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Tyndale University

Renovation:
The Trinity Transforming Lives

A Research Portfolio
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
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by

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ABSTRACT

The Trinity exists in perfect harmony and relationship. Humanity was created to share in that relational love. In pride, the created chose knowledge over a relationship with the Creator, breaking God's designed order and His anthropomorphic heart. The Trinity gifted humanity their independence while presenting an opportunity to restore them back into relationship. If every person were a house, each house would be a wreck, ravaged by the devastation of sin, desperately needing complete renovation. I used a charismatic metaphor to depict the Trinity as a renovation team, suited up in steel-toed boots, with the tools of the trade hanging off carpenter belts, ready to remodel lives. The Father is the Master Architect, Jesus the Master Craftsman and the Holy Spirit the Onsite Coordinator of this Holy Renovation Team. This portfolio contains an explanation of the Trinitarian blueprints for renovation and a story of personal restoration. Some spiritual disciplines are discussed as the renovation tools of spiritual formation. The favourable results of a research curriculum taught with the goal of heart rehabilitation are reported, and the ultimate reason for this Trinitarian renovation. Holy sweat drips, and the clangors of hammers and drills are heard as the Restoration Team commences the renewal process of Renovation: The Trinity Transforming Lives.

DEDICATION

For you, Trinity.
What will You do with it now?
I wait expectant.

A song on this journey:

I need the kind of love that can outlast the night.
I need the kind of love that is willing to fight.

When the going gets tough,
And my strength's not enough,
I see You showing up like never before.
This battle for my heart,
You took on from the start,
You are the peace when my mind's at war.
And oh

You will never stop fighting for me,
When I can't fight for myself.
Every word is a promise You keep,
'Cause You love me like nobody else.
You stand up for me in the darkest night,
When my faith is weak, You're still by my side.
You will never stop fighting for me.
You will never stop fighting for me (Clemmons 2019).

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To Tyndale University, Professors and Staff – thank you for allowing a foreigner to come and visit academia for a while. Academia is not my culture, language, or mission field, yet you treated me kindly and taught me much during my visit there. May the fruit of your labours bring glory to God.

Mom, you probably have memorized this portfolio by now as many times as you have heard me read it. Thank you for your listening ears and for being my home during the pandemic.

EPIGRAPH

I PRAY THAT OUT OF HIS GLORIOUS RICHES HE (THE FATHER) MAY STRENGTHEN YOU WITH POWER THROUGH HIS SPIRIT IN YOUR INNER BEING, SO THAT CHRIST MAY DWELL IN YOUR HEARTS THROUGH FAITH. AND I PRAY THAT YOU, BEING ROOTED AND ESTABLISHED IN LOVE, MAY HAVE POWER, TOGETHER WITH ALL THE LORD'S HOLY PEOPLE, TO GRASP HOW WIDE AND LONG AND HIGH AND DEEP IS THE LOVE OF CHRIST, AND TO KNOW THIS LOVE THAT SURPASSES KNOWLEDGE—THAT YOU MAY BE FILLED TO THE MEASURE OF ALL THE FULLNESS OF GOD. NOW TO HIM WHO IS ABLE TO DO IMMEASURABLY MORE THAN ALL WE ASK OR IMAGINE, ACCORDING TO HIS POWER THAT IS AT WORK WITHIN US, TO HIM BE GLORY IN THE CHURCH AND IN CHRIST JESUS THROUGHOUT ALL GENERATIONS, FOR EVER AND EVER. AMEN. (EPH 3:16-21)

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GLOSSARY

AZ – State of Arizona
BCM – Bible Centered Ministries International
CSF – Christian Spiritual Formation – The spiritual journey to be formed into the image of Christ.
FCC – Fellowship Community Church in New Jersey
IBS – Institute of Biblical Studies
Imago Dei – Image of God
Imago Christi – Image of Christ
NIV – New International Version
NJ – State of New Jersey
NT – New Testament
OT – Old Testament
PA – State of Pennsylvania
PCB – Philadelphia College of Bible (now called Cairn University)
PNG – Papua New Guinea
TEE – Theological Education by Extension
Telos is the Greek word for aim or goal.
WBT – Wycliffe Bible Translators

CHAPTER I

RENOVATION BLUEPRINTS

The greatest wonder of the Christian gospel is that the Trinity is open for human relations. Therefore, to the extent that the Western church... lives in communion with the triune God; has an openness for human relations reflective of God's openness; works in participation with what he is doing; works incarnationally, (is) modelled on and in union with Christ; lives in communion with the indwelling, transforming, empowering Spirit; reflects the oneness of the Trinity in catholicity and unity; and reflects the diverse, irreducible identities or character of the three persons in a coinherent way, there is hope for the Western church, and indeed the whole church of God.

-Ross Hastings (2012, 83-84)

Introduction

It was utter perfection. Humans had a flawless relationship with God and each other while living in the paradise of Eden's Garden. The tempter twisted truth, there was a reasoned yet erroneous decision that led to action, and the fragile bliss was obliterated. Sin destroyed, like a tornado, leaving complete desolation. Amid this devastation stands the Trinity with the desire to rebuild and bring transformation out of the destruction. On this damaged landscape, each person is like a derelict house and the many rooms inside are different parts of their lives. (Munger 1992, chap. 1).

In this chapter and throughout the portfolio, I have chosen to depict the Trinity as a renovation team and each person as a house needing a complete

restoration. In this remodelling imagery, I describe the Trinity in their construction roles. The Father is described as the Master Architect mapping out the blueprints of renewal. Jesus is the Master Carpenter artfully restoring, and the Holy Spirit is the Onsite Coordinator acting as the liaison between the Trinity, the renovated one and the community of faith. When a person believes in Christ, the Triune Godhead starts the process of spiritual reformation, as detailed in this portfolio titled *Renovation: The Trinity Transforming Lives*.

This chapter, titled *Renovation Blueprints*, starts with an overview of the Trinity and the unity and roles of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as seen in Scripture. The chapter continues by defining a relationship with the Trinity as the focal point of Christianity and how this connection leads us into relationships with others. Finally, it concludes with defining renovation and how the Father draws up renovation blueprints for each believer as the Trinity desires to restore every part of a life, forming the believer into the image of Christ.

The Trinity

The word Trinity is never used in the Bible, and no single passage describes the doctrine of the triune Godhead (Grenz 2000, 75). However, Trinity is the word that evolved to describe this magnificent God, who is three separate and distinct beings while remaining harmoniously unified as one God. It is well known that God is one God (Dt 6:4). Many Old and New Testament verses speak of the Spirit of God and the Holy Spirit. Likewise, many verses declare Jesus and His divinity. In other places, God is called the Father. As people studied

Scripture, the understanding of the Trinity developed as a doctrine (Grenz 2000, 76).

Stanley Grenz, a North American theological professor and author, wrote about the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE. At this time, “the church unequivocally affirmed the full divinity of Christ” (Grenz 2000, 80). In 381 CE, at the Council in Constantinople, the church “affirmed the full deity of the Holy Spirit [...] From this point, the orthodox understanding of God would need to view all three persons—Father, Son, and Spirit—as fully divine” (Grenz 2000, 80). Using the Greek language to define this new understanding of God, “The Cappadocians [...] declared that God is one *ousia* (‘essence’) but three *hypostases* (‘center of consciousness’ or ‘independent reality’). The three ‘independent realities’ share the same will, nature, and essence” (Grenz 2000, 81-82). In Latin, Tertullian was “the first to use the word ‘Trinity’” and he “coined the well-known Latin formulation *tres personae, una substantia* (‘three persons, one substance’)” (Grenz 2000, 82). The early believers struggled to understand the fullness of God’s Personhood and developed this doctrine of the Trinity to help Christians understand this “plurality of unity” (Grenz 2000, 94).

In the beginning, as the writer of Genesis introduced the Trinity in Scripture, he did so by describing God in the act of creation. In Genesis 1:1-2, the Spirit of God hovered over the waters while the Trinity created the universe. These verses show God the Father and the Holy Spirit present at creation, but it was not until Colossians was penned that Jesus’ role in creation was clarified.

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him, all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. (Col 1:15-16)

The Trinity is one God, in unified action, completing the work of creation.

Creation was the first example of seeing the Godhead at work in unity.

Unified in love and purpose, Father, Son and Holy Spirit created all from nothing.

Bruce A. Ware, a theologian and author, wrote about the unity of the Trinity.

In unique and remarkable ways, each member of the Trinity relates distinctively with the other members, yet each contributes in ways that advance and fulfill the one common plan and purpose of God. The unity of the Godhead is seen in that each of the three divine Persons possesses the identically same nature simultaneously, fully, and eternally; and all of the divine Persons work together in absolute harmony to support one another in accomplishing the common divine task, from creation to the new creation and beyond. (Ware 2005, 108)

It is tremendously difficult for humanity to understand the equality and unity in which the Trinity functions. Human beings only attain a basic level of unity, which is achieved only through tremendous effort. Yet, it must be understood that the Trinity relates to each other harmoniously as a part of their nature. God is one (Du 6:4), and God is love (1 Jn 4:8). Divine love fuels this harmonious, eternal unity. Jesus described this unity by saying He was in the Father and the Father was in Him (Jn 14:10). Each member of the Trinity indwells the other members of the Trinity in the doctrine known as *perichoresis*. Kevin DeYoung, a pastor and professor of theology, explains *perichoresis*.

The mutual indwelling of *perichoresis* means two things. First, the three persons of the Trinity are all fully in one another. And second, each person of the Trinity is in full possession of the divine essence. To be sure, the Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Spirit, and the Spirit is not the

Father. *Perichoresis* does not deny any of this. What *perichoresis* maintains is that you cannot have one person of the Trinity without having the other two, and you cannot have any person of the Trinity without having the fullness of God. The inter-communion of the persons is reciprocal, and their operations are inseparable. (DeYoung 2020)

While mutually indwelling each other, each member of the Trinity is harmoniously enacting the role given to them by each other. The reality of this mutual indwelling refutes the heresy of Modalism, which taught that “one God revealed himself first as Father, then as Son, and finally as Holy Spirit” (Morgan and Peterson 2020, s.v. “Trinity”). The Trinity is a plurality in unity, dividing the work and accomplishing it together in love.

Although one and the same nature, each member has a specific role to perform in the Trinity. The following examination of Scripture shows evidence of their distinct roles. These sections about Father, Son and Holy Spirit do not thoroughly examine the Trinity, a topic on which entire books are written. Instead, it is a brief overview as a foundation to discuss a believer’s relationship with God. In discussing each member of the Trinity, I referred back to a personal doctrinal statement created at Bible College in 1997. The analysis of the different functions of the Trinity members starts with the Father.

The Father

“There is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live” (1 Cor 8:6). While I would never expect to become intimately acquainted with a famous personality, I do know and am in a relationship with God the Father. Miraculously, I will have eternity in the fullness of His presence.

There is also the opportunity to explore the depths of knowing “the only true God” (Jn 17:3; 1 Jn 4:7). This God is knowable, even though He is a Spirit (Jn 4:25). The Father’s intellect (Fuller 1997, 1) is shown by the fact that He has knowledge (1 Sm 2:3; Rom 11:33-34). Scriptures reveal that God displays emotions such as love (Jer 31:3; Jn 3:16), wrath (Rom 1:18), hate (Ps 11:5), and jealousy (Dt 5:9). God the Father has a will and makes choices based upon His desires (Dn 4:35; Jn 6:38, Eph 1).

Some characteristics that describe the nature of God are: holy (Ex 15:11; 1 Sm 2:2, Is 6:3), eternal (Dt 33:27; Ps 90:1-2) and self-existent (Ex 3:14; Jn 5:26). He is also present everywhere (Ps 139; Jer 23:23-24), knows all (Ps 139:1-4; 147:5; 1 Jn 3:20; Heb 4:13), and has all power (Is 43:3; Jer 32:27; Mt 19:26). God the Father also never changes (Mal 3:6; Jas 1:17). He is truthful (Jn 3:33; Ti 1:2), righteous (Jb 4:17; Ps 89:14; Rom 3:25), and is rich in grace (Fuller 1997, 2) and mercy (Eph 2:4, 7; Jas 5:11; 1 Pt 1:3). God has all these exemplary aspects in His nature, many of which He uses as a Father.

God is a Father to humanity (Is 64:7; 1 Cor 8:6; Lk 6:35-36; Eph 4:4-6; 1 Jn 3:1). He also has a Father relationship to Jesus in the Trinity. Jesus claimed that He came “from the Father [...] into the world” (Jn 16:28) “not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me” (Jn 6:38; Mt 26:39). He follows the Father’s will, which indicates a temporary subordinate role, yet, Jesus said, “I and the Father are one” (Jn 10:30), which shows complete unity and equality of essence. Simultaneously being equal to God, Jesus also allows the Father to have

a temporary role of authority over Him and His actions (Jn 14:28); yet, this limited role of leadership is within the bounds of the Trinity's harmonious relationship (Jn 1:18). Jesus follows His Father's commands because He loves Him (Jn 14:31). The Trinity's interpersonal relationship is discussed more below. Next, Jesus' position as the Son is examined.

The Son

“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Tm 1:15). While existing as God before taking a human body (Jn 1:14, 8:58), He was still God in the flesh. There are several verses (Fuller 1997, 2) that speak to His eternity (Mi 5:2; Is 9:6; Jn 1:1-3; 1 Tm 1:17) as well as His role in creation (Jn 1; Col 1:16-17). The Old Testament attributed deity to the Messiah (Is. 9:6; Dn 7:13), and the name Immanuel was given to Jesus (Is 7:14, Mt 1:18-23). Others in Scripture credited deity to Jesus by calling Him Lord, God or the Messiah: Peter (Mt 16:16), Roman soldiers (Mt 27:54), Martha (Jn 11:27), the Apostle John (Jn 20:31), Paul (Acts 9:20; Col 2:9), Thomas (Jn 20:28), and the writer of Hebrews (Heb 1:1-8). Lastly, Jesus Himself claimed to be God (Mt 24-27; Jn 8:58 and Jn 10). Many passages in the Old Testament (OT) and the New Testament (NT) call Jesus God.

But Jesus is the only member of the Godhead to take on human flesh. Much biblical evidence exists for His incarnation (Fuller 1997, 3). Jesus had human genealogies (Mt 1:1-17; Lk 3:23-28) and was born of a woman (Lk 2:7). There are many descriptions of Christ in the flesh, including physical death (Mt

27; Mk 15; Lk 23; Jn 19; 1 Cor 15:3-4, Col 1:22). Jesus had human emotions like grief, compassion, and anguish (Jn 11:35; Mt 9:36; Lk 22:44) and physical limitations such as hunger, thirst and fatigue (Jn 19:28; Mt 4:2; Lk 8:23).

Not only human but also wholly divine, the Hypostatic Union of Christ can be seen in the following passages (Is 9:6-7; Dn 7:13; Jn 1:1, 14; Gal 4:4-5). Hypostatic Union is “A theological term used with reference to the Incarnation to express the revealed truth that in Christ one person subsists in two natures, the Divine and the human” (Pace 1910, 1). Being completely man and God simultaneously meant that Jesus could be both located in a single location and yet omnipresent and omnipotent and tired at the same time. It is impossible for humans to fully understand the incarnation’s miracle. However, we will have eternity to worship Him upon this comprehension.

Jesus became human to redeem people (1 Tm 1:15). He was tempted (Mk 1:13), “yet He did not sin” (Heb 4:15). He is holy (Lk 1:35; Acts 4:27; 1 Pt 1:16) and loves the Trinity and people with an intensity that is beyond mental grasp (Eph 3:18; Mk 10:21; Jn 10:11, 14:31). Despite being the most notable personality ever to exist, He is humble (Mt 11:29; 2 Cor 2:1) and completely unchangeable (Heb 13:8).

All of humanity’s accomplishments have never surpassed the magnificence of creation. Yet, Jesus’ most remarkable work was achieved by pacifying God’s holy wrath (Fuller 1997, 6) as the atoning sacrifice for the excessive disobedience of untold generations (Rom 3:25; Heb 2:17; 1 Jn 2:2,

4:10). The enemies of God were reconciled to a relationship with the Trinity (Rom 5:10-11; 2 Cor 5:18-21). God declared the transgressors legally righteous based on Christ's atonement (Acts 13:38-39; Rom 3:21-24; Gal 2:16). Praise God for humanity's redemption through Jesus, "the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross" (Heb 12.2).

The Holy Spirit

The last member of the Trinity is the Holy Spirit. "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Some of the works of the Holy Spirit (Fuller 1997, 4) in believers are that He births us spiritually and renews us (Ti 3:5), baptizes us from death to life (Rom 6:1-10) into one body (1 Cor 12:13), fills us to encourage one another and give praise and thanks to God (Eph 5:18), distributes gifts as He determines best (1 Cor 12:11), is our "seal of ownership" and "guarantee of what is to come" (2 Cor 1:22; Eph 1:13-14, 4:30), and He indwells us (Jn 7:37-39, 14:17; Rom 5:5; 1 Cor 6:19). Is there anything more amazing than the Holy Spirit residing inside of people? As the human body needs breath to live, the human spirit needs the Holy Spirit's life-giving breath to "live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

The Holy Spirit works inside the believer and on the earth (Fuller 1997, 3). He restrains evil in the world (Gn 6:3; 2 Thes 2:7) and gives life (Rom 8:2, 11; 2 Cor 3:6). The Holy Spirit also testifies (Jn 15:26; Rom 8:16), leads (Rom 8:14), teaches (Jn 14:26), and convicts (Jn 16:8). A favoured practice of the Spirit is how

He helps believers to pray by interceding for us (Rom 8:26-27). The Holy Spirit is a very active member of the Trinity, simultaneously at work in each believer and the world. At the same time, He is in complete unity and harmony with Jesus and the Father.

The Holy Spirit also displays the characteristics of a personality. He has an intellect (Is 11:2; Rom 8:27; 1 Cor 2:10-11) and emotions. He can be grieved (Eph 4:30) and loves (Rom 15:30). The Spirit has a will and exercises it (Acts 16:6-11; 1 Cor 12:1). Besides having a personality, the Holy Spirit also exhibits features of divine status such as eternality (Heb 9:14), omnipresence (Ps 139:7-10), and He is called God and Lord (Acts 5:3-4; 2 Cor 3:17-18). Having studied the roles and some significant features of each member of the Trinity individually, it is time to look at the relationship expressed between the Godhead members and how that relationship extends to humans.

Relationships

There is an emphasis on relationships in Scripture, although ironically, this word never occurs in the Bible. Having a relationship with God and others is the primary focus and the greatest commandment in the Bible (Mk 12:30-31). Relationship starts inside the Trinity and extends out to people. As people interact with the Trinity, they can, in turn, relate to others in love.

The Relationship within the Trinity

W. Ross Hastings is a pastor, professor, and author writing about theology, including the Trinity. “To be Trinitarian means first to understand the fundamental loving relationality of God and the power of that relationality. It is the power of love” (Hastings 2012, 84-85). I believe that love is the quintessential descriptor of a relationship. Not only does Scripture define God as loving (Jn 3:16; 1 Jn 3:1), but love comes from Him, and He is love (1 Jn 4:7-8). Jesus said the Father loved Him and that He abides in the Father’s love (Jn 15:9-10). No specific verses mention that the Holy Spirit loves the Father or Jesus and vice versa. However, we do know that the Spirit gives love to the believers (Rom 5:5, 15:30), and love is one of His fruits (Gal 5:19). Since the Holy Spirit has and gives love and is a member of the Godhead who is love, it is not an assumption to state that reciprocal love exists within the Trinity even though we do not have a verse explicitly stating this fact. The Trinity is love and operates in a loving relationship with each other.

Another characteristic of the Trinity’s relationship to each other is unity.

The interconnectedness and interdependence among the members of the Trinity is such that one is hard-pressed to think of any “work of God” which does not involve various members of the Trinity working together. For example, God the Father designs what the purpose of the created order will be. In this, he designs that his Son be the one who comes and redeems sinners. The Father designs it, but his fulfillment of that design depends upon the Son obeying the Father. And yet the Son obeying the Father depends upon the Spirit empowering the Son. There is interdependence, an interconnection intrinsic to the very nature of God (Ware 2005, 93).

The following paragraph details some of the many verses in Scripture to show how the Trinity is interdependent and unified. The Father, Son and Spirit work together, in harmony, to achieve their work. The Trinity's nature is unified and inter-reliant. This harmony is shown prominently in their working relationship.

Many verses show the Godhead working together. The Father and Spirit jointly created the conditions for Jesus to be born of Mary (Lk 1:35). As Jesus was baptized, both Father and Spirit were there (Mt 3:16-17). Baptisms occur while naming each member of the Trinity (Mt 28:19). For believers to receive an advocate, Jesus asks the Father to send the Spirit (Jn 14:16-17). The Spirit distributes the gifts for Christians to follow Jesus while God is at work (1 Cor 12:4-6). God helps believers to "stand firm in Christ" and gave us the Spirit as a "guarantee" (2 Cor 1:21-22). Peter wrote to those believers chosen by the Father through the Spirit and who were obedient to Jesus. (1 Pt 1:1-2). "There is one Spirit [...] one Lord [...] one God and Father of all" (Eph 4:4-6). When Paul prayed for the Corinthians, he prayed for the "grace of Jesus," the "love of God," and "the fellowship of the Holy Spirit" (2 Cor 13:14). The Bible is replete with examples of the Trinity accomplishing tasks in harmonious togetherness.

