual formation is founded on Wesleyan theology. Over the last generation, however, Wesleyan vocabulary relating to spiritual formation, including words such as ‘sanctification’ and ‘holiness,’ has fallen into disuse; the average attender wouldn’t understand this vocabulary. The diversity of our community and surrounding neighbourhood results in a lack of common categories for conversation about spiritual formation.

Having a common framework when meeting with people to discuss spiritual formation could remove confusion and result in better communication.

Thesis

This paper will begin by asserting that God reaches out to all people and that He is the initiator of our spiritual formation. Secondly, it will affirm that all people are spiritual beings. It will then focus on the fact that as humans we are capable of being formed or transformed in five core aspects of our being: physical, emotional, mental, social, and spiritual. The concept of spiritual formation will be supported by key spiritual formation models, including those set forth in James Fowler's *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (Fowler 1981) and Janet Hagberg's *The Critical Journey: Stages in the Life of Faith* (Hagberg 2005).

Finally, I will describe my five-part Spiritual Formation Model of Change. Each part will be described in relation to a comparison of the protagonists in two contrasting books: *White Oleander* (Fitch 1999) and *Pilgrim's Progress* (Bunyan 1966). The model will then be supported theologically and exemplified using the parable of the Prodigal Son. Following this I will explain how the model can be used in two ways: 1) as part of a daily practice to help us continually engage in spiritual formation, and 2) as a tool for speaking about spiritual formation.

God Is Reaching Out to All People

The Bible contains numerous examples of God reaching out to human beings in love. One key text is "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life"

(John 3:16 NIV). This verse reminds us that out of sheer love for the world, God sent His Son to earth to save it. All people (and the rest of the earthly creation) are the focus of God's love. Even though humans were, and continue to be, opposed to God because of our inherent sin nature, God loved and continues to love us (Romans 5:8). When the Israelites, God's chosen people, were enslaved by the Egyptians, God saw their misery, heard their cries, was concerned, and came down to rescue them (Exodus 3:7). Whether we have established a relationship with Him or not, God invites everyone to come to Him (Matthew 11:28) and to seek Him with all their heart (Jeremiah 33:3); Joel records God's words when he writes that "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Joel 2:32). God is interested in all people and is aware of our situation. My spiritual formation model of change is founded on the belief that God is alive, loves each of us, and is eager to interact with and save the people of the world. He is reaching out to us all.

Johan Herman Bavinck, a Dutch pastor, missionary, and theologian of the early 1900s, theorizes, "God concerns Himself with every man. Buddha would never have meditated on the way of salvation if God had not touched him. Mohammed would not have uttered his prophetic witness if God had not concerned Himself with him. Every religion contains, somehow, the silent work of God" (Bavinck 200, 1966).

God's interest in humans stems from the fact that He made us (Psalm 139), and we are created in His image (Genesis 1:27). Because all humans are

made in the image of God, all humans are capable of experiencing God's general revelation. Bavinck states,

General revelation is 'so real, so concrete, so inescapable, so urgent, that no one can escape from it.' It provokes a human answer and leads everyone into a struggle with God, which the human heart resists; it suppresses and replaces God's truth. The result of this struggle is religious consciousness, which is typical of every human being. Religious consciousness thus does not stem from man himself but is the answer to the "speechless speech" of God's self-manifestation. (Bavinck 187, 1949)

God initiates connection with people because He loves us (John 3:16) and because He desires to save us from being separated from Him (John 3:17). As spiritual beings, humans created in God's image, we can respond to God's initiative.

All People Are Spiritual Beings

On December 25, 2020, Walt Disney Studios released the animated movie *Soul*. It's a story about Joe Gardner, a middle school band teacher and jazz pianist who becomes separated from his soul when he falls down a manhole. While in hospital in a coma, he finds himself on the precipice of the afterlife. One of the main characters in this multimillion-dollar production is a soul called 22; together Joe and 22 discover what it is to be human and to discover one's "spark." The first sentence of the advertisement for this movie is, "What is it that makes YOU . . . you?" (Docter 2020).

At a time in Canadian history when religious affiliation and activities are in decline (Statistics Canada 2021), the people at Disney realized that there was money to be made in a movie about the soul. Although church attendance continues to decrease interest in spirituality has not disappeared.

What is spirituality? Is it anything concerned with our soul? If so, what is the soul? We refer to the soul in ordinary conversation: we can have a “soulmate,” or we might quote the proverb, “The eyes are the window to the soul.” What is it that we are connecting with or viewing in each case? What about the spirit? Are the soul and the spirit the same?

In his work, *Renovation of the Heart*, Dallas Willard describes the soul as “that dimension of the person that interrelates all of the other dimensions so that they form one life” (Willard 2012, 37). Willard compares our soul to a machine that continually runs in the background of our lives enabling all our heart, mind, and will function in harmony. He continues, “’soul’ here is a term that refers to the whole person through its most profound dimension” (Willard 2012, 37). The Hebrew understanding of the soul is similar. In Genesis it is recorded that after God created Adam, He breathed life into him, and he became a *nephesh*, a “living soul” (Genesis 2:7 KJV). Strong’s Concordance translates the Hebrew word *nephesh* in Genesis 2:7 as “soul, living being, life, self, person, desire, passion, appetite, emotion” (*Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, s.v. “*nephesh*,” <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/5315.htm>): the soul is evidently the whole human person.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:23 the soul, spirit, and body are listed as separate entities. Paul wrote, “May God Himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:23 NIV). Similarly, in the book of Hebrews the soul and spirit are described as united but distinct: “For the

Word of God is active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints, and marrow” (Hebrews 4:12). The spirit and soul are not the same thing; they are distinct entities, but are also connected and similar. Vine’s dictionary describes the Greek word *pneuma*, which is translated “spirit,” in part as “the power by which the human being feels, thinks, decides; the vital principle by which the body is animated; the disposition or influence which fills and governs the soul of anyone” (*Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, s.v. “spirit”, accessed October 28, 2020, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/dictionary/viewtopic.cfm?topic=VT0002735>).

In Romans, the spirit is referred to as the place within humans that connects with the divine (Romans 8:16). When we accept the gospel message of God’s mercy through Jesus Christ, the Spirit of God comes to live within. To give us assurance of our salvation through Christ, God’s Spirit testifies to our spirit that we are children of God. It is with the activity of the Holy Spirit that Christian spiritual formation begins. Kenneth Boa writes,

The spiritual life is an all-encompassing, lifelong response to God’s gracious initiatives in the lives of those whose trust is centered in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Biblical spirituality is a Christ-centered orientation to every component of life through the mediating power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. (Boa 2001, 19)

As human beings we are innately spiritual. Our spirit is the point of connection where the Spirit of God interacts with us; our soul is the essence of who we are, and is thus united with our spirit, emotions, and intellect. Our spirit, like any part of our humanity, is alive and capable of changing. This change is called spiritual formation. Dallas Willard writes,

The human spirit is an inescapable, fundamental aspect of every human being; and it takes on whichever character it has from the experiences and the choices that we have lived through or made in our past. That is what it means to be formed. (Willard 2014, 13)

Willard's words point to the fact that every person is a spiritual being, and that we all are formed.

All People Are Formed

Throughout the life of a human being, physical, emotional, intellectual, and social attributes change. Casual observation of an infant over the first two years of life reveals that they learn to hold their head up, to sit, to stand, to walk, and then to run. Their body changes to increase their ability to become mobile and take care of themselves. At the same time, the infant experiences a wide range of emotions and learns about their expression. The infant learns how to control their feelings or to share them depending on the situation. Their emotions develop and become nuanced, and as they do the child learns to understand the emotions of others as well. Their intellect teaches them that they are not the centre of the world; they discover that the world can be interacted with, and this interaction produces many predictable results, some positive and others negative. They learn that others matter, that care can be received from others and given to others in return. The child acquires increasing skill in language, and uses it to communicate with others and learn from others. The formation of each aspect—physical, emotional, intellectual, social—is crucial to the overall health of the child. How these aspects change and develop over time has been researched and catalogued by numerous experts over the past century.

Jean Piaget, one of these experts, has had a significant impact on our understanding of a child's mental and physical development; his 1930s study of child development still influences education today. "Piaget's stages are age-specific and marked by important characteristics of thought processes. They also include goals children should achieve as they move through a given stage" (Marcin and Richardson 2018). Piaget's research indicates that children progress in their thinking and physical ability. Physically an infant may move by crawling, while an adult, in contrast, is able to walk, run, and perform several complex athletic activities; the muscles, bones, heart, and lungs form over time to enable the adult to do these things. Intellectually an infant starts out in life barely able to comprehend who is in front of them, whereas by adulthood humans can have complex conversations with multiple people about abstract ideas. The brain is formed in the womb and continues to be formed throughout the life of each person.

Similarly, the German psychologist Erik Erickson developed a theory of human psychosocial development that involved eight stages. He believed that humans developed in distinct ways and stayed in specific stages for characteristic periods of time. His theories reinforce the concept that humans develop psychologically and socially over time (Cherry and Susman 2020).

As the physical, mental, emotional, and social elements of life are formed, so too our soul—the combination of all that makes us who we are, animated by the spirit—develops. Like the other four aspects of human growth, the growth of the soul has also been studied and categorized. Ancients such as Origen (AD 185-

254) were among the first to examine the Hebrew Scriptures and write commentaries on them. Origen described a three-step process for the Christian life: the moral level (behaviour), the natural level (intellectual activity), and the contemplative level (spiritual union with God) (Holt 1993, 36).

Since then, there have been many models depicting how we are formed spiritually. Diane Chandler, in her book *Christian Spiritual Formation: An Integrated Approach for Personal and Relational Wholeness*, provides her own model of the growth of the soul. In it she reminds the reader that the concept of spiritual formation originated at the beginning of time, when God made humans in His image. She writes that Christian spiritual formation is the process by which people recognize the sin in themselves that mars God's image and accept God's gift of salvation. This acceptance starts them on the process of becoming more like God through His Spirit's work in us, forming us spiritually (Chandler 2014, 29).

Spiritual formation and its study, however, is not specific to Christians.

The Islamic Institute for Spiritual Formation describes the development of Muslim spirituality in this way:

Rooted in and nourished by the religious and spiritual traditions of Islam, the Islamic Institute for Spiritual Formation (IISF) offers a refuge for souls seeking healing, spiritual deepening and development, holistic religious education, and transformation at all levels. Combining contemplative study with practice and social engagement, we seek restoration and transfiguration in the Divine, and we strive to reflect and refract the Divine light in the world. In doing so, we aspire to embody and promote the principles of universal dignity and equity, to practice in a spirit of denominational and religious inclusivity, to promote intelligent, respectful, and constructive interreligious engagement, to embrace the Divine trust of creational stewardship, and to pursue the restoration and ennoblement of all humankind, one person at a time. (Gianotti n.d.)

Spiritual formation is a universal human experience in the same way that physical development, emotional growth, intellectual formation, and social engagement are. It is an integral part of our existence which develops over time as we intentionally and unintentionally submit ourselves to stimuli both external and internal. As Christians we are urged by God, through the apostle Paul, to be continually transformed by the renewing of our minds and to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice as our spiritual worship (Romans 12:1-2). Our spiritual formation includes all of who we are; not just one part of us, but the whole person.

Christian Spiritual Formation

Christian spiritual formation has been defined in a variety of ways. World renowned spiritual guide and counsellor Henri Nouwen defines it as a movement away from the negative aspects of our inner life (such as fear and compulsions) to a life of freedom, joy, and courage. He writes,

Spiritual formation helps us to see the face of God in the midst of a hardened world and in our own heart. This freedom helps us to use our skills and our very lives to make that face visible to all who live in bondage and fear. (Nouwen 2010, xxix)

For Nouwen, spiritual formation is a movement towards God and leading to a freedom that gives others the opportunity to know God too. It's a movement that takes place in the inner life of the participant within the context of the external world.

Richard Foster also sees spiritual formation as movement but describes it as a journey. This journey, in which we are active participants, leads to deeper connection with God (Foster n.d.). James Wilhoit concurs, adding that spiritual

formation is a communal process made possible through the power of the Holy Spirit (Wilhoit 2008, 23). It is not a solo activity; it is enabled by the power of God.

Kenneth Boa, in his book *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation*, suggests that “the most concise revelation of God’s ultimate intention for those whom he foreknew, predestined, called, justified, and glorified ... is that we become ‘conformed to the image of His Son’” (Boa 2001, 17), referencing Romans 8:29b. Boa’s definition of spiritual formation is expressed in terms of a goal, and that goal is to be like Jesus.

Haley Goransson Jacob focuses on the same passage in Romans in the introduction to her book *Conformed to the Image of His Son* (Jacob 2018), where she describes spiritual formation as the process of being “conformed to the image of Jesus” (Romans 8:29b). Using etymology to arrive at a full understanding of each word in that phrase, Jacob proposes that the key outcome of being conformed to the image of Jesus is that together with Christ we rule over creation. She explains: “Paul’s references to being ‘co-inheritors,’ ‘co-glorified’ in Romans 8:17, and ‘glorified’ in Romans 8:30 all refer to believers’ participation with the Son in his unique role as sovereign over creation” (Jacob 2018, 16). For Jacob, the *telos*, or goal, of spiritual formation is the essence of the relationship of the Christian with Christ, as a co-worker with Jesus.

Each of these definitions assumes key facts about spiritual formation which, taken together, can be defined as: A process or journey undertaken in the realm of the human spirit by an individual, empowered by the Holy Spirit and in

the context of community, with the goal being an intimate relationship with God through Jesus Christ. These definitions confirm that our spirituality is a *living* aspect of humanity. It is a part of us that is changing and developing over time, throughout our lives.

Scholars James Fowler and Janet O. Hagberg have quantified and defined various stages of the journey of spiritual formation. In *Stages of Faith* (Fowler 1981) Fowler examines the aspect of faith in humanity, an integral element of every person. He writes, “Faith, as it appears, is generic, a universal feature of human living, recognizably similar everywhere despite the remarkable variety of forms and contents of religious practice and belief” (Fowler 1981, 14). He defines faith as more than our belief that the chair we are sitting on won’t collapse; it is a belief in something beyond us, and more than an adherence to creeds. He writes, “. . . [F]aith is understood as trust in another and as loyalty to a transcendent center of value and power” (Fowler 1981, 14). Fowler’s work affirms that all people experience growth in the aspect of trust and loyalty to a being, or God.

According to Fowler there are seven primary stages of faith in the life of the individual. His model mirrors Piaget’s stages of human physiological development, with the difference that in Fowler’s model not all people attain the later stages. The following is a brief overview of the various stages.

Fowler’s Seven Stages of Faith Development

Stage 0: Infancy and Undifferentiated Faith Primal (birth – 18 months). In this stage infants begin to see themselves as differentiated from their parents and

experience the ability to have faith. Trust is developed, or not, as parents or caregivers are reliable and loving, or not (Fowler 1981, 121).

Stage 1: Intuitive-Projective Faith (2 – 6 years). Faith in this stage is still primarily a result of the parents' or caregivers' influence. God is viewed in a vague way with a magical or mythical quality. Faith development is enabled, in large part, through storytelling (Fowler 1981, 133).

Stage 2: Mythic-Literal Faith (5+ years). In this stage children accept objects of faith in a literal way and with anthropomorphic thinking (e.g., God is an old man with a long white beard). They take their understanding of faith from their parents and from society around them (Fowler 1981, 149).

Stage 3: Synthetic-Conventional Faith Stage (Adolescence +). This stage is characterized by a hunger to be known and understood. This is often satisfied in a group (usually peers) who will confirm the person's sense of self (Fowler 1981, 172).

Stage 4: Individuative-Reflective Faith (Young Adult +). At this time of life, when the person has often moved out of the home of the family of origin, they begin to establish their own pattern of faith. They may reject the group mentality established in Stage 3 and develop an individual faith (Fowler 1981, 182-183).

Stage 5: Conjunctive Faith (Early Adulthood – Mid-life). Fowler states that he finds this stage the most difficult to describe, as someone in this stage sees the various sides of an issue. He writes, "Stage 5, as a way of seeing, of knowing, of committing, moves beyond the dichotomizing logic of Stage 4's 'either/or'. It

sees both (or the many) sides of an issue simultaneously. . . . [T]hings are organically related to each other” (Fowler 1981, 185). This is a time when symbols, myths, and rituals are appreciated. Life is viewed as a mystery, with the result that there is more acceptance of other people’s ideologies (Fowler 1981, 197-198).

Stage 6: Universalizing Faith (Adult +). According to Fowler, very few people reach the universalizing level. In Stage 6, people “have become incarnators and actualizers of the spirit of an inclusive and fulfilled human community” (Fowler 1981, 200). They dedicate their lives to serving others and challenge the status quo for the good of humanity. Fowler suggests several examples of people he considers to be in Stage 6: Martin Luther King, Jr., Gandhi, Mother Teresa, and Thomas Merton, to name a few (Fowler 1981, 211).

Fowler’s work confirms that every person has the dimension of faith within them. His stages also confirm that there is development throughout life in the area of faith. His definition of faith, and the basis on which he assesses the stages, correlate with the spiritual aspect of each person asserted at the beginning of this chapter. *Stages of Faith* affirms my belief that just as the physical, intellectual, emotional, and social aspects of being a human are formed throughout our lives, so is the spiritual.

Hagberg & Guelich’s *The Critical Journey: Stages
in the Life of Faith*

The general shape of Fowler’s model is linear. In contrast, Janet Hagberg and Robert Guelich in *The Critical Journey: Stages in the Life of Faith* describe a

model of spiritual formation which is circular (See [Appendix R](#)). Similar to Fowler's, Hagberg's first stage, called "The recognition of God," represents the life of faith of a child. In this stage the individual discovers, or intuitively, that there is a powerful, transcendent being outside of their own self (Hagberg 2005, 33). Hagberg's model is unlike Fowler's in that people can remain at this initial stage indefinitely. Hagberg's subsequent stages describe the life of a person engaged in a relationship with God. Stage 2 is "The life of discipleship," in which spiritual formation involves learning about God (Hagberg 2005, 53). People at this stage gain knowledge about God in Sunday School classes or Bible studies; the focus is on acquisition of knowledge and intellectual understanding. Stage 3 is "The productive life," in which spiritual formation is defined by working for God (Hagberg 2005, 74). For many, this would manifest itself in serving within a church where the values of service are encouraged. Stage 4 is called "The journey inward." This is similar to Fowler's Stage 4 in that there is a rediscovery and a separation from the group in order to own and define faith personally (Hagberg 2005, 94).

Unique to Hagberg's model is an experience called "The Wall." This is not a numbered stage, as it can occur at different points within the model, though it most closely aligns with the characteristics of Stage 4. During this phase the individual experiences a time of resistance or rebellion against the will of God. Hagberg states, "The Wall represents our will meeting God's will face to face. We decide anew whether we are willing to surrender and let God direct our lives" (Hagberg 2005, 114). At this time the individual does not progress to the next

stage or move forward in the faith journey, but rather is stuck until they come to a place of surrender to God's will.

This surrender is the basis of Stage 5, "The journey outward" (Hagberg 2005, 134). Stage 5 has similar characteristics to Stage 3 because there is a desire to "work for God," (Hagberg, 2005, 169) but one of the main differences between the two stages is motivation; as Hagberg writes, "Our primary motivation in life becomes the desire to love honestly and live according to God's purposes" (Hagberg 2005, 133). The final stage, Stage 6, is called "The life of love" (Hagberg 2005, 153). In a way that is also reminiscent of Fowler's model, this final stage is not often attained, but those who do enter it live extraordinary lives of faith.

Hagberg describes her model in this way:

As we shall note, this journey of faith has various phases or stages. Some find a place along the way where they may stay indefinitely. Some even get stuck at a stage. But we believe that God calls us continually to recognize God's presence in our lives and to respond. And the spiritual or faith journey is first a movement of individual choice toward an acknowledgment of who God is. Further, it is our invitation to God to take control of all aspects of our lives. Once consciously entered upon, this reception of God into our lives effects a continual process of growth rather than a point of arrival. (Hagberg 2005, 4)

Hagberg's model describes an ongoing, "continual process of growth" (Hagberg 2005, 4) in the spirituality of the individual. The descriptions of the spiritual formation in each stage show that individuals change spiritually from a basic understanding about God to an intimate relationship with God resulting in loving action towards others. Hagberg's model affirms my belief that spirituality grows and develops over a lifetime. Her description of spiritual formation provides an excellent model with which to understand the various stages of growth. In her

model each of the stages appears to be distinct from the others, except for Stage 4 and the Wall. The movement from the Wall to Stage 5 reveals the experience of change between two stages.

The Wall, as noted above, is not part of any particular stage but is linked closely to Stage 4; it is the process of change that typically links Stage 4 and Stage 5. The question that arises when looking at Hagberg's model is, What is the process that occurs between the stages? At the end of each chapter Hagberg provides what she calls "a catalyst for movement" (Hagberg 2005, 110) from one stage to the next and describes what might spur or instigate the change. She writes, "I do believe that shocks or crises in the life of faith frequently move us and are, in the long run, healing if we attend to the inner call that they bring" (Hagberg 2005, 254). It was this aspect of Hagberg's work that caught my attention; I began to wonder what occurs during this transition and whether it can be initiated intentionally. It was out of this aspect of Hagberg's work that I created my Spiritual Formation Model of Change (SFMC).

Spiritual Formation Model of Change

The scholars above give evidence for how change occurs. Hagberg states that sudden shocks or crises initiate spiritual change. Piaget and Erikson teach that while physical and psychological change occurs over a period of time, all change begins as a reaction to some stimuli, either unintentional or intentional. For instance, an unintentional stimulus could be described as the cold, dark winter in Ontario when the temperature is below zero. As a result of this stimulus we feel cold when we go outside, we shiver, and we may feel sad or discouraged. Our

bodies, minds, and emotions react to the change around us. This is an unintentional stimulus. We didn't cause the stimulus but because it affected us, we reacted and were changed.

Change can also occur as a result of intentional stimuli. For instance, we can become more physically fit by training, more emotionally resilient by focusing on our emotional health, more socially connected by interacting with people who are loving, and intellectually more astute by studying from those wiser than ourselves.

Spiritual formation happens as a response to both unintentional and intentional stimuli. In Chapter 2 we saw how as a young child I heard hymns sung by my mother and the congregation. These gave me my initial understanding of God; I learned unintentionally (on my part, but intentionally on my mother's part) that God loved me, and as a result I felt drawn to Him. As a young adult rejected from teacher's college, I intentionally cried out to God and experienced His comfort through a reminder of His presence (Appendix F). Whether the stimulus is intentional or unintentional, change happens. The fact that change can occur due to intentional stimuli suggests that we can create circumstances to help elicit spiritual formation.