The Trinity's collaboration in creation has already been mentioned (Gn 1:1-2, Col. 1:16). It was the moment that the Godhead, working collectively in an expression of love, created the opportunity for new avenues of love to be given and received from human beings. God gives and receives love, and because of His love, humanity can also be bearers and recipients of love to Him and each other.

Humanity Relating to the Trinity and Each Other

Out of loving unity, the Trinity created people in God's image (Gn 1:26-27). The Godhead, who exists in relational and interdependent community, formed people to share in their relationship. Richard Plass, a pastor and counsellor, and James Cofield, a pastor and professor, together co-wrote *The Relational Soul*.

By definition the Christian God exists in relationship as Father, Son and Spirit. While existing as three distinct persons, they share one divine essence that is described as love (1 Jn 4:8). God can be love only if God exists as community [...] We were created with this relational likeness and we long for relational connection because God exists in a relationship of love. God designed us to enjoy giving and receiving. God designed us to be for another. God designed us to receive from another (Plass and Cofield 2014, 15).

Out of this deep, abiding relationship, God designed people to be able to relate to the Trinity and other humans.

A relationship with the Trinity is the deepest love and relationship a human can experience. Ruth Haley Barton, an author and practitioner of Christian spiritual formation, describes love and longing for God. "We love God because he first loved us. We long for God because he first longed for us. We reach for God because he first reached for us" (Barton 2009, 25). God created us for a relationship with Himself. However, before people realize this truth, they only recognize the desire to be loved. This longing for love is seen and heard everywhere in love songs on the radio, romance novels on the shelf, and romantic movies playing in the theatre. Human beings search for love, usually in all the

wrong places first. A loving relationship with another person can never fulfill our spiritual thirst for a love relationship with the Trinity.

Blaise Pascal was a French mathematician, philosopher, physicist and writer. He wrote about this longing for God by indicating there is a hole inside the heart of man that God can only fill.

What is it, then, that this desire and this inability proclaim to us, but that there was once in man (sic) a true happiness of which there now remain to him only the mark and empty trace, which he in vain tries to fill from all his surroundings, seeking from things absent the help he does not obtain in things present? But these are all inadequate, because the infinite abyss can only be filled by an infinite and immutable object, that is to say, only by God Himself. (Pascal 1660, 80)

Humans were made by a relational Trinity created with a tremendous desire for a relationship with that Godhead. People will keep trying, in vain, to fill that void with other objects, places and people until they find that only a relationship with God will fulfill that deep desire.

As there are biological imperatives for living organisms (food, sleep, breathing, procreation), I am claiming this term “spiritual imperative” for the spirit of people. Humanity’s most significant spiritual need is to have a relationship with God. While coming into a relationship with God through faith in Jesus fulfills the most significant spiritual imperative, it is not the only relationship we need. After God created Adam, He created Eve as a companion for relationship (Gn 2:18-24). Humans need to be in relationships with other people and God. Because of His love for us, we should love others (1 Jn 4:11) and be in a relationship with them. The Trinity never intended Christians to be so

focused on their relationship with God that they lose connections with people or for Christians to separate from others, living life on their own. On the contrary, we are in a relationship with God to relate to others.

We were created to be in a loving relationship with God and live in community with others. Jesus said loving God and loving others fulfill the two greatest commandments (Mt 22:36-40, Mk 12:30-31). Scripture tells us to “not give up meeting together” (Heb. 10:25) and that we are a part of the “body of Christ” (1 Cor 12:27). Each part of the body must be together and work collectively for the work to be accomplished.

We are nurtured by relationships. In the community, we learn what it means to live out the story of redemption. In the community, the Spirit of God resides, encouraging, teaching and guiding its members into a deeper love for God and others. It is impossible to foster soulful relationships without a real commitment to a particular community of faith. We learn to love by loving real people. (Plass and Cofield 2014, 117)

Being in a relationship with God is not only a spiritual imperative for humanity, it is also necessary for us to be mentally, emotionally and physically healthy.

In the book *Born for Love*, psychiatrist Bruce D. Perry and neuroscience journalist and author Maia Szalavitz wrote about how empathy affects our ability to socialize and the power that human relationships have in our lives (Szalavitz and Perry 2010, 1). The authors believe that human beings cannot exist without relationships. “Humankind would not have endured and cannot continue without the capacity to form rewarding, nurturing, and enduring relationships. We survive because we can love” (Szalavitz and Perry 2010, 1). Human beings need relationships with people. Perhaps this is why Paul said that the greatest virtue is

love (1 Cor 13:13). The love Paul is writing about is more than an emotional feeling. It leads to action by loving with all the heart, soul, mind and strength. It is not just love towards God but also loving others in our community as we love ourselves (Mk 12:30-31).

The Father, Son, and Spirit are a community, one God existing as three Persons. The Trinity created us for a relationship with God and with others.

At the heart of the Christian understanding of God is the declaration that God is triune—Father, Son, and Spirit. This means that in his eternal essence, the one God is a social reality, the social Trinity. Because God is the social Trinity, a plurality in unity, the ideal for humankind does not focus on solitary persons but on persons-in-community. God intends that we reflect his nature in our lives. This is only possible, however, as we move out of our isolation and into relationships with others. The ethical life, therefore, is the life-in-relationship or the life-in-community (Grenz 2000, 94).

Because being in relationship is significant to the Trinity, it should also be an imperative to all believers. Therefore, Christians should focus on growing in a loving relationship with God and others. Having discussed the vital role of relationship within the members of the Trinity and also with humanity, it is time to look at the renovation blueprints needed for human transformation.

The Renovation Blueprints

What an absurd notion that the God of all creation wants a relationship with humans (Ps 8). Unexplainably, humanity demolished that relationship by choosing independence rather than interdependence. The all-too-familiar theme song for the human heart became “I did it my way” (Sinatra 1969). The more humans understand God and ourselves, the less we can understand His desire to

have a relationship with people. Each person is like a rundown wreck of a house that the Trinity is renovating while in a relationship with us. As fallen human beings, we fail to recognize the destruction that sin has caused in our lives.

Being born into sin (Ps 51:5) has utterly ruined the metaphorical house of our lives. The catastrophic results of sin could be compared to the damage a house sustains in a tornado. Imagine a tree falling onto the dwelling, breaking through the roof and causing structural damage. Without restoration, the roof leaks and dangerous black mould spores begin to grow in the structure. This unrepaired damage becomes an invitation for malevolent destruction. Passersby look at the ruin and throw rocks at the windows, breaking in and spraying graffiti on the walls. The dwelling is in shambles. As the expert Renovation Team is on the scene passionately surveying the devastation, a restoration plan is formed.

The divine renovation blueprints are the Trinity's design to remodel fallen humanity back into the image of God. However, instead of reforming people into the image of God like the original creation (Adam and Eve), the Trinity is conforming us to the image of Christ. Adam's sin brought death, and Christ's death brought life (Rom 5:17). In Christ, humanity is a new creation (2 Cor 5:17). The Trinity is now at work, transforming each person who comes to them by faith in Jesus into the image of Christ (Rom 8:29). Christians make their journey through life as a living sacrifice, not being moulded into the image of the world, but transformed to the image of Christ (Rom 12:1-2).

Every house, representative of every life, will have a separate renovation plan. Each person is unique and individual, and the landscapes of their lives are distinct. The Trinity, as the Renovation Team, moves in to remodel, making restoration decisions based on that person. The result is always to transform believers into the image of Christ. However, the pathway varies. Sometimes the Renovators start the remodel in the library (renovating “the mind”), the dining room (the room of “appetites and desires”), or possibly the living room (“relationships”) (Munger 1992, chapters 2-4). This room imagery was inspired by Robert Boyd Munger, a professor and a pastor who wrote the book *My Heart Christ’s Home*. The Trinity starts renovation in the room where the transformation is needed most. The price of the renovation has already been paid (Rom 6:23). It is now a matter of allowing the Trinity access to the site to continue their work and bring it to completion (Phil 1:6).

Chapter one of this portfolio has introduced this holy Renovation team. In this document, the Father is described as the Master Architect, drawing up the scriptural plans of restoration. Jesus is the Master Craftsman, remodelling every area of the house. The Holy Spirit is the Onsite Coordinator arranging for the community of faith electricians, plumbers, and natural gas technicians to reconnect all services. As with all house renovations, the restoration is a process, a journey back to wholeness in relationship with God and others. Chapter two recounts a personal story of renovation, particularly how the Trinity has been restoring me into Christ’s image.

Chapter three discusses the renovation tools of the Restoration Team. This chapter details some spiritual disciplines needed to refurbish us as the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19-20). These tools are based upon some scriptural principles and verses I memorized when being disciplined as a teenager in the Navigator 2:7 Bible Study series. “So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness” (Col 2:6-7). The spiritual disciplines are presented under the four sections of these verses: 1) continue to live your lives in Christ, 2) rooted and built up in him, 3) strengthened in the faith, and 4) overflowing with thankfulness.

Chapter four presents the renovation of the heart. This chapter is a thorough report of the research project Destination Abundant Life: The Process of Leaving Hurting for Healing. The chapter shows the results of teaching a healing curriculum to five women. It details what happens in a person’s life physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually when their life wounds are taken to Jesus for healing. More profound relationships can occur between God and others as the Trinity restores the heart.

Chapter five describes why the Triune God is participating in this renovation project by showing how believers are His representation in this world. Christians are God’s ambassadors, imploring others to be reconciled to God (2 Cor 5:20). Believers are a reproduction of Christ on display and represent Him in this world. Our renewed lives are an “open house” exhibiting the love and

transforming power of the Trinity. The community sees the changes, experiences God's transformation through us, and is drawn to new life in Christ. The Trinity Renovators sign is on the front lawn of our lives, advertising the remodel in process.

Conclusion

The Trinity is one God in three persons. Father, Son and Holy Spirit relate to each other in loving unity. God created people to be in a relationship with Him. Humanity chose independence rather than a relationship with the Trinity. The Godhead formed a plan to bring humanity back into a relationship.

The particular and transforming presence of Jesus in us is the good news of the gospel. He is the reason our relational capacity finds new life. The good news of Jesus is not religious doctrine; it is not an idea; it is not a set of beliefs to be embraced. The good news is the loving presence of the Trinitarian God in the person of the eternal Son dwelling within us. We have life in him, not in our ideas about him. We receive his life when we become like little children and trust him. (Plass and Cofield 2014, 72)

When a person believes in the redeeming work of Jesus, they come into God's family. The Trinity starts remodelling that person, based on the renovation blueprints for that life, forming them in the image of Christ. The next chapter shows the Renovation Team at work in my spiritual journey to become like Christ.

CHAPTER II

MY RENOVATION JOURNEY

When spirituality is viewed as a journey, the way to spiritual wholeness is seen to lie in an increasingly faithful response to the One whose purpose shapes our path, whose grace redeems our detours, whose power liberates us from crippling bondages of the prior journey and whose transforming presence meets us at each turn in the road.

-M. Robert Mulholland (2016, 16)

Introduction

Having already detailed the renovation blueprints in chapter one, it is constructive in this section to have a personal story of restoration as an example. The following chapter recounts my renovation journey and how the Trinity has been remodelling me to Christ's image. This reformation process can also be called spiritual formation. While there are many good definitions of spiritual formation, M. Robert Mulholland, a professor and author, is concise, "Spiritual formation is a process of being formed in the image of Christ for the sake of others" (2016, 16). This chapter details my journey as the Trinity Renovation Team has been restoring me to the image of Christ.

From birth to my mid-teen years, stories show the desperate need for renovation in my life. Sin had left great holes in the roof of my life, causing extensive damage from the Arizona summer monsoons. The wallpaper was

hanging off the walls, an inch of dust covered every surface, and black widows occupied every corner of the house. The Renovation team began to set up operations to start rehabilitation, but it wasn't until I allowed them entrance at age fifteen that the real work was started. The Master Architect drew up magnificent plans, and the Master Carpenter soon glistened with sweat while sawdust clung to His beard. The Onsite Coordinator was busy orchestrating the community of faith workers. The Renovators set about their long-term rehabilitation project of making me into the image of Christ.

A Name Indicative of Renovation

It was days after I had been born, and “Girl Fuller” was still the only identification on the hospital bassinet. My mother's friend suggested Elizabeth as a potential name. An article in the paper on Elizabeth Taylor gave my mom the spelling, so she proposed the name to my father. He agreed to Elizabeth but said I would be called “Beth.” Over the years, there have been many nicknames given to me: Bethy, Bethers, Beffy, Betty, and Betherino-Jalapeño. Queens have borne the name, many actresses, and even Jesus' relative in the Bible (Lk 1:36).

Names have meanings. Solomon said, “A good name is more desirable than great riches” (Prv 22:1). Examining the name Elizabeth, there are a couple of meanings such as “God is my oath” (Baby Names 2023) or “Consecrated to God” (Baby Center 2023). So what is in a name? Identification? A way to get a person's attention? Does the meaning of the name predict a personality?

I was a teenager, already following God, when I learned that my name meant consecrated to God. I felt the meaning of the name described my personality and spiritual goals. Since I entered into a relationship with the Trinity, I have tried to live my life as set apart to God. This spiritual autobiography is a short account of how the Trinity has been renovating me into Jesus's image. It is how I have journeyed with God to become Elizabeth, one consecrated to God. May the name of Jesus be "fixed and embedded in my heart" (Teresa of Avila 1987, 187).

Pre-Renovation – Birth to Age Ten

The following autobiographical section is anecdotal of my earliest childhood stories, elementary school, examining my spiritual inheritance and experiencing other spiritual factors.

Earliest Childhood Stories – Background

Even before I was born, I was organized and pragmatic. My mother tells stories of how I was quite punctual in the womb, awakening each morning at the same time, stretching, and exercising. At sixteen months, I potty trained myself, analytically watching my older brother on the potty chair and assuming that all little people were required to perform bodily functions on the small commode. These stories are not my conscious memory. Multiple motherly repetitions have engrained them in my mind. The anecdotes show some of my temperament and the start of my personality. My mother also shares the stories of me having

emotional outbursts. One, in particular, was so demonstrative and noisy that she took a picture of it and would show it to me at other times when I was having a fit. Overall, I was an easy-going child with positive and negative characteristics, self-determined to achieve and finish projects relatively independently.

Some stories illustrate my independence and determination. Once, my maternal grandfather called my mother and told her I was at his house. Only three years old, I had walked a third of a mile to his house to invite him to Bible club. My mother could not believe I had left the house alone, much less knew how to get to his home. I was motivated to get visitors to come to the Bible club to receive a treat. Although I could be independent, that did not necessarily mean being disobedient. My brother, two and a half years older, liked to step over the boundaries to test the consequences. Watching the deserved correction administered to him was all I needed to realize what my behaviour should be. A simple look in my direction was enough to discipline me. As a child, I was mostly an analytical rule follower, usually well-behaved.

Elementary School Ages – Personality Developing

As an adult taking the Myers-Briggs personality test, my results were reported as ISTJ. In the Myers-Briggs Personality classification, I = introvert, S = sensing, T = thinking, and J = judging (The Myers-Briggs Company 2023, Personality Types). I look back now and see traits of this personality type exhibited as a child. Some descriptors of this personality type are “analytical, practical, calm, organized, systematic, dependable, prefers working alone, and

focuses on tasks” (The Myers-Briggs Company 2023, “Type Heads”). Qualities that stress this personality type are “mess, disorder, noise, change, challenging my bottom-line approach or established rules and regulations” (The Myers-Briggs Company 2023, “Stress Heads”). Even at a young age, I see how accurate these descriptors were of my personality. God was already at work in my renovation by giving me a temperament that would benefit me working in the mission field.

Some of the stories reported above demonstrate that ability to be analytical and organized. An anecdote that illustrates being calm and sensible is when I went to a water park with my family as a small girl. I played in the children’s section, going down shallow water slides. Some other kids went down the slide on their stomachs and I also tried that. I landed in a small pool of water with my face down. The water current was forceful enough that I could not lift my head to breathe. I thought that I would die.

I was strangely calm, not screaming or flailing. The moment seemed to last forever, and just about the time I would suck water into my lungs, a woman lifted my head and asked me if I was okay. I still look back on that occasion and see how inexplicably calm I can be in stressful situations and how God has been watching over me ever since I was a wee girl. This realization of God’s protection and presence stuck with me, and later on in life, when I was in difficult circumstances, I could remember how God had saved me in the past and have confidence that He would help me in the present.

Examining My Spiritual Inheritance

The Trinity's presence in my life journey is evident in many ways, not merely as my Protector. I can genuinely say, as David said, "LORD, you have assigned me my portion and my cup; you have made my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance" (Ps 16:5-6). My spiritual inheritance, the most significant legacy possible, includes having great-grandparents, grandparents and parents who were believers in Jesus. Each of these relatives was at a different place in their journey with God. Some had travelled closely with God on that journey. Others bore the name of Christian while still not entirely dedicated to Christ alone.

My father's parents were missionaries and church planters in Mexico. They were a model of how to be God's ambassador to another culture and language. My mother's parents were also believers. I lost my maternal grandfather to a heart attack at age eight and remember little about him. I knew my maternal grandmother the most of all my grandparents. She lived close to us and was in the United States year-round. She was another example of a person desiring to know God.

My parents were also believers. Although my dad was a genuine rebel, he did come into a relationship with God early on in life. However, he did not permit the Trinity to start renovating his life until a few months before his death. I praise God that he did allow the Trinity residence in his life, but I am sad that he chose

to live in a wreck of a metaphorical spiritual house until those last precious months when He surrendered his rebel heart to God to start renovations.

My mother's relationship with God was quite the opposite of my father's. As a child, she entered into a relationship with God and gave the Trinity access to begin restoration in her life. Even now, in her seventies, should you encounter her in the early morning, you will find her sitting in her recliner, reading her Bible. She still goes to Bible studies, looking to be in God's Word with other women who are learning and growing. Over the years, she has taught in many Bible and Good News clubs, chapels and Sunday schools. Whenever I tell her about a challenging situation, she immediately suggests praying. These activities point to a vital spiritual growth factor in her life. Her relationship with God is living and active. She is an excellent example of a life representing authentic spiritual growth as the Trinity renovates her.

Experiencing Other Spiritual Factors

As Christians, my parents agreed that attending church was valuable for our family. In my memory, my father did not go to church regularly for most of my life. In contrast, my mom was in church almost every time the doors were open. I went to church first in the womb and continued after birth. I was in Sunday school, Bible Clubs, Pioneer Girls and Awana. Because of this marvellous spiritual influence, I realized early on that I was a sinner and separated from a relationship with God. As much as I could understand it as a young child, I asked Jesus to forgive me for my sins.

The Holy Spirit wooed me with the Father's plan of salvation, and I believed that Jesus died to pay for my sins (Jn 3:16-17, 16:13-15). I believed in God. However, I did not yet realize that having faith in God brings people into a relationship with the Trinity. I do not know if I heard about a relationship with God and did not understand it or if it was not being preached. The result of only mentally believing in God, without involving the heart in a relationship, meant I was living a religion in my mind.

This condition of head faith without heart faith led me to legalism, a combination of faith and works as a condition for salvation. If I believed in God and did the right religious exercises, then I was acceptable to God. Believe in God, check. Go to church, check. Read my Bible, check. Go to Sunday school, check. This "faith" was a misinterpretation of the relationship that God offers us in Scripture. This wrong understanding of faith in God was all I understood until I was fifteen years old. This erroneous faith did not satisfy me. I felt like I had a hole in my heart. I tried to fill that void with many other fillers from ages twelve to fifteen. None of these substitutes satisfied because only Jesus can fill a God-shaped hole in the heart. I continued believing in God but practiced a religion rather than a personal relationship with God.

Renovation Begins – Ages Eleven to Twenty

The story continues at age eleven. I started a job delivering newspapers on my bicycle, which provided a small income. It also was the start of learning about work responsibility. I am hard-wired to be responsible, and this job fulfilled my

ISTJ personality traits, “organized, reliable, prefers working alone” (The Myers-Briggs Company 2023, “Type Heads”). People always thought I looked older than I was. As an adult, I reflect on this job and realize how difficult and dangerous it was. I was responsible for going to each house to collect the monthly newspaper dues from each person to whom I delivered a newspaper. Imagine being eleven and having an adult ask if they could pay late. (This meant I must cover their financial shortfall until they could repay me.) It was good but hard work.

The job could also be dangerous. Once, when delivering a paper in a retirement community, an older man fondled my breast after I entered his apartment. It was common for retired people to invite me into their houses, and many of those retirees had kind intentions. This experience taught me that depravity has no age limits and that I must be cautious to protect myself. Another time, after delivering all the papers, I was riding my bicycle across a major road with no traffic lights. I started across the street, grossly misjudging the speed of an oncoming car. That car should have struck me, but at the last minute, the driver swerved, and I was safe, quite shaken, but uninjured. These stories show the protective hand of God, an example of the Psalm we used to sing, “Thou, O LORD, art a shield about me” (Ps 3:3).

Looking for Love

In 1980, when I was ten years old, Johnny Lee released the hit song “Looking for Love in All the Wrong Places” (Lee 1980, 1). That song was my theme song for ages twelve through fifteen. I was looking for God’s love, yet

oblivious to knowing that His love was what I needed. Somewhere around my twelfth year, I became aware of the hole in my heart. It is the only way I know how to describe it, as that is precisely how it felt. Augustine, an early church theologian and author, expressed it well: "Thou has made us for Thee, and our heart is unquiet till it finds its rest in Thee" (Augustine and Bourke 1966, 4).