Chapter 2 also revealed that a stimulus can trigger a chain reaction or process of change. In my experience, as recorded above, my rejection from teacher's college caused me to feel sad and alone. As I cried out to God, He reminded me of His constant presence, and at that moment I had a choice whether to believe Him or to ignore His truth. I chose to accept what I heard in my

thoughts. Although it didn't take away the sting of disappointment at that moment, it did enable me to continue to live and make new goals, and enabled my faith in God to grow.

A series of five steps occurred before my faith in God grew. 1. I awakened to my situation: I was not getting into teacher's college; 2. I acknowledged the suffering and the sadness I felt; 3. I became aware of a spiritual truth, namely, that I was not alone, God was with me, and He had a purpose for my life; 4. I accepted this truth, believing in my spirit that God was with me and had a purpose; 5. I acted in accordance with this truth by making new life goals, and I grew in my faith in God. These five steps happened within my life many times and served as a means for God to form me spiritually.

In casual conversation it has been interesting to discover how this 5-step process has occurred with congregants and friends during the pandemic. For several of us who were used to being very busy living out our faith, particularly on Sunday mornings, the government mandated order to stay at home resulted in us experiencing a jarring awakening. We suddenly had more time to be still and silent before God causing us to realize and then acknowledge we had become spiritually disconnected from Him in our busyness. With months of Sundays watching church on-line, as opposed to going to a church building, we had time to read the Bible and pray on Sunday mornings without the need to rush to a church building. In these moments we heard a few key truths. Some of us heard that God is more concerned that we have an open heart for worship than we accomplish a list of jobs, even when these jobs are to aid others in worshipping Him. Others of

us remembered the truth that we are deeply loved by God, that He made us to be in a relationship with Him, and that He is a faithful partner in the relationship. These truths caused many to experience God's love, peace, and joy, and to act with more patience, love and kindness. The pandemic provided an experience that resulted in us experiencing spiritual transformation as we progressed through the 5 steps of the Spiritual Formation Model of Change.

Further study of literary protagonists and biblical characters revealed that this pattern of steps was not unique to me. A study of the books *Pilgrim's Progress* (Bunyan 1966) and *White Oleander* (Fitch 1999) suggests that the protagonists in each experienced, in different ways, similar aspects of spiritual formation. These aspects are what comprise the Spiritual Formation Model of Change (SFMC). The following section will explain each aspect, the theological basis for its importance in spiritual formation, and a biblical example.

Awakening to One's Situation

The allegory *Pilgrim's Progress* portrays Christian, the protagonist, coming to the realization that he has been living in a village that has no hope. He has a wife and children, friends, and a home, but he suddenly becomes aware that a great destruction is going to come upon all of them and cries, "What shall I do to be saved?" (Bunyan 1966, 11). Similarly, in the novel *White Oleander*, 12-year-old protagonist Astrid suddenly realizes she has been abandoned. Fitch writes, "It hit me like a punch in the stomach. I could go for years and never see her [Astrid's mother] again" (Fitch 1999, 59). Protagonists experience something

that makes them stop and become aware of their circumstances and see them from a different perspective.

All people are impacted by circumstances in life, and this influences how we experience and understand spirituality. This can be seen most easily in the life of an infant. When infants are hungry or tired, they cry; they awaken to the realization that they need something. If someone comes to feed or comfort them, they learn that the world is a loving place where needs are met. This interaction, and the manner in which it happens, teaches the infant about life, God, and spirituality. Like osmosis they take on the beliefs of those around them. Fowler agrees, and writes,

I believe faith is a human universal. We are endowed at birth with nascent (developing/emerging) capacities for faith. How these capacities are activated and grow depends to a large extent on how we are welcomed into the world and what kinds of environments we grow in.” (Fowler 1981, xiii)

An infant’s initial surroundings impact its spiritual health even before there is an awareness of spirituality, and in that respect there is a degree of unintentionality to the infant’s belief. As infants we are awakened by something working on us from outside ourselves.

A spiritual awakening can happen to anyone at any point in life. Out of the blue we may experience sudden clarity of thought, or a feeling may alert us to the fact that we need to pay attention to what is happening around us. When these things happen, we realize there is more than the concrete or intellectual aspects of life. For some, this awakening might happen when they witness something that produces wonder, such as the birth of a baby or the majesty and beauty of a mountain. These experiences take our breath away or overwhelm us. Again, in

these moments we suddenly believe that there is more to life than our own existence. It is in these moments that we can choose to pay attention to what is happening within us or to disregard the sudden pause and move on. In many cases the impact of stimuli around us awakens us to another perspective without our intention.

What is it that causes us to suddenly notice things or come to our senses? When our spirit is awakened in this way, it is possible that our spirit is being prodded or nudged by the Holy Spirit. We are spiritual beings, formed to connect with God, and God has been reaching out to people since the beginning of time.

God has been speaking to humanity through nature and people since the dawn of creation. There are many instances in the Bible of people awakening to their situations. Adam and Eve suddenly realized they were naked (Genesis 3:7), Moses was awakened by the sight of the flaming bush that did not burn up (Exodus 3:2), and Zechariah was startled by the sight of an angel (Luke 1:12). God got their attention by the unusual or supernatural.

In a pivotal move God sent His own Son to the world to speak His message to humanity (John 3:16, Hebrews 1:1-2). While on earth, Jesus helped people become spiritually awakened to their situation through his teaching and his miracles. His very presence caused some to stop and assess their lives (John 3, Nicodemus). After Jesus returned to heaven, the Holy Spirit descended upon a large group of His followers. The Spirit came to live within them, and God spoke to them collectively and individually through Him.

During His ministry on earth Jesus used parables to teach people spiritual truths. In the parable of the Prodigal Son, the younger son experiences the five stages of the SFMC. In Luke 15 we read that he left home and spent all of his inheritance. Verse 17 states that suddenly “. . . he came to his senses.” The son realized that he, a wealthy man’s son, was feeding pigs. The realization that his foolish living had caused him in to be in a worse situation than one of his father’s servants jarred him and helped him to see life from a different perspective. As a result, the son acknowledged his inner state, as opposed to his circumstances. He was hungry: “Here I am starving to death” (Luke 15:17); and he was guilty: “I have sinned against heaven and against you” (Luke 15:18). This acknowledgment is the second aspect of the SFMC.

Acknowledging One’s Inner State

Both Christian and Astrid had a growing awareness of their inner state. Christian felt guilt and fear. Bunyan writes, “This man’s burden is a growing consciousness of personal sin and guilt which he later confesses to Mr. Worldly-Wiseman; it is stimulated by the reading of his holy book” (Bunyan 1966, 29). Christian acknowledged his sin and guilt. Similarly, Astrid recognized that she had played a part in the death of her mother’s ex-boyfriend, Barry. This caused her to feel guilt, sadness, and regret. She recognized that she was sinful; that she had acted in opposition to what God wants. Fitch describes Astrid’s inner state through the words of the character Pastor Reverend Thomas, who says that she has the “sin virus” (Fitch 1999, 72). Astrid recalls,

And I was crying, my tears coming down. We were dying inside, my mother and I. If only we had God, Jesus, something larger than ourselves to believe in, we could be healed. We could still have a new life. (Fitch 1999, 73)

Acknowledging our inner state is a response to awakening to our situation.

The awakening focuses on the external circumstances, whereas the acknowledgment looks at the corresponding internal, bodily sensations and emotional response. Acknowledging our state in that moment takes some time, and consequently entails a pause or a cessation of activity in order to think. This pause allows opportunity to recognize what is happening within.

Just as God is present in our awakening, God is also present when we acknowledge our inner state. From the beginning of time God has heard the cries (whether vocal or interior) of those in pain or sadness. He came to Adam and Eve in their nakedness and shame and made them coverings (Genesis 3:21); He spoke to Moses out of the bush and brought him both a challenge and comfort (Exodus 3:12). When Jesus lived on earth, He too responded to the cries of the hurt and sick. He touched the leper (Luke 5:13), and He comforted Mary and Martha in the wake of Lazarus's death. God has made us emotional creatures, and the emotions we feel help us to acknowledge our spiritual state. Janet Hagberg writes,

When entering the journey as an adult, we frequently come out of a longing for a resolution to some discomfort. It may be a personal pain like divorce, an illness, a job loss, prison, grief, dependencies, abandonment, loneliness, or a search for meaning in life. We are really feeling scared, low, and depressed, angry, and bitter, or simply resigned. Alone in our pain, we feel unloved and unwanted. When God becomes real to us in this time of need, we find one who soothes us, loves, and cares for us, and encourages us to go on living. (Hagberg 2005, 36)

Hagberg teaches that when God becomes real to us, we find help for our inner state. This process of God becoming real to us is found in the next phase of

the SFMC, called “Awareness of spiritual truth”. For the Prodigal Son, this occurred when he remembered his father’s love. After acknowledging his hunger and guilt, the son remembered his father’s generosity to his servants. Luke records, “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death!’” (Luke 15:17). It was his remembrance of the truth of his father’s character that gave him hope.

Awareness of Spiritual Truth

In Psalm 32, a penitential psalm, the Psalmist writes, “Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord.’ And you forgave the guilt of my sin” (Psalm 32:5). The Psalmist acknowledged his sin. The verse also reveals an awareness of the spiritual truth that God forgives. For spiritual formation to occur, acknowledgment of our inner state must be paired with an awareness and acceptance of spiritual truth.

The character of Christian in *Pilgrim’s Progress* heard the spiritual truth from a variety of characters. The character named Evangelist preached to him about the folly of following those not headed to the Wicket Gate. Another character, the Interpreter, taught Christian about salvation using an allegory about a house. In *White Oleander*, Astrid’s awareness of spiritual truth came from the sermons of Reverend Thomas. He preached,

... acting upon our own desires instead of following God's plan, we have become infected by this terrible plague. We have to receive the knowledge of our responsibility to the heavenly power, and our own vulnerability. . . . We need Christ's antibodies to overcome this contagion within our souls." (Fitch 1999, 72)

Although Thomas's message made no mention of God's love, it still provided Astrid with enough truth that in accepting it, she felt relief; she experienced God's forgiveness and love.

During the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, people searched for relief from their inner state through various avenues. Facebook was littered with jokes about weight gain indicating that people used food to satisfy their boredom or anxiety during the lockdown; people also posted about bingeing on Netflix to escape boredom and unhappiness due to restrictions related to COVID-19. Recognizing the need for resources to help people facing anxiety, depression, and substance abuse brought on by the pandemic, the Government of Canada instituted an online platform called Wellness Together Canada. This free service gave Canadians access to mental health and substance abuse supports (Government of Canada 2022).

Even prior to the pandemic, people tried to ease their emotional and spiritual pain by overindulging in alcohol or latching on to self-help remedies and tools such as mindfulness and non-Christian religious practices. These tools may have provided temporary relief, but none equalled spiritual truth. Spiritual truth comes from the Spirit Himself, who is outside of ourselves. As this Spirit interacts with our spirit, we are helped.

The content of this truth is crucial to the trajectory of the person's spiritual formation, for what we choose to believe will determine what we do next. It is critical, therefore, to receive spiritual "information" that is both helpful and true. From a Christian perspective, God's word, enlivened and applied to our hearts by

His Spirit, provides us with this truth. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). The spiritual reality that Jesus is the way to God is the one truth that will lead to being formed into the likeness of Christ. This truth is based on the God who was there at the beginning of time, whose Spirit awakens us to our situation, and who hears our acknowledgment of our state. He is the one who also made a way to remedy our state and alleviate our pain by taking it on Himself: in an unprecedented and historic event, the Son of God allowed Himself to be sacrificed, absorbing the wrath of God against sin. To alleviate the state of suffering and sin of the world, Jesus responded by giving Himself as an atoning sacrifice so that we could be at peace with God. Isaiah wrote,

Surely, he took up our pain
and bore our suffering,
yet we considered him punished by God,
stricken by him, and afflicted.
⁵But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,
and by his wounds we are healed. (Isaiah 53:4-5)

The punishment for the sin that took away our peace with God was removed from us and put on Jesus, so that our inner state could be one of peace, joy, love, patience, and self-control. In Romans we read,

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:6-8)

Awareness of this spiritual truth—that God loves us so much that He gave Himself for us—requires us to listen, because in order to know the truth we have to hear

it. Either we must have learned it before and be able to recall it or it must be newly presented to us. As children we may have been presented with the truth through adults who taught us about God and faith before we were able to seek out the truth for ourselves. As adults we can recall this truth when we are faced with our sin, our struggle, or the stagnation in our faith development. In these cases, we listen to God's Spirit reminding us of His truth. But before we have ever accepted God's Spirit, we must typically rely on others who know the truth to share it with us. It is in this stage that we hear the message by listening.

Listening to the presentation of the gospel, either aurally or by reading it ourselves, is one aspect of listening—giving physical or cognitive attention. But listening spiritually involves believing that God is speaking, being open to hearing from Him, and allowing Him to have an influence or impact on our mind, heart, body, and soul. We are invited to hear and listen to God's message of love.

Once we have an awareness of spiritual truth, we are faced with a choice: to accept it or not. The prodigal son, having remembered the truth of his father's love, could have remained in the pig pen, wallowing in self-pity. He had a choice whether to accept this truth in a way that would lead to action, or not. He chose to accept the spiritual truth that his father loved him and would forgive him. "Acceptance of the spiritual truth" is the fourth aspect of the SFMC.

Acceptance of Spiritual Truth

In *Pilgrim's Progress*, Christian chose to believe Evangelist's teaching. In his acceptance he was so overwhelmed that he "fell down at [Evangelist's] foot as dead, crying, 'Woe is me, for I am undone!' . . . Then did Christian again a little

revive, and stood up trembling before Evangelist” (Bunyan 1966, 23). In *White Oleander*, Astrid’s acceptance of the spiritual truth came over time as she attended the church of Reverend Thomas and heard the message of salvation. In thinking about it, she internalized it and accepted it as truth. She professes, “I wanted the spirit to wash me clean. I wanted to follow God’s plan for me” (Fitch 1999, 73).

Hagberg describes accepting spiritual truth in this way:

For some, meeting God in this way becomes a peak event, a very identifiable, often datable, concrete life experience. For others, as in some romances that develop from a friendship, the recognition of this special relationship dawns so gradually that they aren’t certain just where or when the experience began. The experience of faith at this early stage is the discovery and recognition of God. It is accepting the fact of the reality of God in our lives. (Hagberg 2005, 33)

The acceptance of spiritual truth impacts us as whole persons. The soul is who we are, as discussed above. Whatever we allow to impact our soul via our spirit will change who we are and how we act. In view of this, it is crucial that we make a choice, and that we choose what is good. To float along in life without choosing any particular spiritual truth is, in fact, choosing to reject God and his offer of love and mercy. In rejecting God, we forfeit the gift of life in communion with Him for eternity. We turn our backs on His peace, protection, and provision, and on the awareness of His presence in our lives.

Adam and Eve could have rejected God’s offer of clothes (Genesis 3:21); Moses could have walked away from the burning bush and gone back to his family to be a sheep herder for the rest of his life (Exodus 4:19-20). Similarly, those whom Jesus encountered could have chosen not to believe that He had the power to heal, to raise someone from the dead, to pronounce someone’s sins

forgiven. But they didn't. Each one acknowledged their inner state, and as they became aware of the spiritual truth of Jesus, they accepted Him as that truth.

When the disciples first saw Jesus coming towards them in their various circumstances, they awakened to their respective situations (I'm a fisherman, a tax collector, someone's brother). They acknowledged their inner state (I'm skeptical, puzzled, curious). They became aware of the spiritual truth as He spoke to them and disclosed himself to them through His actions (Jesus is the Son of God, He heals people and forgives sin). They chose to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and in accepting that spiritual truth they entered a close relationship with Jesus. This is true for us today as well.

The spiritual truth is more than an intellectual concept to which we need to give mental assent; it is an invitation into a personal relationship with the living God. Jesus uses an analogy to explain this new relationship to his disciples:

⁵“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing . . . ⁹As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. ¹¹I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. (John 15:5, 9-11)

To accept the spiritual truth that Jesus is God's Son who died for our sin, and that through His sacrifice we are forgiven, brings us into a different relationship with God. We become as connected to God as a branch is connected to the vine (John 15:5, above). We also become part of the church, the large group of other people who believe this truth. As an integral member of this vine, and of the church, we are called to act, and God's Spirit alive in us enables us to act in accordance with God's will. One of the best-known passages in the book of Proverbs supports this

idea: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight” (Proverbs 3:5-6). When we choose to accept the truth, trust in God, and submit to Him, He makes right action possible: “He will make your paths straight.” Belief is followed by action. In the SFMC this final aspect is called “Acting according to the new state”.

Acting According to the New State

The *Pilgrim's Progress* protagonist Christian acted according to his acceptance of the truth by beginning to journey towards the Celestial City. He had been instructed that this city was the goal of his pilgrimage, so with determination and beset by difficulties, he progressed along this path. He had companions who also accepted the spiritual truth and walked alongside him. They helped him when he was stuck or uncertain.

Astrid, in *White Oleander*, also acted upon her acceptance of the spiritual truth by being baptized. She recalls,

In July, I was baptized into the Truth Assembly of Christ . . . I closed my eyes as he laid me back in the square pool behind the Assembly building, my nose filling with chlorine. I wanted the spirit to enter me, to wash me clean. I wanted to follow God's plan for me. (Fitch 1999, 73)

However, Astrid did not have other people who also accepted the spiritual truth to walk alongside her. As a result, when subsequent experiences again brought awareness of her situation and the attendant emotions, she ultimately rejected the spiritual truth and became hardened to feeling love, seeking truth, and experiencing peace.

Acceptance of a spiritual truth results in spiritual formation. When the truth of God's love and forgiveness penetrates our thoughts and emotions, God's Spirit enters us and we are changed at our core; the actions that follow flow out of our new inner state. When we believe in the God who created the universe, who provided a way for us to be free from our sin, and who lives within us by His Spirit, our souls are grounded in truth and we know the peace that comes from being united with God. And as we are connected to God like a branch connected to the vine, we produce spiritual fruit. The fruit of the Spirit of God alive in us is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). This fruit is borne and ripens in us as we live out the commands of God to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love our neighbour as ourselves (Mark 12:30-31). We are commanded to love God with our whole being, because God created us for Himself as whole beings. His Spirit at work in us as multidimensional spiritual beings enables us to love Him with all that we are.

The prodigal son, accepting the spiritual truth that his father was loving, "got up and went to his father" (Luke 15:20). The picture of the father in this parable emphasizes the vast love God has for people. Luke records it in this way:

But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him, and kissed him . . .²² But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate. (Luke 15:19, 22-24)

The loving father had been waiting all along for his son to awaken to his situation, to acknowledge his state, to be aware of the spiritual truth, to accept it, and to act

in accordance with his new state so that he could lavish blessing upon him. In the same way God, the Father, is waiting for us to accept the truth He offers us. Even before we are aware of Him, He is reaching out to us in love to welcome us into a relationship with Him.

Application

Like the prodigal son, the protagonists of *Pilgrim's Progress* and *White Oleander* were formed spiritually as they experienced things that caused them, successively, to:

1. awaken to their situation;
2. acknowledge their inner state (suffering/sin/the Spirit's indwelling);
3. become aware of truth;
4. accept the truth;
5. act in accordance with the new state.

This pattern happens to most people at some time in their lives, if not multiple times. As discussed in Chapter 2, my own spiritual formation followed these five steps. The sudden awakening happens when jarring news or circumstances disrupt our routine, compelling us to adjust our thinking, behaviour, or both. This adjustment can be a reflexive action without much thought (e.g., jerking your hand away after touching a hot stove), but it can also take the form of conscious reflection on the way things have been and how best to move forward (e.g., after a diagnosis of cancer). Just as physical reactions result in a change in position physically, intentional reflection on our spiritual state during a disruption in life can drive a change in us spiritually; we can move to a different stage in the life of

faith. Figure 1 below represents both the order of the aspects of change and the iterative nature of the model by its circular form. The five stages can occur once or multiple times before one moves to another stage of spiritual formation.

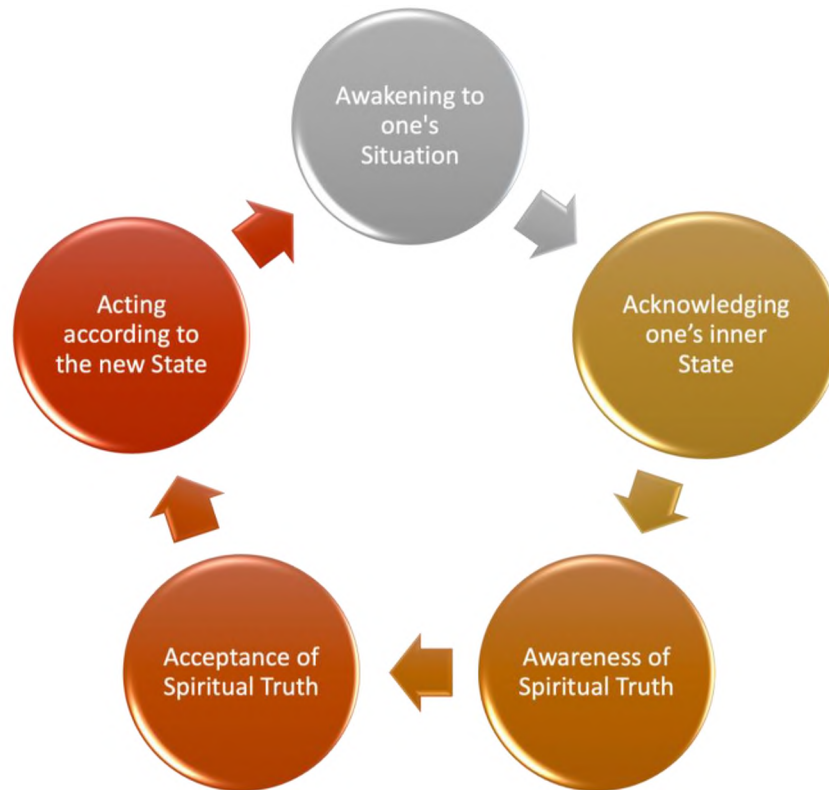


Figure 1: Spiritual Formation Model of Change

Both Fowler's and Hagberg's models show that most people do not continue in the same stage of faith throughout their whole lives but change over time. Jesus himself changed as He learned obedience from His suffering (Hebrews 5:8). The SFMC describes the steps people take to move from one stage to the next; it explains the transition from Stage 1 to Stage 2 or Stage 2 to Stage 3. The SFMC fits *between* successive stages in Hagberg's model (see Figure 2.)