It was a spiritual hole that I felt in my heart. However, I experienced it as a piercing physical pain. A pain so intense it drove me to try to fill that hole to find relief. Later, I learned that the Holy Spirit was awakening my desire to search for Him until He brought me to know Him fully. At the time, I only felt pain and was actively looking for a painkiller. The loving presence of God is the only object that can fill that hole. Naively, I looked for God's love in all the wrong places.

I told my parents I would no longer attend Sunday school at age twelve. There was a teacher whom I did not like, and I was growing disillusioned with the idea that I would spend the rest of my "religious life" checking good deeds off the church checklist. I continued to go to church, but not Sunday school. My older brother, age fifteen, was starting to explore what the world had to offer.

Since the church activities did not fill the hole, I decided to try some of the pursuits my older brother was exploring. Attempting to fill the void by going down this path led me to a couple of years of grief. I tried smoking. During the teenage years, smoking was supposed to be popularity wrapped in a paper tube. Surely, impressing others would fill the hole. I could exhale smoke out my mouth while simultaneously inhaling through my nostrils and blow smoke rings. These

activities brought favour but did not fill the void. I even had a short excursion into drinking alcohol. Many people think alcohol will fill the hole, but it does not. Walking on these wrong roads led to the greatest joy when I finally discovered the right path.

Lightbulb Experience – Renovation Begins

At age fifteen, I decided to try church again since my current pursuits were not filling the hole in my heart. At church, there was a new pastor for the youth group. I will always be thankful for this man. Unfortunately, the youth pastor ended up splitting the church. Still, through him, I first understood that journeying in a relationship with God to be renovated to the image of Christ was the goal of Christianity. The youth group had many fun activities, and I kept attending them.

One Sunday morning, the youth pastor announced the start of a small leadership group to help plan activities for the larger group. This group sounded interesting, so I asked to be on the leadership team. The pastor gave me a form to fill out. I will never forget that Sunday afternoon, lying on the bed and filling out the form. The second question was, “How is your personal relationship with God?” I felt as if the Holy Spirit switched on the proverbial lightbulb. I realized that Christianity is focused on a personal relationship with God.

Remember the thrill of going into a new relationship? You cannot get enough of being with that person, desiring to be with them every waking moment. It is like you are hungry for steak and are only given vegetables; that appetite cannot be satisfied. At fifteen, I started a relationship with the Trinity, which has

been a life-long journey. I was attracted to God's Word like a magnet pulls iron. The church doors were not open enough for me to hear the truth of God's Word. The Trinity started their renovation plan for my life.

Light Reflector – the Missional Seed is Planted

As a teenager, I remember going to Peppersauce Cave to go spelunking with a group. The leader asked us to turn off our flashlights in one giant cavern. We sat for a few minutes in the dark, and then, he alone turned on his torch. Light flooded through the cavern. This exercise taught me how even one small light has tremendous brilliance in a dark place. As the Holy Spirit helped me grow in faith, Christ's light shone through me into the dark world.

At age seventeen, my younger brother and I went to a different church and attended a new youth group. While attending this church, opportunities arose to shine in the darkness. In high school, I met a new immigrant girl from Mexico named Anna. When she asked about the Bible on my desk, I told her I believed in Jesus and asked if she wanted to start a Bible study. She did, and we started meeting at lunchtime to study the book of Luke. I thank the Father for using me as a light on her path as the Holy Spirit drew her into a relationship with Jesus. The Holy Spirit also helped us overcome language difficulties, as Anna's primary language was Spanish, and mine was English.

Spanish also figures into my first cross-cultural mission experience. While in that new youth group, each year, we took a mission trip to Mexico for a week. Several thousand teenagers and adult leaders from all over the United States

travelled to Mexicali, Mexico, for an intense week of spiritual growth meetings morning and night. During the days, we went into surrounding villages and led vacation Bible school for the kids. Once again, the Holy Spirit was at work without my knowledge. He planted the seeds that would eventually lead me into full-time mission work. These weeks in Mexico were fruitful as I grew in the grace and knowledge of Jesus, being a light of God's love in a dark place. The Trinity also continued their renovation plan for me, teaching me to trust and rely on them in another country where life was vastly different.

Learning to be Rooted in Christ

I was growing spiritually at this new church with a bigger youth group. The youth pastor challenged us to start living out our faith. So, I brought my Bible to public school and put it on my desk daily. I also tried to bring God into conversations with my classmates. I was following the Trinity on this journey to become like Christ. Renovation was occurring, and I was learning to be more like Jesus and walk in a relationship with the Trinity.

At this new church, I attended a weekly Bible study produced by The Navigators. The discipleship study was based on these verses, "So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness" (Col 2:6-7). I studied in community with this group, learning to be rooted deeper into Christ. After two years, the group broke up, but the leader's wife saw my keen desire to continue growing and offered to mentor me weekly.

This time was filled with wonder and growth in my relationship with God. While I was in the group Bible study, I was in high school, both attending school and working at a restaurant. I graduated from twelfth grade and continued working a few jobs, unsure where God would lead next in the journey.

For as long as I could remember, I had loved children and desired to be married. My mother had gotten married at age eighteen. Somehow, that number stuck in my mind, and I assumed the same thing would happen in my life. It did not. I was eighteen, a high school graduate without a single prospect of marriage, and had no idea what I wanted to do with my life. Thank God, I was finished with high school.

Further education was outside my plan, and no sign of a marriageable man was on the horizon. What was a young woman to do? I continued to work and be spiritually mentored. My mentor and I prayed about where God was leading me next on the journey. I was learning how to enjoy this relationship with God, even when I felt a little lost on the excursion, not knowing which direction to go next.

While searching and praying for what to do with my life, my mom suggested the idea of a one-year Bible school. It was a brilliant program with in-depth Bible training and a study trip to Israel. Since I had been working, I had enough money saved to pay for the program. One caveat to taking this study was that the school's location was in New Jersey (NJ). I was not a travelling person. Born and raised in Tucson, I expected Arizona to be my home until I died. However, the idea of being able to study God's Word intensely drew me to leave

the comforts of home and step out on an adventurous journey with the Trinity. Up to this point on the journey with God, I had been on an undulating path with a few curves along the way. Now, there was a junction with a distinct choice of either continuing in the same direction or taking the new, unknown path.

In any relationship, there comes a time to make decisions about the journey. Although I did not realize it then, this was a significant decision in my life. I thought this decision would only affect the next year of my life since I was planning to take the course in NJ and return to Arizona. However, this path to NJ led to many other tracks, each leading farther away from Arizona. From my vantage point, I could never have seen the far-reaching ramifications of this single decision. I chose to follow this path as I have made many other decisions by praying, talking with others who knew and loved me, and eventually, stepping out in faith in the chosen direction.

Renovation in New Places – Ages Twenty to Thirty

This section highlights time spent in Bible college, mission work in Russia and starting a teaching career.

Bible School

I moved to NJ at age twenty to study in this one-year program at the Institute of Biblical Studies (IBS). Learning God's Word in-depth was tremendous. Unfortunately, with the start of the Gulf War, our study trip to Israel in February was postponed, but it eventually occurred in May of 1991. What a

blessing to visit the country of Jesus' birth and ministry, where His death and resurrection purchased my righteousness. It was a challenging year of study, yet it was utterly marvellous to be immersed in God's Word with a group of people dedicated to being renovated into the image of Christ. Some relationships that started in these classes have continued for over thirty years.

At that point in time, I had no idea that I would end up working in missions in Papua New Guinea (PNG) for most of my life. However, the Trinity did and knew that I would need this Bible training for doing Bible translation and helping people to engage with their newly translated Scriptures in PNG. We cannot be prepared for an extraordinary future if we are unwilling to follow Him on the journey. God led me to a life and work I could never have fathomed.

There is a beautiful verse about God leading Abraham's servant, who journeyed to choose a wife for Isaac. The servant says, "I being in the way, the LORD led me" (Gn 24:27 KJV). I feel this verse describes my journey with the Trinity. As we were walking together, He led me. For example, at IBS, one week, a chapel speaker challenged us to continue forming relationships with non-believers to be witnesses of Christ's grace and mercy. My heart was pierced as if God was speaking specifically to me.

It had been two years since I had been friends with someone who did not actively follow their belief in God. At IBS, I was surrounded by Christians. The Holy Spirit showed me this need to be in relationships with non-believers so I could share the gospel. Later, it was no surprise when a friend told me about the

prospect of a live-in nanny job with a Catholic but not yet born-again family. The job would start as soon as Bible school finished. I had thought I would return to Arizona after my studies, but God provided a new opportunity. Now, I had to choose. Once again, we approached a ‘Y’ intersection on the journey. The song was playing in my mind, “Should I Stay or Should I Go?” (The Clash 1982).

Being a Nanny

It was challenging to consider working in NJ. I thought I was only going out to NJ for a year and then returning to Arizona. Change can be difficult for my personality type, and now I was thinking of altering the plans again. This time, the change felt more substantial for two reasons. All the other students were leaving (my support base would be gone), and I had not found a home church yet. Also, I had been interviewed by the family and realized the differences in our personalities and the lack of a solid spiritual environment.

Once again, the discernment pattern emerged of praying, asking advice from other Christians who knew me and my situation, and eventually, stepping out in faith in the direction I felt God was leading. I knew I was anchored into Jesus, the Holy Spirit was my Helper, and the Father had opened a door of opportunity. With appropriate apprehension, I accepted the position, took the Trinity’s hand figuratively, and ventured out in a new direction on the renovation journey.

I loved being with these children. They were two and three years old when I started. We went to every park, pond and river within a five-mile radius of the

house. Together, we picked topics to study and went to the library to learn from books, studying scientific facts and reading fictional stories. Working with these children helped me realize I wanted to become a teacher. However, being with the children was only half of the equation of this new working relationship. The parents were extremely fair to me and did not take advantage of the fact that I lived with them by making me work extra hours. They also allowed me to borrow their vehicle, which helped me find a church home.

There was abundant renovation in my spiritual life during this time. No family members were living close to me. I had to develop new relationships all over again since the students from IBS had all returned home. It was an excellent time to reach out to God and find He was all I needed. I found a lovely church home with a terrific singles group at Fellowship Community Church (FCC). I memorized some verses that gave me strength, such as “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labour for me” (Phil 1:21-22). I realized that the Apostle Paul also struggled in the ministry contexts as he journeyed, and God used Paul’s weaknesses to show His strength (2 Cor 12:9-10). It was challenging, but a good work and living situation.

The Beloved Sends a Helper

After being a nanny in NJ for several months, I went home to Arizona for Christmas vacation. It was emotionally challenging to go back to NJ after the break ended. I was excruciatingly homesick. The first weekend I returned, I cried most of Friday night and continued crying on Saturday morning. I did not realize

it then, but I was going through the process of cutting the emotional umbilical cord that ties the child to their parents. I cried for nearly two hours that morning, then decided to go out. I cried almost all the way to the library. My terrific idea to be in public so I could stop crying was not working.

Behind the library, there was a small lake. I decided to walk around the lake to calm down before entering the library. There were many cars in the parking lot, but no people. I started walking, and as I went, I heard a person calling out to someone. I did not pay attention, and I kept walking. That person continued to call out. I decided to listen and heard a man calling, “Hey, you with the halo personality.”

Hearing this unusual expression, I stopped to investigate. I turned around and was completely surprised to find a man calling out to me. Where had this guy come from? There had been no people around. The man caught up to me and started a conversation of small talk of statements and questions. “You look upset. Are you okay? Do you live locally?” The conversation caught me off guard. I forgot about my emotional distress and started talking to the man. He told me his name was Cal, and I noticed he was a balding African-American with blue eyes.

We talked for several minutes, during which time he invited me for coffee. I declined since he was a stranger. We talked about our churches. As we conversed, I felt stronger emotionally and spiritually. He decided to leave, and we parted, saying our goodbyes. We both turned and walked away from each other. I walked only a few steps, thinking about how peculiar this interaction had been. I

turned around to see where Cal had gone but only saw a parking lot full of cars and no people.

How was that possible? Where had he gone? I continued to walk around the lake, but now had more confidence after talking with Cal. I finished my walk and went into the library. For the rest of the day, my soul had a new peace. I was still extremely sad that I was without my family, yet there was peace amid the loss. Had this been an experience with an angel? Or was it a Christian man responding to the promptings of the Holy Spirit sent to help me? I cannot tell you. I can only praise the Trinity for sending such an encouraging interaction when I desperately needed help.

Bible College

God continued to renovate me for working overseas by helping me cut the emotional umbilical cord from my parents and getting more training. After working with children as a nanny, I decided to study for a career in education. I completed my one-year commitment to this job and told the family I would be leaving to enroll in college. They did not want me to go. It shocked me when they counter-offered by saying they would put the kids in preschool part-time so I could take classes. After researching, I found the Philadelphia College of Bible (PCB) in Pennsylvania (PA), offering a dual bachelor's degree in Education and Bible.

PCB accepted all my credits from IBS. The following year promised to be insane as I worked thirty-five hours a week as a nanny and took eighteen credit

hours each semester that sophomore year. It was a forty-five-minute commute in each direction to the college. Journeying with the Trinity at PCB was marvellous. God provided everything I needed. The Father provided a reliable car for the commute. Jesus helped me transition mentally to being a student again. The Holy Spirit gave me the physical and mental strength to work and attend school full-time. With the Trinity's help, I bought a car, enrolled in school, and travelled back and forth to college on a dangerous interstate. I was only twenty-two years old.

Looking back, I know I was not making these decisions unaided, nor could I accomplish these activities in my strength alone. God was enabling me. It still amazes me how His mighty power strengthened me to do both roles full-time. That year was challenging, but with God's strength, I persevered. The Trinity stretched my faith and taught me to trust, a huge step in the renovation process.

God also provided considerable support through friends at FCC as I joined Single Adults Linked Together (SALT). I had always wanted to be married. I assumed that the combined prime locations of a Christian college and singles group would be the perfect chance for God to bring me a husband. I searched intently for someone I could marry, figuring that we could grow into a relationship as we grew together with God. I met a lot of great guys. However, there was no one with whom God opened a door for marriage.

That year flew by quickly. Finishing that sophomore year, I knew I could not continue full-time at work and school as it was too heavy a load. At this point, I had worked as a nanny for two years. Once again, the question arose of whether

to stay or go. In praying and asking counsel of friends, I felt God gave me the freedom to move closer to college. I left the nanny job in NJ and moved to PA, just ten minutes from the campus. I started my junior year knowing I only had enough money to study for one semester.

God provided a place for me to live at my friend's grandma's house, which was close to PCB. I got a part-time job and took eighteen credit hours that semester. The higher-level classes were difficult, as evidenced during a single week of classes when several exams and papers were all due simultaneously. Amid the stress, I found myself at school with two different shoes on, one blue and one black. I laughed at myself and sped home during a break to change shoes.

During the second semester of my junior year at PCB, I decided to audit a few classes and work more since I did not have enough money to go full-time. God used the lack of money to guide me into auditing some courses that were not in my degree but were highly instrumental in ministry. The courses were cross-cultural communication and counselling. In the early spring of 1994, a chapel speaker told us about a fantastic opportunity to minister in Russia.

The walls of communism had just fallen in 1991. The chapel speaker told us that the Russian minister of education had watched *The Jesus Film* (Krish and Sykes 1979) and that he wanted this film to be shown in every school in Russia. Over eighty Christian mission groups and organizations joined forces to meet this need. The group, called "The CoMission" (Wilkinson 2004, 1), prepared and sent Christians to Russia for short-term missions. The teams showed *The Jesus Film* in

Russian and taught a Christian ethics and morality curriculum based on that film. Each team also had videos on creation and teaching principles from a Christian viewpoint. What an opportunity to minister in Russia.

In that chapel service, it felt like the Holy Spirit took out His metaphorical holy howitzer and shot me straight in the heart. I left that chapel session convinced I needed to discern if this was the new direction the Trinity was leading me on the renovation journey. I prayed fervently. My Christian friends and pastors prayed with me, as well as my parents. I got the application from Bible Centered Ministry (BCM) and presented the ministry opportunity to the mission team at my home church.

BCM approved my application to go, and the FCC mission team was willing to send me. If God was indeed leading me into this mission, He must supply the funds for the trip. I wrote letters to everyone I knew and spoke at any group that would have me, and within a couple of months, the support had been raised. I told God I would go if He brought the money. It was time to take His hand again and step out into the unknown with Him. I had trusted the Trinity to take me across the country, now, we went across the world.

Being a Light in Russia

I went on a team of ten people for one year of ministry in Russia. As we entered this country, which had been darkened spiritually by communism, we brought in a shaft of light with Russian Bibles and a Christian ethics and morality curriculum. Bible usage and distribution had been heavily regulated in Russia for

over seventy years. What an unbelievable opportunity to be a light by bringing the truth of God's Word and the grace of Jesus to the people of this country.

Russia is a highly cultured and educated country. I went to ballets, symphonies, and many museums, paying a fraction of the cost of a ticket in North America. Russians greatly value cultural experiences, and there was respect for the government-controlled Russian Orthodox Church. However, the average person on the street had no idea what the Bible was about or that the Trinity created people to be in a relationship. People were still crawling out of the isolating cave of communism. A pastor of a local Baptist church told me how he bought a Bible. Because few Bibles were available in the early 1990s, it cost him a month's salary to purchase one, a considerable investment for any book.

Another story of Biblical poverty in Russia occurred in a small village. We were doing a group Bible study when one of the women started crying. When I asked why she wept, she told me that her grandmother had told her Bible stories when she was a little girl. However, the grandmother was imprisoned for owning a Bible and died there. In Russia, during this time of freedom to have Scripture, I thought of this verse, "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness, a light has dawned" (Isa 9:2).

What a tremendous blessing to go to another country, learn their language, eat their food, hear their stories, and become friends with these lovely people God created. Nevertheless, it was not all joy. Learning the Russian language was very difficult. I cried coming home from a Russian language lesson the day I realized

that not only does it feature verb conjugation (subject markers at the end of all verbs), but also, all the nouns were inflected (had case endings on them). Russian also features a Cyrillic alphabet, which I found utterly foreign to English's Latin script. It was rewarding but challenging to start learning the language.

No matter how hard it was for me to be in Russia, I found God's grace sufficient (2 Cor. 12:9). I was able to help plant the seeds of the gospel in many lives. In return, the Trinity continued renovating me while living in another culture and speaking a different language. I thought I would stay in Russia for several years, but God made it clear at the end of the year that I should return to the United States to finish college. With sadness, I left Russian friends and teammates, the land of culture, the darkest days I had ever seen in winter, and the longest days of sunlight in summer and returned to college in my home country.

Back at Bible College

Returning to the United States, I re-enrolled at PCB to finish the Education and Bible bachelor's degrees I had previously started. I took a Russian language test at another university and qualified for one year of foreign language credits. PCB also granted me prior learning credits for Communication Arts and Teaching Bible in the Elementary School for my mission work in Russia. I took out loans to help me finish these degrees in two years. It physically and mentally stretched me as I took the highest study load possible each semester, worked part-time, and commuted.

The Trinity helped me to find great places to live each year, even working for my rent at one house. During these two years, I met students at PCB who grew up on the mission field. Through them, I learned about the need for teachers overseas to educate the children of missionaries. Once again, the Holy Spirit was guiding me. This time, He led me toward teaching the children of missionaries at an international school.

It was spring 1997 and the last semester at PCB. I was required to do two student teaching experiences at a public and Christian school. The public school experience was in the inner city of Philadelphia (Kensington). This area is notorious for drugs and social problems. I cried every day, driving into and out of this area as I witnessed these children's problematic lives. Grandparents raised most students as their parents were either in jail or junkies.

I learned halfway through the semester that Wycliffe Bible Translators (WBT) offered a student teaching program in Papua New Guinea (PNG). My professor graciously allowed me to change plans from teaching at a PA-based Christian school to applying for this program. Where was PNG? I did not even know. I only knew it would fulfill my student teaching requirements and would be an experience that would help me discover if I could be a missionary teacher. I prayed, asking the Trinity for discernment to know if I should journey here. I also had many discussions with other Christians who prayed with me. Eventually, I decided that God was calling me to go to PNG to do student teaching. I applied to

WBT and was accepted into the program. Once again, there was a good deal of financial support to be raised, which the Trinity provided quickly and entirely.

Papua New Guinea is an amazing little country in the South Pacific. The country has a landmass slightly larger than the state of California, with almost ten million people and a high percentage of the population living rurally (CIA 2023, 1). It has over eight hundred languages, making it the most linguistically diverse country in the world (Ethnologue 2023, 1). I went to this incredible country for three months to do student teaching. Seeing the number of languages in PNG and how many people had dedicated their lives to ensuring that those who spoke those languages could access God's Word was unbelievable.

I loved teaching there, not only to affect learning in children's lives but also to support the work of Bible translation. Leaving this country, I hoped to return as a teacher after working to repay my student loans. I left and went to Hawaii to teach at a small Christian school in a multi-ethnic third-grade classroom. God provided this job opportunity just before I graduated from college and left for PNG.