PROCESS OF CHANGE IN SPIRITUAL FORMATION

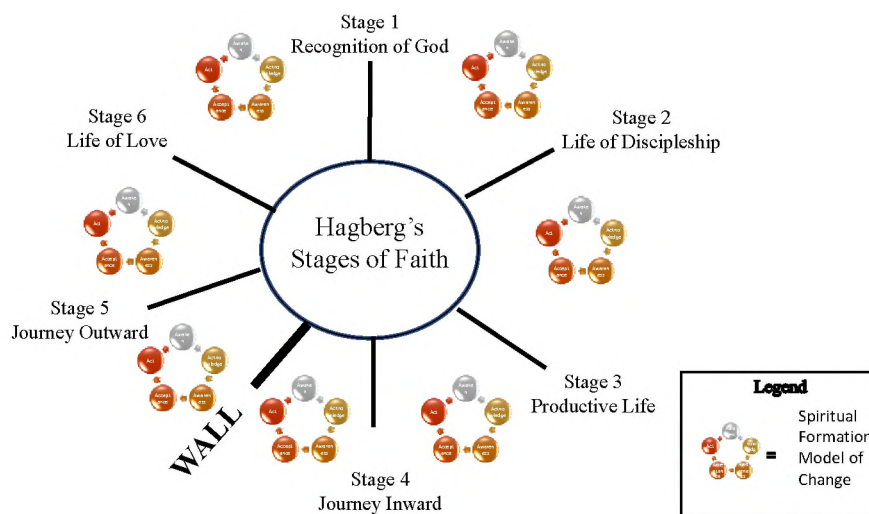


Figure 2: Spiritual Formation Model of Change in Hagberg's Model

Just as Hagberg's stages function like floors in a building, the SFMC is like the stairs between the floors. The Spiritual Formation Model of Change is the means of moving between the stages. Not pictured here but of importance is the fact that the SFMC may be repeated multiple times before one moves onto the next stage. Changes may occur in increments that lead to a recognition of a new way of experiencing God in life. Ultimately, however, the final push into a new stage will involve the five steps of this model.

As noted earlier, a disruption in the routine can create an experience of awakening. The awakening creates an invitation to pause, think, listen to God, and be formed spiritually. The following section will provide two possible situations where an awakening is induced intentionally to create an opportunity for spiritual growth. The two applications of the model are: 1) as a morning practice to daily

engage in spiritual formation; 2) as an evangelistic tool for speaking about spiritual formation.

SFMC Used as a Morning Encounter with God

In this application, the SFMC serves as a guide for a morning encounter with God. Each morning when we wake up, the night's sleep is disrupted, causing a physical awakening. As we open our eyes and awaken to the new day, we can also experience a time of spiritual awakening. Following the steps of the SFMC provides a structure for an intentional time of communication with God.

Upon awakening we become alert to our external surroundings. Once fully awake, we can acknowledge the presence of the Spirit in our midst. Reflecting on the Spirit we can also acknowledge our inner state: our suffering, sin, stagnation, or satisfaction in life. Taking time both to acknowledge the Spirit who is love and to communicate honestly with God about our inner state provides a foundation for receiving God's truth. Meditation on a Bible passage, Christian writings, hymns, or songs reminds us of His truth; it also takes time and is best carried out in solitude and silence.

At this point we have opportunity to reaffirm both our acceptance of God's truth and our willingness to submit to and cooperate with the Spirit of God, who enables us to act in accordance with that truth. Following these steps is a concrete way to remain intentional about our spiritual formation: as we intentionally take time to listen to God, we provide a clear conduit for the Spirit to speak to us. For those who are already Christians, this model serves as a

framework for communicating with God in a regular way. Figure 3 provides five questions to guide us through the SFMC each morning.



Figure 3: SFMC as a Morning Spiritual Practice

In order to be continually spiritually formed, we need to make a regular practice of becoming aware of our situation. The circular shape of this model (Figure 3) reminds us of the recurring nature of the model. Christians benefit from regular acceptance of God's invitation to stop and awaken to His work in the world and in them. Each new day we communicate with Him afresh as we repeat the pattern of listening to God.

SFMC Used as an Evangelistic Tool

Sharing this model in conversation with a client or congregant provides a framework to speak about spirituality in a way that both parties understand. The familiar language used in this model bridges the gap previously opened by terms whose meanings have changed over time and between denominations or cultures. The method of sharing this model (in conversation where one person listens to the other to hear their experience of God) is congruent with its content: conversation imitates the communicative relationship God desires with each person, helping to ground the model in a relationship rather than a to-do list.

The following set of conversation starters using the five “A” words from the SFMC (awaken, acknowledge, awareness, acceptance, act) helps build rapport and facilitate discussion about the spiritual life. Figure 4 (below) is a helpful tool to show how someone can make the most of the pivotal disruptions in life to grow in their life of faith.

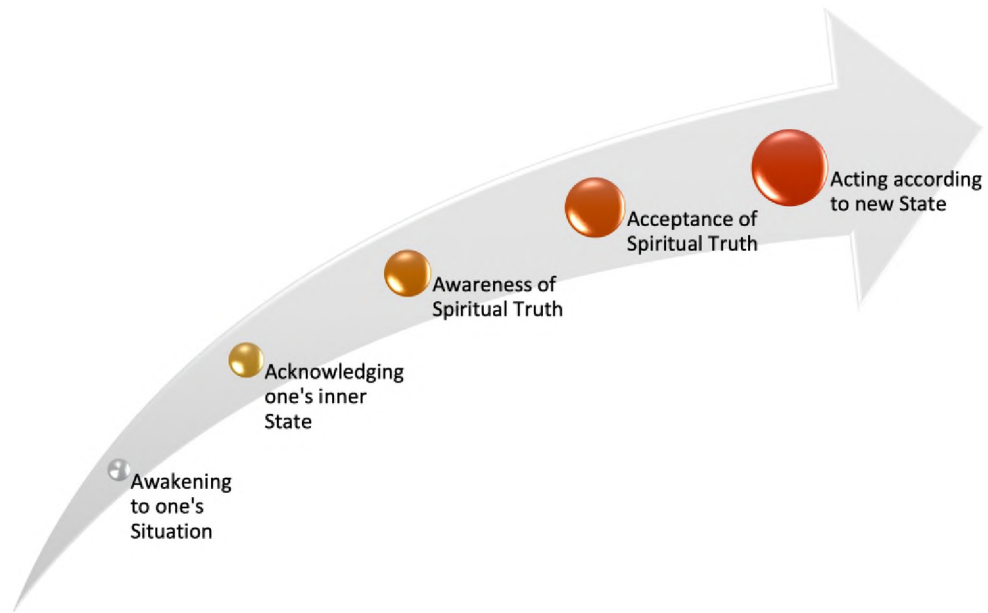


Figure 4: SFMC as a Framework for Spiritual Conversion

The following are conversation starters for each of the five areas of the Spiritual Formation Model of Change that could be used in a one-on-one meeting.

1. Awaken: Have you ever experienced a sudden realization, like an “aha” moment? Or have you ever felt like you were at the end of your rope and realized that there must be a better way? What happened after that? Have you experienced this recently?
(Listen to the person’s experience and then relate it back to the diagram to show how an “aha” moment can provide opportunity to move forward in the spiritual journey.)
2. Acknowledge: Could you describe your emotion today? What motivates you? Do you feel comfortable sharing how you relate to God (if at all)? How’s that going now?
(Listen as they share their feelings and their state of spirituality.)
3. Awareness: What have you been hearing lately (both from outside sources and through internal messages)? What does truth sound like to you?
(Listen as they share their beliefs.)
4. Acceptance: Do you believe what you’re hearing either externally or internally? If not, why not?
(Listen as they share their choice to believe or not. Perhaps the truth they are hearing is not worthy of believing. Ask if they would like to

hear the truth about Jesus. Ask if you can share your story of accepting the truth and how you moved from awakening to acknowledging to gaining awareness of the truth to accepting it.)

5. Action: Have your actions, thoughts, or reactions changed as a result of accepting this belief?
(Listen to their answer without criticism or judgment.)

This application would allow a pastor or spiritual director to understand the client's or congregant's spiritual position at that moment.

Conclusion

Formation implies change: to be formed is to be moulded or shaped so that one's new state is different from the previous one. All humans experience change physically, mentally, emotionally, socially, and spiritually. As I studied existing models of spiritual formation, and thought about the process of spiritual formation of Bible characters and protagonists in literary works as well as in my own life, a pattern emerged. There were similarities shared by all of these sources that resulted in an understanding of how people move from one stage of spiritual growth to the next. Rather than describing the characteristics of specific stages of spiritual growth, this model explains what happens between stages. The model, called the Spiritual Formation Model of Change (SFMC), details the steps and changes that happen in the process of formation. The prophet Jeremiah, noting the need for spiritual change in the Israelites, relayed God's message reminding them that God was like a potter and their lives like clay in his hands (Jeremiah 18:6). The SFMC describes what happens to the clay as it is being formed by the Potter.

Discussing spiritual formation with people in our community can be difficult, particularly with those who are not familiar with the concept or vocabulary of spiritual formation. Chuck Colson writes:

Today, many people are completely unfamiliar with even basic biblical teaching, and we must find ways to engage those who think more like Greeks than Jews; we must follow the New Testament pattern for addressing a pagan culture . . . God calls us to love people enough to go where they are not only physically but also conceptually; we are to listen to their questions and frame answers they can understand. (Colson 1999, 31)

Chuck Colson's call to engage people of varied beliefs and cultures resonates with my desire to create a framework that will facilitate communication with people who are unfamiliar with the gospel and spiritual formation. Despite the external differences that tend to separate humans, we are all spiritual beings, a fact that enables us to communicate with God. He made humans in His image, and He wants to be in a relationship with each person. God is the initiator of our spiritual formation, and He continually reaches out to us.

James Fowler's *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* and Janet Hagberg's *The Critical Journey: Stages in the Life of Faith* revealed that it is possible to describe the formation of faith and spirituality in people's lives. The Spiritual Formation Model of Change in turn describes five aspects people experience as they are moving from one stage to the next, experiencing spiritual formation. This model can describe an initial spiritual conversion, but it also describes the ongoing relationship a Christian has with God, and can be used by believers as a spiritual practice to intentionally seek formation by God. In addition, it provides a framework that can facilitate communication about spirituality between two people.

My desire in creating this model is that it become a bridge by which to connect with people and clarify how spiritual formation occurs within people's lives. In order to test the model, I created an Action Learning Research Project that provided participants with an experience of the first three aspects of the SFMC (awakening, acknowledgement, awareness) and with the invitation to engage personally with the last two (acceptance, action). The following chapter will describe this project.

CHAPTER 4:
LISTENING TO GOD: TEACHING AND
ENGAGING IN SPIRITUAL PRACTICES
WITH OTHERS

Introduction

The previous two chapters have shown that communication happens as we take time to listen. Listening to God is a key factor in our ability to know God, to be in relationship with Him, and to be formed into His likeness. The following chapter describes the process and findings of an Action Learning Research Project in which participants were invited to take time to listen to God. The chapter begins by describing the context surrounding the participants and researcher. After this the Spiritual Formation Model of Change (SFMC) and other resources will be reviewed to explain the rationale for the project. Next, the project methodology and methods will be described, leading to a description of the findings, interpretation, and outcomes. The project will affirm that pausing in the routine of life prompts an awakening that provides time to listen to God.

As mentioned in earlier chapters, from the inception of The Salvation Army (TSA), its soldiers have preached the gospel in the streets, cared for military personnel in wars, and ministered to children, the elderly, the victimized, and those dealing with substance abuse (Halliday, n.d.). Service to others out of love for God is still the focus of TSA, with the latest Canadian Territorial Vision

Statement declaring, “We are an *innovative* partner, *mobilized* to share hope wherever there is hardship, *building* communities that are just and know the love of Jesus” (The Salvation Army THQ Canada and Bermuda n.d.; emphasis mine).

The congregation at Scarborough Citadel desires to fulfill this vision. The soldiers (members) and adherents (attendees) of this church are active in declaring the gospel through music, giving out food through the church food bank, welcoming and helping new immigrants to Canada, ministering to the elderly through visitation, and nurturing children and youth in onsite daycare, Sunday school, and evening discipleship programs. Providing programs based on sharing the gospel has been our means of serving God.

As the Integrated Ministries Coordinator (IMC) at Scarborough Citadel, I am charged with the task of helping people connect with each other and with God. Much of this ministry occurs within the church programming mentioned above. However, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, our ability to minister to others in person was curtailed. In casual conversation with soldiers of Scarborough Citadel, I learned that the government-mandated stay-at-home order resulted in these soldiers having more time to reflect on their motivation for and method of serving God. Several soldiers who had been very active in the church found that they were exhausted; their relief at the closure of the church building and temporary halting of all programs hinted at a problem they didn't realize they had. The sudden pause in activities, coupled with the anxious uncertainty surrounding COVID-19, resulted in an openness to seek God individually. It also resulted in efforts to discern God's will for how to worship corporately post-

pandemic. Whereas prior to COVID-19, soldiers at Scarborough Citadel didn't necessarily feel that there was a problem to be solved regarding their spiritual formation, the pandemic created space for some to connect with God more intentionally and to be open to exploring that formation more.

It was during this time that I was taking the courses for the Doctor of Ministry (DMin) and the Spiritual Direction Internship. I was learning and experiencing spiritual practices (e.g., *lectio divina*, gospel contemplation, silence) that were helping me to take time to slow down, become aware of God's presence, and listen to Him. Adele Calhoun, in her work *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform Us*, writes, "Spiritual practices . . . simply put us in a place where we can begin to notice God and respond to His word to us" (Calhoun 2015, 20). I found that when I engaged in these practices, I became more aware of God's message for me through His word. In addition, as part of the DMin program, I was meeting with a spiritual director. This relationship also helped me become more intentional about listening to God.

As a young person I did not learn the concept of listening to God through Sunday School or other church events. The SA soldiership preparation course excludes some contemplative spiritual practices because they are viewed as too mystical or too Roman Catholic for practical evangelical faith (Bakke 2000, 18). However, an early publication of TSA entitled *The Officer* reveals that the devotional works of contemplative authors were popular sources of spiritual encouragement for original Salvationists (Faragher 2010, 29). As well, over the last two decades spiritual practices, including spiritual direction, have been slowly

re-infiltrating some areas of The Salvation Army. The article by Canadian officer Colonel Glenn Shepherd in the November/December 2003 issue of *The Officer* comments on the place of a prayer room during a corps (church) anniversary celebration. He writes:

The Army has built its reputation on its activism—an activism of evangelism and holiness, of openness to the Spirit of God and his gifts, of social justice and involvement in the community But there is another stream which is finding its place in our tradition, that of contemplation. Contemplation is the prayer-filled life, a longing for the presence of God. The life of contemplation brings us back to our first love—our love for God and an awareness of his love for us. (Quoted in Faragher 2010, 21)

Shepherd's article inspired Major Christine Faragher of Australia to write about the evidence of contemplative practices throughout the history of TSA (Faragher 2010, 18). Her writing confirms that spiritual practices, once hidden in TSA, are again being given prominence.

Lieut.-Colonel Karen Shakespeare's 2011 thesis "Knowing, Being, and Doing: The Spiritual Life of Salvation Army Officers" supports this fact. In her paper Shakespeare records the findings of an international study on the spiritual formation of SA officers (clergy), called the International Spiritual Life Commission, and reports on the introduction of spiritual direction for officers (Shakespeare, 2011). As a response to this study, in 2016 The Salvation Army in Canada and Bermuda launched their own territorial Spiritual Life Survey. In it 800 officers and lay leaders from Canada and Bermuda were invited to fill out a survey indicating the state of their spiritual health. The discovery that over half felt spiritually dry and unsupported resulted in Salvation Army officers being encouraged, and financed, to meet with a spiritual director for spiritual health This was formalized in the operating policy, "Spiritual Wellness and Soul Care –

Officers”.

In 2021 the Canada and Bermuda territory launched a new vision statement with four key pillars, the first of which is “Strengthen Spiritual Health”: a sign that the leadership of TSA identifies spiritual health as its top priority for both officers and soldiers. Despite this priority, and the endorsement of spiritual direction by SA leadership, the soldiers at Scarborough Citadel were not engaged in meeting with a spiritual director prior to the project described in this chapter.

Having personally benefited from spiritual direction and other spiritual exercises, I wondered if these practices would help my fellow soldiers listen to God. As discovered in Chapter 3, I believed that disrupting our routine by meeting together and focusing our minds on God would enable us to listen to Him through spiritual practices such as *lectio divina* and imaginative prayer. This was not a unique idea of mine; over the years, monks and scholars have built their lives on these practices. Ignatius of Loyola’s *Spiritual Exercises* (Ignatius 1914) provides instruction on how to participate in spiritual practices deemed to position the user to better communicate with God. Ignatius believed that using his imagination helped him to sense God’s communication with him (Martin 2010, 145). In reference to Ignatian practices James Martin writes, “Ignatian contemplation enables us to hear more easily, or differently, and to recognize something that might otherwise be overlooked” (Martin 2010, 151).

Contemporary writers such as Morris Dirks and Richard Foster also teach that the practices of silence, solitude, spiritual direction, and other spiritual disciplines aid Christians in their ability to listen to God. Dirks writes of “paying

attention to God’s personal communication” and “listening to God, and to the other” (Dirks 2013, 30), supporting the importance of listening as part of the process of meeting with a spiritual director.

As not all soldiers at Scarborough Citadel were familiar with these practices, this project was designed to teach them the spiritual practices in order to increase their independent ability and desire to listen to God. Thus the meetings with a spiritual director in this project were not exclusively for the purpose of spiritual direction but were also times of teaching. In this way they were a hybrid of both learning conceptually from and engaging with a spiritual director.

Supervision, Permission, and Access

The following details the supervision, permission, and access I was given in order to conduct this project. As the Integrated Ministry Coordinator I report to the corps officer, Captain (then Lieutenant) Johnny Valencia, of Scarborough Citadel. Captain Valencia gave me permission to conduct this project at Scarborough Citadel and was very supportive of it. Before the project was conducted, our congregation was trying to discern God’s direction for reaching our community with the gospel in new ways. Both Captain Valencia and I believed that increasing the ability and desire of soldiers to listen to God would help them to know how God wanted them to participate in His mission. This knowledge, in turn, would influence other soldiers of Scarborough Citadel as they saw the impact the study had on the participants’ experience of listening to God.

I asked a third party (one of my colleagues) to invite soldiers to be part of this study in order to reduce the risk of the invitees feeling pressured to do so.

With the permission of each person who had agreed to participate, I recorded all Zoom sessions during the project. This meant that, if necessary, someone of the participant's own choosing could review the sessions to give support or feedback to the participant.

I also used the recordings to reduce bias in my assessment of the data. For the purpose of data collection, being able to rewatch sessions rather than trying to recall what happened from memory allowed me to have a more objective perspective on what happened. However, since I knew all the participants before the project began, and was hoping for a specific outcome, it was impossible to remain completely unbiased in my role as spiritual director; the multiple roles of spiritual director, researcher, friend, and congregant in this project all caused me to greatly desire a positive outcome. The recordings allowed me to see what happened so that I didn't read more, in hindsight, into a participant's words or actions than what was actually there. In addition, to decrease my bias, I met for supervision with my spiritual direction supervisor to assess my own reactions throughout the sessions.

Context

As described above, The Salvation Army supports some contemplative spiritual practices and provides funding for officers to meet with a spiritual director; the project was conducted with Salvation Army (SA) soldiers in this underlying context of sanctioned spiritual formation. The following section will describe both the local SA setting of this project (Scarborough Citadel) from which the soldiers were selected, and my background as the researcher.

Scarborough Citadel is situated on the corner of Lawrence and Warden Avenues in the Maryvale-Wexford area of Scarborough, Ontario. The Wexford-Maryvale neighbourhood has a multiethnic population, with 28.2% speaking a language other than English or French as their first language (Social Policy, Analysis, and Research for the City of Toronto, 2016). Once an English-only congregation, Scarborough Citadel now comprises congregants who speak Tagalog, Tamil, Arabic, Italian, Spanish, Chinese, Urdu, Hungarian, German, French, and Mandarin. The corps officers are Colombian by birth and lead the church in both English and Spanish. This study included congregants from a variety of ethnic backgrounds.

In 2019 the attendance at a Sunday morning worship service averaged 120 people. Since March 13, 2020, when the Scarborough Citadel building was closed due to COVID-19, church services have been held via Facebook Live and YouTube. The average engagement of Scarborough Citadel Sunday morning services for 2021 was 200.

Only soldiers were invited to participate in this project, because as soldiers they share a particular belief system and level of commitment to God and The Salvation Army. There were 141 soldiers on the Soldier Roll at Scarborough Citadel in 2021, 65 of whom were actively participating in the online life of the corps at the time of the project. After reviewing the 65 soldiers for current health issues, availability, ability to cope in the pandemic, fluency in English, and internet know-how, I identified ten potential participants, of whom eight were able to participate: four women and four men. They ranged in age from 18 to 68

and represented a cultural cross-section of the congregation, with English, Hispanic, and multiethnic soldiers participating (African-British and Indigenous-British, specifically). The participants met with the spiritual director (myself) biweekly over Zoom for six one-on-one, one-hour sessions. The length and number of sessions were chosen to give participants the opportunity to learn a variety of new ways of listening to God, and the biweekly meeting schedule was chosen to give participants time to practise the new ways of listening between sessions, enabling them to learn a variety of spiritual practices. The length of the study was also determined by the time frame of the course for which this project was conducted.

In each session the participants were asked whether the previous session had changed the way they listened to God and whether it had increased their desire to do so. Each session included time for the participant to speak about their life and faith experience; it also included the teaching and engagement of a specific spiritual practice (such as *lectio divina*, silence, gospel contemplation). Due to COVID-19 restrictions in Toronto, with repeated stay-at-home orders from the provincial government, this study was limited to those who had access to the internet and were comfortable connecting via Zoom.

Scarborough Citadel's Spiritual Climate

Scarborough Citadel is a Salvation Army corps (church) and as such is a part of the evangelical branch of the Christian Church. It is both a worshipping community and a movement dedicated to helping those who need social and spiritual support. Historically, TSA is based on Wesleyan theology but was also

influenced by “the holiness teaching of Phoebe Palmer, the revivalism of Charles Finney, and the evangelistic endeavours of such as James Caughey” (Read n.d.). Scarborough Citadel’s theology is based on the 11 doctrines of The Salvation Army found in the Soldier’s Covenant (see [Appendix S](#)) and in Our Beliefs (see [Appendix T](#)).

Over the past three years there has been an increase in new people attending our worship services at Scarborough Citadel, resulting in growing ethnic diversity in the congregation. Some of the Hispanic and African worshipers new to our congregation have brought both a contemplative awareness of the presence of the Holy Spirit and a freedom of expression in worship that have broadened Scarborough Citadel’s spirituality. In our worship services we experience spontaneous, heartfelt prayers during which the congregation is invited to seek God’s presence. The atmosphere of the service is more informal, with many people wearing casual clothes and leaders speaking in a conversational manner from the platform. Congregants are encouraged to worship in the style that is most comfortable to the individual. During our times of worship through music, this results in some people dancing and others raising their hands, while still others stand reverently or sit in place. The spiritual climate that characterizes Scarborough Citadel is a growing desire to do God’s will and to help others. More recently, the personal spiritual fervor of our current corps officers has created an atmosphere of expectancy and a desire to seek God’s will for our congregation. The officers are familiar with contemplative practices, including spiritual direction, and were supportive of this project. They viewed it as part of God’s

plan for Scarborough Citadel and were excited to see how He would use it for His glory.