Being a Teacher

I taught at Doris Todd Christian Academy in Maui, Hawaii, for one year and paid off half of my student loans. I desired to move closer to my home church in NJ to teach for a year, apply to Wycliffe Bible Translators, and ask FCC to send me back to PNG as a missionary. The school in Hawaii needed to know by the end of February whether I would teach the following year. I had tremendously

enjoyed living and working in Hawaii. After much prayer and many conversations with the community of faith surrounding me, I felt God was leading me back to NJ. So, I declined their offer to teach there the following year. It was a tremendous leap of faith, stepping out and not knowing where my foot would touch the ground.

I sent out job applications in NJ. “March blew in and out like the trade winds” (Wycliffe Bible Translators 2019, 47) with no offers to teach in NJ. I widened the application net out to Pennsylvania. April came and went with no job offers. The Trinity was renovating my faith, like knocking out the small walls and enlarging the living space in a house. I wondered if I had gone slightly insane, leaving Hawaii to work in New Jersey. May flew by, and I was still waiting for a job offer. Not knowing if I would find work, I asked my parents if I could move back in with them in Arizona.

There was nothing I could do but wait for God. Mentally and emotionally, I battled fear. Yet, spiritually, I knew that the Trinity was at work renovating, even if I could not see what their restoration was producing. In periods of waiting, the truths of the Psalms are precious. “I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand” (Ps 40:1-2).

The school year finished in Hawaii, and it was now June. I attended a week-long science course at the University of Hawaii in Oahu. I remember going out of the dorm room to receive a call on the payphone from the principal at

Bethel Baptist Christian School in Cherry Hill, NJ. The principal asked me to come for an interview to teach middle school science. Being an elementary school teacher, working with teenagers in middle school science was not what I expected, but finally, my feet could touch the ground.

I had stepped out in trust, months later, the Trinity provided. God showed me that while I was waiting, He was preparing the path for me and me for that path. I moved from the Pacific to the Atlantic Ocean. Over five thousand miles were travelled to this location physically, but culturally, it was a million miles away. My life of transitions was only beginning.

That next year in NJ was certainly a whirlwind. I learned how to teach middle school science (including fetal pig dissection) and paid off my school loans. Also, I applied to WBT to teach in PNG as an elementary school teacher. By God's grace, I was approved. My home church in NJ appointed me to go to PNG for a two-year mission trip. In a matter of months after these approvals, the Trinity had provided the financial support needed. The visa and work permit were applied for and granted. I packed up to go to PNG for a couple of years. At age twenty-nine, I left for PNG, having had many unique life experiences and still hoping to get married and have kids.

Renovation During Studies and Work – Ages Thirty to Forty

By the time I turned thirty, the Trinity had been renovating me for fifteen years. Their restoration process, thus far, had taken me to five different countries. It was an unexpected life outcome for me as I thought I would get married, have

twelve children and never leave Tucson, Arizona. At least three patterns had emerged in the past fifteen years on this tremendous renovation journey with the Trinity. One pattern was that this relationship with God is a journey lived out day by day. It is not a religion where a person must perform suitable activities and say the right words to appease an angry, fault-finding god.

Another pattern was how discernment for direction takes place on the journey with the Trinity. In my discernment process, there were always three critical parts to each decision: personal prayer, prayer with my local Christian community, and eventually, stepping out in faith. The last pattern was seeing how God always provides for His children. The Trinity was the giver of all good things as I journeyed with them, whether it was money, strength, transportation, wisdom, a job, or peace. It did not mean money fell from the sky. Sometimes, money came in the form of a job rather than cash. Whatever I genuinely needed, whether physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual, God provided it. “And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:19). I have experienced His provision in many countries, but none more than in PNG.

Teaching and Resisting

I arrived to teach in PNG on November 2, 1999. I landed at the mission station on a Wednesday and was teaching the second grade by Monday. For seven months, I taught grade two, then moved up to grade five as a teacher was needed in that class. I was only a teacher in Papua New Guinea for a few months before I felt God calling me into Bible translation. Contrary to God’s big-picture view, I

did not see the need to go into translation. Every other weekend, I visited local villages to show *The Jesus Film* (Krish and Sykes 1979) in language groups close to the mission station. I was quickly learning Melanesian Pidgin, the trade language in PNG.

Many people kept saying to me that I should go into Bible translation. I responded to their suggestion politely, but in private, I refused this conversation with God. I had already travelled eight thousand miles and left all my family and friends to come to this foreign country to follow Him. Now, God was thinking of changing up the plans again. In English, I said to God, “No way.” In Russian, I told Him, “нет” (No). In Melanesian Pidgin, I told Him, “Nogat olgeta” (No completely). I had learned three languages on the journey with Him thus far, and I declined His suggestion in all those languages.

For months, I rejected the idea of Bible translation because I felt that decision would slaughter my dream of marriage and children. Going to live out in a remote jungle village did not increase one’s odds of finding a Christian husband to marry. I had followed Him this far, which was as far as I would go. The Trinity found another area of my life that needed renovation.

Independence was the first sin, and here it was again, like an independence power surge hit my life’s metaphorical house and the electrical wiring was blown in every room. The Renovators needed to go into each room of my life and replace the wiring. At first, I did not want to let them in. I figured I could live without power and with the charred lines on the walls. However, it was miserable

living this way. Finally, I let the Trinity come in and transform this area of my heart, mind and spirit. As I put my dream of marriage on the altar of sacrifice, it allowed space for a much deeper relationship with the Trinity. I am not saying marriage is wrong, as Scripture says it is good (Prv 18:22). But desiring marriage more than my relationship with God is equivalent to creating an idol. The Trinity continued their renovation, now in this area of surrendering my life to them.

Translation Training

After being willing to put the possibility of marriage on the altar, I investigated working in Bible translation. God opened the doors for me to take translation training after teaching missionary children in PNG for only fourteen months. It was a miracle that the school had all the teachers needed so I could leave to attend a graduate-level linguistic program. I left PNG to go to Australia to be trained to do Bible translation at an in-depth translation course in a year at Wycliffe Australia. This graduate diploma program was equivalent to taking all the coursework for a master's degree in linguistics and translation without writing the thesis. These classes taught a person how to go into a language only spoken orally, learn it, develop an alphabet, study its grammar, and translate the Bible into that language.

The translation classes were intense. I am tremendously thankful for the Trinity's strength and wisdom, which helped me finish this program. The Father filled me with wisdom and strength to learn how to translate the Bible. Jesus held me in His love when the terrorists flew into the World Trade Center, and my

grandfather passed away all within four horribly emotional days in September 2001. The Holy Spirit arranged for doctors, blood tests, and classmates to help me when I came down with my second type of malaria from PNG in Australia. God was my rock and fortress through the good and the challenging times in Australia. I left the country at the end of 2001 to go on leave before returning to PNG.

Translation Work

When I arrived back in PNG in August 2002, I started looking for a partner to work with in a translation project. While waiting for a partner, I participated in many teaching opportunities, such as helping new missionaries learn the Melanesian Pidgin language, conducting language surveys, and teaching Bible background to Papua New Guinean translators. Instead of teaching children, I was now instructing adults. These activities prepared me for when I would become a translation advisor, although I did not realize it then.

In June 2003, God brought an opportunity to visit Western Province to survey several languages. It was a flat area, so we travelled around on bicycles. After surveying seven languages, we had time to visit another village about 36 miles away on the coast. Nothing could have prepared us for the thirteen-hour journey to Mari village. There were only nine miles of road rideable on bicycles. After that, the “road” included three swamps with water up to my hips, about 24 miles of a flooded walking track (we pushed the bikes through), and two giant, elongated mud pits. I struggled physically, as I had a sprained ankle. The day started well but quickly turned into a nightmare.

We left for Mari just before sunrise. In the middle of the afternoon, travelling the rough road, discouragement hung from our shoulders like heavy, dragging chains. We were all silently praying each step forward. Finally, we made it to Mari village just before sundown by God's mercies. Never had the sea looked so inviting. We dropped our bicycles and ran fully clothed into the waves to wash the mud and stink off our bodies.

The locals gathered on the shore to watch us in the water. When we came out, they said, "Well, it is shark season, but if you want to swim in the water, go ahead." Of course, we did not know it was shark season, so we thanked God for His protection. We were utterly exhausted. The village gave us a house to sleep in. We set up our mosquito nets and fell onto our camping mats. We each were silently wondering why we had chosen to go to Mari.

In the morning, we discovered why the Trinity had brought us to this village. In the middle of the night, a foreigner, speaking only French, had washed up on the Mari shore in a rubber dinghy. This man, Philippe, had left France attempting to sail around the world some months before. Unfortunately, his ship crashed onto the reef in the Torres Strait between Australia and PNG. He got into a rubber dingy and floated on the open ocean for six days until he landed ashore at Mari the same night we arrived in the village.

We were able to help Philippe get rescued. Many groups helped, including Mission Aviation Fellowship, my mission directors and aviation team, and the French Embassy in Australia. Philippe was only with us for about thirty-six hours.

I do not know how he would have been rescued if we had not been there. He spoke a foreign language, had no way to communicate with the outside world from Mari, and had no transportation to leave that beach where he landed.

It was a miracle. Only the Trinity could have organized this phenomenal meeting and the fact that we had a satellite phone. I do not know if Philippe ever developed a personal relationship with God. We did our best to communicate God's love, and he could see the miraculous hand of God in his rescue. "Because of the LORD's great love, we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness" (Lam 3:22-23). God showed His faithfulness to Phillippe and remained faithful to me as I searched for a translation team to join in PNG.

Trouble

As a person journeys with the Trinity through life, it does not preclude them from encountering suffering. Another occurrence of God's incredible rescue was in early 2004 when my arm came out of the socket while trekking up the highest mountain in PNG. I had been training for weeks to climb this fourteen thousand-foot mountain, Mt. Wilhelm. We drove for seven hours, three of those hours on 4WD roads, to get to the start of the trail. Unfortunately, when we started up the path, it was raining, and the rain made the trail run like a river.

At twelve thousand feet, my right arm popped out of the socket while hiking on the slippery path. My joints are hyper-flexible, and up to this point in life, I had dislocated both shoulders three times each, mainly in sports activities.

Regrettably, we could not get it back into the socket this time. Thank God for the four men who helped me hike the next three hours up that trail to a cabin for the night. They jury-rigged a sleeping bag under my shoulder so that the arm did not just hang, causing terrible pain. I prayed my way up the mountain for three hours. Each step was agony with the dislocated shoulder.

When we got to the cabin, two girlfriends helped me change out of wet hiking clothes. We had some food and then rested for the night. While my companions slept, all I could do was try to find a sitting position that was not excruciating. One friend sat for a couple of hours trying to hold my arm in a comfortable position, but she eventually laid down as she was falling asleep sitting up.

It was the middle of the night, and I was the only one awake in the cabin. I knew God could miraculously put the arm back into the socket if He chose. I prayed intensely, “God, you are the Mighty One that held up the walls of water of the Red Sea while the Israelites walked across on dry ground. I know it is nothing for you to put my arm back into the socket. Please do so.” I waited expectantly for a miracle. When the shoulder did not reduce back into the socket, I realized that the Trinity was at work, renovating me in a way I could not understand. The following conversation with God went like this, “All right, God. If you do not put this arm into the socket, you will have to do something. I cannot get back down this mountain myself.”

A trekker from another group had a satellite phone and let us use it to call our mission station at six AM the following day. The director arranged for a mission plane to come to evacuate me. God strengthened me to hike down the mountain in four hours (arm still out of the socket) and, despite the thick fog early on, helped the Cessna 206 to land at Kegeuglo Airstrip to take me back to the mission station. Our missionary doctors contacted Australia to talk to orthopedic specialists to find out how they could help me. However, the arm had been out of the socket for twenty-four hours, and there was tremendous swelling. My fingers were swollen to the size of sausages.

Our missionary pilots medevaced me to Australia, and the next day, the doctors anesthetized me and reduced the arm back into its proper place. Hallelujah. It had been out of the socket for nearly two days and, to date, remains my most painful physical experience. I thank God I did not lose the arm due to lack of circulation. After about a year of physical therapy, I could use it again relatively normally. I learned that God's grace was sufficient for me (2 Cor 12:9), and His deliverance became a memory stone (Jo 4:1-9) to look back upon when I came into the next challenging situation.

Eventually, in late 2004, I visited the Aitape West Translation Project, a multilanguage Bible translation program translating into ten languages simultaneously. This project was training Papua New Guineans to be Bible translators and walking alongside them as they translated. It took several years of searching for a program and seeking God's direction before I joined this

multilanguage project. He often brought people into my path at the exact time I needed help in choosing what to do next. I joined this project in early 2005.

Taking a Master's in Education

In May 2005, shortly after joining the multilanguage translation project, it was time to return to the United States on a home assignment. I received an email from the head of the education department at PCB. She told me that scholarships were available for a master's degree in international education. The classes were in Thailand and started in about six weeks. I initially resisted the idea as Thailand was far away, and the classes started in just weeks. However, as I prayed about it and got more information, I felt the Trinity presented this opportunity to me.

Two barriers to attending these classes were getting the books to meet me in Thailand and finding an inexpensive place to stay in Bangkok. I prayed, "God, if this is your plan, I need books and a place to stay. Only You can arrange it. It is beyond my capability." When the Trinity desires something to happen, nothing stands in the way. Even though we only had an internet connection at the mission station in PNG for one week out of the next four weeks, God enabled me to get enrolled, had a person coming from America bring all the books to Bangkok, and provided an apartment only a five-minute walk from the classes at one-third of the price that the other students were paying. God showed me His glory, shining brilliantly for all to see. His provision for this study became another memory stone of the Trinity's loving care.

I loved learning in this program. God created me to be a teacher, and taking these classes gave me new tools to accomplish this work. I was very interested in the cultural course in the second year of classes. With God's help, I found my thesis topic. I realized that as missionaries, we receive cultural training to work with people from other countries. Then, we insert ourselves into the middle of a cultural context without teaching our culture to the people with whom we work. How could we teach our PNG colleagues about culture?

The Holy Spirit enabled me, and I wrote a unit about culture. I taught the cultural unit to the Papua New Guinean translators who work with us in the village. It was an excellent chance for the translators to learn about cultural diversity, and it helped us overcome some difficulties as a team. I also taught this cultural unit to all the PNG employees at our mission station. We had a tremendous time of growth and forgiveness. The Trinity renovated many lives through this unit. Praise God for His mercy.

Translation Advisor

From 2004 to 2010, my primary role was as a translation advisor to four different, yet related, Papuan languages in PNG. In these years, the translators translated the book of Luke and Acts, which is twenty-five percent of the New Testament. My job was to help the translators check their work to ensure their translations were faithful to the Scriptures and clear and natural in their mother tongue. During this time, I encountered various illnesses, including malaria a few

times and a mystery virus that incapacitated me for five months. Living and working in PNG can be extremely stretching.

It was also very challenging to be a translation advisor for four reasons. I was a woman working in a man's world. These languages were tonal, and working with four languages simultaneously was difficult. Lastly, I was completing a master's degree in education during this period. Bible translation is exciting work. As I journeyed with the Trinity in those years, I helped check the book of Luke and half the book of Acts in four languages. The translators were growing in their ability to produce quality translations, and it was a joy to be part of this program. The Trinity used this work to further renovate me and the translators with whom I worked. We were a community of faith as the Trinity formed us into Christ's image.

Renovation Continues in New Work and Studies – Ages Forty to Fifty

This final autobiographical section highlights shifting work roles and health challenges as the renovation continues.

New Role

It was a privilege to help bring God's truth into these four languages, a challenging blessing. Around age forty, I changed roles. The Trinity was still renovating me as I journeyed together with them. I continued to work with the same Bible translation team. I love translation, but my passion is to see people using God's Word for life transformation and renovation.

When we finished translating the Gospel of Luke into eight languages, I was dreaming about making *The Jesus Story* film in these languages, recording the book of Luke so illiteracy could not stop people from knowing God's Word, making up Christmas and Easter story booklets, starting college-level training for the translators (Theological Education by Extension), and running workshops to train church leaders. When I communicated these desires to teammates, they encouraged me to follow those ideas to help people start engaging with God's Word. I stepped out of the role of translation advisor to four languages and stepped into Scripture engagement.

New Materials Promoting Renovation

It was exhilarating as I started to work with Scripture engagement in our translation program. Instead of working with seven translators doing Bible translations in four languages, I worked with about a hundred people from ten language groups a year. Some of the activities the Trinity has allowed our team to organize are creating *The Jesus Story* film in eight languages, teaching Theological Education by Extension (TEE) courses, and teaching Scripture engagement workshops for church leaders.

As a team, we also realized that we could not focus on working only at our village centre. We desired to get these mother tongue Bible products out to the other villages by hiking around to these locations. In 2011, we distributed the newly printed book of Luke. We travelled around to eight language groups distributing Luke and did presentations on the history of how the Bible was

written. In 2013, we hiked around to disperse the printed book of Acts, the Christmas Story, and the Easter Story, as well as solar players with recordings of the books of Acts and Luke. In addition, we taught people how to do an oral Bible study and did literacy activities with adults and children.

In 2014, we hiked to our largest language groups, Malol and Sissano, with a Youth with a Mission team. We distributed Scriptures in these languages, shared testimonies and conversed with people. It was a fantastic chance to minister to the people in these villages. In 2018, we hiked to nine different language groups to distribute translations we produced of 1-2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon. We presented Bible studies on those books and did literacy activities. We also showed a film on sorcery created by PNG Christians. Being a part of the Trinity renovating people's lives in PNG was exciting. As the Holy Spirit applied God's truth to lives, the Father continued transforming believers into Christ's image.

New Health Challenges

The Trinity continued their renovation in me. The years of 2013-14 were immensely challenging for me as new health problems developed. I had severe allergies and viral thyroiditis multiple times. These sicknesses caused a tremendous reduction in strength and energy. It was challenging to work. The doctors at our mission clinic did as much as they could to help me.

Eventually, my problems grew beyond our small clinic's capability, which led to several medical trips to Australia. The first trip diagnosed the allergy problem, acquired medicine to treat the allergies, and located a nodule in my

thyroid. The second trip entailed surgery to remove the thyroid since that nodule was papillary thyroid cancer. I will have to take thyroid medicine for the rest of my life, but thankfully, the cancer had not yet spread. It was a comfort to be held and led by the Trinity through these challenging health issues. God was renovating me to develop a deeper trust in Him.

New Village House

Another experience on the journey with the Trinity occurred in 2016. I had lived in an old bush house in the village for twelve years. The leaf roof had been replaced three times, and termites had moved in and taken over. It was time for a new house. God graciously supplied all the funds to build a new house when I was on home assignment in the United States in 2015. Now, the real work started as I lined up teams to construct the new house. Getting all the building materials to that extremely remote location was even more complicated.

The Master Architect provided a missionary architect to draw up the house plans. The Master Craftsman provided all the carpenters needed for the build. The Onsite Coordinator gave wisdom and strength to get everything out to the village. It took months of prayer and the hard work of many groups of people functioning together for this house to be built. Despite all the hard work, I would do it all again to have the blessing of this new house. God expanded my ability to trust during this process and taught me how to have faith over an extended time to complete a project. I had to learn a new level of organizational skills to finish the

house. I see now that God was using this experience to prepare me for the challenge of doctoral studies.

New Workshop Development

At age forty-seven, in 2017, I had the opportunity to develop a workshop, which was another exciting journey with the Trinity. Using my teaching skills, I mapped out the course and wrote seventy-five percent of the lessons. Other colleagues developed the next twenty-five percent of the classes. In only two weeks, we had a workshop ready to teach. I enjoyed creating a new workshop, but not the stress of developing it so quickly. This workshop was an overview of the entire Bible taught to church leaders from ten language groups.

It was exciting to have a helpful product. Other colleagues have used this curriculum to teach in different provinces of PNG. Much prayer went into designing and creating this workshop. It was fascinating to see how the Holy Spirit helped our preparations. Developing a workshop has shown me how much I enjoy using the creative teaching gift that God has given to me. I am praying for other opportunities to create seminars and teaching activities.

New Injury

“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news” (Is 52:7). It was April 2018, and we hiked to the Malol language villages to bring 1-2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon in printed booklets. How exciting to present these books of God’s Word to these villages for the first time. I had hiked

through Malol several times before. Sometimes, the path was dry and other times muddy. We knew the trail was muddy this time, but we left with joyful hearts despite the horrible hike ahead.

We were hiking for three hours on an extremely muddy trail, most of the time the mud halfway up to the knee. The earthen sludge was the texture of cooked oatmeal coloured gray. It was tricky hiking. Walking in sandals was impossible, so I went barefoot. About an hour into the hike, my foot struck a piece of wood buried in the mud. I figured I had broken the pinky toe on my left foot, or possibly two toes. In the middle of the jungle, the only emergency call is prayer.

I cried out to God to enable me to hike through the pain. There were still another two hours of hiking, now made slower by hobbling on this hurt foot. During those hours, we came up to a single log bridge. My teammates carried my backpack across. They also cut some long walking sticks for me to balance crossing the log so my mud-covered feet did not cause me to slide off the makeshift bridge and fall into the water about ten feet below. On the other side of the log bridge was another hour and a half of slogging through the mud.

Finally, we came up to a large river with no bridge. Thankfully, some men held my hands and helped me walk through the water. With my thirty-five-pound backpack, swift-running river water up to my hips, and the injured foot, I could not have crossed it without that help. The strong current of the river yanked on my injured toe. It ached excruciatingly by the time we got to the other side.