Background of the Researcher

As a soldier and employee of Scarborough Citadel I seek to help people connect with God and with each other. Having faithfully attended Scarborough Citadel my whole life, I am familiar with the congregation and its spiritual history. I am also trained as a spiritual director and assumed that role for this study. As the researcher, I chose the topic of listening to God because it was something I sensed God bringing to my attention over the last few years through music, books, and my experience of spiritual practices at Tyndale.

As described in Chapter 2, writing my spiritual autobiography revealed to me that God has used music to communicate with me throughout my life. Music has also been a useful means of learning how to pay attention and listen well. Through my engagement with various music groups (band and choir), I have been trained to be aware of what's happening around me, to listen to others, and to see how I fit into what is happening overall. This continuous awareness and attentiveness required when participating in musical groups has helped me both in listening to God and in giving spiritual direction.

Other resources contributed to the choice of "Listening to God" as the topic for this portfolio and this project. As a teenager I was given a novel by Taylor Caldwell called *The Listener* (Caldwell 1960). This book had a great spiritual and emotional impact on me. The author writes in the foreword, "The most desperate need of [people] today is not a new vaccine for any disease, or a

new religion, or a new ‘way of life’ . . . His [or her] real need, his most terrible need, is for someone to listen to him” (Caldwell 1960, vii). In the book, as people from different life situations visit a chapel to share their requests with the silent Listener, they find answers to their deepest needs. Caldwell explains, “While he listens, you will find your own problems solved. Will he speak to you, also? Who knows? Perhaps. Surely, if you ask him. If you listen, too” (Caldwell 1960, ix). Even today, 40 years later, I remember that the concept of having someone always available to hear me met a deep desire of my heart. More than a repository for secrets, though, the Listener provided comfort, instruction, forgiveness, and more. It wasn’t a one-way conversation, but a relationship where both persons listened and were listened to.

In my master’s studies at Tyndale, I took a course in spiritual formation in which I first experienced *lectio divina*. At that time, I listened to God by meditating on a biblical text through multiple readings and silence, an experience that resulted in a revelation from God confirming my role in His church through the image of a bridge. This image has become a reality in my current role as IMC, where I help connect people to God and to the church.

Functioning as a bridge between non-churched people and the congregation in order to introduce people to God is not always easy; as mentioned in previous chapters, the language used to communicate about spiritual things can be hard to understand. The expression “listening to God” captures a simple yet profound concept to share with others. Listening to God implies that God is

speaking. The following paragraphs show that God not only has spoken, but wants us to listen to Him.

Biblical Support for Listening to God

God wants us to listen to Him. Throughout both the Old and New Testaments, God commands His people, and us, to listen to Him. In the Old Testament He commanded the Israelites to listen to Him for their well-being (Exodus 15:25-26) and exhorted others to listen to find wisdom (Proverbs 1:8-9). Through the prophet Jeremiah, God described the outcome of not listening, underscoring the weight of importance God placed on listening to Him: “This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: ‘Listen! I am going to bring on this city and all the villages around it every disaster I pronounced against them, because they were stiff-necked and would not listen to my words’” (Jeremiah 19:15). God’s desire is for good; He pleaded with the Israelites, “Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live” (Isaiah 55:2b-3a).

The New Testament contains multiple accounts of Jesus going to a solitary place for prayer (Matthew 14:23, Mark 6:46, Luke 6:12) where He could be with His Father. Jesus stated that He only spoke what God commanded Him to say (John 12:49, 50), indicating that Jesus listened to God. Jesus also instructed people to listen to Him, often beginning his parables with the word “Listen” (Matthew 13:18, Matthew 15:10). God also called the disciples to listen to Jesus: during the transfiguration God commanded, “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to Him!” (Mark 9:7).

My experience of listening to God throughout my life, and God's evident desire for all people to listen to Him, made me curious about this topic. I wanted to understand it for myself but also to be able to help others engage in a listening relationship with God in which they could truly experience Him and thus be transformed by Him.

Literary Support for Listening to God

As noted in Chapter 3, God has continued to speak to me through books such as *Pilgrim's Progress* (Bunyan 1966) and a less likely source, *White Oleander* (Fitch 1999). The comparison of the protagonists in these two vastly different stories alerted me to common aspects of spiritual formation, which I categorized in five stages of the Spiritual Formation Model of Change (SFMC). I later discovered when reading Robert Mulholland's work *Invitation to a Journey* that this is similar to what he describes as "The Classical Christian Pilgrimage," which involves stages of Awakening, Purgation, Illumination, and Union (Mulholland 2016, 95). Both my model and Mulholland's include a form of awakening, awareness, or illumination—stages in which the pilgrim or participant must stop what they are doing in order to be aware or to hear what God is saying to them. These three books provided evidence to support listening as a common element in models of spiritual formation and to confirm that the act of listening creates the climate for hearing God through which this formation happens.

As noted in Chapter 3, the intellectual support for the SFMC came from the writings of two key authors: James Fowler and Janet Hagberg. Their work

supported my belief that spiritual development is something every human being experiences, much as we all experience emotional or physical development.

Salvation Army Support for Listening to God

Desiring to connect my understanding of spiritual formation with my Salvation Army roots, I turned to Salvation Army publications. *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine* (General of The Salvation Army 2010) is the Salvationist's guide to what we believe. The 2010 edition includes a detailed chapter on each doctrine, describing it phrase by phrase and including sections on: 1. essentials of the doctrine; 2. an historical summary; 3. later theological developments; and 4. issues for Salvationists. In addition, the Handbook contains appendices with historical church creeds, a lectionary for Salvationists, and a section on the Salvationist's understanding of the church.

A final section, entitled "Affirmations," contains 12 statements further exploring the life of faith, the sixth of which is called "The Disciplines of the Inner Life" (General of The Salvation Army 2010, 305). In this section the Salvationist is encouraged to cultivate the inner life through solitude, prayer, meditation, study, and self-denial. It instructs readers that "[p]ractising solitude, spending time alone with God, we discover the importance of silence, learn to listen to God, and discover our true selves" (General of The Salvation Army 2010, 305). In short, the book affirms the practice of solitude and silence as beneficial for the soldier to listen to God.

Recognizing the need to draw Salvationists back to the *Handbook of Doctrine* and bridge the gap between theology and culture, Major Ray Harris

wrote *Convictions Matter: The Function of Salvation Army Doctrines* (Harris 2014). In this work Harris aids Salvationists in seeing the relevance of the doctrines for everyday life. His work reaffirms the biblical idea of transformation, stating, “Together we affirm the belief that it is a privilege to be transformed into the image of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. We look for real change now and for the day when this transformation will be complete” (Harris 2014, 201). His work asserts that Salvationists are in a process of spiritual change that has as its goal our ultimate full transformation into the image of Christ.

Harris addresses the process of spiritual change that happens as we spend time listening to God by reminding his readers of the biblical concept of holiness. He affirms that, as written in Doctrine 10 (see Appendix R), holiness is for all people: This doctrine (number 10) also points to the conviction that holiness is intended to be the experience of *all* believers. Holiness is not for an elite few. God intends ordinary people to embody his character in ordinary circumstances” (Harris 2014, 198; author’s italics retained). This project aims to discover the impact, in the ongoing formation of soldiers of Scarborough Citadel, of listening to God with a spiritual director.

More recently, in 2020, the office of the General published two books for Salvationists: *Called to be a Soldier: Exploring the Soldier’s Covenant* (The General 2020) and *Day by Day Call to Mission: Practical Application and Inner Strength for Your Discipleship* (Street 2020). Written for soldiers and officers, both books were made available worldwide and given out freely to all who

wanted them. These are excellent resources for helping SA soldiers learn and practise their beliefs. Called to be a Soldier states:

Every soldier should allow the Holy Spirit to direct every aspect of our life—our attitudes, motivation, behaviour, thinking, speech, and interaction with other people are all influenced by the Spirit. This consistent cultivation of the inner life is essential for our faith-life and for our fighting fitness. (General of The Salvation Army 2020, 22)

The cultivation of the inner life is encouraged, with the instruction to participate in such disciplines as solitude, prayer, meditation, study, and self-denial. On their own these practices are self-directed and individualistic. What would be beneficial in conjunction with them is the practice of meeting with a spiritual director: having a relationship with someone who walks alongside a soldier providing support and encouragement in spiritual development. Jeannette Bakke writes,

We listen for God in spiritual disciplines and in the midst of life and consider what we notice in the prayerful context of spiritual direction conversations God uses spiritual direction to develop our awareness, which in turn affects our ability to recognize God in ourselves, others, and the world, to notice God’s invitations, and to be deliberate about our responses. (Bakke 2000, 241-266)

My project aims to expand the resources of the SA soldier to include the communal practice of meeting with someone and partnering in soul care in order to help create an environment of grace-filled listening.

Additional models that influenced and contributed to this project came from contemplatives such as St. Benedict, whose *Rule of Life* begins with words that echo Proverbs 1: “Listen carefully, my son, to the master’s instructions, and attend to them with the ear of your heart” (Benedict 1989, 3). As well, modern authors such as Morris Dirks provided inspiration for the format used in

conducting this study. His work *Forming the Leader's Soul: An Invitation to Spiritual Direction* (Dirks 2013) grounded spiritual direction in biblical authority. His writing also provided several definitions of spiritual direction all of which contain the concept of God's desire to speak to us as we listen to Him. Dallas Willard's work *Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God* (Willard 2012) provided theory as well as suggestions for practical ways of approaching Scripture as a means of listening to God. Finally, this study is based on the practical examples of *lectio divina* and on types of prayer covered in David Sherbino's workbook *Re:Connect: Spiritual Exercises to Develop Intimacy with God* (Sherbino 2013) and Richard Foster's *Prayer* (Foster 2002).

Dallas Willard wrote, "Given our basic nature, we live—really live—only through God's regular speaking in our souls and thus 'by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" (Willard 2012, 20-21). For us to hear from God it is necessary to listen in an active way. We hear God speak through His word and through His Spirit. Spiritual practices and spiritual direction provide the time, the support, and the means to listen to God.

Field, Scope, Limitations, Methodology, Methods, and Ethics

The following section will outline the field, scope, methodology, and method used for this project in order to detail the process. A chart outlining the scope will give an overview of the topics covered in the sessions. (Appendices at the end of this document contain individual outlines of each session.) This section will also include a chart of the activities leading up to, during, and following the

project to validate the process used to gather data. A comment on the ethical practices will conclude the section.

Field

This research project occurred online via Zoom with eight senior soldiers of Scarborough Citadel. The participants ranged in age from 18 to 68. Most participants had taken the Soldiership preparation classes before they were 25 years old. All had signed the Soldier's Covenant containing the doctrines of The Salvation Army (see Appendix S) and the statement of Our Beliefs (see Appendix T). Five of the participants were of British heritage, two were of mixed ethnicity, and one was of Hispanic background. Their education varied, with two having high school as their highest level of education and four having completed college, one with an undergraduate degree and one with a graduate degree. The participants were divided equally between gender and tendency towards introversion/extroversion. All participants knew me prior to the project, as we all attend Scarborough Citadel.

Each participant engaged in six biweekly one-on-one sessions with me. Data was collected in the form of video recordings and transcripts of these sessions. Data in the form of pre-project (see [Appendix U](#)) and post-project (see [Appendix V](#)) surveys was also collected from all participants. These surveys were developed by the researcher and tested with people not participating in the project to ensure they elicited the information needed for the study. The questions in both surveys aimed at discovering the participants' current ability, time spent, and desire to listen to God in order to have a base-line marker at the beginning of the

study. The post-project survey included 5 more questions which were used to gauge the participants' experience of the project. In addition, a video recording and transcript of the final debriefing session with six of the participants provided data.

Scope

The scope of the project covered the engagement in various spiritual practices with a spiritual director to measure the increased desire and ability of soldiers to listen to God. Since some of the participants were not familiar with the spiritual practices, these were introduced and taught during the sessions; as noted above, this meant that the sessions with a spiritual director were not “pure” spiritual direction of the kind in which the director allows the Holy Spirit and the directee to guide the conversation. For the purpose of this study a hybrid was created that included both teaching and spiritual direction.

The sessions were roughly divided into times of teaching and times of listening together. The spiritual practices experienced were: *lectio divina*, gospel contemplation, use of the imagination, the use of music, the use of art, and silence. After these practices were taught and experienced there was time for the participant to debrief with the spiritual director. At the end of each session the participant was then invited and encouraged to engage in the practices independently until the next session two weeks later.

Table 1 outlines the topic of each session, its biblical focus, and the spiritual practices used. A summary of each session can be found in the

Appendices of this paper according to the letter found in the leftmost column (e.g., 1/AG indicates that the summary of Session 1 is found in Appendix AG).

Table 1: Scope of Sessions

Session/ Appendix	Topic	Bible passage focused on	Focal spiritual practices used
1/W	Silence	1 Samuel 3:1-10 God speaks to Samuel	Silence <i>Lectio divina</i>
2/X	God speaks	The words of God and Jesus in various Bible verses from Genesis to Revelation	Music Scripture Reflection with a spiritual director
3/Y	The Holy Spirit	Psalm 46	Meditation on Psalm 46 in the Voice, Message, and NIV translations Psalm 46 in song Reflection with a spiritual director
4/Z	Imagination	Mark 2:1-11 Jesus forgives and heals a paralyzed man	Gospel contemplation Reflection with a spiritual director
5/AA	Questions	Five questions God/Jesus asked	Meditation on questions found in Scripture. Reflection with a spiritual director
6/AB	Postures of Listening to God	Luke 15:11-32 The Prodigal Son	<i>Lectio / visio divina</i> Reflection with a spiritual director

Each spiritual practice and Scripture passage was chosen with the aim of helping participants learn a new way of listening to God and experience it with a spiritual director. The project began with the topic of silence as this is foundational to many other spiritual practices, especially listening. The second session grounded

the practice of listening to God in the words of God and Jesus found in the Bible. The third session highlighted the work of the Holy Spirit as the means to our ability to hear God's message. The final three topics used common practices (the use of our imagination, questions, and bodily positions) and linked them to Scripture meditation as a way to enhance how to be more open to hearing from God. Thus there was a progression from session to session as the topics increased the knowledge of how to listen while providing opportunity to practice during and between sessions.

Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to those who had internet access, were active soldiers of Scarborough Citadel, and had the resources and knowledge to participate online. In addition, there were other limitations around the field and scope of this study. The field of study was limited to include only English-speaking soldiers, since I am fluent only in English. Another limitation involved the scope of the project. The topic of Listening to God was chosen because it is foundational to the Spiritual Formation Model of Change (SFMC). This study was limited to only the first three aspects of the model due to the short time frame of the project and the interest in measuring one focal aspect (listening).

The project engaged a subset of the soldiers of Scarborough Citadel in order to keep the amount of data manageable for the size of the DMin project. Not all soldiers approached were able to participate. Also, given the time frame of the course, the participants met with the spiritual director every other week. Often people meet with a spiritual director monthly to allow time for the director to

experience God through the various practices and the rhythms of daily or weekly life. The tightening of this time frame may have influenced the results.

These limitations were necessary for this project as they provided guidelines for what was needed and explained why other things were left out.

Methodology

The methodology chosen for this research project was Action Learning. Coghlan describes it in this way: “Action learning is an approach to learning through engaging with a group of peers which provides reflective space, support, and challenge to work through a problem” (Coghlan 2019, 189). Coghlan clarifies his definition of the word “problem” to mean “difficulties where no single solution can possibly exist because different people advocate different courses of action in accordance with their own value systems, past experience, and intended outcomes” (Coghlan 2019, 67). Action learning focuses on helping participants experience or try new ways of doing things based on their existing knowledge, while allowing everyone to discover, through action, how best to meet the goal of the project. In this case participants came to the project as Christians who already engaged in Bible reading and prayer. They met with the researcher to experience listening to God in new ways.

Methods

The project began with an email letter of invitation ([Appendix AC](#)) to soldiers who were currently attending Scarborough Citadel’s online worship services. As mentioned above, this email was sent by a third party (a colleague of

mine in the DMin program) in order to mitigate any feelings of pressure to participate. The email outlined the project and invited questions or comments on its process. A consent form ([Appendix AD](#)) was sent to those who wished to participate.

Once consent was received, the online pre-project survey (Appendix U) was emailed to each participant. This survey was used to gain baseline data regarding participants' knowledge of and engagement in listening to God. It also captured what the participants felt were the qualities of a good listener and practices they identified as ways they listened to God. When each participant's completed survey was received, one-on-one sessions were arranged and started with the spiritual director. These continued biweekly (except for the Christmas holidays) for a total of six sessions per participant. Each session was recorded, and transcripts were created via the program Zoom.

Each of sessions 2 through 6 began with the questions, "Did anything stick with you since our last time together? Have you found yourself listening to God in a new or different way?" In addition, a post-project survey (Appendix V) and group debrief session provided insight into the outcomes of the project.

Table 2 below lists the various methods used, the type of data, the date it was collected, and who provided it. One hundred percent of participants provided answers to both pre- and post-project surveys. All eight participants attended all six of their one-on-one sessions, resulting in 48 hours of video footage and 48 transcripts of sessions. Three participants were unable to attend the debrief session because of other commitments.

Table 2: Summary of Data Collected

Data	Date collected	Who provided data
Pre-project survey (see Appendix U)	Oct. 12-25, 2021	All participants
One-on-one session videos	See Table 6 below	All participants
One-on-one session transcripts	See Table 6 below	All participants
Post-project survey (see Appendix V)	Jan. 11-20, 2022	All participants
Group debrief meeting	January 20, 2022	Participants F01, F02, F03, M01, M04

Use of the online survey caused confusion for some participants because of different operating systems and an inability to type onto the form. I resolved this issue by amending the format of the survey so that it was more accessible. The internet connection was stable for all sessions, providing ideal conditions for communicating over Zoom. Using the surveys, case notes, and debriefing session enabled triangulation of data for greater accuracy.

Being a participating member of the same church and a friend of the participants was both a benefit and a hindrance. It was a benefit in that I knew the histories and personalities of the participants to some extent and could thus anticipate their tendency to like or dislike something. This enabled me to choose, for example, music that they might appreciate, and to have a good rapport right from the start. At the same time, this knowledge may have resulted in me jumping to conclusions or glossing over significant reactions because of my assumptions. Familiarity allowed me to work well with participants, to benefit from the study, and to learn what would help others in our congregation in the future.

The methods of gathering data were appropriate for this project because they provided ways for the researcher to understand the participants' experience of listening to God both pre- and post-project. The method was timely, as COVID-19 prevented us from meeting in person for worship together; meeting one-on-one with a spiritual director provided a much-needed opportunity for people to have spiritual conversations, learn new spiritual practices, and listen to God. Zoom has also become very familiar to people through the pandemic, making this an appropriate method of engaging in spiritual direction. [Appendix AE](#) contains a chart indicating when each task for this project was completed, the primary person involved in each task, and the purpose behind it.

The research methods provided both qualitative and quantitative data, enabling the use of content analysis to evaluate patterns such as the frequency of words and concepts. The survey data was collected using a Word document emailed out to each participant, who emailed it back to me with their answers. I then compiled the results in an Excel spreadsheet. For some survey questions, a simple comparison of pre- and post-project survey answers provided an indication of change per participant. For example, the first question of the survey asked participants to indicate the number of times per week that they met with God; according to their responses, all participants met with God at least once a week (Table 3):

Table 3: A Subset of Pre- and Post-project Survey Data

Participant/ Question	F01		F02		F03	
	Pre-project survey	Post-project survey	Pre-project survey	Post-project survey	Pre-project survey	Post-project survey
1. I set aside time to be with God ...	a few times a week	a few times a week	every day	every day	every day	every day

Other survey questions (Questions 2, 3, 8, and 9) were multiple choice and required the participant to select as many answers as were applicable. For example, Question 8 asked, “What helps you to be a good listener?” and provided the following options to choose from:

- silence
- noise
- patience
- motive
- focus
- atmosphere
- energy
- love
- time
- darkness
- self-discipline

Comparing pre- and post-project answers provided data to show whether the project impacted the way participants listened. Table 4 illustrates the way three of the eight participants’ answers were formatted and how the answers of all participants were summarized for survey Question 8.

Table 4: Survey Reflections

Participant/ Question	F01		F02		F03	
	Pre-project	Post-project	Pre-Project	Post-project	Pre-Project	Post-project
8. What helps you to be a good listener to people in your life? Check all that apply.	silence, focus, patience	silence, focus, time, patience, love	silence, time, patience, love	silence, focus, time, atmosphere, patience, energy, self-discipline, love	silence, time, atmosphere, patience, love	silence, focus, time, patience

Results for all participants:

Possible answers	Pre-project	Post-project
Silence	6	8
Time	1	1
Patience	6	6
Love	7	7
Focus	2	2
Atmosphere	3	3
Self-discipline	1	2
Energy	1	2
Motive	1	1

Note that of the nine options given to answer the question, “What helps you to be a good listener?” the most common and consistent answer was “silence” with 6 participants listing it pre-project and 8 in the post-project survey. Time, love, and focus were also popular choices, but not consistent between the pre- and post-

project survey responses; for example, love as a chosen answer decreased from 7 participants in the pre-project survey to 5 in the post-project survey.

In addition, other survey questions (Questions 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14) were open-ended and answered in a narrative style. These produced qualitative data. In those cases, the data was coded by word meaning (for example, “Bible reading” and “Scripture reading” were considered the same) in order to then compare pre- and post-project surveys to see if there was an increase in amount or intensity of the factor being studied.

Qualitative data was also collected for each spiritual direction session from the researcher’s observations in written case notes. These notes described each participant’s experience in listening to God during the session, their familiarity with various methods of listening to God, and the outcome of spending time listening to God. In addition, the recording of each session and its transcript were reviewed; this data was compiled into an Excel sheet and also coded by word meaning. Each session recording was watched and listened to in order to hear how the participant’s ability and desire to listen to God were impacted.

Table 5 provides a sample of the way this data was recorded. Having the session notes from each participant in a single Excel sheet enabled the researcher to draw out themes and changes in the experience of each participant.

Similarly, the data from the debriefing session was gathered from a recording and transcript of the session, coded by word meaning, and stored in a sheet in the Excel file.

Table 5: Sample of Session Data Sorted by Participant

In order to capture the trends and recurring themes in all three sources of

Participant: M03	Session topic	Initial reflection on how the project has impacted them	Three examples of how the session topic, their own time with God, and life have been impacting their ability and desire to listen to God.		
			Example 1	Example 2	Example 3
Session 1: Listening in silence	1 Samuel <i>Lectio Divina</i>	<p>Have you ever had spiritual direction?</p> <p>“Informally, from church elders, parents . . .”</p>	<p>Can you describe your practice of listening to God?</p> <p>“Irregular—don’t schedule, haven’t made the effort. When I’m ready to crash I tend to take time, me, my guitar. More recently I listen to Scripture . . .”</p>	<p>“When I’m stressed, I take a lot of pauses to reflect and spend time alone—often with music.”</p>	<p>Beginning of relationship with God?</p> <p>“It’s stairlike. I’ve had moments of growth and then plateaus. No specific moment for being saved. I feel I’ve known Jesus from a young age . . .”</p>
Session 2: God speaks	Bible verses Power Point	<p>Did anything stick with you?</p> <p>“Listening component—I feel like I’ve been listening more. Instead of me thinking, I’ve been trying to keep things open—not trying to force it or direct it to the overall scheme.”</p>	<p>“Certain phrases jump out at me—all around I have this distinct happiness—I’m just, like, ‘Wo, wo, wo, it doesn’t need to be so vivid.’ It’s an overall thing.”</p>	<p>“God speaks to me through different people. People may say things they don’t realize is significant.”</p>	<p>Heard from God through the Bible?</p> <p>“God knows the birds—nothing special but it stuck. If God looks after the birds, then I don’t have to worry.”</p>

data, a final Excel sheet was created. In this sheet data was sorted via themes that

emerged within each of the data sources. Table 6 reveals how the theme of silence occurred in all three sources of data, illustrating the impact of silence on participants' ability to listen to God. Proximity of themes in the file (e.g., busyness and noise) enabled the researcher to discover how themes related to each other.

Table 6: Data from All Sources Sorted by Category

Debrief Meeting	Comparison of Surveys	Themes	Session Data
<p>“Yeah, really the idea of being quiet and being still has stayed with me, just the idea of taking that time, and just at the beginning breathing deeply and just being still and being settled and present to what’s happening right with me.” (F01)</p>	<p>Comparing pre and post surveys, all participants (8) listed “silence” in the post-project survey as a factor that helps them to be a good listener, in contrast to 6 in the pre-project survey.</p>	<p>Silence</p>	<p>Imagination & silence: “When silent with God I imagine the Jesus from [TV series] <i>The Chosen</i> holding my hand, putting his arm around me or whatever in silence” (Session 1 – F01).</p>

The pre- and post-project surveys, one-on-one sessions with a spiritual director, and the group debriefing meeting were the three sources of data for this project, enabling triangulation of data for accurate and thorough interpretation.

Ethics

The goal of this project was to help participants experience new ways of listening to God. The means of achieving this goal was to create one-hour, one-

on-one experiences of learning and engaging in new spiritual practices with a spiritual director. One way to ensure a positive experience was to follow the requirements of the Tyndale Research Ethics Board, which I did by creating and submitting an ethics proposal. This was approved by the Board on October 8, 2021.

As the Integrated Ministries Coordinator (IMC) at Scarborough Citadel, I have no formal authority over any of the participants. However, I recognized that I have unspoken influence, potentially creating a power differential between researcher and participant and causing a feeling of pressure to participate. To mitigate that power differential, as mentioned above, I had a third party email the invitation to potential participants. This person sent the invitations, received responses, and then relayed the responses to me. Engaging a third party reduced the pressure participants may have felt to participate because of their ongoing relationship with me. All those invited responded positively. In addition, as the IMC I adhere to The Salvation Army's Code of Conduct which requires me to uphold the mission and core values of the organization.

When sending out the consent form, I reiterated that there was no pressure from me for them to participate and that at any time they were free to withdraw from the project with no negative repercussions. Throughout the project I also repeated these instructions. In addition, I reminded participants that their participation did not require them to give answers they thought I wanted, but that whatever experience or answer they had was the one I wanted to hear.

To help me identify any biases on my part towards the participants, I reflected on our sessions and reviewed my responses. I met once with my spiritual direction supervisor to review my interactions with the participant to whom I felt closest in friendship (F01) in order to monitor my reactions and improve my open-ended questioning with her. With the participants' permission I recorded each session and created transcripts of the recordings so that I would have an accurate portrayal of our meetings. This enabled me to see, from an external perspective, if I was being as unbiased as I needed to be.

To identify and manage the expectations of the participants, I communicated with them before and during the project, listening to their questions and answering them. Spiritual direction is about listening to God, but it is also about the director listening to the directee; therefore, it was very natural to converse with the participants about their expectations in each session.

Although my position as IMC did not originally include the role of spiritual director, my supervisor Captain Johnny Valencia saw this project as a great opportunity to both teach and engage congregants in this way. He was happy that I was able to engage congregants in this project and supported me in prayer throughout.

Findings, Interpretation, and Outcomes

The two areas examined in this project were the ability and the desire of soldiers to listen to God. In hindsight, "ability" and "desire" are concepts that should have been defined for the participants in order to clarify their meaning. Stating their definitions now provides a clearer understanding for the reader and

allows for accuracy in data analysis. For this project I defined “ability” as the actual (as opposed to potential) capacity of participants to engage in spiritual practices for the purpose of intentionally positioning themselves so as to hear from God. Ability was measured by the number of spiritual practices that a participant learned in the sessions and that they engaged in after the sessions. Post-project I discovered that ability could also be measured by an increase in the understanding of a specific spiritual practice. For some this was manifested in the use of one practice more than others or continuing to use a practice on their own throughout the project.

“Desire” I defined as a longing or craving. In this case the longing or craving was to spend time listening to God. Desire was measured by the change in the amount of time set aside to spend with God individually. Post-project I realized that desire could also be measured by the amount of time a participant used a specific spiritual exercise that helped them listen to God, whether in conjunction with or to replace a previously used way of being with God.

Findings and Interpretation: Ability

Findings from the three sources of data revealed that, overall, participants’ ability to listen to God increased. Participants reported that they were more able to listen to God because they had learned: 1) new spiritual practices; 2) new ways to listen to God using familiar spiritual practices; 3) that having a variety of spiritual practices in their repertoire gave them more opportunities to listen to God; 4) the value of silence in listening; and 5) to expand a spiritual practice beyond what

was taught in the session. The following paragraphs outline the findings in these four areas.

New Spiritual Practices Learned

Pre- and post-project surveys revealed that, overall, the number of spiritual practices participants used to spend time with God increased from 13 to 23. The perception was that participants learned new practices of listening to God, such as silence, the use of imagination, and meeting with a spiritual director, resulting in an increased ability to listen to God. Figures 5 and 6 below give a clear visual of the increase in the number of spiritual practices participants used both pre- and post-project.

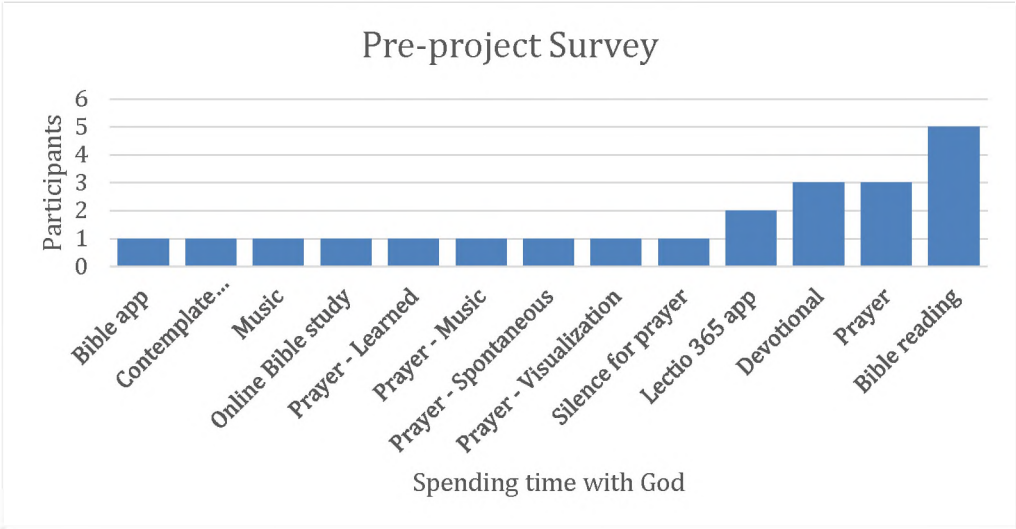


Figure 5: Number of Ways Participants Used When Spending Time with God Pre-Project

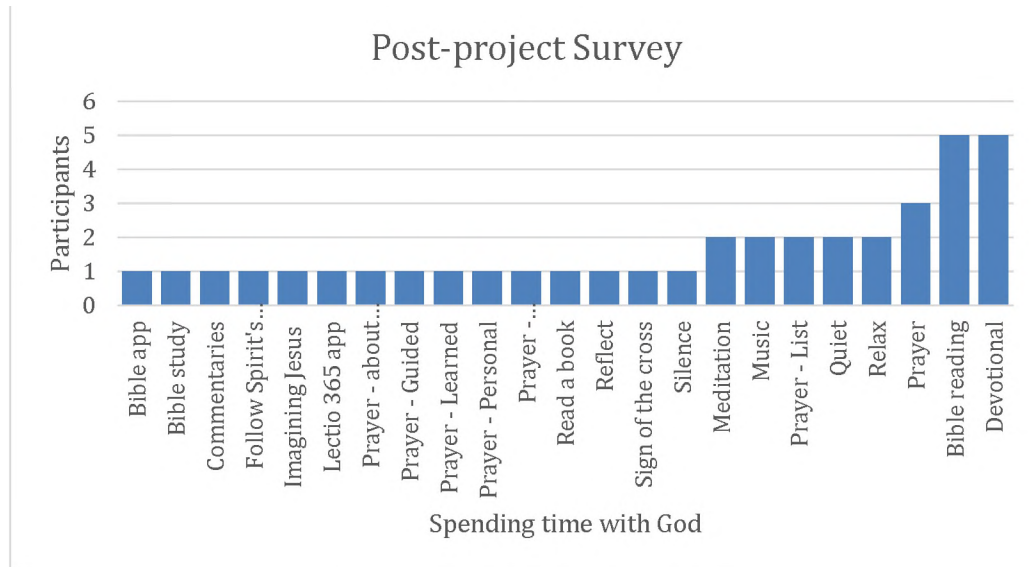


Figure 6: Number of Ways Participants Used When Spending Time with God Post-Project

There was a relationship between the number of ways the participants used to listen to God and their increased ability to do so. In the debrief, participant F01 described learning new practices as adding to a spiritual practice toolkit. She commented:

Some places in Scripture, you know, it's very easy to imagine yourself in the story. For example, "Where do I fit into this story?" or "Who do I identify with?" Other passages of Scripture lend themselves more to "What posture would I take in this?" or just to be silent and to just meditate on a word or an image. So, it is kind of nice to consider that and just think, yeah, like the ability to listen to God, having more tools helps us be more able to listen to God through different passages of Scripture, or different circumstances in our life. (F01, Debrief)

M03 agreed, stating that the various ways to listen to God gave him a deeper sense of understanding a Scripture passage and his relationship with God (M03 Debrief).

New Ways to Listen to God with Familiar Spiritual Practices

Some of the spiritual practices (Bible reading, prayer) were listed by participants in both pre- and post-project surveys as ways in which they met with God. The participants reported that the way they engaged in these familiar practices had changed since the project, helping them to be more able to listen to God. For example, reading the Bible was used by all participants pre- and post-project; however, participants reported that post-project they coupled the practice of reading Scripture with the use of imagination, following the Spirit's leading, or meditation. M01 noted that imagining oneself as part of the worshiping crowd of Psalm 103 "helps you experience it in a different way—I don't know if it was 'more real'" (M01, Session 5). He also commented that "imagining myself in different scenarios or in proximity with God or things like that was actually one of the more powerful ones that we did" (M01, Debrief). M03 and M04 concurred that using their imagination helped them to listen to God. Personalizing the activity (visualizing themselves in the narrative in the Bible) as well as actively engaging in the practice of listening (imagining rather than passively hearing the story) helped the participants feel that they had an encounter with God. Learning new ways of using familiar spiritual practices with a spiritual director gave participants the resources to listen to God in different ways.

Variety Results in More Opportunities to Listen to God

The increase in the variety of ways available to listen to God aided participants in engaging more senses in their time with Him. In the post-project

survey F01 reported, “It has been helpful to consider such different ways of listening to and responding to God: through Scripture, through music, through posture, through my imagination, etc. It has added some variety and interest to my meditations as I consider a Scripture passage” (F01 Post-project Survey, Question 12). The various ways of listening to God that were learned in the project broadened participants’ ability to engage with Him through Scripture and in prayer. Through the use of their imagination, they were able to see, hear, smell, and touch what was described in Scripture, or to envision Jesus’ expression as He looked at them while they prayed. As a result, their attention and emotions were more engaged than previously in their experience of these spiritual practices.

The Value of Silence

Each session began with a moment of silence. Spiritual direction taught participants that this time of quietness allowed both parties to become aware of the present moment and God’s presence in it. The silence also enabled participants to awaken to their situation, namely, that they were engaging in practices to communicate intentionally with God. In comparison with pre-project surveys, post-project surveys revealed an increase in participants’ awareness of the value of a quieter atmosphere when listening. In the pre-project survey noise was reported as a hindrance to good listening by 36% of participants, but by post-project, 74% claimed it was a distraction. Thus, over the course of the project participants came to value silence in the act of listening to God.

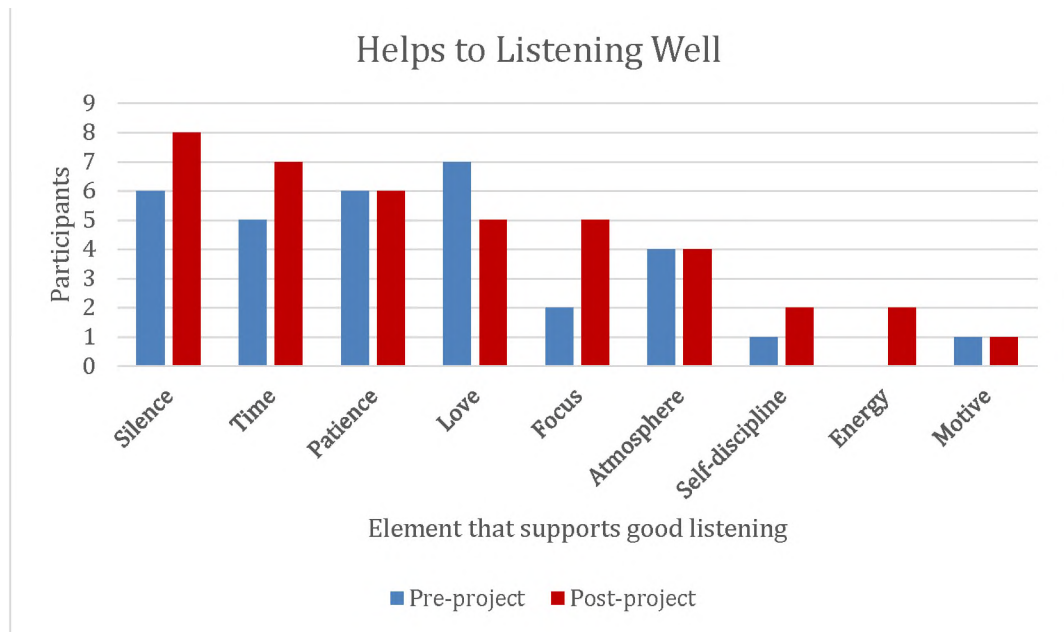


Figure 7: Helps to Listening Well

Figure 7 illustrates the findings related to the participants’ answer to Question 8, “What helps you to be a good listener?” The most common answer was “silence”, with 75% of participants listing it pre-project and 100% in the post-project survey. The practice of silence helped participants engage in spiritual practices of listening to God.

Combination of Practices and Integration in Daily Life

In addition to the four ways listed above, participants also expanded the way they engaged with a spiritual practice. For instance, all participants combined two or more practices. M03 reported using solitude, the Bible, and keeping his mind open to listen to God, and that in doing so he experienced a “distinct happiness” that was overwhelming (M03; see Table 5 above). Combining spiritual practices gave participants a richer experience of listening to God.

Others used the spiritual practices outdoors and surrounded by the natural creation, or found that they were impacted by media in their ability to listen to God: F01 shared that she found herself using her imagination to listen to God, and that when doing so she pictured the actor who represented Jesus in the television series *The Chosen* to help her experience God's presence (Session 1, F01; see also Table 6). Participants expanded their use of the spiritual practices and incorporated them into their own daily lives. In this way the practice of listening to God became more personal.

Findings and Interpretation: Desire

The second aspect being tested in this project was desire to listen to God. Desire was measured in the pre- and post-surveys by 1) the frequency with which participants devoted time to being with God; and 2) their reported motive for doing so.

Amount of Time Devoted to Being with God

Both pre- and post-project surveys indicated that 62% of the participants spent time with God every day; all participants spent time with God at least once a week. Comparison of pre- and post-project surveys, as shown in Figure 7, indicates that the number of days per week that participants spent time with God did not change over the course of the project.

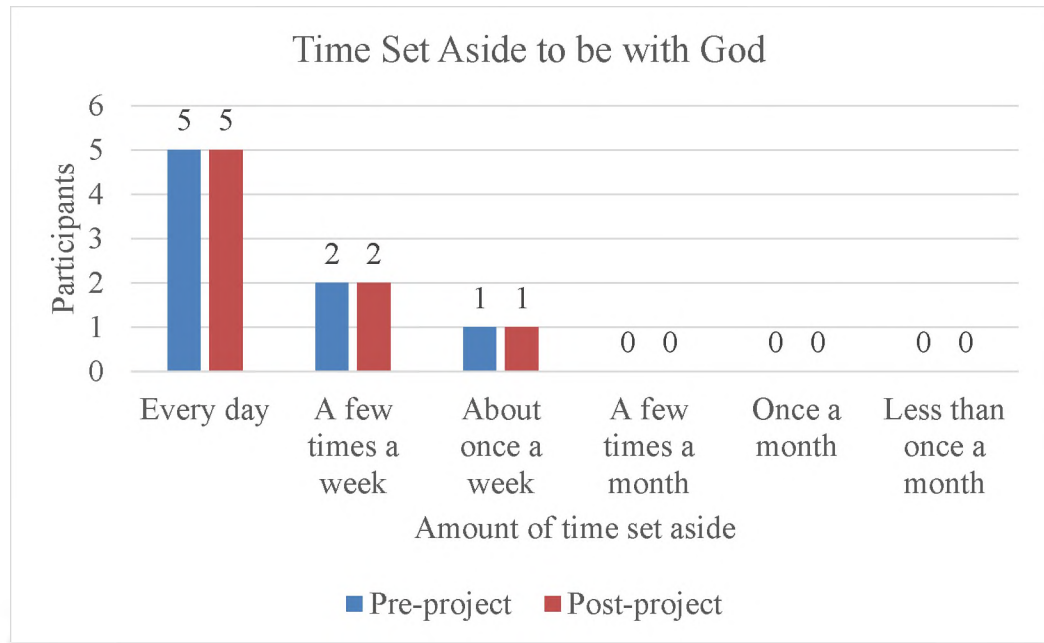


Figure 8: Time Set Aside to Be with God

There are many factors that come into play in how often a person takes time to meet with God. These factors were not explored in this study, mainly because I had assumed that time spent with God would increase. I made a false assumption and, unfortunately, didn't have time in the study to find out the reason behind the lack of change. For now, what is known is that meeting one-on-one with a spiritual director biweekly did not result in people spending more time to meet with God for their personal time of devotion. However, each participant spent an hour biweekly meeting with God and a spiritual director, which none had done beforehand. I wonder if this was accounted for in participants' responses post-project. If not, there would be an increase simply because of their participation in the project.

Motive for Meeting with God

Desire as a reported motive for listening to God was quite high pre-project, with six of the eight participants listing it on the survey as at least one of the reasons why they spent time with God. Post-project, two of those participants changed their responses, one from desire to need and the other from desire to routine. Other motives selected included love, duty, and need. No participants met with God out of a sense of guilt; given that TSA's Junior and Senior soldier covenants require soldiers to read the Bible every day, I thought some participants may have felt an obligation to spend time with God because of the promise they had made. I wondered if this would lead to avoidance of guilt as a motive—whether participants would feel they had “let down” their side of the covenant if they didn't spend time with God. But none reported this as their motivation. I was happy about that.

In meeting with the participants in the debrief session I discovered that the concept of desire was not consistent among the group. They brought up good points, such as the fact that desire can ebb and flow throughout life depending on circumstances or physical wellness (F01, Debrief) and that it sometimes isn't clear what motivates us. M01 commented, “. . . the more you're equipped to do it [i.e., listen to God], the more likely it will be that you're inclined to do it—whether that's a change in desire or a change in how you approach it” (M01, Debrief).

All participants had a desire to meet with God before the project began, as evidenced by their taking time each week to do so. F02 remarked, “Of course I

have [i.e., had] desire, but maybe I didn't desire enough to be still. I enjoy Bible studies and activities like that, but I hadn't prioritized sitting still and being aware of His presence" (F02, Debrief). Others concurred that they had desire.

For F03, the discovery that God wants to speak to her increased her desire to meet with Him. This resulted in her taking time and using new practices to listen to what He had to say. Another participant (M04), who regularly read devotionals and the Bible, was not familiar pre-project with any other spiritual practices to position oneself before God in order to connect with Him. However, this participant reported no change in his desire; it is possible that his existing means of connecting with God were meeting his need and temperament.

If I were to use this survey again, I would define each word in Question 2 of the survey ("desire," "love," "duty," "routine," "need," "guilt") so that there would be consistency among participants and between participants and the researcher. At this point I am uncertain whether those who changed their reported motivation from "desire" to "routine" had begun intentionally setting aside a specific, regular time to meet with God because they now prioritize doing so, or found themselves doing so out of sheer unfeeling habit. If the former, it could mean that the sessions did in fact help participants to recognize the importance and benefits of spending time alone with God.

Even though the concept of desire was unclear, there was an increase in participants' use of spiritual practices for listening to God reported in Question 4 of the post-project survey. Practices such as using the imagination, meditating, and following the Spirit's leading were listed in the post-project survey but not in

the pre-project survey. Comments from the debrief meeting and sessions also supported this change.

The concept of listening to God was unfamiliar to M04 at the outset; he commented that it hadn't been taught in the church. "It took me a few sessions to grasp what we were doing," he said, "but now I incorporate it into my life" (M04, Debrief). By Session 2 M03 had grasped and incorporated listening to God into his life. When asked what stuck with him from the first session, he replied, "The listening component: I feel like I've been listening more. Instead of me thinking, I've been trying to keep things open, not trying to force it or direct it to the overall scheme" (M03, Session 2).