Mercifully, we only had about another mile to hike into the village. The Malol

people had been waiting all day to welcome us with dancing and excitement as they knew we were bringing God's Word in their language.

We had some speeches, and then it was dark. I limped painfully to the house where we were staying while tears splashed silently down my cheeks, with no one but the Trinity to know they were falling. The household graciously provided us with buckets of water to clean up. I asked my travelling companions to tape the suspected broken toes together. Exhausted, we set up our mosquito nets and fell onto our mats. The following day, blood and pus came out between the two taped toes. Then, I realized I had not broken the toe but punctured into the skin underneath the toe.

It was two days before the pus smelled putrid and four days until I received proper medical care. A red line of infection moved steadily up my foot to my ankle. I know it was only by God's grace that a truck finally came to pick us up in the village on the third day. On the fourth day, one of our mission planes took me to get medical care at our clinic. It took about a year and painful physical therapy to heal correctly since the hole had been one inch deep and a half-inch wide. Was taking these Scripture portions to the village worth the painful injury? My answer is a question. What would you be willing to suffer to bring God's Word to someone in their language for the first time?

Conclusion – Continuing the Renovation Process

What a journey, a marvellous expedition thus far with the Trinity. Together, we have gone to many incredible places and met beautiful people. This

spiritual autobiography shows my journey with the Trinity as they have been renovating my life. The roof was repaired, and some rooms have been rehabilitated, although the work continues. Although my life has turned out far different than I imagined, I would not trade it for any other life renovation story. As the OnSite Coordinator, the Holy Spirit made me aware of His presence and invited me into a relationship with the Trinity. Jesus is the Master Craftsman who has been shaping me in His image. The Father, as the Master Architect, has been designing adventures to help me grow in faith and trust Him more.

My personality descriptors are relatively dull and do not describe someone who is the life of the party. However, I can be adventurous, although my adventure occurs in a more calculated, organized plan. I have visited thirty countries, been skydiving, repelling, and white water rafting. I even rode a motorcycle by myself from Arizona to NJ and back. I have eaten sago palm grubs, ants, and part of a green lizard in Papua New Guinea and tasted dog in Vietnam which is pretty adventurous for an ISTJ. This ability to be brave results from being in a relationship with the Trinity and walking with them on the journey.

My name is Elizabeth, and I am consecrated to God. It is what my name means and how I hope people will describe my life. I have been walking on this renovation journey with God since I was fifteen, and I hope to be found still walking with Him when He comes to fetch me home.

This spiritual autobiography recounts some stories of the journey. For as many stories as I have written, many are still untold. I pray that these anecdotes

cause you to praise God and encourage you on your journey with Him. For “The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it” (1Thes 5:24). This promise of God also accompanies us on this journey, “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand” (Is 41:10). Because of these promises and His great love, I continue on the journey on renovation to becoming Elizabeth, one consecrated to God. As this chapter of personal restoration closes, it is time to consider what tools the Trinity uses in remodelling lives.

CHAPTER III

RENOVATION TOOLS

“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.”

-Col 2:6-7

Introduction

The Trinity created humanity and offered them the opportunity to be in a relationship. When people choose to go into that relationship by faith, the Master Architect, Craftsman and On-Site Coordinator starts the journey of restoration to transform each person into the image of Christ. The Holy Renovators long for a complete renewal as they come into each room of the house, rehabilitating it into the image of Christ. This renovation process is called Christian Spiritual Formation (CSF). CSF and being conformed to the image of Christ are defined in this chapter. Examples of the terms and images from Scripture that describe CSF are discussed. A key Scriptural passage chosen to exemplify the process of CSF is found in Colossians 2:6-7, which lists four statements of growth as 1. “continue to live your lives in Him,” 2. “rooted and built up in Him,” 3. “strengthened in the faith,” and 4. “overflowing with thankfulness.” Categorized under these four headings are ten spiritual tools that can renovate us into the image of Christ. Each

tool is described in depth as a vital discipline which supports the CSF process, and suggestions are given on how to use each tool.

What is Christian Spiritual Formation?

Paul defines the first step in becoming a believer in Christ in Colossians 2:6 as receiving Jesus Christ as Lord. Receiving Jesus is the realization that, as individuals, “we have sinned in thought, word, and deed,” a prayer of confession from the Book of Common Prayer (Cranmer 2005, 86). Sins must be atoned. Jesus' substitutionary death was the only way humans could be purchased out of the slave market of sin (Rom 3:23, 6:17-20; 1 Cor 6:20). God's wrath was appeased through Christ's death. Because God's wrath was poured out on Christ, we who were enemies with God have now been reconciled to a relationship with Him (Rom 1:18-20, 3:25, 5:10; Heb 2:17; 1 Jn 2:2, 4:10; 2 Cor 5:18-22).

Justice for God's wrath is held in creative tension with His deep love and desire for relationships with people. God's love came to find us and bring us into a relationship (Jn 3:16, Ro 5:8). He stands at the door knocking in desire for fellowship (Rv 3:20), and He calls us to come into His rest (Mt 11:28-29). He is a victorious warrior, not coming to conquer us, but to quiet us with His love and sing over us (Zec 3:17). He longs to remove a stony heart, replacing it with a beating heart that lives for a relationship with Him (Ez 36:26).

Through Jesus, we come into a relationship with God, a new life in Him. We start the life-long renovation journey to be transformed into Christ's image. The most significant decision a person ever makes is to receive Christ Jesus as

Lord. It is the first step of a long journey. This progression of growing in relationship with God on the journey is called spiritual formation. Mulholland reminds us,

Everyone is in a process of spiritual formation [...] We are being shaped into either the wholeness of the image of Christ or a horribly destructive caricature of that image, destructive not only to ourselves but also to others, for we inflict our brokenness upon them. (Mulholland 2016, 27)

We are all being formed. What we are being formed into is a crucial question.

The term “spiritual formation” never directly appears in Scripture, but the concept of forming does, in the Old Testament (OT) (Is 43:1) and in the New Testament (NT). “My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you” (Gal 4:19). Lacking a formal definition in the Bible, many Christian writers have robustly defined CSF in recent years. Mulholland defines spiritual formation as “a process of being formed in the image of Christ for the sake of others” (2016, 16). His concise description includes the entire human soul, “holistic spirituality always takes place in the midst of our emotional, psychological, physical and mental conditions and emerges out of them” (Mulholland 2016, 17).

Diane J. Chandler, a professor and author, defines CSF.

Christian Spiritual Formation is defined as an interactive process by which God the Father fashions believers into the image of his Son, Jesus, through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit by fostering development in seven primary life dimensions (spirit, emotions, relationships, intellect, vocation, physical health and resource stewardship) [...] (which integrate) into an ethical lifestyle that witnesses to the unbelieving world of God's redeeming love. (2014, 18-19)

Jeffrey P. Greenman, an author and editor (2010, 24), includes community in his definition, “Spiritual formation is our continuing response to the reality of God's grace shaping us into the likeness of Jesus Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit, in the community of faith, for the sake of the world” (Greenman and Kalantzis 2010, 24) CSF is described as a process where a person is renovated into the image of Christ, a work of the Trinity, holistic in nature, and results in the fruit of the Spirit flowing out of the believer into a broken world.

The Goal of Spiritual Formation is Conformity to the Image of Christ

In the OT, the Trinity created humanity in the “image of God” (Gn 1:26-28). What does being made in the image of God (*imago Dei*) mean? Chandler summarizes four historical interpretations of being made in the image of God as “humankind's capacity for (1) thinking and reasoning, (2) interpersonal relationships, (3) dominion of the earth, and (4) becoming further restored into God's image through the sanctification process” (2014, 32). She argues for a “multi-dimensionality of human flourishing that is not limited to any single historical interpretation” (Chandler 2014, 33).

Mulholland relates his definition of the image of God to the second and fourth historical views (2016, 41-43; 48-49). Grenz's definition of *imago Dei* is like the fourth historical interpretation. However, he includes that “humankind created in *imago Dei*” becomes “humanity conformed to the *imago Christi*”

(image of Christ) (Grenz 2001, 18). The Trinity created humanity in the image of God, but that perfection was affected by Adam and Eve's sin (Gn 3).

In the NT, the Promised One arrives, and Christ becomes the new Adam, “one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin” (Heb 4:15). “For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ, all will be made alive” (1 Cor 15:21-22). In Romans and 1 Corinthians, Paul describes Adam and Christ as representatives of the human race in many ways, such as natural/spiritual, earthly/heavenly, death/life, condemned/righteous, and disobedient/obedient (Rom 5:14-19, 1 Cor 15:45-49).

Grenz compares the OT Adam's journey to the NT Adam (Christ), “the humankind created in the *imago Dei* is none other than the new humanity conformed to the *imago Christi* and the *telos* toward which the Genesis creation narrative points is the eschatological community of glorified saints” as well as humankind becoming “bearers of the divine image” in this current age (Grenz 2001, 18). People were created in the image of God, but sin disfigured that image. Raymond Studzinski, a professor of spirituality and author, wrote, “Sin has obscured the image of God within the person. The beginner must work with God's grace to remove all the other images that hide the image of God” (Studzinski 2009, 50).

The death and resurrection of Christ proffer the opportunity “to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in

the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph 4:22-24). Thus, “believers are in the process of becoming the image of God and hence of fulfilling their divinely given, human destiny” (Grenz 2001, 240). Grenz's assessment is reminiscent of this verse, “And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit” (2 Cor 3:18).

To be spiritually formed, we must understand our history as humanity. People were created in the image of God. Through their defiance, that image was disfigured by sin. The Father reached out in a loving relationship and sent His Son to redeem those stained in depravity. The Holy Spirit sanctifies those who believe in the righteousness of Christ and continues the life-long process of renovating them into His likeness. Scripture uses many images and terms to describe this process of being conformed to the image of Christ.

Biblical Terms/Images of Becoming Like Christ

A non-exhaustive list of the Biblical terms describing the process of transformation into the image of Christ is: “union with Christ” (Eph 1:11-13; 2:13-15), “in Christ” (Eph 2:6, 7, 9, 13, 22), “imitating Christ/God” (Eph 5:1, 1 Pt 2:21, 1 Jn 2:6), “conformed to the image of Christ” (Rom 8:29), “godliness” (1 Tm 4:8), being a “disciple of Christ” (Jn 13:34-35, Lk 14:26-27, Mk 8:34), “sanctification” (1 Thes 5:23; 2 Thes 2:13; 1 Cor 6:11, Heb 10:14), and being “transformed” (2 Cor 3:18, Rom 12:2). Scripture also uses many images to

illustrate the process of spiritual formation. Wilhoit (2008, 24) compiled this list from Scripture: Christian life and nurture, the potter and the clay, apprentice/disciple, hunger and thirst, growth, heart and soul, human growth, and the vine and the branches. David G. Benner, a prolific author and psychologist, lists other images.

There are many possible metaphors for this journey of becoming [...] awakening, unfolding, evolving, rebirth (from death to life), integration (from fragmentation to wholeness), liberation (from captivity to freedom), unification (from separation to oneness), enlightenment (from blindness to seeing), and homecoming (returning from exile). All of these help us identify elements of the transformation of the self that are involved in this journey. (Benner 2012, pt. 4, preface)

Scripture includes different images and metaphors of being conformed to the image of Christ to nurture various personalities. However, the culmination of the process of spiritual formation is always the image of Christ.

The Christian journey, therefore, is an intentional and continual commitment to a lifelong process of growth toward wholeness in Christ. It is a process of “growing up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ” (Eph 4:15) until we “attain to [...] mature personhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:13). It is for this purpose that God is present and active in every moment of our lives. (Mulholland 2016, 28-29)

“The Spirit applies the finished work of Christ through grace in order to transform the human spirit, emotions, relationships, thoughts and behaviour for the glory of God” (Chandler 2014, 72). “For the Christian, the *telos* of virtuous living is becoming Christ-like in order to glorify God” (Chandler 2014, 261). Regardless of how CSF is exemplified, the Trinity aims to renovate people to Christ's image.

Christian Spiritual Formation Tools

After coming into a relationship with God, the Apostle Paul says the path to be renovated into the image of Christ is to “continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness” (Col 2:6-7). In these four statements, Paul clarifies some of the attitudes and behaviours necessary as the Trinity is renovating a person into the image of Christ. These statements act as categories under which ten renovation tools can be grouped. How does one continue to live in Christ? What spiritual activities cause us to be rooted and built in Him? How do spiritual exercises strengthen our faith? What behaviours and emotions are associated with our lives overflowing with thankfulness? In this section, we will examine some tools (spiritual disciplines) the Trinity uses to renovate people into the image of Christ.

Table 1: Colossian's Statements with Tools

Statements from Col 2:6-7	Tools discussed
“Continue to live your lives in Him”	Sabbath, Practicing the Presence of God, Spiritual Retreats
“Rooted and built up in Him”	Types of Prayer, Silence and Solitude
“Strengthened in the faith as you were taught”	Scripture Engagement, Discernment
“Overflowing with thankfulness”	Worship, Service, Community of Faith

“Continue to Live Your Lives in Him”

Being in a relationship with the Trinity is a tremendous cultural shock.

The life formerly focused only on self now realizes a spirit alive to God.

Previously, this life was lived with reckless abandon to own its desires. Now, it is challenged to walk as a living sacrifice to God (Rom 12:1) and to “live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God” (Col 1:10). For a person to live a life worthy of God, they must learn who the Trinity is. To grow in the knowledge of God, we must walk with him and live our lives in him. Three tools the Trinity uses to renovate us are the Sabbath, practicing God's presence, and spiritual retreats.

The Sabbath Tool

God introduced the concept of the Sabbath immediately after creation. In six days, He created the world and rested on the seventh. The seventh day is described as a time of rest after creation. God called it blessed and holy (Gn 2:2-3). The Trinity knew that working people would need rest. In Genesis, we see the seventh day as a time of restoration and an example of caring for the body.

The next time the seventh day is mentioned in Scripture, it is part of the Ten Commandments (Ex 20:8-11). “But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God” (Ex 20:10). Here, the Hebrew word Sabbath means “period of rest” (Strong 2001, 1458). This Hebrew word comes from another root meaning “to come to an end” or “cause to cease” (Strong 2001, 1458). In Exodus, God

commands the Israelites to have an intermission, to desist from their work. Coca-Cola made the slogan famous in 1929, “The Pause that Refreshes” (The Coca-Cola Company 2023). It is as though God commanded Israel, “Pause and refresh yourself.” Barton reminds us to pause.

There is something deeply spiritual about honouring the limitations of our existence as human beings—physical bodies in a world of time and space. A peace descends upon our lives when we accept what is real rather than always pushing beyond our limits. (Barton 2009, 138)

Although the Trinity created the Sabbath as a gift to people, humanity turned this lovely renewal invitation into a law. When Jesus came to the earth, leaders tainted with religiosity had sucked the joy out of the Sabbath and turned it into an obligation stripped of grace. Jesus stood against this religious culture of duty and said, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath” (Mk 2:27). Jesus healed people and did other work activities to demonstrate to people that “it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath” (Mt. 12:11-12). It is still a commandment from God to practice the Sabbath, as Jesus did not remove that directive. Instead, He showed that the Sabbath should be practiced for relationship rather than duty.

It is still a vital exercise. Believers need to understand the Sabbath to use this tool for renovation. How does one practice the Sabbath properly? A North American counsellor, professor and author, Dan Allender, writes that many people who practice the Sabbath destroy it with rules and boundaries (2009, 7-8). Sabbath is a “play day with God full of wonder, delight and joy [...] (Sabbath) is the queen of all days, the day in which division, destitution, and death are put

aside to celebrate our union with God, the abundance of his love, and the wild hope of the coming kingdom” (Allender 2009, 29).

The Sabbath is a day to experience the fullness of relishing God. This encounter with joy spills over into every part of our lives, invigorating us to the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual work we are called to participate in for the next six days. However, many people live life overworked, “bound to time as if it is the boss and we are the slave,” and speed has become “a drug that helps us escape seeing our empty, dull, time-addicted lives” (Allender 2009, 53-54). A life preoccupied with time chooses to live “bastard” Sabbaths (Peterson 1994, 34). Sabbath practiced like this is far from the desired delighting ourselves in God (Ps 37:4). We must move away from bastard sabbaths (unplanned and not recognized) to intermissions of wonder as we “taste and see that the Lord is good” (Ps 34:8).

Utilizing the Sabbath Tool

I have observed that practicing the Sabbath is a forgotten, potentially never even experienced, joy for most believers. Lost in the cloud of legalism and misunderstood as simply another rule to follow, the Sabbath was created as a time of pleasure and renewal for people. “The Sabbath is our play day—not as a break from the routine of work, but as a feast that celebrates the superabundance of God's creative love to give glory for no other reason than Love himself loves to create and give away glory” (Allender 2009, 82).

Allender suggests that the three days following Sabbath should be spent revelling as a person looks back on the joyful experience. The next three days are

spent waiting expectantly for the subsequent Sabbath. In this way, believers remember the incredible things God has done and look forward to what He will do. A proper Sabbath should answer this question, “What would I do for a twenty-four-hour period if the only criteria were to pursue my deepest joy?” (Allender 2009, 15). Go for a hike, nap, prepare a fabulous meal to share with others, and curl up on the couch with a book. There are many ways that we can enjoy a Sabbath. We must exercise this tremendous gift to care for ourselves and relish time in relationship with the Trinity and others.

Practicing the Presence of God as a Tool

Ken Boa is an author and speaker about Christian spirituality. “All of life is lived in the presence of God; there is no part of it, nothing too mundane or ordinary, that is not permeated by him” (Boa 2017, 137). The reality of the Trinity's presence should be a continual transformation point for believers. Aiden Wilson Tozer, a North American pastor and author, wrote, “We need never shout across the spaces to an absent God. He is nearer than our own soul, closer than our most secret thoughts” (Tozer 1948, 46). The Trinity is present, but how does humanity operate in light of this truth?

From birth, we are hardwired to focus on ourselves and what makes us happy. After becoming followers of Christ, we realize there is more to life than just ourselves or the vanities offered to us by living in this world. We are transformed by renewing our minds (Rom 12:2, 2 Cor 10:5) to realize the ubiquitous presence of God and the “complete unity” possible with the Trinity (Jn

17:20-23). David recognized the depths of God's presence, "Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?" (Ps 139:7). From our mother's womb (Ps 139:13) to the last day ordained for our life (Ps 139:16), God is present.

Dallas Willard, a professor of philosophy and author, says of God's presence,

His presence banishes our aloneness and makes real the meaning and full purpose of human existence. This union with God consists chiefly in a conversational relationship with God while we are consistently and deeply engaged as his friend and colaborer in the affairs of the kingdom of the heavens. (2012a, 75)

The Trinity is always with us. Where are we? God asks the same question to us that He did to Adam after the disastrous events of Genesis 3, "Where are you?" (Gn 3:9) God questioned Adam, not to find his location, but as an invitation for Adam to assess his location in relation to God's presence. Brother Lawrence was a monk in the seventeenth century who made it his life's work to practice God's presence continuously. He said people "needed neither art nor science for going to GOD, but only a heart resolutely determined to apply itself to nothing but Him [...] and to love Him only" (Lawrence 2021, 10). His book, *Practicing the Presence of God*, details the joys and challenges of realizing God's presence in his daily life. Whether peeling a potato or going for morning prayers, he sought God's presence in every activity. Lawrence reminds us, "There is not in the world a kind of life more sweet and delightful than that of a continual conversation with God" (Lawrence 2021, 22).

How does one practice the presence of God? Each person must pay close attention in any relationship, lest the connection drifts off course like a crewless

vessel. Only diligent effort will attune our brains and hearts to seek God's presence, especially in a Western culture besotted with busyness. God is there. It is a matter of us realizing and paying attention. Many verses speak of God's presence. "You fill me with joy in your presence" (Ps 16:11). "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest" (Ex 33:14). "My heart says of you, 'Seek his face.' Your face, LORD, I will seek" (Ps 27:11). Table 2 shows many Biblical activities to practice God's presence.

Table 2: Activities to Practice the Presence of God (Boa 2018)

Boa's List of Activities	
Abide (Jn 15:4–5)	Love God and neighbour (Mt 22:37–40)
Press on (Phil 3:12–14)	Give thanks always (1 Thes 5:18)
Rejoice always (1 Thes 5:16)	Pray continually (1 Thes 5:17)
Set your heart (Col 3:1–2)	Submit/offer yourself up (Rom 12:1–2)
Dwell on (Phil 4:6–8)	Walk by the Spirit (Gal 5:16, 25)
Set your mind (Rom 8:5–6)	Run with perseverance (Heb 12:1–2)
Remember God's faithfulness and provision (Dt 8:2–3)	

Just as it takes many physical exercises to strengthen the body, there are many spiritual exercises to practice God's presence. "For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come" (1 Tm 4:8). Practicing the presence of God takes spiritual and mental training.

Utilizing the Presence of God Tool

“You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me” (Ps 139:5). God's presence always surrounds us. What spiritual exercises can we do to realize His presence? Karen Burton Mains, an author of many spiritual growth books, “suggests that practicing the presence is like going on a ‘God hunt.’ It is a way we keep our souls awake to God [...] The question is—are we paying attention?” (2003, 60). If we look for God throughout the day, we will find him. Calhoun reminds us, “Practicing the presence of Christ is simply a way we love him and stay connected to him throughout the day” (2005, 60).