The practice of meeting with a spiritual director also increased the ability and desire of participants to listen to God both in the sessions and after them. F01 noted, "Meeting with a spiritual director helped remind me of the importance of listening to God" (F01, Post-project Survey Question 14). F02 remarked about her sessions, "I have found it really helpful! To come together one-on-one with the goal of talking about spiritual things is wonderful!" (F02, Session 5). Meeting with a spiritual director caused participants to want to spend their time with God listening to Him.

The routine of meeting regularly with someone in order to engage in listening to God caused participants to think about listening to God. As a result, participants noted that they became more intentional in their time alone with God to listen to Him: "Yes. I am more aware of the need to be with God intentionally and am using different techniques" (F04, Post-project Survey). The regularity of

meeting with someone else to speak about their spiritual life also caused them to pay more attention to their relationship with God, enabling them to sense that the relationship had deepened. In answer to Question 12 on the post-project survey, “List any positive outcomes of this project for you”, M04 stated that the outcome of the project is that “[I] Feel calm and have strengthened my relationship with god” (M04, Post-project Survey Question 12, direct quote).

Some participants had an experience of sensing God speak to them during the sessions, whether through Scripture, their imagination, or silence. The real, felt experience of God caused them to listen to Him more carefully both in sessions and afterwards. Regarding an experience of God’s presence in a session, F02 and F04 commented respectively, “I was very aware of God’s presence” (F02, Post-project Survey Question 14) and “It brought me peace and an awareness of the importance of my spiritual life” (F04, Post-project Survey Question 12). Engaging in spiritual practices with a spiritual director gave participants the time and opportunity to experience God’s presence and sense that they had heard from Him as a result of listening.

All but one participant (M02) said that this project had changed the way they listened to God. In each session, M02 consistently responded to the opening question that the sessions had not changed the way he listened to God. He reported that nothing stuck with him from one session to the next. He also responded with “Nothing” to the survey question about what changed in the way time was spent with God. His focus was most often on “others”, “the world”, and getting to “them”. By Session 6 M02 was engaging in the content of the Bible

passage for the session, but was also interested in other characters not included in the story, bringing them into the conversation. His curiosity and outward focus remained prominent. M02's responses helped the researcher remember that we are all unique, and that the variety of spiritual practices enable each person to listen to God in a way that is in line with their personality.

The impact of learning and engaging in spiritual practices with a spiritual director on the ability and desire of soldiers of the Salvation Army Scarborough Citadel to listen to God was positive overall. Through the sessions participants learned new spiritual practices, new ways of utilizing familiar practices, the benefit of having a variety of spiritual practices to draw on, and the value of silence in increasing their ability to listen to God.

Outcomes of the Project

Increased Desire to Engage Intentionally with God

The project of meeting with eight soldiers from Scarborough Citadel has resulted in at least three main outcomes for the congregation. The first outcome is that participants have become more intentional about listening to God during their times with Him. Individually, participants reported an increase in the desire to engage with God during the time spent with Him, intentionally making use of spiritual practices to do so. For instance, some (F01, F04, M01, M04) reported doing this by using their imagination when reading Scripture; this practice, new to all, helped them engage all their senses in being open to what God was saying through the passage. Others stated that they concentrate more, or are more

intentional in their time with God, actively listening in order to hear from Him. For many, the project highlighted the importance of their life with God, causing them to pay more attention to what they were doing in the time set apart to be with Him.

In an example that involves corporate listening as opposed to time alone, the project has resulted in F01's worship experience on Sundays being altered: she now uses a notebook during services to record her thoughts. In the debrief meeting she shared:

At one point you said to have a pen and paper there, and so I was writing down kind of keywords or drawing little things and so I've been doing that, during the sermons. I have a book now that I've been just writing down ideas and words as they occur to me during the message and kind of doodling around them and connecting things with little dots and arrows and things and just kind of helps me stay attended and focused on what's going. So, I'm going to continue to do that, and I think that's going to continue to create a little more meaningful introspection during sermon time.”

Shared Benefit of Spiritual Practices

The second outcome is that, as a result of benefiting from the new spiritual practices learned in the project, participants have shared some of these with the congregation. F01, mentioned above with reference to using a notebook to help her focus on the sermon, has incorporated both silence and an invitation to be aware of God's presence when leading the congregation in sung praise and worship. In this way the congregation as a whole has benefited from the project.

Another segment of the congregation, those who aren't able to come out to the worship services, are being impacted by the ministry of F02. F02 took the practice of meditating on a verse by emphasizing different words or parts within it

(e.g., for Psalm 46:10a, “Be still and know that I am God”: *Be still and know that I am. Be still and know. Be still. Be.*) to the shut-in and elderly whom she visits. She has discovered that they too find spiritual practices from the project helpful in becoming aware of God’s presence and listening to Him.

A further outcome for F02 has been the desire to continue in ministry. She commented in the debrief meeting:

There’s always that temptation to oh let’s stop just stop doing all these things and rest and such, but really, it’s going through the process that you’ve led us or led me through, Alison, that has made me just all the more aware. I don’t want to stop! I want to keep going, doing what I’m doing . . . And I’ll use some of your techniques (F02, Debrief).

Having experienced myself the transforming benefit of taking time to be still and listen to God while meeting with a spiritual director, I expected the participants to have a positive experience in this project. I was happy to find that most participants did so, and benefited spiritually from the project. Even so, I was surprised when F02 (a retired Salvation Army officer) expressed her deep appreciation of the sessions and the way her time with the Lord had been enriched. I had been uncertain how she, as a retired officer, would receive the contemplative aspect of this program, so I was relieved and happy to discover that contemplation has been part of her own personal practice and that she was open to building on it. I wonder if her acceptance is partly a result of the fact that she was an active Salvation Army officer at the time of the Spiritual Life Commission, during which she may have heard about the value of spiritual direction. F02 has continued meeting with me for spiritual direction and continues to implement many of the practices she learned through the project in her own time with God.

Growth as a Spiritual Director

The third outcome of this project is my own growth as spiritual director. Meeting with each participant multiple times and using the same format for each session benefited me in two ways. Firstly, I improved my ability to lead people through specific spiritual practices (such as *lectio divina*); and secondly, as I listened to God and to the participant in successive sessions over the course of the project, my relationship with both deepened. The repetition of meeting regularly and of meeting on Zoom, where there is a need to look directly at the camera or at the other person, as well as the fact that our conversation circled around matters of our spiritual lives and praying together, allowed a deepening of the relationship between each participant and me. The fact that we were listening intentionally for God's direction caused us to be drawn closer to Him as well.

This project was a positive, though small, development in the ministry of Scarborough Citadel. It impacted nine people directly (eight participants and me) and several others indirectly. The results are as hoped for: they show that it is beneficial for soldiers to meet one-on-one with a spiritual director to help them learn spiritual practices that enable them to listen to God.

Conclusion

The pandemic, with its stay-at-home order, denied Salvationists the ability to meet in person for worship. Along with singing, prayer, Bible reading, and listening to a sermon, a key aspect of a worship service at Scarborough Citadel is the “appeal”—the practice of pausing after the sermon for a time of reflection. During the appeal the piano plays, prayer choruses are sung, and people are

invited to come to the mercy seat to pray, either alone or with someone else.

Those who do not go to the mercy seat spend that time reflecting on the sermon, allowing God to speak to them, and praying for those kneeling. At a time when people were unable to take time to reflect on God's message or to pray with someone in the usual way, this project provided an opportunity to do both.

Over the course of the project the eight participants learned new spiritual practices as well as new ways of using familiar ones. This led most of them to feel more able and inspired to listen to God in their time with Him. Their experience has led them to feel more joy when meeting with God, and to continue to feel peace in His presence. Many discovered that engaged silence is beneficial while meditating on a Bible verse or passage; others learned that using their imagination to engage with a Bible passage helped them sense the reality of God's presence.

Data gathered from Question 13 of the post-project survey, "List any negative outcomes of this project for you," indicated that five participants perceived no negative effects. Two of the participants left that question blank, which, given the way the question was worded, could mean that they experienced no negative effects. One participant's comment was that the project was too short, indicating that she would have preferred to continue meeting with a spiritual director. This participant has met with me since the project ended. For all participants, meeting with a spiritual director was a positive experience. Because the project introduced unfamiliar spiritual practices and participants were invited to speak about the very personal relationship between themselves and God, I had

thought that some would find it uncomfortable or challenging. I am glad that this was not the case.

In the course of preparing for and reporting on the project, I discovered other Salvationists who have been studying and writing about spiritual formation and contemplative practices. This led me to discover that from the earliest days Salvationists were influenced by contemplative writers. I also found recent studies conducted by the International and Territorial SA on spiritual health that revealed these same practices were being actively encouraged, formerly for officers and now for both officers and laity. Although they were approved, contemplative practices were not being described, and the local soldiers were not hearing about them. This project invited soldiers to learn and engage in spiritual practices with a spiritual director, and confirmed that soldiers benefit from being taught how to spend time in silence with God in order to listen to Him. Meeting with a spiritual director was an effective way for this to happen.

Learning new ways of listening to God helped them personally, but it also helped others. F02 shared that the elderly people she visited told her they felt blessed by her use of the “Be still” focus exercise mentioned above (see “Outcomes of the Project” section). Other participants used the practices learned in spiritual direction sessions in corporate worship. In sharing the practice of being silent, the congregation built on the foundation of silence as a part of corporate worship laid by the corps officers in their leadership, and supported the officers in their ministry of teaching the congregation new ways of worshipping.

This in turn benefited the congregation as they were encouraged to focus their attention solely on God in the silence.

The fact that participants used new ways of listening to God in their lives outside the project was further evidence that the project benefited them. Because they used these new ways of listening with other members of Scarborough Citadel, those other members have also benefited from this project. Soldiers meeting with a spiritual director gain the tools and experience of listening to God; their increased knowledge and time spent with God impacts the whole congregation. Having soldiers in leadership meet with a spiritual director regularly to learn and engage in spiritual practices results in increased awareness and practice of listening to God for the whole congregation.

A few of the participants requested that they continue to meet with me after the project was completed, indicating that they found the experience meaningful and useful. Meeting with the participants was also beneficial for me. As a spiritual director I have become more competent in giving direction through repeatedly using specific tools in direction and through engaging with a variety of participants who brought unique and diverse responses to the tools. Using the same theme for eight participants resulted in improvement in providing spiritual direction using that theme. For example, the more participants I led through *lectio divina*, the better I became at leading someone through it. In addition, each participant related their own life to the passages or spiritual exercises used, bringing a diversity of experiences to the way each practice was taught and learned. As well, each participant came with their own personality and stage of

spiritual formation, giving me opportunity to hear their unique experience of God's work in their life and increasing my understanding of how God works. The practice of meeting one-on-one over the course of six sessions with eight participants improved my skill in listening both to the participants and to God.

Meeting with participants regularly to engage in spiritual practices also resulted in the development of our relationship. Intentionally listening to God together resulted in more focused conversation, so that we moved beyond surface conversation to aspects of life that impacted our heart and soul. This type of conversation and the shared time together in the awareness of God's presence brought us closer to each other and to God. In this way the Body of Christ was strengthened.

Future Applications

The implications for future applications coming out of this research project are many. There are benefits from both the process and the content of research. The following paragraphs will outline these.

Although this project did not follow an action research methodology, learning about action research has taught me how to involve more people in the process of both spiritual and systemic change. This knowledge has already affected the way our church is moving forward to be more relevant to our community. As a church, post-pandemic, we want to have a greater impact on our community. Rather than brainstorm our own ideas within the leadership team, we have applied lessons from the process of action research, where all stakeholders are consulted, and broadened our consultation to include any congregant, clients

from our food bank, seniors who live in the adjoining apartment building, international university students who have recently come to Canada and have started attending on Sundays, and city bus drivers who often wait inside our building between shifts. Getting input from more sources will provide a better idea of what the community needs, enable us to build relationships with people in these groups, and result in a transforming influence in our community. Learning about action research has shown me the benefit of broader engagement and an iterative process of moving forward so that more people have a part in the change, making it more impactful.

In seeking out resources for this project I connected with the authors of various Salvation Army publications (Lt.-Col. Karen Shakespeare, Major Christine Faragher, Major Ray Harris). In this way I have learned more about the International Spiritual Life Commission and its findings. I have also learned about the history of contemplative practices within The Salvation Army, which has provided a context in which to help other Salvationists be more comfortable with practices that might be unfamiliar. As a result of these connections, I feel part of a community of Salvationists who affirm contemplative practices and see value in helping other Salvationists experience God in this way. The implications of that for the future are a continued expansion of this community within TSA and of the sharing of contemplative practices with others.

This project extends the existing conversation about contemplative practices in TSA to include laity. Many of the published papers encouraging spiritual direction are written for officers. This paper extends the encouragement

to soldiers, recording how eight soldiers of Scarborough Citadel benefited from meeting with a spiritual director. In addition, while the *Handbook of Doctrine* does encourage soldiers and officers to “be still” before God, it does not specifically outline how to do this, whereas this project provided lay people with teaching and experience in a variety of spiritual practices. The possible implications of this are that these soldiers at Scarborough will feel they are spiritually equipped, more deeply connected to God, and able to share what they have learned with others. This in turn supports the concept of the priesthood of all believers, one of TSA’s tenets of faith.

The scope of this project (see Table 1 above) could be applied to the social services (Community and Family Services) ministry of Scarborough Citadel in the initiative called Pathway of Hope. In this program a client is guided in making positive life changes with the help of an assigned case worker and spiritual care person. The universality of the soul, of the need to connect deeply with others and with God, and of God’s desire to speak to people, means that the tools in this project could be useful for all people whether they are Christians or not. Meeting with a spiritual director one-on-one who both teaches and helps people engage in spiritual practices could be beneficial to clients coming through the Community and Family Services. Those who have registered for the Pathway of Hope will be invited to participate in this type of relationship, though their decision to do so or not will not affect our other services to them; if they choose not to engage spiritually, they will still be helped with the practical needs of life to the fullest extent of our ability.

The Salvation Army is well known for its work in reaching out to those in distress and need. Its soldiers are encouraged to fuel their good deeds by developing their relationship with God personally. At Scarborough Citadel we embrace this vision. This study has affirmed that soldiers from Scarborough who met regularly with a spiritual director were both equipped and supported in listening to God. For the majority participating in the project, this experience has deepened their relationship with Him and given them an ability to serve God from a stance of being open to hearing His leading in order to follow Him. I sense that this project is a continuation of what God has been doing in the life of our congregation. My prayer is that God would continue to open ways to engage other groups of soldiers in the future, so that even more will be equipped by His Spirit and led by His voice as we listen to God.

CHAPTER 5:

CONCLUSION

By the spring of 2022, the COVID-19 pandemic was thought to have receded and the congregation at Scarborough Citadel had resumed meeting on Sundays for worship. People continued to sit at a distance from each other (a holdover from the “six feet apart” government mandate), but they were happy to be together.

Over the course of the pandemic our congregation applied for and received a grant to revitalize the inside of our building. We want to make our foyer a welcoming, accessible space so that we can engage with our community. In the past, people have entered our building surreptitiously to use the washroom, eat their lunch, or get out of the rain while waiting for a bus. Clients who access our food bank use the foyer as the waiting room. Currently they sit on hard plastic chairs or stand around in a space that feels cavernous. We would like to create a place where they feel comfortable and know that they are welcome. Given our desire to engage in conversations with our community, and the growing multicultural complement of our congregation, the need for a way to speak about Christianity in a clear and relatable manner is very real. The three chapters in the body of this portfolio revealed that listening to God is the foundation of this type of conversation. Listening to God, for the purpose of this document, is more than the act of physically hearing audible sounds; it is defined as having an open mind

and spirit, believing that God is still speaking, and receiving a thought, impression, or feeling from the Holy Spirit that aligns with Scripture.

Each chapter has taken a thoughtful look into a specific aspect of listening to God: 1) through a conduit (listening to God through music); 2) stimulated by a catalyst (a crisis or activity that creates an awakening to God); 3) in community (the benefit of teaching and engaging in spiritual practices with others). Using the question words “when,” “where,” and “how,” the following chapter will take a broad view of the portfolio to summarize key aspects of listening to God and others.

When We Can Listen to God

In the Spiritual Autobiography (Chapter 2), the Spiritual Formation Model of Change (Chapter 3), and the Action Learning Research Project (Chapter 4), it was revealed that listening to God can happen anytime.

Chapter 2 described how listening to God occurred over my lifetime. From childhood to present day, I have been listening to God. Initially I didn't realize that this was what I was doing; but each week, during the appeal time after the sermon, I intentionally thought about God, spoke to Him, and waited for His answer. I was listening for His message for me, for a sense of His presence or a nudge from His Spirit. Over the last few years, I have learned that this was listening and have cultivated that practice. Now I listen in the mornings as I sit in a spare bedroom with the door shut, my Bible open, and my eyes often closed as I meditate on a passage. Listening to God is also for any time of life: it is for children, teens, adults, and seniors. There is no age requirement or limit.

Chapter 3 highlighted the experience of listening to God at a specific moment in time. This moment could be an initial conversion experience, a moment of crisis, or a daily time to realign with God. The Spiritual Formation Model of Change (SFMC) gave evidence that it was through these specific, intentional moments that spiritual growth or change occurred. Listening to God at a specific moment or juncture in our life provides opportunity for a decision to be made regarding faith or trust in God's truth. The SFMC describes the process by which someone comes to faith in God; listening to God in that specific time can be a defining moment that sets the course of a life in a specific direction.

Chapter 4 examined the experience of setting aside regular times to listen intentionally to God: noting the benefit of listening to God in a specific moment in time, the practice of spiritual direction works to capitalize on this benefit by arranging sessions in which to do so. Jesus deliberately took specific moments in time to meet with God (Luke 6:12, Mark 1:35). After a long day with people, or early in the morning, He went up a mountain or into the wilderness by Himself to pray. Intentional and regular meetings with God give us time to listen to Him.

God works within time. Although He can perform miracles that work outside the norms of time (for example, healing someone instantaneously), God typically works within our lived time. As human beings we require time to recognize our need, hear His truth, and accept that truth within our soul. We can listen to God anytime, all the time, and over time.

Along with highlighting when we can listen to God, the three chapters also answer the question of where we can listen to God.

Where We Can Listen to God

God is involved and intertwined with our ordinary, everyday moments. Chapter 2 reported several instances in my life when I was doing something ordinary in my everyday life (like cooking spaghetti sauce on the stove) and found myself listening to God. In other cases I was responding to my experience of everyday life through playing the piano, and listened to Him while playing. In those instances I sensed God's response to my listening as He enabled me to compose music. We can listen to God in all the familiar places in our lives—in our homes, at work or school, or in the natural environment.

We can also listen to God in unfamiliar places. Chapter 3, in which the model was presented and discussed, indicated that listening to God can often occur in response to a break in our everyday routine, whether that break is caused by a crisis of some kind or by an unusual activity or circumstance. Often these breaks from routine take us to places we would not normally be (e.g., to hospitals or funeral homes, or our own homes when we are stuck or taken back there unexpectedly). We can listen to God in the places we inhabit regularly, but also in any place to which extraordinary circumstances take us. There is no place where we are separated from God and our ability to listen to Him.

God is available anywhere we are, including sacred places that are set aside for listening to Him. During the pandemic, meetings for worship, fellowship, and mutual edification occurred online, making the internet a sacred place; but such meetings can also occur in a church, a retreat centre, a home, or an

office. Any place designated for listening to God alone or in the company of another is a place we can intentionally listen to God.

The body of this paper revealed when and where to listen to God, whether in the presence of another or when alone. It also described *how* to listen to Him.

How We Can Listen to God

One way of listening to God, described in Chapter 2, is through the use of a conduit, such as music. God used music to grow my relationship with Him from knowing about Him to experiencing Him through His Spirit, to sharing that experience with others. He used music in my life because I am musical and attuned to the music that surrounds me. There are other conduits that help us to listen for and experience God; art, nature, sermons, lectures, books, and a witness from another Christian are some of the other channels that, when used by the Holy Spirit, can relay God's message. God uses our own specific personality and gifts to communicate with us. He also speaks through our unique circumstances.

Another way of listening to God is through the process of following a model. Chapter 3 described the Spiritual Formation Model of Change (SFMC) as a tool for guiding us to respond to our circumstances by listening to God. When experiencing a catalyst in the form of a crisis or a sudden moment of awakening, the SFMC reminds us that God can still communicate with us. Like a plumb line for a builder, it provides the direction to follow, giving both a purpose and a process for moving through the situation, and also serves as a reminder to listen to God. This experience of listening can happen in a single, dramatic moment in life

or through a gradual incremental shift as God takes us through numerous iterations of the SFMC.

Engaging in the Doctor of Ministry (DMin) program was an instance in my life where I moved through the stages of the SFMC. I awakened to the fact that I felt ill-equipped to speak to others about their spiritual experience. This awakening was a catalyst that led me to acknowledge that I needed training to communicate with others about spirituality. In the process of taking courses for the DMin and participating in spiritual direction, I became aware of God's desire to speak to me. Choosing to believe that God wants to speak to me, to guide me through life and to help others hear from Him, I conducted the Action Learning Research Project (Chapter 4).

The Action Learning Research Project described in Chapter 4 provided an example of listening to God in community, as it required participants to meet biweekly with a spiritual director; in this instance the interaction with another believer became a means of listening to God. In addition, the participants used both new and familiar spiritual practices for listening during the sessions: newly learned practices such as *lectio divina* and gospel contemplation, as well as familiar practices such as silence, solitude, and meditation on a Bible passage, were all methods of listening to God used in the project.

The portfolio reveals *when* we can listen to God: over a lifetime, in a specific "occasional" moment, and regularly at an appointed time. It also reveals *where* listening to God can occur: in our everyday surroundings, when we are taken out of those familiar surroundings, and in sacred spaces. Lastly, the

portfolio reveals *how* we can listen to God: through a conduit, through the use of a model that provides a framework and reminder, and through spiritual practices in community. These revelations show that listening to God requires time, a place, and participation.

As we listen to God through conduits, as a result of catalysts, and in community, God forms us spiritually so that we can be used to share His love and grace to others. In meeting with others for spiritual conversation we become the conduit that the Holy Spirit uses to share who God is and how He loves us. As we rely on God's direction by listening to Him in the moment, our conversation in community with others can be a catalyst for them to desire a relationship with God. These three tools for sharing in spiritual conversation—a conduit, a catalyst, and community—all require an internal heart stance characterized by a willingness to hear from God. The following section will elaborate on this.

Receptivity to the Holy Spirit

Though music was happening all the time around me, it was when I was attentive to the meaning of the lyrics, thinking about God, believing He was speaking, and being willing to communicate with Him, that my soul was impacted. These four things directed at God—attention, focus, faith, and desire—together constitute the necessary mindset and heart stance of openness to listen to Him. Being open to the Holy Spirit enables someone who is listening to God to hear His message. More than words or language, more than a tool or model, the most important aspect of communication with God is a receptivity to the Holy Spirit.

This is similarly the most important aspect of communicating about God with others. In order to share about spiritual things, the Spiritual Care Representative or SCR (see Chapter 1) must have a living experience of the Spirit in their own life. Listening to God is the way God empowers us to speak with others about Him: as we rely on Him, He gives us the words to speak, and as we rest in His power, He enlivens the words so that the client can understand. It is a supernatural occurrence—not just a sharing of information but an experience of God in relationship.

In order to learn how to communicate better with clients about spirituality, I had to learn first how to listen to God. Listening to God was the key to answering the question, “How do I share about spiritual things?” The answer is not just a tool or a rubric or a language, it is an openness to the Spirit to work through the representative sharing the tool, rubric, or language. Communication about spiritual formation happens best when the Spirit is speaking through the actions and words of the spiritual representative/director in relationship with the other. Therefore, it must be the case that the best communication about spiritual things requires the SCR to have clear communication with God.

Over the last few years I’ve taken training to become a spiritual director. One of the most difficult things to learn, as a new spiritual director, is how to listen to the directee and the Spirit at the same time. Initially, when I met with directees I was very anxious about my ability to know what to say to them. I wondered if I would be able to call upon the right passage of Scripture to help them, or if I would be able to keep the conversation going when there was a lull.

It felt very stressful. As I have learned and experienced more of listening to God and resting in His presence, this anxiety has abated. The ability to engage with someone about how God is at work in their life is about listening to their story and allowing God to point out where He is at work. Listening—to God, but also to the directee—is key. Terry Wardle concurs in his book *Healing Care, Healing Prayer* when talking about the person providing spiritual care. He writes:

Any discussion of inner healing prayer must prioritize the spiritual journey of the counselor, therapist, pastor The caregiver’s spiritual maturity greatly impacts the process of inner healing. Cooperating with the Holy Spirit in the moment is essential.” (Wardle 2001, 18-19)

Wardle’s emphasis on the spiritual maturity of the counselor, therapist, or pastor also applies to spiritual directors and Spiritual Care Representatives.

I learned how to listen to God through the DMin course work, my own meetings with a spiritual director, and silent retreats; in addition, the very process of earning the DMin, the circumstances and challenges involved over the course of three years, have taught me how to listen. In the process of listening to God I am being formed spiritually so that I have an experience to share with those to whom I speak about spirituality.

The Action Learning Research Project confirmed for me that it is not just language or a model that enables me to communicate about listening to God, but a personal experience of His Spirit. In fact, sometimes the words I used in the project were a hindrance. For instance, “desire” was misinterpreted. All participants wanted to connect with God, and they all spent time with Him, so their “desire” didn’t seem to change; however, the quality of their meeting with

Him changed. Their desire didn't necessarily change but their ability to meet with God with intentionality and openness was expanded.

Communicating with Others Involves Listening

Communication with others happens as we take time to listen, with our thoughts fixed on the speaker and our desire being to hear what they say. Just as listening with God requires time, a place, and intentional participation, so too does communicating with those who will come into our foyer at Scarborough Citadel. Sharing about Jesus doesn't happen in a sound bite; communicating about spiritual things requires making or taking time, repeatedly over time, and even throughout a lifetime. The practice of listening to God not only empowers us to speak with another about faith but teaches us the posture to take when sharing in conversation with others. The portfolio points to the underlying principle that listening well to God requires an openness to receiving and an attentiveness to the speaker. This stance is crucial in order to build the trust and openness needed to show others how to listen to God.

Communication with our clients happens as we share and engage over things in common. Such commonalities, once found, can serve as conduits for conversation about faith. Music is one topic that can fulfill that function. It is both sacred and secular, it can have an impact on the whole person, and it is everywhere around us: in the grocery store, television commercials, cell phone ring tones, the music we choose to listen to, and movie scores. Shared circumstances can be another point of commonality that works as a conduit; over the last few years, for example, the pandemic was a topic of conversation for

strangers as well as family, as we were all affected by it. Life stages or situations can also serve to bridge the gap between strangers and lead to conversation about deeper things. When facing moments of challenge or awakening where there is a desire to give meaning to life, knowledge of the Spiritual Formation Model of Change is invaluable. While journeying with the client, the listener can be attuned to the Spirit for moments when it is appropriate to share the gospel and invite the client to connect on a regular basis. In this way they too can learn to listen to God.

Listening to God is a key aspect of our ability to know God and be in relationship with Him. Whether we are congregants, soldiers, officers, clients, or community members, God invites us to listen to Him. Taking time to recognize how God is trying to speak (through music, art, Scripture, icons, etc.), being receptive to His message to us, and believing in Him enables us to experience His Spirit alive in us, forming us. As we intentionally break from routine to pause, awaken to our situation, acknowledge our inner state, and become aware of His Spirit, our relationship with Him is deepened and we are formed spiritually. Engaging in spiritual practices positions us to hear from God so that He can continually form us into His likeness. Meeting with someone such as a spiritual director helps us see how we can listen to God's presence in our lives. It also reminds us that we are not alone on the journey of faith but belong to the Body of Christ.

Each of the prior chapters in this paper has affirmed that the practice of listening to God is the foundation for communicating with others about

spirituality. It is the mindset, the heart stance, the spiritual openness that enables the one listening to hear from God in order to have something to offer others.

God Invites Us to Listen to Him

God continues to invite us to listen to Him. From the past, through Isaiah, God implores us:

Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labour on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David. (Isaiah 55:2-3)

Through my personal experience of composing music inspired by Scripture, God calls. Listen to His invitation through the music and words of “Come to me”:

(www.UsBeadles.com/alison/ComeToMe.mp3) (Click link to hear)

Have you heard God’s voice? He calls you today.
Have you heard Him before, yet turned Him away?
Still He waits and welcomes you to come
To receive His forgiveness, to experience His love!

*He says, “Come to Me! Come to Me!
You who are weary, come to Me!
Come to Me! Come to Me!
You who are weary, come.”*

Did you hear God’s voice and answer His call?
Have you followed Him faithfully too?
Still He waits and welcomes you to come,
To have fellowship with Him,
To abide in His love!

*He says, “Come to Me! Come to Me!
You who are weary, come to Me!
Come to Me! Come to Me!
You who are weary, come.”*

Still He calls today, can you hear His voice?
With a love that compels, yet He leaves you the choice ...

Will you come?

*He says, "Come to Me!
You who are weary, come!
All who are weary, come."*

God is speaking to us. As we listen to Him, He transforms us into His likeness, enabling us to communicate God's invitation to others to listen too. May we each accept His invitation today.

APPENDICES

Appendix A – “Gentle Jesus, Meek and Mild”

www.UsBeadles.com/alison/GentleJesusMeekAndMild.mp3 (click link to hear)

Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
Look upon a little child,
Pity my simplicity.
Suffer me to come to Thee.

(Wesley, Public Domain, 1742)

Appendix B – “Secure in Your love”

www.UsBeadles.com/alison/WhenAllAroundMe.mp3 (Click link to hear)

When all around me darkness is creeping everywhere
I cry for help I need You, I'm living in despair
Oh, Your arms surround, enfold me,
I'm lost in Your love
And my thoughts they turn from here on earth
To heaven above.

Jesus' love is wider and deeper than the sea,
But what is so much more beautiful is His love reaches me!

When I feel frightened, lonely, I'm far away from home,
I need to be reminded, I never am alone
For Your presence never leaves me
You're always by my side
And I never need to fear or doubt,
For You are my guide.

Jesus' love is wider and deeper than the sea,
But what is so much more beautiful is His love reaches me!

(Moore 1983)

Appendix C – “Our Wedding Prayer”

www.UsBeadles.com/alison/OurWeddingPrayer.mp3 (Click link to hear)

We meet here in love today
To join our lives and souls this way
Our hearts one with You we pray:
Lord, fill us with Your love.

Patient and kind, love is gentle yet strong
Love always pardons and conquers all wrong
Thoughtful and caring, love's honest and true,
When all else fails, love shines through.

We meet here today,
Knowing Your love has paved the way
As we commit ourselves to You,
We pray Your love fills us through,
Our hearts attuned to Your design,
Your plan for us first in our mind.
Our new life founded here in You,
Secure in Your Love.

Our hearts attuned to Your design,
Your plan for us first in our mind
As we commit ourselves to You,
We pray Your Spirit fills us through
Our new life founded here in You,
Secure in Your Love.

(Moore 1989)

Appendix D – “Plans of Mine Fallen Through”

www.UsBeadles.com/alison/PlansOfMine.mp3 (click link to hear)

Plans of mine fallen through,
Lifetime dreams shattered too
And at times God seemed so far away.
I asked, “Why do my best?”
“Why am I put through this test?”
And in answer I hear Jesus say ...

Chorus:
Hold My hand, walk with Me
Here I am, can't you see
That I've been with you all the way
I will guide you, I will stay
Walk with Me on this road
Let Me lighten your load
And together you will find perfect peace.

Each new day lies ahead
Full of promise, yet I dread
Fearing what? I don't know, but it's real.
Mind games, some people say—
Yet those feelings rarely stray
My only courage is found in Christ's appeal...

Chorus:
Hold My hand, walk with Me
Here I am, can't you see
That I've been with you all the way
I will guide you, I will stay
Walk with Me on this road
Let Me lighten your load
And together you will find perfect peace.

(Moore 1992)

Appendix E – “God’s Peace”

www.UsBeadles.com/alison/GodsPeace.mp3 (Click link to hear)

A wondrous birth, a crying babe, a noisy cattle stall.
Unlikely wrapping for God’s most precious gift to all;

God’s peace,
Sweet peace.
God’s presence living in me,
His power meeting my need,
My soul, calm and complete,
Surrounded by God’s peace.

A lowly Galilean man, rejected by His own
Yet out of love He gave His life so all the world might know...

God’s peace,
Sweet peace.
God’s presence living in me,
His power meeting my need,
My soul, calm and complete,
Surrounded by God’s peace.

Almighty God, our Sovereign Lord, the King of kings on high.
In love God’s Holy Spirit came to comfort and provide ...

God’s peace,
Sweet peace.
God’s presence living in me,
His power meeting my need,
My soul, calm and complete,
Surrounded by God’s peace.

(Moore 1993)

Appendix F – “His Child of the King”

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www.UsBeadles.com/alison/HisChildOfTheKing.mp3 (Click link to hear)

Hush now, hear the birds' song, hear them sing all day long.
They're so tiny, yet special, for God made every one.
And He loves each one, big or small but what's greater you see:
Though I'm not big or too old, God loves me.

Find me, can you find me, if we play hide and seek?
In a closet, under boxes, I will not make a peep.
And though you cannot see me, God's view always is clear.
For He's with me, all around me, ever near.

Count them, can you count them, all the stars shining bright?
Are there thousands, or millions that we gaze at each night?
God is so wise and powerful that He knows all these things,
Yet He still calls me His child of the King.
Jesus knows me, and He loves me, and I'll always be His Child of the King!

(Moore 1992)

Appendix G – “Open Your Heart”

www.UsBeadles.com/alison/OpenYourHeart.mp3 (Click link to hear)

I searched for joy, the world offered pain
I longed for direction, the world failed again
Yet each wish, each dream, each fear and each pain,
Were heeded by God, when I called out His name.

*Open your heart and receive God's rich blessing,
Offer your soul and be filled,
Filled with God's spirit your life is set free,
Free to fulfill God's will.*

God fills my life, His love satisfies,
The more that I give Him, the more He supplies
And each time I call Him, each time I seek
I find He is able to meet every need.

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost but now am found,
Was blind but now I see.
Now I see.

*Open your heart and receive God's rich blessing,
Offer your soul and be filled,
Filled with God's spirit your life is set free,
Free to fulfill God's will.*

(Moore 1994)

Appendix H – “Shine Through Me”

www.UsBeadles.com/alison/ShineThroughMe.mp3 (Click link to hear)

A lonely man amidst the crowd who needs Your love.
A grieving woman filled with pain who needs Your peace.
A little child full of hope and promise needs to find Your way.
Lord use my life to share Your plan, Your truth, so others may,
Come to know the ...

*Love of God, so boundless, rich, and free
Love so great, yet it reaches down to me!
A child upon this earth, a sinner set free!
Love of God, let it shine through me.*

Lord help me see the lonely one who needs Your love.
Help me touch the hurting heart who needs Your peace,
Lord help me recognize each child is Yours and needs to find Your way
Lord use my life to share Your plan, Your truth, so others may,
Come to know the ...

*Love of God, so boundless, rich, and free
Love so great, yet it reaches down to me!
A child upon this earth, a sinner set free!
Love of God, let it shine through me.*

Shine through me,
Lord, let Your love flowing be
A ray of truth and of right,
Your hope beaming bright
Shine through me.

Shine through me,
Lord, let Your love flowing be
A ray of truth and of right,
Your hope beaming bright
Shine through me.

(Moore 1994)

**Appendix I – “Dear Lord, As I Keep My Eyes
Focused on You”**

www.UsBeadles.com/alison/DearLordAsIKeepMyEyesOnYou.mp3 (Click link to
hear)

Dear Lord, as I keep my eyes focused on You
All the cares of this world just fade away.
As I rest in Your strength, daily walking with You,
I find You are all I need.

(Moore 1997)

Appendix J – “Think on Me”

www.UsBeadles.com/alison/ThinkOnMe.mp3 (Click link to hear)

Think on Me; I love you dearly,
More than anyone could love.
Speak to Me, each moment nearly,
Lift your thoughts to heaven above.
More than a father loves his children,
More than a shepherd knows his lambs,
I long to draw you to Me,
And to hold your hand.

(Moore 1997)

Appendix K – “Psalm 23”

www.UsBeadles.com/alison/Psalm23.mp3 (Click link to hear)

The Lord is my shepherd, my comfort, my friend,
Provider, protector, and guide
He knows me completely, as all sheep He tends,
And all that I need He supplies.
His love is eternal, His guidance is sure
And He keeps me safe at His side
For He is my shepherd, and I am His lamb,
With me He will always abide.

He leads me through valleys and pathways unknown
Where fear often threatens to harm,
I look to my shepherd and find He is near
His presence dispels all alarm.
His rod guides me safely within His great fold
His staff leads me, letting me know,
That He is my Shepherd, and I am His lamb
His love for me never lets go.

I am His lamb.
He watches me.
He is my Shepherd
And He will always be.

(Moore 1999)

Appendix L – “It’s Gonna Be All Right”

www.UsBeadles.com/alison/ItsGonnaBeAlright.mp3 (Click link to hear)

Chorus:

It’s gonna be all right!

It’s gonna be okay!

Takin’ each moment as it comes, each step of the way.

Just puttin’ my faith in God above,

Surrounded by His wondrous love.

God’s provision is enough,

So it’s gonna be all right.

Verse 1

Did you think you had it all worked out?

Did you think you knew what was right?

Did you feel like singing all the time?

Like there was never any night?

Then the mountaintop came crashing down...

Your life was tumbling round and round,

If you feel you can’t get off the ground,

Well let me say, it’s gonna be all right!

Chorus

Verse 2

A little fishing boat set sail,

A storm began to rage,

The men inside were terrified,

Until they looked beyond the waves.

Then Jesus said, ‘Walk out to Me!’

Peter said, “I do believe!”

His walk of faith helps me to see,

That it’s gonna be all right.

Chorus

God’s provision is enough,

You know that it’s gonna be all right!

(Moore 2000)

Appendix M – “Draw Me Close”

www.UsBeadles.com/alison/DrawMeCloseToYou.mp3 (Click link to hear)

Draw me close to You,
Lord, draw me close to You,
That I may feel Your love and know Your power,
Draw me close to You.

(Moore 2000)

Appendix N – “I Come Before You, Lord”

www.UsBeadles.com/alison/IComeBeforeYouLord.mp3 (Click link to hear)

I come before You, Lord, to meet with You in prayer
I seek and find You now, Your presence ever near.
Each time I seek Your power transforms,
My life is changed, my heart reborn.
I see Your power anew, as I draw close to You.

*Draw me close to You,
Lord, draw me close to You,
That I may feel Your love and know Your power,
Draw me close to You.*

(Moore 2007)

Appendix O – “Come to Me”

www.UsBeadles.com/alison/ComeToMe.mp3 (Click link to hear)

Have you heard God’s voice? He calls you today.
Have you heard Him before, yet turned Him away?
Still He waits and welcomes you to come
To receive His forgiveness, to experience His love!

*He says, “Come to Me! Come to Me!
You who are weary, come to Me!
Come to Me! Come to Me!
You who are weary, come.*

Did you hear God’s voice and answer His call?
Have you followed Him faithfully too?
Still He waits and welcomes you to come,
To have fellowship with Him,
To abide in His love!

*He says, “Come to Me! Come to Me!
You who are weary, come to Me!
Come to Me! Come to Me!
You who are weary, come.*

Still He calls today, can you hear His voice?
With a love that compels, yet He leaves you the choice ...
Will you come?

*He says, “Come to me!
You who are weary, come!
All who are weary, come.”*

(Moore 2015)

Appendix P – “Be Still”

www.UsBeadles.com/alison/BeStill.mp3 (Click link to hear)

Be still
And know
That I
Am God.

Be still
And know
That I
Am God.

In Thee,
O Lord,
I put
My trust.

In Thee,
O Lord,
I put
My trust.

(Moore 2015)

Appendix Q – “You Are Faithful”

www.UsBeadles.com/alison/YouAreFaithful.mp3 (Click link to hear)

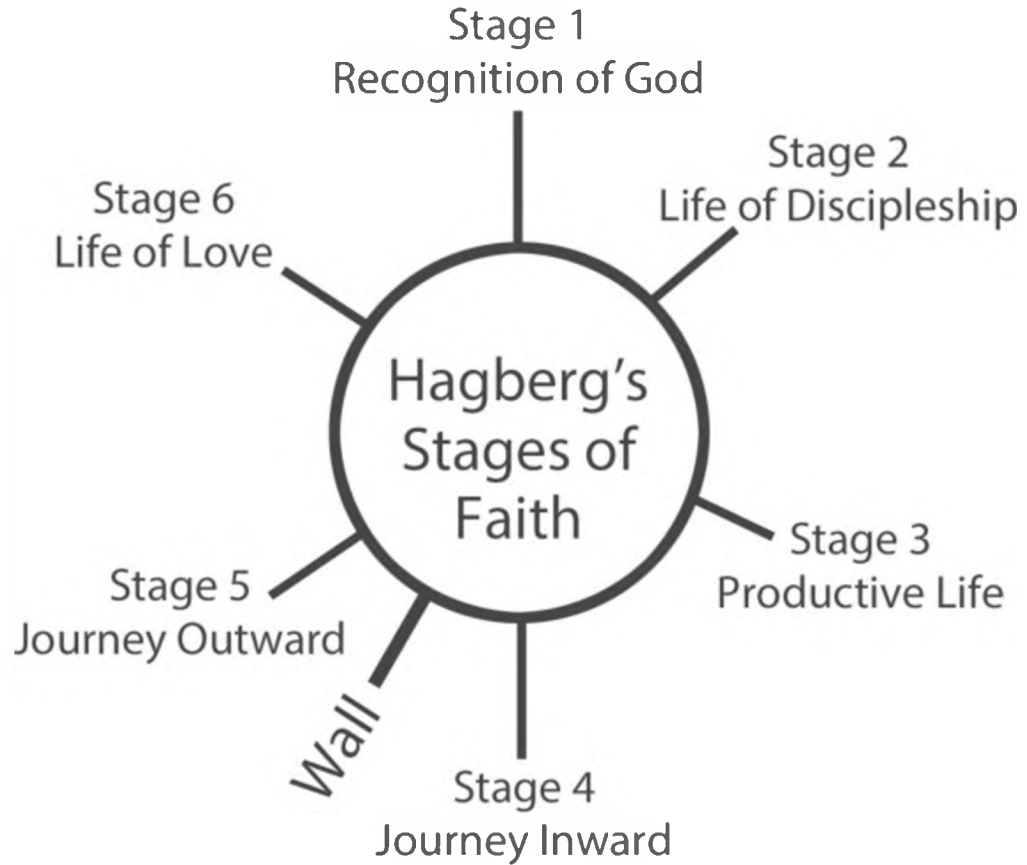
You are faithful, Lord, to me
So I sing this song of praise and victory
If I rise above like eagles or I fall into the depths
Your love and grace are always ever here for me.

For You're faithful, Lord, I see
So I'll shout aloud my praise in victory!
For You raise me up like eagles
And You draw me from the depths.
Your love and mercy always here at work in me.

(Moore 2016)

**Appendix R – Hagberg’s Stages of Faith
(Hagberg 2005)**

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Hagberg-Guelich. *The Critical Journey: Stages In The Life Of Faith, 2/E*
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Appendix S – A Soldier’s Covenant

Having accepted Jesus Christ as my Saviour and Lord and desiring to fulfil my membership of His Church on earth as a soldier of The Salvation Army, I now by God's grace enter into a sacred covenant.

- I believe and will live by the truths of the word of God expressed in The Salvation Army's eleven articles of faith.
- I will be responsive to the Holy Spirit's work and obedient to His leading in my life, growing in grace through worship, prayer, service, and the reading of the Bible.
- I will make the values of the Kingdom of God and not the values of the world the standard for my life.
- I will uphold Christian integrity in every area of my life, allowing nothing in thought, word, or deed that is unworthy, unclean, untrue, profane, dishonest, or immoral.
- I will maintain Christian ideals in all my relationships with others; my family and neighbours, my colleagues, and fellow Salvationists, those to whom and for whom I am responsible, and the wider community.
- I will uphold the sanctity of marriage and of family life. I will be a faithful steward of my time and gifts, my money and possessions, my body, my mind, and my spirit, knowing that I am accountable to God.
- I will abstain from alcoholic drink, tobacco, the non-medical use of addictive drugs, gambling, pornography, the occult, and all else that could enslave the body or spirit.
- I will be faithful to the purposes for which God raised up The Salvation Army, sharing the good news of Jesus Christ, endeavouring to win others to Him, and in His name caring for the needy and the disadvantaged.
- I will be actively involved, as I am able, in the life, work, worship, and witness of the corps, giving as large a proportion of my income as possible to support its ministries and the worldwide work of the Army.
- I will be true to the principles and practices of The Salvation Army, loyal to its leaders, and I will show the spirit of Salvationism whether in times of popularity or persecution.
- I now call upon all present to witness that I enter into this covenant and sign these articles of war of my own free will, convinced that the love of Christ, who died and now lives to save me, requires from me this devotion of my life to His service for the salvation of the whole world; and therefore do here declare my full determination, by God's help, to be a true soldier of The Salvation Army.