Calhoun gives many suggestions on how to practice the presence of God.

Set an alarm clock to go off several times during the day; upon hearing the alarm, spend time with God. Decide times throughout the day when to pause, then stop to read Scripture during that pause to focus upon God's presence. Develop prayers for different times of the day: upon waking, in the shower, cooking, and driving; use those times of prayer to focus on God. Dedicate a task throughout the day to God, and pray before, during, and at the task's end. (2005, 61)

These suggestions are only the start of how believers can realize the reality of God's presence. Being focused on the Trinity prepares space in our lives for renovation to bring transformation. It is an incredible experience to return the gaze of God throughout the day as we realize His focus is continually on us.

Spiritual Retreat Tool

The Sons of Korah asked, “My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?” (Ps 42:2). David wrote, “Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him” (Ps 62:5). Jesus encouraged, “Come to

me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Mt 11:28). Peter preached, “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord” (Acts 3:19). Where can we go meet with God, in both the good and challenging times, so that our soul finds rest and is refreshed?

Scripture shows that people met with God in many different places. Moses went up the mountaintop with God (Ex 19) and spent many years in the desert. Elijah saw the backside of God from a cave at Horeb (1 Kgs 19). David spent years in various nooks and crannies in the desert. The Holy Spirit took Jesus to an isolated part of the wilderness to be tempted (Lk 4), and He spent much time alone praying in the desert. The Apostle Paul spent years isolated in prisons, and this concentrated time with God produced the Prison Epistles. These Biblical characters and verses show humanity's great need for time intensely focused on God. A spiritual retreat is a time dedicated to and spent with God.

A spiritual retreat means intentionally spending time away from everyday life to concentrate on being with God. Being in God's presence drove Mary to Jesus' feet in Luke 10:38-42. She neglected her cultural responsibility to spend time with Jesus purposefully. Her heart was hungry to be fed the words of truth, and she desired to go deeper. Barton describes this relational desire:

Desire has its own rhythms. Sometimes it ebbs, and sometimes it flows. But in the end, it is the deepening of spiritual desire and the discipline to arrange our life around our desire that carries us from the shallow waters of superficial human wanting into our soul's movement in the very depths of God. (Barton 2009, 161)

Whether for hours or days, going on a spiritual retreat gives the ability to cast aside the normal and have extended time to call upon God, that He may “tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know” (Jer 33:3).

Utilizing the Spiritual Retreat Tool

A retreat is like a date, intentionally setting aside time to be with someone. A spiritual retreat is a choice to focus purposely on our relationship with God. Spending in-depth time with the Trinity can be challenging. The Western Christian is used to being entertained. It takes creativity and a resolute determination to spend time with God. A retreat can last several hours to weeks, depending on the desired intensity.

When cultivating a retreat habit, it is good to start with a short time, perhaps several hours. It is wise to bring a notebook to write down all the distracting thoughts that will inevitably arise. Do not be discouraged by distractions. Write them down, then return to focusing on God. Take a Bible, other devotional books, and possibly some music or spiritual poetry and have a date with the Trinity. Picking an invigorating place is essential. Often, an area out in nature is terrific (beach, mountain, garden). If the weather does not allow being outside for a retreat, search for a building (Catholic retreat center, Christian Camp area, an unused room at church).

Sometimes, it is helpful to have a schedule. A few suggested times and activities are fifteen minutes of singing/playing worship music, an hour of prayer (praise, confession, thanksgiving, intercession), a half-hour of reading a

devotional book, a half-hour of reading Scripture, a half-hour of gratitude – writing a thank-you list to God, a half-hour of writing encouragement notes to others. Feel free to vary from the list as it is only a guide. During a retreat, a person can realize how exhausted they are. Take a nap to be renewed and rest in His presence if needed. A retreat should holistically minister to a person physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. It is a time to release our crazy schedule to be rested to continue renovation into Christ’s image.

Retreats are beneficial for an individual but are also helpful in community. A retreat can be planned with work colleagues, a group of men or women, or even a Bible study group. A corporate retreat should allow time to practice spiritual disciplines individually and communally. The critical factor of a retreat is not how busy a person can be during this time, for we can hide from God in our busyness. The essential factor of a retreat is to focus on being with God, for this is how we continue to live our lives in Him.

“Rooted and Built up in Him”

Some renovation tools the Trinity uses to help us live a life rooted and built up in Him are prayer, silence and solitude, and resting in Him.

Prayer Tool

Just as the physical body needs oxygen to live and grow, the human spirit must have prayer. Prayer is communication with God, and every relationship must have communication to flourish. The Apostle Paul commands us to “pray

continually” (1 Thes 5:17). He urges “that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone” (1 Tm 2:1). “Pray for those who mistreat you” (Lk 6:28), Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus also trained his disciples how to pray when they asked Him (Mt 6:5-13). The Gospels record Jesus praying often. If Jesus, being a member of the Triune Godhead, prayed frequently, it is a significant example for believers to follow.

Many life circumstances provided opportunities for Jesus to pray. He prayed as he was baptized (Lk 3:21), all night before He chose the disciples (Lk 6:12-13), on a mountain before he walked on water (Mt 14:22-25), before the transfiguration (Lk 9:28-29), very early in the morning in a solitary place (Mk 1:35), in isolated areas as the crowds increased (Lk 5:15-16). He prayed with “loud crying and tears” (Heb 5:7) and three times that His impending death would not occur (Mt 26:36, 39, 42, 44). In John 17, Jesus' death was imminent. He prayed for Himself, His disciples, and future believers. Many verses in the Bible speak about how Jesus prayed.

Other verses direct how often Christians should pray and for whom, even instructing them not to pray like the “hypocrites” and “pagans” (Mt 6:5,7). Scripture also teaches us how the Holy Spirit is involved with prayer. Paul teaches us to pray “in the Spirit on all occasions” (Eph 6:18), and “the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express” (Rom 8:26). The Trinity is involved in our prayer as we pray to the Father (Lk 11:2), through Christ, the high priest (Heb 4:14-16) with the Holy Spirit interceding (Rom 8:26-27).

Depending upon how prayer is defined, there are anywhere from two hundred twenty-two (Dake 2000, 1) to six hundred fifty (Lockyer 1990, 5) prayers catalogued in the Scriptures. This high number shows that prayer is essential and must be practiced.

Saints throughout the centuries have practiced the communication art of prayer. Teresa of Avila (1987, 31), a Spanish author of spiritual writings and poems, wrote, “Turning away from prayer would be the equivalent of shutting the door on God who longs to share His life intimately with us.” The motto “*orare est laborare*” (prayer is work) shows the Benedictine Rule's focus on prayer (Norris 2001, 212). Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1873), a theologian and pastor, preached, “If God be near a church, it must pray. And if he be not there, one of the first tokens of His absence will be a slothfulness in prayer.” Prayer is our communication with God and our avenue of help from God.

E. M. Bounds was a pastor who wrote many books about prayer.

How vast are the possibilities of prayer. How wide is its reach. What great things are accomplished by this divinely appointed means of grace. It lays its hand on Almighty God and moves Him to do what He would not otherwise do if prayer was not offered. (Bounds 2021, 6)

An evangelist of the Great Awakening, George Whitefield, said of prayer, “For in the heart of every true believer there is a heavenly tendency, a divine attraction, which as sensibly draws him to converse with God, as the lodestone attracts the needle” (Whitefield n.d., 543). Prayer is not just the method of communicating with God; it is our work and something we are commanded to do.

It is a sign that we are true believers and how we participate with God in His work. Prayer is our life, the very heartbeat of our spirit, the language of our soul.

Human beings find themselves in many circumstances in life. Thus, there are many types of prayer in the Scriptures. A writer and editor, Joe Carter, suggests that “the Bible lists at least nine different types of prayer” (Carter 2014).

Table 3: Types of Prayer (Carter 2014)

Carter’s Types of Prayer	
Prayer of faith (Jas 5:15)	Prayer of thanksgiving (Ps 95:2-3)
Prayer of imprecation (Ps 69)	Prayer of request/petition/supplication (Phil 4:6)
Prayer of worship (Acts 13:2-3)	Prayer of consecration/dedication (Mt 26:39)
Prayer of intercession (1 Tm 2:1)	Praying in the Spirit (1 Cor 14:14-15)
Prayer of agreement/corporate prayer (Acts 2:42)	

In my observation, Christians use only a few types of prayer. Often heard are prayers of request, intercession and thanksgiving. Where are the prayers of confession, listening, lament, and worship? These types of prayer are often lost as believers focus on themselves and “doing” prayer rather than “being” with God.

When was the last time a person was heard praying, “Break the teeth in their mouths, O God” (Ps 58:6)? Will believers be honest to God in their prayers, even imprecatory prayers, as they long for justice? Walter Brueggemann, an OT scholar, professor, and theologian, proposes, “Everything must be brought to speech, and everything brought to speech must be addressed to God, who is the final reference for all of life” (2002, 27). All emotions must be brought to God,

lest those feelings become putrefaction in the darkness of our soul. The holiness of God is not offended by our strongest emotions or prayers to Him. Honesty in prayer “requires that our conversation with God be vigorous, candid, and daring” (Brueggemann 2002, 74).

Utilizing the Prayer Tool

Prayer is our lifeline to God. It should be as natural and effortless as breathing to converse with God. How else could we “pray continually” (1 Thes 5:17), “devote ourselves to prayer” (Col 4:2), and “be [...] faithful in prayer” (Rom 12:12)? There are numerous types of prayer, such as listening, intercessory, confession, praying Scripture, praising, adoring, thanking, and conversational prayer as an individual or in groups. This list is not exhaustive, as there are other types of prayer. Likewise, there are various positions in which we can pray.

Although prayer can (and should) be done from any bodily position, the Bible lists five specific postures: sitting (2 Sm 7:18), standing (Mk 11:25), kneeling (2 Chr 6:13; Dn 6:10; Lk 22:41; Acts 7:60, 9:40, 20:36, 21:5; Eph 3:14), with one's face to the ground (Mt 26:39; Mk 14:35), and with hands lifted up (1 Tm 2:8). (Carter 2014)

Unfortunately, many Christians treat prayer as a monologue rather than the dialogue it should be. As we pray, we must remember times of silence and waiting to allow the Holy Spirit to communicate with us. Often, we will feel a gentle urging or a stirring in our hearts if we are willing to listen patiently.

Gordon Smith, a professor and author of spiritual formation books, wrote about how to listen in prayer.

We will not recognize the voice of Jesus unless we establish the pattern of listening to the Spirit in our prayers. We learn to listen in prayer. Then, in time, the whole of our lives will be marked by our capacity to listen. Thus, mature pray-ers are those who are not just attentive to Jesus in prayer; they have, over time, become women and men who are able to discern the inner witness of the Spirit in the midst of life and work. (Smith 2003, 26)

Eli told the young boy Samuel to respond to God, “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening” (1 Sm 3:9). We could pray this verse as we wait to hear from God.

The Holy Spirit might bring a specific person to mind as we listen to God.

Many times, this is so we can pray for them. Barton says of intercession,

Now, as I sit quietly in God's presence daily, I see who God brings to mind and heart. As they come into my awareness, I invite them into that place where God's Spirit and my spirit are communing, and we sit together with that person [...] Most times, there is nothing for me to do or say except to hold the people and situations that are of concern to me in God's presence and listen. Sometimes, there will be some word of wisdom, guidance, and action that God invites me to relative to that person or situation. (Barton 2008, 147)

Frequently, when we think of intercession, it is a list of requests we feel responsible for praying for others as if our prayer is the life or death answer for them. Barton reminds us to focus on being with God and allowing Him to be busy with the doing.

Intercessory prayer is twofold. It allows us to be in a relationship with God during prayer and build relationships with others as we intercede for them.

Whitefield explained it this way,

He that every day heartily intercedes at the throne of grace for all mankind cannot but in a short time be filled with love and charity to all: and the frequent exercise of his love in this manner, will insensibly enlarge his heart, and make him partaker of that exceeding abundance of it which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Whitefield n.d., 547)

Intercessory prayer is our duty but should also be our delight as we realize that we are gifted with the ability to lift others into the Father's caring hands. It is “an opportunity to ask God to mercifully intervene in our world with grace and power. Prayer is an exercise by which we verbally request that God manifest his divine glory in our lives and in our work” (Smith 2003, 162).

Part of prayer must also be confession. David teaches us how to confess in Psalm fifty-one. He acknowledged his sin and asked God to cleanse and purify his heart. We must have a clean heart if our prayers are to be effective. This verse also says to “confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed” (Jas 5:16). We confess our sins to God, but in each other's presence, this vulnerability with each other helps us grow together. We know that when we confess, God is faithful in forgiving those sins and cleaning us (1 Jn 1:9). Confession is an essential part of prayer.

We can also pray Scripture. Joni Tada, a Christian radio host and author, practices praying Scripture and seasons her prayers with God's Word. She feels it is a way to talk to God in His language. God's Word is living (Heb 4:12). “God's Word gives our prayers life, infusing vitality [...] To use God's Word in prayer is to employ divine power in breaking strongholds and demolishing arguments of the enemy” (Tada 2012, 2).

Paul often wrote in his letters what he was praying for others. Some of his prayers were Rom 8:1-10; 1 Cor 1:4-9; 2 Cor 1:3-7; Eph 1:15-23; Phil 1:9-11; Col 1:3-14; 1 Thes 1:2-3; 2 Thes 1:11-12; and Phil 4-7 (Halloran 2014). We could

easily pick one of Paul's written prayers and pray it for someone. We can also pray the Lord's Prayer (Mt 6:9-13).

The Israelites prayed Scripture in the Old Testament. In Nehemiah 9:5-37, they confessed their sin to God. In verse 17, they pray Exodus 34:6, a verse Moses wrote hundreds of years before. In the New Testament, a group of believers pray in Acts 4:24-30. The part of their prayer in verse 25 is Scripture from Psalm 2:1-2. These examples show that people in the Old and New Testaments were praying Scripture (Naselli 2013, 417-418).

Martin Luther, a German theologian and church reformer, said this of the Lord's Prayer.

This, in brief, is how I go about praying the Lord's Prayer. Like a child, I still suckle at it, and, like an old person who cannot be satisfied, drink from it and eat of it. It is the best prayer, even better than the Psalms, which I dearly love. (Luther 2017, 14)

Luther paints a precious picture of how praying Scripture is a nurturing and life-giving practice.

William Franklin Graham Jr. (Billy) was a pastor and evangelist. When he was praying at a remembrance in New York in 1957, he prayed using Scripture.

Our Father and our God, we pray that [...] we all might be conscious that Thine eye is upon us. If God can see the sparrow fall [Mt 10:29], if He has the hairs of our head numbered [Lk 12:7], we know that He watches us, that He loves us, that He cares for us, and we are told in Thy Word that He cares for us so much that He sent His only begotten Son to the cross to die that we might find forgiveness of our sins [Jn 3:16]. We pray [...] that Thy Holy Spirit will draw all men unto the Savior [Jn 12:32], for we ask it in His Name. Amen. (Reasons for Hope in Jesus 2018)

A pastor and author, John Piper, also encouraged people to pray Scripture.

For me, it is absolutely essential that my prayers be guided by, saturated by, and sustained and controlled by the word of God. I have said to people, “You can pray all day if you pray the Bible.” Some people wonder how you can pray longer than five minutes because they would lose things to pray for. But I say that if you open the Bible, start reading it, and pause at every verse and turn it into a prayer, then you can pray all day that way. (Piper 2007)

Christians throughout the centuries have been praying the truths of Scripture. We should be doing it also. It is not an arduous task to pray Scripture. As we read or meditate on Scripture, we pick portions or even an entire verse and pray to God concerning a particular situation or person in our life.

Many believers praise and thank God when they pray. It is an excellent habit to continue. Another type of prayer is conversational. “Prayer, as a classical spiritual discipline, is primarily relational, not functional” (Mulholland 2016, 122). Adele Calhoun, an author of a handbook of spiritual disciplines, wrote about many types of prayer, including conversational prayer. In conversational prayer, the list of prayer requests is forsaken for a prayer of just a few sentences (Calhoun 2005, 216). It is prayer time with at least one other person, and no requests are shared before starting. After quieting their hearts and minds, a person prays a few sentences about what the Holy Spirit brought to their mind. People take turns praying as the Spirit leads with no one dominating. In this way, prayer is like a conversation with a good Friend.

There are many different ways to use the prayer tool, each method drawing us into deeper conversation and relationship with the Trinity. In the

richness of the time spent in prayer, the Renovation Team continues forming us in the image of Christ. Another way to explore the depths of a relationship with God is in silence and solitude.

Silence and Solitude Tool

With its excess of entertainment and information overload, the modern world is reminiscent of the auditory and visual distractions of walking through a casino. Inside a casino, there are distracting colourful lights and enticing jingle-jangle sounds. No clocks or windows provide the illusion of hope and an escape from reality. Can the modern spirit bear to be silent or practice solitude away from social media? Smith shows the extent to which we need silence.

If we are going to hear God, we need to learn silence. We must be still enough to listen, move slowly enough so that we do not miss the sound of sheer silence. We may be impressed with an earthquake, wind and fire, and indeed, there may well be times in which God thunders from the heavens or shouts at us in the streets, but we will not recognize even this kind of speaking unless we learn silence. (Smith 2003, 165)

The world is noisy, and our hearts and minds are filled with “our own inner fears and anxieties, our own anger and quarrelsomeness and frustrations, our own misguided desires and aspirations” (Smith 2003, 166). However, God calls us numerous times in Scripture to “Be still, and know that I am God” (Ps 46:10). “Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him” (Ps 37:7). “Teach me, and I will be quiet” (Job 6:24). “The fruit of that righteousness will be peace; its effect will be quietness and confidence forever” (Is 32:17) and “make it your ambition

to lead a quiet life” (1 Thes 4:11). These verses point to the fact that we must have times of silence.

We dare not fool ourselves. Every lover who has lain in the arms of their beloved, not speaking or even thinking of the world outside the room, knows the raptures of silence and solitude. The world could cease to exist, and neither would care. Intimacy is the experience God offers to us through silence and solitude.

It is an invitation to enter more deeply into the intimacy of relationship with the One who waits just outside the noise and busyness of our lives. It is an invitation to communication and communion with the One who is always present even when distraction has dulled our awareness. It is an invitation to the adventure of spiritual transformation in the deepest places of our being, an adventure that will result in greater freedom and, authenticity and surrender to God than we have yet experienced. (Barton 2010, 12)

We can start this critical renovation work by spending time alone with the Trinity. This relational time is how to offer ourselves as a “living sacrifice” and continues as we are “transformed by the renewing of our minds” (Rom 12:1-2).

It is in silence that we habitually release our own agendas and our need to control and become more willing and able to give ourselves to God's loving initiative. In silence, we create space for God's activity rather than filling every minute with our own. (Barton 2010, 29)

Being silent before God allows us to hear Him. Oftentimes, it is helpful to be in a place of isolation, away from the distractions of life.

Solitude was a regular habit for Jesus (Mt 14:23, Mk 3:7, Lk 6:12). “But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed” (Lk 5:16). In Mark six, Jesus sent out the twelve for ministry. When the disciples returned, Jesus said, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest” (Mk 6:31). Lovingly,

He knew they would need renewal after their intense ministry time. Jesus knew silence and solitude were essential. He needed it as He ministered.

Solitude can be a place of privacy with God. “Most important, solitude is a place inside myself where God's Spirit and my spirit dwell together in union. This place within me is private and reserved for the intimacies that God and I share” (Barton 2009, 32). Henri Nouwen, a Dutch theologian, professor and author, called solitude “‘the furnace of transformation,’ in that dark place in the soul where we shed all distractions and simply wait in trust and faith for the one who calls us the beloved” (Nouwen 2013, 197). Setting aside time alone with the Trinity is essential for our renovation.

In solitude, we gaze at God and realize all the while that His gaze has been fixed on us. In that quietness, the soul experiences “being” with God. Being with God fills us. Then, we are ready to interact lovingly with others. “The way of the heart is from solitude with God to community with God's people to ministry to and for all” (Nouwen 2010, pt. 10, introduction). When times of solitude with God are neglected, we become focused on ourselves and try to captain our ship. The noise and busyness of life overtake us, and we run aground quickly.

A life without a quiet center easily becomes delusional. When we cling to the results of our actions as our only way of self-identification, we become possessive, defensive, and dependent on false identities. In the solitude of prayer, we slowly unmask the illusion of our dependencies and possessiveness and discover in the center of our own self that we are not what we can control or conquer but what is given to us from above to channel to others. (Nouwen 2010, 19)

God created us for a relationship with Himself. However, without times of silence and solitude, our hearts go astray to seek other lovers who are like cotton candy, all fluff and no substance.

Utilizing the Silence and Solitude Tool

It is possible to have short times of silence and solitude every day. There are also possibilities for a longer extension of time to practice these two critical spiritual exercises. “Silence offers us a way of paying attention to the Spirit of God and what He brings to the surface of our souls” (Calhoun 2005, 108). Silence and Solitude invite us to go beyond a surface connection with God and dive into the depths of a love relationship with Him. Consider the habits of a person who has entered a new love relationship. That relationship dominates a person’s thoughts and plans.