Appendix T – Our Beliefs

The Doctrines of The Salvation Army represent the fundamental set of “statements of belief” to which members of the movement subscribe. There are 11 such Doctrines, as follows:

1. We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, and that they only constitute the Divine rule of Christian faith and practice.
2. We believe that there is only one God, who is infinitely perfect, the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of all things and who is the only proper object of religious worship.
3. We believe that there are three persons in the Godhead – The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, undivided in essence and co-equal in power and glory.
4. We believe that in the person of Jesus Christ the Divine and human natures are united, so that He is truly and properly God and truly and properly man.
5. We believe that our first parents were created in a state of innocence, but by their disobedience they lost their purity and happiness, and that in consequence of their fall all men have become sinners, totally depraved, and as such are justly exposed to the wrath of God.
6. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has by His suffering and death made an atonement for the whole world so that whosoever will may be saved.
7. We believe that repentance towards God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit, are necessary to salvation.
8. We believe that we are justified by grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and that he that believeth hath the witness in himself.
9. We believe that continuance in a state of salvation depends upon continued obedient faith in Christ.
10. We believe that it is the privilege of all believers to be wholly sanctified, and that their whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
11. We believe in the immortality of the soul; in the resurrection of the body; in the general judgement at the end of the world; in the eternal happiness of the righteous; and in the endless punishment of the wicked.

Appendix U – Pre-Project Survey

Name: _____

Date: _____

Thank you for filling out this survey. Please answer the questions with what you actually do, not what you would like to do or be. Take your time and think about your life. No answers are wrong. ☺ This survey is all about you so whatever you say is good! Thank you!!

1. I set aside time to be with God... (highlight or underline all that apply)

Every day

A few times a week

About once a week

A few times a month

Once a month

Less than once a month

2. My most common motive for setting aside time to be alone with God is: (highlight or underline all that apply)

Love

Duty

Desire

Routine

Guilt

Other (please specify)

3. How do you feel when you are spending time alone with God? (highlight or underline all that apply)

Useful

Wise

Peaceful

Smart

Bored

Distracted

Joyful

Tired

Righteous

Other (please specify)

4. In your time alone with God, what do you do? Describe a typical experience:

5. Where or with whom do you feel comfortable talking about your spiritual life?

6. What is it about this place or person that makes you feel comfortable?

Appendix U – Pre-Project Survey cont'd.

7. God speaks to us today. How much do you believe this is true? (Highlight or underline your answer)

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------|
| A great deal | A little |
| A lot | None at all |
| A moderate amount | |

8. What helps you to be a good listener to people in your life? (highlight or underline all that apply):

- | | |
|------------|-----------------------|
| Silence | Energy |
| Focus | Self-discipline |
| Time | Motive |
| Noise | Love |
| Atmosphere | Other (please specify |
| Darkness | |
| Patience | |

9. What hinders you from listening well to people in your life? (Highlight or underline all that apply)

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Disinterest | Lack of time |
| Noise | Impatience |
| Misunderstanding | Busyness |
| Thinking of what to say next | Other (please specify |

10. How do you listen to God? List as many ways as you can

Appendix V – Post-Project Survey

Name: _____ Date: _____

Thank you for filling out this survey. Please answer the questions with what you actually do, not what you would like to do or be. Take your time and think about your life. No answers are wrong. ☺ This survey is all about you so whatever you say is good! Thank you!!

1. I set aside time to be with God... (highlight or underline all that apply)

Every day	A few times a month
A few times a week	Once a month
About once a week	Less than once a month

2. My most common motive for setting aside time to be alone with God is: (highlight or underline all that apply)

Love	Routine
Duty	Guilt
Desire	Other (please specify)

3. How do you feel when you are spending time alone with God? (highlight or underline all that apply)

Useful	
Wise	
Peaceful	Joyful
Smart	Tired
Bored	Righteous
Distracted	Other (please specify)

4. In your time alone with God, what do you do? Describe a typical experience:

5. Where or with whom do you feel comfortable talking about your spiritual life?

6. What is it about this place or person that makes you feel comfortable?

7. God speaks to us today. How much do you believe this is true? (Highlight or underline your answer)

A great deal	A little
A lot	None at all
A moderate amount	

Appendix V – Post-Project Survey cont'd.

8. What helps you to be a good listener to people in your life? (highlight or underline all that apply)

Silence

Focus

Time

Noise

Atmosphere

Darkness

Patience

Energy

Self-discipline

Motive

Love

Other (please specify)

9. What hinders you from listening well to people in your life? (Highlight or underline all that apply)

Disinterest

Noise

Misunderstanding

Thinking of what to say next

Lack of time

Impatience

Busyness

Other (please specify)

10. How do you listen to God? List as many ways as you can.

11. Has the way you listen to God changed since you participated in this project? If yes, how?

12. List any positive outcomes of this project for you:

13. List any negative outcomes of this project for you:

14. Please explain how this project has impacted you.

Thank you so much for filling out this survey!

Appendix W – Listening to God Session 1 Silence

Theme: Silence

- paying attention to our breathing
- closing our eyes to shut out what is seen to pay attention to what is unseen.
- Genesis 2:7 – “Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.”

How have you been listening to God?

Prayer – Formal, read prayer

Lord, teach me to listen . . .

Teach me to listen, Holy Spirit, for Your voice – in busyness and in boredom, in certainty and doubt, in noise and in silence. In the silence name me, that I may know who I am, hear the truth You have put into me, trust the love You have for me, which You call me to live out every day.

O Holy One, I hear and say so many words, yet Yours is the word I need. Calm me now, into a quietness that heals and listens, and molds my longings and passions, my wounds, and wonderings into a more holy and human shape.

Speak now, and help me listen and, if what I hear is silence, let it quiet me, let it disturb me, let it touch my need, let it break my pride, let it shrink my certainties, let it enlarge my wonder.

I believe my life is touched by You, that You want something for me, and of me. So, give me ears to hear You, to see the tracing of Your finger, and a heart quickened by the motions of Your Spirit.

Amen. (Tyndale University, Misa Mochinaga)

Lectio Divina – 1 Samuel 3:1-10 God calls Samuel.

Sharing time – Who do you most identify with in the story?

Discussion

Prayer

Appendix X – Listening to God Session 2 God Speaks

When you think back on last session what stands out for you?
Is there anything going on in your life right now that is going on or is in the ‘forefront’ of your life that you’d like to share right now?
What is one experience of listening to God in our time together that has stuck with you?

Music: “Speak” – Jon Guerra (Jon Guerra, 2015)

Chorus

*Speak to me here
Jesus, I am all ears
Speak to my heart
And my healing will start
When I need to be raised, Lord
What more can I say than
Speak, Jesus*

Silence

Prayer

Power Point – Bible verses that refer to or quote God speaking. In between each verse we pause to listen to what God wants to bring to our attention.

Genesis 1:1-3

Exodus 3:1- 4

Psalm 46:10-11

Hebrews 1:1

John 1:1

Matthew 3:16-17

Matthew 17:5-7

Mark 4:38-39

John 5:5-9

Matthew 19:23-26

2 Corinthians 12:8-9

Matthew 11:28-30

Matthew 26:39

John 21:15

Revelation 22:12-13

Reflection: As we went through those verses were there any words that stuck out for you?

Prayer

Appendix Y – Listening to God Session 3 The Holy Spirit

Question: When you think back on last session, what stands out for you?

Silence

Psalm 46:10

Be still and know that I am God (silence)

Be still and know that I am (silence)

Be still and know (silence)

Be still (silence)

Be (silence)

Prayer

Music: In preparation for listening to God let's pray the chorus "Spirit of the Living God" (Voices of Praise, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jrwRS1h-rmY>)

As you listen to Psalm 46 list some of the images in the Psalm that you find significant. Why are they so powerful in your life? What might God be saying to you?

Read: Psalm 46 in the CEV followed by silence

Read: Psalm 46 in The Voice followed by silence

Reflection: Has anything resonated with you from these two readings?

Listen to Psalm 46 in music "God is our strength and refuge"
(Paul Kew, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cfv1NFz4e6U>)

Listen to Psalm 46 read to us dramatically: "God is Our Refuge and Strength"
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KaVUcOqitFc&t=13s>)

Silence

Invitation: Pray this Psalm back to God using your own words.

Music: "His Provision" (International Staff Songsters,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qnl6B5IRGR8>)

Prayer

Appendix Z – Listening to God Session 4 Imagination

Question: Did anything stick with you from our last time together? Anything that has helped you in listening to God? (Psalm 46 – the Holy Spirit) Or have you changed the way you listen to God?

Invitation: Today we are invited to listen to God via our imaginations. We will spend time in the story of the four men bringing their paralyzed friend to Jesus, imagining ourselves as part of that story (called Gospel contemplation).

Silence

Matthew 11:28

“Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest
(pause)

Come to Me all you who are weary and burdened (pause)

Come to Me all you who are weary (pause)

Come to Me all you (pause)

Come to Me (pause)

Come (pause)



Figure 9:
Tree Diagram

Let's invite the Holy Spirit to work in our lives. Let's pray this together. Silence

Prayer

How are you coming to God today?

Where are you? Using your imagination look prayerfully at this picture (Figure 9 – Tyndale University, Ouida Pihulyk) Which of these characters represents where you are in your relationship with God/spiritually right now?

Why?

To listen well we need to be aware of ourselves. Where are we right at this moment? Are we distracted? Jittery? Giddy? Tired? Energetic? How do we feel? Happy? Sad? Confused? Calm? How are you coming to God right now?

Music: In preparation for listening to God let's pray the chorus "Spirit of the Living God" (Voices of Praise, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jrwRS1h-rmY>)

Read: Mark 2:1- 11 Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralyzed Man

Pause

Read with Pauses throughout: Mark 2:1- 11 Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralyzed Man

Music: Be Still (Moore 2015)

Appendix AA – Listening to God Session 5 Questions from God and Us

Silence

Meditation: Matthew 11:28

Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.
(silence)

Come to Me all you who are weary and burdened (silence)

Come to Me (silence)

Prayer

How are you coming to God today? How have you experienced God in your life since we last met?

Visio Divina: (Show generic picture of sea crashing against rocks with the sun peeking out from behind the storm clouds) Where does your eye go when you first look at this picture? Does this relate to how you are coming to God today?

5 Questions of Jesus

Pause in between the 5 so you can ask God what He wants you to hear from Him. Dialogue with God through these questions.

Who do you say I am? It's easy to give the quick answer, "Bible, Jesus, God" but take a moment to honestly think about that.

Do you want to get well? (Jesus heals the man by the pool)

Why are you so afraid? (Jesus calms the storm) (Matthew 8:23-27)

You of little faith, why did you doubt? (Peter walks on water)
(Matthew 14:29-31)

Do you love me? (Jesus asks Peter after His resurrection) (John 21:15-17)

Reflection: Which question of the 5 resonated with you the most? Was there one that stood out?

Jesus asks, "Who do you say I am?" I ask Jesus, "Who am I to you?"

Jesus asks, "Do you want to get well?" I ask, "Jesus, what needs healing in me?"

Jesus asks: "Why are you so afraid?" I ask Jesus, "Where are You when things are scary? Why can't I sense Your presence?"

Jesus asks, "Why did you doubt?" I ask Jesus, "How can I know for sure You will rescue me?"

Jesus asks, "Do you love me more than these?" I ask Jesus, "Will You help me to love?" or, "What do You mean by love?" or, "What are 'these' that I need to set aside today to love You the most?"

Visio Divina Reflection: Where is your eye drawn in the picture now? Does this relate to anything you have seen or heard throughout our time today?

Prayer

Appendix AB – Listening to God Session 6 Postures of Listening to God

Did anything in the way that you listen to God change since we last met?
Today we are going to explore how we position our bodies as we listen to God

Silence followed by prayer.

How are you coming to God? Psalm 95:6 - 7

Show picture of listeners. What is their posture like? How are they listening or not listening with their bodies?

Although there is no one right way to position yourself to pray—standing, sitting, kneeling, lying face down on the ground (prostrate)—our body position can impact how we listen, and/or can be an indicator of how we are listening.

“Why would it matter for us to worship with our bodies? The answer, I believe, emerges from a biblical understanding of the person. God did not make us as nonphysical spirits that just happen to have bodies as temporary shells. Rather, God created us as physical beings, as souls that have bodies as an essential element of our being. Our bodies and our spirits are thus deeply interconnected. What we experience on the inside deserves to be expressed in actions. And the actions of our bodies often influence and shape our hearts” (Roberts, n.d.
<https://www.theologyofwork.org/the-high-calling/daily-reflection/how-might-we-use-our-bodies-worship-part-1>)

Reflection: Have you found that certain physical expressions of prayer and worship help you to communicate more completely with God? If so, why do you think these particular expressions are powerful for you?

Prayer – for God’s work in and through His word and the person’s posture

Gospel Contemplation - The Prodigal Son Luke 15:11-32

Two readings of the same passage . . .

1. Pick one posture while listening and imagining yourself in the scene;
2. Mime the postures of the two sons to engage in their state of mind

Visio Divina - Rembrandt’s *The Prodigal Son*

Prayer

Appendix AC – Email Invitation to Participants

Dear _____

Thank you for your interest in participating in my class project. Before you formally agree, here is a little bit of the background and purpose of this project. Over the last two-and-a-half years I've been studying what it is to grow in a relationship with God. The formal title for this is spiritual formation. Another way of saying this is, to grow in your faith, or sanctification. In Romans 8:29 we read that as Christians we are “predestined to be conformed to the image of His (God's) Son” (Romans 8:29). The process of being conformed begins with confessing our sin and accepting God's gift of salvation. God's acceptance of us results in an indwelling of the Holy Spirit. As we journey with God through life, He continues to work in us to become more like Him. To be changed by God Christians must be attentive to His presence and intentional about listening for His direction.

The purpose of this project is to both experience listening to God, increase the knowledge of how to do this, and inspire a desire to do this more. The process for this will be for us to meet over Zoom, taking time to sit in God's presence while reflecting upon His word. Together we will journey through the project to benefit both you and the project mutually.

Here is the plan:

1. The project will begin with each participant signing a consent form.
2. Once I receive your consent form, I will send you a link to a 10-question survey on Survey Monkey.
3. After you have filled out the survey, I'll contact you so that we can arrange the times and dates of the six one-hour Zoom meetings. They will occur every other week over a twelve-week period. The plan is that they will start the beginning of October 2021.
4. We will then engage in the six sessions with your input and feedback along the way so that the sessions will be tailored to your personality and spirituality.
5. After the twelve weeks each participant will be asked to fill out the initial survey again.
6. Once all the surveys have been completed you will be invited to join in a debriefing Zoom session with all participants.

If you have any questions at all, please feel free to ask. All questions are welcome!

Due to this being a project for my Doctor of Ministry studies I am required to have each participant sign an official consent form. If you would still like to be part of this project, please let me know and I'll email you that form.

Thanks so much for your willingness to jump on board! I really appreciate it. I also believe that as we seek God's will through listening, we will hear Him and be more deeply formed to His likeness.

God bless you,
Alison, Integrated Ministries Coordinator

Appendix AD – Consent Form

Consent to Participate in the Study

Listening to God: The Effect of Spiritual Direction on Senior Soldiers of

The Salvation Army Scarborough Citadel Corps

September 2021 – January 2022

Conducted by

*Alison Moore
Integrated Ministries Coordinator
The Salvation Army Scarborough Citadel*

Contact information:

Under the supervision of

Dr. Mark Chapman PhD

For the course

DMSF 0943 SPIRITUAL FORMATION
ACTION LEARNING RESEARCH PROJECT

I understand that I am invited to participate in the research study named above. This study is intended to record and analyze the impact of biweekly, one-on-one Spiritual Direction on the spiritual lives of Senior Soldiers of The Salvation Army Scarborough Citadel.

The purpose of this study is to:

1. Give those in our congregation an opportunity to connect one-on-one with the researcher (a fellow member of the congregation) in order to provide time to pray, meditate on Scripture, and become aware of God's presence.
2. Discover how meeting together in this way can result in being more aware of God's presence and work.
3. Practice spiritual disciplines; learning new ones, practicing familiar ones.

By signing this form in the space provided at the end, I indicate my agreement to participate in the study.

What Will Participation Involve?

My participation will consist of:

1. An initial survey. This document will be emailed to me once I return this consent form signed by me. The survey will be used to provide a starting point for my current spiritual awareness. The survey will be filled out via Survey Monkey.
2. Arranging an appointment time. I will then arrange a day and time with Alison when we will meet for spiritual direction.
3. Participating in six one-hour sessions. The following week I will begin six biweekly, one-on-one sessions of spiritual direction with Alison. Each session will be held via Zoom for one hour for a total of six Zoom meetings. The meetings can start as early as September 2021 and will be completed by December 18, 2021 (or earlier).
4. A final survey. This document will be the same as the initial survey and will help chart any change in spiritual awareness. The survey will be filled out via Survey Monkey.
5. A debrief Zoom meeting. Once all participants have completed the final survey, I will be invited to a group Zoom meeting with the other participants. I am free to decline this invitation if I wish to remain anonymous, or I can attend and share my experience (as I am willing to do so) with the group.

Are There Risks?

My participation in this study will entail that I am willing to participate in prayer, sharing of personal information, and unfamiliar spiritual disciplines. This may cause nervousness, a sense of vulnerability, and a feeling of not knowing. I have received assurance from the researcher (Alison) that every effort will be made to minimize these risks by creating a welcoming, gracious environment and by assurances of confidentiality.

What Benefits Will My Participation Bring?

My participation may result in me learning new ways of connecting with God, experiencing community by meeting with the researcher, and contributing to the overall study which might result in helping others come to know God better.

Will the Information I Share Be Kept Confidential?

I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential. I understand that the contents will be used only for the accumulation of data for the researcher's final published Doctor of Ministry project. Data collected from or about me will not be shared with other researchers or re-used in other research projects unless my consent is obtained again for those purposes. To safeguard my confidentiality, the researcher will create a code name to be used on all documents so that my name will not be linked with my information.

Since much of the participation will occur over the internet, to minimize the risk of security breaches and to help ensure your confidentiality we recommend that you use standard safety measures such as signing out of your account, closing your browser, and locking your screen or device when you are no longer using them / when you have completed the study.

Will My Identity Remain Anonymous?

My identity will remain anonymous unless I choose to tell others about my participation.

The details shared in each meeting will be confidential. The use of a code name will enable the researcher to use examples in the final paper without identifying me. The results of the surveys will be used to show general changes and will not refer to anyone specifically.

The option of participating in the final debrief Zoom meeting with other participants is my decision. If I wish to remain completely anonymous, I am not required to attend this meeting.

What Will Happen to the Records of My Participation?

The data collected will be stored in the form of electronic files and handwritten notes. Electronic records will be securely stored on an external hard drive and the hard drive of the researcher's computer under password protection. Handwritten notes will be securely stored in a filing cabinet. The records will only be accessible by the researcher, and they will be destroyed after December 2023.

How Will the Study Results Be Shared?

The results of the study will be shared by being included in a submitted course project (named above). The final document of the Doctor of Ministry program may include the data from this project. That document will be published and be accessible to the public (i.e., by being included in the Tyndale University Library).

All participants will be informed of the results of the research by March 2022 and will be informed of the publication date when it is known.

Is My Participation Totally Voluntary?

I understand that I am under no obligation to participate in this study. There will be no penalty if I choose not to participate. If I choose to participate, **I can withdraw from the study at any time** and/or refuse to answer any questions without suffering any negative consequences. If I choose to withdraw, all information gathered about me prior to my withdrawal will be deleted and not included in the final study report. I understand that if I choose to participate in this research, I have not waived any legal rights.

Consent to Participate

I, _____, have read and understood the above information and I freely consent to participate in this research study by signing in the space provided below.

If I have any further questions about the study, I may at any stage contact the researcher Alison Moore _____).

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Board of Tyndale University. If I have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study or my rights as a participant, I may contact the Research Ethics Board at reb@tyndale.ca.

Participant's signature _____

Date _____

**Appendix AE – Schedule of Tasks Completed for
Action Learning Research Project**

Phase	Date	Task	Who is involved	Purpose
Context & Needs Assessment	April 19 - 30 2021	Assessed and recorded the context of project	Alison	Defined the project as it relates to the ministry context so that it meets a felt need
Developed the Innovation	May 1 – 31 2021	Imagined and created a project that would engage people within the context	Alison	Created a project that will help meet the felt need
Action Learning Project Proposal Approved	August 24, 2021	After completed, and reviewed by Dr. Chapman, submitted final Action Learning Research Proposal	Alison	Received permission to go ahead with the project
Ethics Proposal to Ethics Review Board Approved	October 8, 2021	Ethics proposal submitted and approved by Ethics Review Board	Alison	Ensured the project will comply with the Tyndale ethics requirements
Pre-Implementation	October 8 – 15 2021	Connected with potential participants regarding willingness to participate and availability for orientation session	Alison & Participants	Enlisted participants for project so that those involved could benefit and data

Phase	Date	Task	Who is involved	Purpose
				could be collected
Pre-Implementation	October 8 – 15 2021	Sent out consent forms to participants	Alison	Consent forms ensured that participants were aware of their rights within the scope of the project
Pre-Implementation	October 8 – 22 2021	Received consent forms	Alison	Confirmed participants' understanding of the project and their willingness to participate
Pre-Implementation	October 8 – 22 2021	Sent participants survey once consent was received	Alison	Initial survey provided a baseline of their awareness and practice of ways they listened to God
Pre-Implementation	October 8 – 22 2021	Received participants' initial survey and recorded data	Alison & Participants	Recorded results in Excel file

Phase	Date	Task	Who is involved	Purpose
Implementation Phase	October 26, 2021 – January 13, 2022	Met with participants for project sessions	Alison & Participants	8 participants, 6 sessions each. Sessions were 1 hour long. Sessions were held every other week.
Implementation Phase	January 5, 2022	Created a debriefing session	Alison	Created an opportunity for participants to discuss their experiences
Implementation Phase	January 11 – 13, 2022	Sent participants follow up survey after last session and invited them to a debrief session	Alison	Further engaged participants in an awareness of the impact of spiritual direction.
Implementation Phase	January 12 – 19, 2022	Received follow up surveys	Alison	Obtained data and recorded data in Excel sheet
Implementation Phase	January 20, 2022	Debrief session	Alison & Participants	Held Zoom session with all participants who are willing and interested to allow them to

Phase	Date	Task	Who is involved	Purpose
				share their experiences and ask questions, and for me to share when the findings will be available for them to read
Post-Implementation	January 20, 2022	Recorded data from follow-up surveys and debrief meeting	Alison	Ensured all data was recorded in Excel sheets
Post-Implementation	December 19, 2021 - January 20, 2022	Compiled and analyzed data	Alison	
Post-Implementation	January – March 2022	Analyzed and reported on data and implementation results	Alison	Discovered the outcome of the project and wrote about it
Post-Implementation	May 31, 2022	Shared the results with participants	Alison & participants	Allowed participants to see the outcome so that they could comment on it and learn from it
Post-Implementation	May 31, 2022	Submitted final project report for marking	Alison	

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