God wants to dominate our thoughts and plans. He waits for us to catch on to His deep love for us. “I have loved you with an everlasting love” (Jer 31:3). “He will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing” (Zep 3:17 ESV). Silence and solitude offer the chance to be quieted by God and be drawn into His everlasting love. The Trinity exists in the unity of their love for each other. God created humanity to be in a relationship. As we spend focused time with the Trinity, the renovation work continues to form us into Christ’s image. We will not be deeply rooted and built up in Christ until we are ready to spend substantial time with Him, plunging into

the depths of who He is through silence and solitude. The following discussion focuses on renovation tools to fortify our faith.

“Strengthened in the Faith as You Were Taught”

Scripture is a conversation from God to us. Because of the significance of God’s Word, Christians must engage with Scripture and practice discernment for life direction. These are two renovation tools of spiritual formation to strengthen a believer’s faith.

Scripture Engagement Tool

The Bible is the most translated book in the world (Wycliffe Global Alliance 2022). King David said of God's word, “Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path” (Ps 119:105). Peter wrote, “the word of the Lord endures forever” (1 Pt 1:25). Paul describes the Scriptures as the “word of truth” (2 Tm 2:15). The Berean Jews “examined the Scriptures” to test the validity of what Paul was preaching (Acts 17:11). Paul encouraged the Colossian Christians to “Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly,” and these Biblical truths would help them teach, admonish, sing to God and counsel each other (Col 3:16). Paul exhorted the Ephesians to protect themselves by using “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph 6:17).

The writer of Hebrews tells us of the power of the word, “For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes

of the heart” (Heb 4:12). Isaiah 55:11 tells us that God's word will accomplish His desires and purposes. John 1:1 tells us that Jesus is the Word and has been with God from the beginning. Jesus prays for believers that God would “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth” (Jn 17:17). The holy words of Scripture are eternal, the truth, a light to guide our paths, our protection, and the standard by which all things are measured.

Jesus knew the Scriptures. When tempted, He quoted three times from the book of Deuteronomy (Lk 4:4, 8, 12). Whitefield preached in a sermon about Jesus and His use of the Word. “Our blessed Lord, though he was the eternal God, yet as man, he made the Scriptures his constant rule and guide” (Whitefield n.d., 383). Jesus focused on Scripture and displayed depth in knowing God's Word.

Saints throughout the ages have written about their love and wonder of the Word of God. For example, Martin Luther wrote, “The Holy Scriptures are full of divine gifts and virtues [...] the Holy Scripture is the highest and best of books, abounding in comfort under all afflictions and trials” (1872, 2). When reading Augustine's Confessions, one cannot help but notice how he constantly referred to Scripture. “But Thy word, O God, is the fountain of life eternal; and passeth not away” (Augustine and Bourke 1966, 387).

George Whitefield claimed this of God's Word,

For whatever was written in the book of God was written for our learning. And what Christ said unto those afore time, we must look upon as spoken to us also: for since the holy Scriptures are nothing but a revelation from God. (Whitefield n.d., 386)

However, the Word of God is not merely for our learning. Just as food nourishes the physical body, the Scriptures feed our spirits. Who would willingly eat once a day, or worse yet, once a week? To strengthen our bodies, people eat multiple times a day. How, then, should we feed our spirit? Donald A. Whitney, a professor of spiritual formation and author, wrote about the significance of Scripture. “No spiritual discipline is more important than the intake of God's Word. Nothing can substitute for it” (Whitney 2014, 22). A believer should be daily in God’s Word.

After Jesus was resurrected, he walked with some men to Emmaus. He explained all the prophecies from the OT about the Messiah. “Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures” (Lk 24:45). The Word of God has depth. It can be read repeatedly with new understandings culled from the scriptural truths. These biblical truths are “teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tm 3:16-17). God uses His word to teach and train us to become holy, like His Son, so that we can join Him in His work in the world.

Utilizing the Scripture Engagement Tool

The ancient words of Scripture offer us life, hope, peace, comfort and growth. Augustine declared God’s Word to be a place where all people are received with a tender embrace, like a mother holding her child (Augustine and Bourke 1966, 139). What are the ways we can engage with these precious words of life? Hearing God's Word is essential. We can listen to the Scriptures as they

are taught in sermons at church, on the radio and over the Internet. Modern Christians have little excuse not to hear the Bible since many formats are available. Some apps even read Scripture with the push of a button. “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it” (Lk 11:28), “faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ” (Rom 10:17) and “devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture” (1 Tm 4:13) are some verses showing the importance of listening to the Bible.

We also need to read Scripture. In my observation, most Western Christians will spend large amounts of time playing games, watching TV or movies, or being on social media but do not make time to read the words of life. Sex, murder, intrigue, not to mention joy, peace, and love, the Bible has more to offer in just recounting King David's life than most TV shows. “Consider this: in no more than fifteen minutes a day, you can read through the Bible in less than a year” (Whitney 2014, 29). Many Bible reading plans are available on paper, in apps, or on the Internet. We must set aside time to read Scripture. The Trinity uses the precious truth of these words to renovate us.

“Read big; meditate small” (Whitney 2014, 56). While we need to be reading the Scripture, we also need to go deeper into these words of truth to learn how to apply them to our lives. “The Scriptures contain the deep things of God, and therefore, can never be sufficiently searched into by a careless, superficial, cursory way of reading them, but by an industrious, close, and humble

application” (Whitefield n.d., 388). Many verses speak of meditating on Scripture and the works of God (Jo 1:8; Ps 1:2, 19:14, 77:12, 119:97-99).

Greg Ogden, a teacher and author about discipleship, wrote about meditation. “To meditate on Scripture is to allow the truth of God's Word to move from head to heart. It is to so dwell upon a truth that it becomes part of our being” (Ogden 2003, 167). If a person does not know how to meditate on Scripture, Whitney gives seventeen different methods to meditate on Scripture in chapter three of his book, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*. There are also apps (Lectio 365, Pray as You Go) and many other websites (Our Daily Bread) that can help believers meditate on God's Word. The purpose of meditating on God's Word is not to “do” or know, it is to “be.” Professors and authors James Wilhoit and Evan B. Howard wrote about contemplating Scripture. “Meditation is not done well because we follow a precise method. It is done well when we permit the word to seep into our heart, we drop our guard and allow God to act on us by his living and active Word” (Wilhoit and Howard 2012, 82).

Other ways to dive into the depths of Scripture are Bible studies, *lectio divina*, and memorization. Bible studies can be done individually or in a group context. It is beneficial to do studies with others, as it encourages learning and growing with a group of people. Numerous Bible study materials are available online or at a Christian bookstore.

Christians have practiced *lectio divina* throughout the centuries. It is a process of “reading (*lectio*), meditating (*meditatio*), praying (*oratio*), and

contemplation (*contemplatio*)” (Wilhoit and Howard 2012, 18). A short passage of Scripture is read through several times while meditating, praying, and contemplating. “*Lectio divina* is the reading of a lover: the relaxed waiting that is as attentive to the relationship as it is to the text” (Wilhoit and Howard 2012, 61). It is gnawing on Scripture, sucking the marrow out of the text, that our spirits might become strengthened by the words of truth and then turn to God and ask Him, “How should I apply these truths for life renovation?”

An excellent way to apply God's truths in our lives is to have them memorized. As Satan tried Jesus in the wilderness, He answered all three times using memorized Scripture. If Jesus, who is God, memorized Scripture, how much more should believers memorize the Bible? God's Word must be hidden in our hearts so we can live in peace, have steadfast minds, and grow trust in God (Is 26:3). Another tool to strengthen our faith is to practice discernment.

Discernment Tool

When examining the word “discern” or “discernment” in the Scriptures, the word appears polysemic. Scriptural discernment has at least these three meanings of distinguishing spirits, determining morals, and discriminating direction. Some key texts where discernment refers to distinguishing spirits are 1 Cor 12:10, 2 Cor 11:13-15, Col 2:8, and 1 Jn 4:1. These texts encourage believers to differentiate spirits/philosophies/thoughts to know if they are from God or the enemy. The Scriptures discuss evil spirits and the trickery they practice upon culture and philosophy, affecting humankind's thoughts, values, and practices.

The second meaning refers to determining morals and can be seen in these verses: 1 Kgs 3:9, Phil 1:9-10, and Heb 4:12; 5:14. The moral determinations are in approving what is excellent, distinguishing good and evil, and discerning the heart's thoughts and intentions.

The last sense of the word refers to discriminating direction and can be found in these Scriptures, Prv 15:14, Hos 14:9, Rom 12:2, and 1 Cor 2:14. These verses refer to a discerning heart which is seeking knowledge, walking in God's ways, transforming the mind to follow God's will, and the Holy Spirit helping us to discern spiritual matters. As Christians journey through life, they need all three types of discernment of distinguishing spirits, determining morals, and discriminating direction. This section will focus on the last two kinds of discernment in spiritual formation to help believers make wise choices as the Trinity renovates them into the image of Christ.

Discernment is a combination of walking with the Holy Spirit and applying the truths of God's Word to our lives. Out of this rich soul atmosphere, there is much contemplation and prayer before choosing an action or direction, wrote Thomas H. Green, an educator and author (Green 1984, 8). When we discern a path for our lives, it is not merely a decision we make.

Even when people understand the difference between spiritual discernment and decision-making (and often they do not), they still find it extremely difficult to know how to discern authentically and fruitfully. The problem, I believe, is not that the principles of discernment itself are complex or obscure, but rather that the *climate* of discernment—the disposition of soul necessary before one can even begin to discern is one of total commitment to the Lord. (Green 1984, 55)

While walking in relationship with the Trinity, truth, peace, and wisdom are given to us to help us discern.

Outside of Christianity, a decision is usually made by balancing the pros and cons of the situation. Our spiritual journey is based on our relationship with God. In this relationship, there is not a single person making a decision. It is a communication between the believer, the Trinity, and the truth of God's Word, balanced by God's sovereignty. Thus, discernment is a robust method of discerning morals and discriminating a direction that comes out of a heart rooted in Christ and a mind that is in the process of being transformed. The believer must know themselves, the Word of God, and the Spirit's mind to appropriately discern between good and evil and which path to take next on the journey.

Jesus is the ultimate example of a human being, walking with God with discernment on the journey. As all people do, Jesus had the choice of whether or not He would follow His Father. He wrestled in prayer in the garden, so violent the struggle drops of blood fell like sweat. Nevertheless, He chose "Not my will, but your will be done" (Lk 22:41-44). Jesus knew Himself and sought God in prayer for His life's direction. Notice that He is part of the Trinity, yet Jesus sought counsel in prayer before discerning the direction as a human. Jesus sought God in prayer before many significant episodes in life, before choosing the twelve (Lk 6:12-13), raising Lazarus (Jn 11:38-42), and feeding the five thousand and four thousand (Mt 14:13-19, Mk 8:6-7). Jesus walked with God and prayed as He

encountered demanding situations in life, and out of that relationship and prayer, he took action to follow God. He is our best example of discernment.

However, we are not exactly like Jesus, as our hearts and minds have been corrupted by sin. Our hearts must exhibit spiritual and emotional intelligence by leaving the idols we worshiped before entering a relationship with God. We must learn how to listen to that still, small voice of the Holy Spirit who whispers to us amidst the roar of the crowd, “This is the way; walk in it” (Is 30:21). Green has experienced that “Discernment, like prayer, is an art: that is, it is learned by doing it and not just by reading about it” (1984, 13). He also said there are “presuppositions of discernment” that must be in a person's life, “1) a desire to do God's will, 2) openness to God, and 3) knowledge of God” (Green 1984, 58-61).

In the preface of Nouwen’s book on discernment, Jonas described the discerning heart environment.

Listening and responding to that place within us where our deepest desires align with God's desire. As discerning people, we sift through our impulses, motives, and options to discover which leads us closer to divine love and compassion for ourselves and other people and which leads us further away. (Nouwen 2013, foreword)

Paul prayed for the Philippians similarly to how Jonas described discernment.

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God. (Phil 1:9-11).

Discernment only comes to the believer walking in a close relationship with the Trinity who is open to following God's plan for their life.

The Trinity uses discernment as part of the process of conforming us to the image of Christ. Discerning God's best path for our lives does not make us robots following a preprogrammed path (Green 1984, 39). Neither should our relationship with God be described as “an external divine power that imposes itself on us” (Nouwen 2013, pt. 5, chap. 1) or a person merely following a “script” God has written for our lives (Au 2006, pt. 5, chap. 4). Wilkie Au, a professor of theological studies, and Noreen Au, a Jungian analyst, wrote a book on Discernment.

God's plan for us is not a static, once-and-for-all scenario predetermined from all eternity that exists independently of our inclinations and desires. In the solitude of our hearts and with the wise counsel of others, we must choose our particular way at each juncture of our life. (Au 2006, pt. 7, chap. 4)

Instead, we are in a relationship with God. He offers us the opportunity to drive our own car and choose where we want to go with the stipulation of following the road's guidelines. He is present with us in whatever direction we decide to go. There are often many different roads that all lead to the same destination. The most important part of the journey is going with the Trinity, not which route we take to get to the destination.

Throughout life, it is not just us and God. There are also communities of believers on the journey. There will be times when communities jointly choose a direction. An excellent Scriptural example of communal discernment is written in Acts 15. There was a problem in the church that precipitated the group of believers to meet together. First, they discussed and spoke of the Scriptures, then

made their decision together. This example shows us that discernment is not only for individuals to practice but also for communities of believers.

Making choices as adult believers requires balancing two stances in creative tension. One stance is that of personal autonomy, which is our ability to stand on our own two feet as responsible and free individuals. The other stance is interdependence, which is our ability to acknowledge our need for others [...] for help, support and encouragement. (Au 2006, pt. 4, Introduction)

Nouwen (2013, 12) also saw the community's help in the discernment process. “While discernment begins in solitude, individual seekers of God always come together in community, for the Spirit gathers all believers into one body for accountability and mutual support.” As believers in Christ, we must be in a relationship with God and pray to discern our direction individually and as a community. This process strengthens our faith.

Utilizing the Discernment Tool

“Discernment is not formulaic; it is more like an individual art that we must develop through learning and experience” (Au 2006, pt. 9, chap. 3).

Discernment comes out of our spiritual journey with God. It is a process rather than a distinct point in time. As we focus on our relationship with God in the grand adventure of life, He is renovating our hearts, minds, actions and speech to become like Christ. We spend time with the Trinity, reading, studying, meditating upon the Word, and praying.

“Discernment calls us to spiritual understanding but also to action. We first seek God's presence, listen to the books, people, and signs in daily life, and

explore vocation; but then there is always a moment when we must choose and step out” (Nouwen 2013, 145). God is journeying with us, but He allows us to choose direction and travel speed. Discernment means we are tuning in to the Holy Spirit, and He is giving us wisdom for the choices and challenges we face along the journey (Au 2006, pt. 1, Introduction). The goal of practicing discernment is walking in a close relationship with God, seeking the Holy Spirit's guidance, and being transformed into the image of Jesus.

“Overflowing with Thankfulness”

As we continue to live in Him, being rooted and built up in Christ and strengthened in the faith, this “being” with God overflows with our thanks to him for the renovation occurring. This thankfulness stimulates worshipping Him, “doing” to serve Him and being in community with believers. Our being with Him and doing for Him cascades over into others' lives and produces worship of the Almighty God individually and as a community of faith.

Worship Tool

“Worship is our response to beauty as we offer awe and gratitude for the gift of goodness” (Allender 2009, 44). In many modern churches, the term “worship” has come to mean a type of song sung in a church service. However, this view of worship is far too narrow for the King of Kings. As we look away from ourselves, we realize the magnificence of God. “Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendour, for

everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all” (1 Chr 29:11).

Our response to His greatness can be similar to these passages, “a mouth filled with praise” (Ps 71:8), we “earnestly seek Him” our “whole being longs for” him” (Ps 63:1), “our souls praise Him” (Ps 103:1), “praying and singing hymns to God” (Acts 16:25), “Give thanks to the Lord” (1 Chr 16:34), “Sing to God, sing in praise to His name” (Ps 68:4-5), “Come let us bow down [...] let us kneel before the Lord our Maker” (Ps 95:6), “my lips will glorify You” (Ps 63:3-4), and “lifting up their hands; then they bowed low and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground” (Neh 8:6). These verses, begin to show what worship looks like in the Scriptures.

Jesus said that those who worship God “must worship in the Spirit and in truth” (Jn 4:24). Another time, speaking of worship with the Pharisees, He quoted Isaiah to them, “These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain” (Mt 15:8-9). True worship of God is born out of an intimate relationship with Him and should be for His glory.

“Worship is a way of gladly reflecting back to God the radiance of His worth. It is not a mere act of willpower by which we perform outward acts. Without the engagement of the heart, we do not really worship” (Piper 2011, 87). As the mind considers the greatness of God, the heart responds with praise. Worship does not only flow out of positive emotions or as a result of feeling that all is right with the world.

True worship is a response of heart and mind [...] True worship gives us space for us to acknowledge that we live in a broken and cruel world and that we often come to our worship with heavy hearts, mourning loss, discouraged with setbacks, bearing sorrow. (Smith 2003, 177)

Worship can emanate even from the depths of despair and is always possible, no matter the circumstances.

True worship means we praise God, not to impress others or to sound holy, but to honour Him amid our life's situations as we recognize His constant goodness. "Worship the LORD in the splendour of his holiness" (Ps 96:9) is a command to us, so we must worship God. Even though it is a command, believers should not worship God because they "have to," but instead because they "get to" worship Him. "Worship cannot be calculated or produced. Instead, it is evoked; it is the response of a heart evoked by the beauty, glory, and allure of the object of your mental focus-holy God" (Whitney 2014, 113-114). We worship God not only for who He is but also as we recognize the renovations the Trinity has been performing in our lives to make us like Christ.

Utilizing the Worship Tool

People were created to worship. The question is, what or who are we worshipping? "Human beings cannot help but assign ultimate value and worth to someone or something" (Calhoun 2005, 25). The people or objects that we value as worthy are what we worship. Therefore, we must investigate our lives to see what or whom we are worshipping, lest we realize that our life has been wasted worshipping something other than the Trinity.

We worship God by singing to Him, praising His name, and giving thanks to Him for the mighty things he has done. Posture is a part of our worship, whether lifting hands or falling on our faces. Worship is the heart's attitude, a humility recognizing God is God, and we are not. That humbleness of heart acknowledges that He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Our worship of God shows that the Trinity is above all else in our hearts, thoughts, speech and actions. "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will, they were created and have their being" (Rv 4:12).

There are moments in life when we experience God's greatness, and we cannot help but exclaim it. "The more we focus on God, the more we understand and appreciate His infinite worth. As we understand and appreciate this, we cannot help but respond to Him" (Whitney 2014, 104). We worship the Trinity both individually and corporately. Worship can be singing about Him, telling others about His goodness, writing about His greatness, or creatively showing His magnificence through drama, music or art. These activities can bring glory to the Trinity, whether done alone or in the community of faith.

The Tool of Service

God created people with the ability to work. Unfortunately, as humans, we have become far too good at busyness and doing rather than just being in a relationship with God. In many ways, it is easier for us to do because we can remain independent and accomplish it ourselves. However, God created us for

relationship first, and then out of that union, to serve Him. We know how to serve, but we need to learn to serve out of devotion rather than duty.

God created us for good works (Eph 2:10). Paul tells us to “always give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord” (1 Cor 15:58) and also to serve the Lord with “spiritual fervour” (Rom 12:11). Jesus said that we should be the “servant of all” (Mk 9:35) and also that He “did not come to be served, but to serve” (Mk 10:45). God gave us Scripture to be trained in righteousness so that we are “thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tm 3:16-17) and so that we can “serve one another humbly in love” (Gal 5:13). Paul reminded the Colossians that their service is for the Lord (Col 3:23-24) and that they should do it in the name of the Lord Jesus (Col 3:17). These verses, show God’s plans for us to serve and that our work should be done in love, in the name of and for Christ.

The Trinity has given us gifts so that we may serve them (1 Cor 12, 13, 14). The Holy Spirit gives each individual the appropriate gifts. Being known and gifted in this way is a comfort to us. It is our duty to serve (Whitney 2014, 144). “It is the Lord your God you must follow, and him you must revere. Keep his commands and obey him; serve him and hold fast to him” (Dt 13:4). However, if we focus on serving as our duty, most people would find it a daily dose of drudgery.

We are not motivated to serve because of our duty but rather out of our love for the Redeemer of our souls. “But be sure to fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart; consider what great things he has done for you” (1

Sm 12:24). As the Trinity renovates us, our hearts are lifted to love as we realize all that God has done for us and out of that love, we serve. We also serve because of the humility of our Servant Leader. Imagine how the disciples looked as the King of the Kings lifted their dirty feet to wash them. They had been having haughty thoughts of Jesus as King and themselves as rulers in the new kingdom. Those thoughts were obliterated as Humility tied a towel at His waist and sat on the dirty floor, serving them. We serve in love and humility as we have been gifted for God's glory.

Utilizing the Serving Tool

“Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share in your master's happiness” (Mt 25:21). We serve Him because of our great love for Him. How can we best serve God? 1 Corinthians 12 talks about the gifts the Holy Spirit gives us to serve God. If people do not know their spiritual gifts, numerous tests can be taken to ascertain their gifts. It is easiest to serve God from the gifts He has given us. Although sometimes, God calls us to serve him for a short time outside of our gifted area to learn a new skill or as He teaches us to trust Him in a new area. For example, we may not feel called to be leaders, but we may need to take on a leadership role at different times. We can trust God to give us the strength and wisdom to serve in this position if it is out of our normal giftedness.

“Worship empowers serving; serving expresses worship. Godliness requires a disciplined balance between the two” (Whitney 2014, 156). Serving

God can be challenging work. It must be done from a heart of love and praise, lest it becomes merely a chore to be performed. Even the most menial and challenging task can and should be done with a heart of praise and prayer for strength and wisdom. Tozer wrote, “Fellowship with God leads straight to obedience and good works. That is the divine order, and it can never be reversed” (Tozer 1988, 183).

It is out of spending time with God (being) that we are able to serve God (doing). This relationship is the proper motivation for serving. We can serve many people, such as family members, those in our community of faith, and the neighbours on our street. The possibilities of service are endless. We must ask the Lord of the harvest where He wants us to put our hands to the plough and then labour in that field with Him.

Community of Faith Tool

All of the tools of renovation listed above are meant to be used individually and have a communal aspect to them, being practiced in a community of faith. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German pastor and theologian who wrote about the Christian faith and community. “The physical presence of other Christians is a source of incomparable joy and strength to the believer” (Bonhoeffer 2005, 29). The Trinity is renovating us individually into the image of Christ to be a community of image-bearers of Christ. “Spiritual formation is not an exercise of private devotion but one of corporate spirituality. We do have personal experiences of God, but together we are formed as the people of God” (Nouwen 2010, pt. 8, Introduction).

The death and resurrection of Christ made our entrance into the family of God possible. “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God” (Eph 2:19).

Christ opened up the way to God and to one another. Now, Christians can live with each other in peace; they can love and serve one another; they can become one. But they can continue to do so only through Jesus Christ. Only in Jesus Christ are we one; only through him are we bound together. He remains the one and only mediator throughout eternity. (Bonhoeffer 2005, 33)

Many Scriptures speak of how followers of Christ should live in community. Paul wrote to the Corinthians (1 Cor 1:10), “Agree with one another [...] that you be perfectly united in mind and thought.” John said, “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another” (1 Jn 1:7). Paul said, “Bear with each other and forgive one another [...] Forgive as the Lord forgave you” (Col 3:13) and “Carry each other's burdens” (Gal 6:2). The writer of Hebrews says, “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another” (Heb 10:24-25). “[So] that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it” (1 Cor 12:25-27).

As a community of faith, we are to be unified, walking in the light and having fellowship, bearing with each other and forgiving each other, meeting to encourage each other, and each as a part of the body of Christ.

Christian community means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ. There is no Christian community that is more than this and none that is less than this. Whether it be a brief, single encounter or the daily community of many years, Christian community is solely this. We belong to one another only through and in Jesus Christ. (Bonhoeffer 2005, 31)

We are one body through Christ with a unified goal to become like Him.

Utilizing the Community of Faith Tool

The Trinity is at work renovating lives. Each community of faith is like a subdivision, with each believer being a separate house. Restoration is happening in our own house, but the Trinity is also at work in every house in the subdivision. Meeting together as a community of faith is critical. We are encouraged by the renovation work we see in each other (Heb 10:24-25). We must be active in a community of faith for encouragement, fellowship, and sharpening each other as we do life together (Prv 27:17).

As a community of faith, we can participate in many spiritual exercises that are impossible for a single person. We can be accountability partners, discipling one another, showing hospitality, mentoring, growing in small groups, worshipping together (in large or small groups), giving spiritual direction to each other, and being spiritual companions to each other on the journey. Certain individuals come into our lives for just a season to help us grow. Others are in our lives for a more substantial amount of time. We are part of the body of Christ, each part doing its job to make the body successful (1 Cor 12, Rom 12:4-8).

Keeping company with Jesus is not just a private spiritual act, it is the way we share the trinitarian life of God with others. We are meant to live in community in the same way God does. In the company of others, we

journey and learn to tell the truth about ourselves. Interacting with others, we learn the vulnerability of giving and receiving love. (Calhoun 2005, 121)

We must actively participate in a community of faith on the journey to become like Christ.

Conclusion—Loving God

Martha and Mary are two interesting characters who spent time with Jesus in Luke 10:38-42. Martha is a picture of serving, and Mary is a picture of resting at Jesus' feet, listening and learning. Martha is focused on doing, and Mary on being. The relationship between doing and being is interconnected. We must be a balanced mix of Mary and Martha as we live out our relationship with God. If we spent all our time at Jesus' feet, we would be engorged spiritually but never serving. If we try to serve others out of human strength and wisdom apart from fellowship with God, we will spout dust from a dry well.

We are formed spiritually by being present with the Trinity. Being with God, we are filled with His presence, which overflows out of our lives into a world in desperate need of hope. “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Rom 15:13). Out of being with God (Mary) comes the ability for doing for him (Martha). Before we can help others to be formed, we must spend time with God ourselves. Mulholland (2006, 16) described it this way, “To be like Jesus, then, as it is portrayed in the New Testament, is a matter of both ‘being’

and ‘doing.’ It is being in a relationship of loving union with God that manifests itself in Christ-like living in the world.”

The greatest commandments are to love God and others (Mt 22:36-40). God created us for a loving relationship with Himself. Thus, the focus of our lives is to have an inseparable union with Him. We use the renovation tools of Christian spiritual formation for the sole purpose of being with Him. However, as we are with Holy Renovators, we cannot help but undergo transformation in each area (room) of our life.

As we experience the Trinity in a relationship, we learn to love them with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mk 12:30). The Trinity loves us, patiently renovating us to the image of Christ. As the Trinity works on the restoration process, we can pray as Augustine did. “Do not abandon me as I invoke Thee now, Thou who didst come to my aid before I uttered any invocation, and who didst repeatedly instruct me by many sorts of calls, so that I might listen from afar off and be turned back, and call upon Thee as Thou wert calling me” (Augustine and Bourke 1966, 407).

CHAPTER IV

HEART RENOVATION RESEARCH REPORT

This chapter presents the report of a research project completed in 2023.

Introduction

The Holy Renovators desire to lovingly restore our hearts from the devastating hurts we encounter in life. Everyone needs renewal in this room. For some, it will be minor, and for others, it is a major restoration. Heart wounds result from people purposely or inadvertently perpetrating trauma on individuals physically, emotionally and mentally. Unhealed emotional wounds preserve pain, causing further problems to a person's life systemically, even causing them to injure other people.

Sandra D. Wilson, a counsellor and author, stated, "Hurt people, hurt people" (Wilson 2001, 8). It is nearly impossible to love God and others when in pain. As the Trinity renovates human lives, they also desire to repair and rehabilitate the heart to restore healing and health. This chapter is the report for a research project conducted to teach Christians a healing process. It assessed how applying the healing concepts affected a person physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. The growth was part of the renovation process as the Trinity

further transformed the participants into *imago Christi* and caused them to grow in their relationship with God.

To teach the healing process, a curriculum was developed to enable a person to examine their heart wounds, investigate the lies they believe about themselves, and identify their emotions and dysfunctional behaviours (Wardle 2001, 137). These lessons were taught to ascertain if renovation growth occurred. What growth can be seen in a person's life emotionally, mentally, spiritually, and physically as God interacted with their hurt and began the process of healing? Five lessons were taught on abandoning hurting to find healing to a group of five women to examine how applying these truths to their lives initiated growth. The researcher assessed the growth as no, initial, limited, good or substantial growth (see Levels of Growth Defined). To assess this training, pre-and post-self-evaluations were given, journals were kept throughout the lessons, and a post-instruction narrative was written. Narrative Research influenced the methodology used. The participants reported their highest level of growth as spiritual, followed by emotional and mental. Physical growth was the lowest level reported.

To live the abundant life that Christ promised us (Jn 10:10), Christians must deal with trauma and pain in their lives. The Holy Spirit is renewing us entirely into the image of Christ. We are like a run-down wreck of a house that is being refurbished. Every room of the home must be renovated to be transformed into the image of Christ. There are hidden rooms and locked closets of pain and

trauma in our lives, concealed deep in our minds, hearts, emotions, and influencing our behaviours.

Unhealed wounds become rampant infections, whether obscured or clearly seen in our lives. These hidden areas of suffering and distress threaten our ability to have fullness of life in Jesus Christ. It can be compared to a room in a house filled with stinking rubbish. The room's door may be tightly closed, but the stench permeates the house. Wounded areas left without cleaning and restoration impede or suspend our conformity to the image of Christ, leave us in pain and ill health, and prevent complete harmony in the community of faith. The wounded areas must be healed for a complete transformation to take place.

All of us have been wounded (Wilson 2001, 10), and every wound needs to be healed. Sometimes, a wound may be buried so deep as to be forgotten at the conscious level. However, even unconsciously, the pain can affect a person in many ways. Thankfully, nothing in all creation is hidden from God (Heb 4:13). The Holy Spirit finds even the subconscious wounds, and the love of Jesus reaches the darkest places in our lives. All is laid bare (Heb 4:13) before the Holy Renovators, the Master Architect (God), the Master Carpenter (Jesus) and the Site Coordinator (Holy Spirit). The renovation will be completed through the loving work of their hands. The Renovators never force a restoration, which would destroy a loving relationship. Instead, the Trinity lovingly waits while wooing people to realize the need for change and being present to facilitate that rehabilitation.

To be healed entirely entails a life-long journey with the Trinity. The hurting-to-healing lessons taught in this research project introduced the participants to a process of healing. The participants learned these concepts and completed the curriculum objectives with the help of the Holy Spirit to answer the research question about how they grew physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually during this process. It was anticipated that participants would experience initial solid growth in all areas of their lives. Once learned, the hurting-to-healing method can be applied to new wounds or deep, hidden ones throughout life as the participant is on the renovation journey with the Trinity.

Research Project Ethics, Permissions and Context

In the research project, I was responsible for maintaining the stated ethics procedures of the following groups: Fellowship Community Church (FCC), Wycliffe Bible Translators (Wycliffe Bible Translators 2023, “Ethics and Conduct”), Tyndale University DMin Handbook (Tyndale University 2022, 12), Tyndale Research Ethics Board Policy Manual (Tyndale University 2019) and the Government of Canada (Canadian Institutes 2018). Additionally, since the research was conducted in the United States (US), I read the ethics documents related to working with human subjects in the US - The Belmont Report (National Commission 1974) and the United States Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Part 46 Protection of Human Subjects (U.S. Department of Health 2018).

The pastors of FCC gave permission to conduct this renovation-based research, and the researcher was under their leadership during this time. A project

proposal was submitted to a Tyndale University professor and approved. An application to the Research Ethics Board at Tyndale University was submitted and approved on October 3rd, 2022. The ethics policies that the researcher followed for Canada are similar to those that must be followed in the US. The research project design is based upon the three core principles expressed by TCPS 2: Respect for Persons, Concern for Welfare, and Justice (Canadian Institutes 2018). Because all people are created in the image of God (Gn 1:27), the researcher treated them with respect. In addition, the researcher showed concern for people's welfare by loving them and treating them with kindness (Lk 6:31-35; Eph 4:32). There was also justice demonstrated in the classroom by creating a supportive environment where participants were allowed the choice to be vulnerable without being judged (see Appendix Two).

The research project was conducted in the local context of Fellowship Community Church (FCC). FCC was a church plant started in 1981 in Mt. Laurel, New Jersey (Fellowship Community Church About, 2022). The researcher started attending this church in 1991. FCC proclaims the gospel and provides a place to be renovated into the image of Christ. Fellowship has ministries for every age group (Fellowship Community Church Ministries, 2022). Very early in FCC's history, the pastors saw that wounded people needed specific ministries. They had two counsellors on staff for many years and started a Celebrate Recovery (CR) group that ministers to people in pain who have turned to addictions for healing. These two ministries demonstrate how the church is committed to helping people

receive healing. The researcher is very thankful for the opportunity to conduct the project in this supportive context.

Background from Tyndale Spiritual Formation Classes

Subject matter learned in formational prayer, nurturing spirituality, and listening to God greatly informed the writing of this portfolio about renovation. The spiritual journey of being renovated into Christ's image (2 Cor 3:18) is an active path of not conforming to the world, instead, being transformed "by the renewing of our minds" (Rom 12:2). Becoming a Christian happens at a point in time, and yet, is experienced over a lifetime of relationship, restoration and raging battles. Paul writes that we are in a spiritual battle (Eph 6) and are to "put to death our earthly nature" (Col 3:5).

In place of this earthly nature, we are to grow the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:19-21) and the peace of God "that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:6). Jesus came to redeem us from being slaves to sin (Rom 6:6, Jn 8:34) to bring us into a relationship with Him (Jn 1:11-13) that offers us abundant life (Jn 10:10). Part of this spiritual journey must include dealing with the hurts we have experienced in life. We present these wounds to Christ for healing and are transformed in this relationship journey.

"We are relational beings because we are created in the image of a relational God" (Plass and Cofield 2014, 13). Relationships are the source of our most thrilling feelings of love and most tortured pain. In our journey through life, not one of us arrives at the finish line without having pain mar, if not wholly

maul, our fragile hearts and minds. Isaiah 53:3 says of Christ's relational anguish, "He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain [...] he was despised, and we held him in low esteem." Indeed, the Saviour who suffered so much at the hands of humanity knew pain and knows how to heal pain. We bring our wounds to Jesus in prayer. Those prayers form us and help us to become rooted and built up in Christ as He is healing us. Jesus heals the hurt physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. Christ knows our pain. He waits patiently until we open the door of our anguish and allow Him entry to heal.

It should continue to amaze human beings how the Trinity longs to care for them. In the Old and New Testaments, God is compared to a mother hen protecting and nurturing her chicks under her wings (Ps 91:4, Mt 23:37). Part of that mothering is to remove the splinters of life from our hearts. God heals us and calls us to the ministry of reconciliation (see chapter five) to a world desperately seeking forgiveness and healing (2 Cor 5:2, 14, 20-21).

Project, Methodology, and Methods

The following section describes the details of the research report in the areas of field, scope, methodology, methods, phases and timetable, and ethics.

Field – Specific Details of the Context

In early August 2022, the researcher met for discussion and prayer with the pastors at FCC to choose potential groups within the church to advertise the research project. Together, we decided that the potential target audiences were the

women's ministry/Bible study, community groups, and the Senior Adults Living Triumphantly (SALT) group. The researcher benefitted from the direction of the pastors who knew the local context.

The discussion with the pastors also determined who could publicize the project. Part of the conversation focused on power. Michael Quinn Patton, the author of many books on qualitative research, has written principles about power. "Status and power differences between the inquiry facilitator and participants are minimized, as much as possible, practical, and authentic, without patronizing or game playing" (2001, 185). The conversation centred around finding a person who was not a pastor or on staff to reduce the power differential of potential participants choosing to join the research project out of obligation. The conversation focused on various leaders. A women's Bible study teacher was decided to be a good possibility. While she did have a certain level of power as a teacher, it is perceived as a lower level than a pastor or church staff. She was chosen because she is known as a godly woman with a good-humoured personality. The pastors agreed that her character contributed to inviting rather than pressuring potential participants.

In full disclosure, the researcher has known this teacher for more than twenty years. She and her husband have been faithful prayer and financial supporters of the researcher as a missionary. When asked, the teacher was willing to promote the research project. After meeting twice, it was decided that she would make announcements to two groups, her women's Bible study group and

the community group she attends. To reduce the power differential, we discussed the parameters of the project advertisement. She would announce the research project to a group of people and then leave the project information sheets (Appendix Three) on a table. If anyone was interested in the topic, they could pick up an information sheet for more details. The researcher's information was listed on the sheet. The potential participants could call, text or email to make contact.

As the researcher met with this teacher to discuss the project, some interesting facts were revealed. She taught a woman's Bible study concurrently with the research project called *Me, Myself, and Lies* by Jennifer Rothschild (2007). She felt this Bible study fit hand in glove with the healing lessons taught in the project. Three of the research participants were in this Bible class. They commented several times during the research project that they felt the Bible study materials and the project curriculum complemented each other. The researcher cannot analyze what effect this Bible study had on the participants. It is referenced anecdotally as occurring coincidentally with the research project.

Another item of note occurred as this teacher advertised the project to the selected groups from the church. She decided to publicize the project only to women. In her explanation to the researcher, she felt that having only women in the group would allow the ability to share stories more freely. This decision resulted in only women being involved in the research project. Therefore, the results from this project are based only on female participants.

It also should be disclosed that the researcher asked the teacher if she would participate in the research project. She responded affirmatively. Knowing her background as a teacher and small group leader, the researcher asked her if she would be willing to participate in the research project, with the possibility of teaching this course in the future. Again, there was a positive response. The researcher holds this woman in high regard, for not only did she immerse herself entirely in applying the course to her own life, but there was also ample evidence of how she integrated this material with the Bible study, *Me, Myself, and Lies*. She also gave specific examples of potential future uses of the project material as she works with other women in a small group. It was a privilege to have a participant who thoroughly learned, applied, and found future implementations for the material.

Since the teacher was the Bible study leader of two women in the class, a potential power difference could affect the contribution and learning of those two participants in the project. However, it was observed that the teacher truly became a participant in this research project. The researcher witnessed a strong conversation level of all the participants before and after classes. Also, the level of vulnerability in sharing stories during the sessions suggested no conflict by having the teacher participate in the project.

As a result of the teacher's advertising, three women came from the Bible study, and no one came from the community growth group. She further publicized it to the SALT group, and three more women contacted the researcher. However,

as the researcher met with the sixth woman, she was found to have significant trauma in life. It was clear from her stories that she needed specific counselling. Unfortunately, the researcher did not have a counselling degree and was not qualified to help her. Therefore, she was not included in the study and was given a list of counsellors from whom she could obtain help.

Ultimately, five women read the information sheet, met with the researcher to ask questions, and signed the consent form (Appendix Four) to join the research project. The five ladies picked a day and time and proceeded to meet once a week with the researcher for the next six weeks, which was the project's duration. The meeting location was a missionary house, which offered privacy and was large enough for a group to meet comfortably.

The five female participants attended Fellowship Community Church in Mt. Laurel, NJ. The project started on November 2, 2022, and concluded on December 5, 2022. The participants met once a week for six weeks (Nov. 2, 9, 16, 21, 30 and Dec 5). The fourth and sixth meetings were adjusted to accommodate the participant's schedules.

Scope – Limiting Factors and Delimiters

The research project was a teaching exploration aimed at helping people overcome wounds, especially realizing how the pain can affect them physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. It was a spiritual formation exercise for the purpose of discipleship. It was not counselling. The researcher took two resources about healing from a formational prayer class and developed a practical

curriculum to teach participants how to apply these truths to their lives. The course was called “Destination Abundant Life – From Hurting to Healing.” The curriculum (Appendix One) had these objectives for the participants.

Table 4: Curriculum Objectives

Hurting to Healing Curriculum Objectives
Examine their life to identify and compile a list of wounds
Recognize and categorize their emotions
Explain the Structures of Healing chart (Wardle 2001, 137)
Start to identify lies they have believed about themselves
Recognize what dysfunctional behaviours were used to deal with pain
Present the hurts to Jesus for healing in a safe place
Write a lament to God with the Holy Spirit’s help to process a wound
Compile a list of lies they have believed about themselves
Create a list of truths of who they are in Jesus Christ

The limits to this research project were group size and time. This project is only one class of a more extensive DMin program. There was a short time frame to develop the proposal and ethical framework of the research project and have them approved, create supporting documents, advertise and form a group, teach the group, analyze the data from the participants, and write up the report. Therefore, the project was limited to six weeks so the researcher could complete all the steps required within the class time frame. While six weeks was a short time, it was adequate to teach the material and see growth occur.

There were several delimiters to the project. First, there were only women in the project based on the values and choice of the project promoter. This topic could also be taught to men, but men were not included in this project's scope. Another delimiter was the subject topic. Potential participants who did not recognize trauma in their lives or feel it was an appropriate time to work on it did not join the project. Age was also a delimiter. The project was promoted only to adults who would be better able to handle the mature nature of the topic. The last delimiter was spiritual. The healing process necessitated the participant to be a Christian, and only Christians were sought as participants.

Methodology – Narrative Research

Narrative research methodology influenced this ministry project. Tim Sensing, a professor of theology and research methods, wrote about qualitative research. “Narrative research is a powerful tool that allows for the exposure of both information and interpretation and is an appropriate means by which researchers can examine their beliefs and practices” (Sensing 2015, 158). Typically, a narrative research project collects people’s stories on a particular topic to find and analyze essential details to see what themes emerge. Kayi Ntinda, a senior lecturer at the University of Eswatini, wrote about research. “Narrative research aims to unravel consequential stories of people's lives as told by them in their own words and worlds” (Ntinda 2019, 411). This project methodology differs from traditional narrative research as the researcher did not collect people’s stories.

The participants reported in their own words after contemplating questions on various forms (self-evaluation, journal, narrative). They were prompted to write what they learned about themselves as they interacted with the curriculum. It is narrative research in the sense that the researcher is working with people's own words, albeit a more directed form of narrative research. In their book about how to do narrative research in faith-based communities, Savage and Presnell wrote about this method. "Narrative method is intended to make research more unbiased, inclusive, and attentive to the uninterpreted meanings and truths latent in the stories" (Savage and Presnell 2008, 102). While it is true that in this research project, the participants were being directed to report about certain aspects of their lives, it was hoped that as they wrote in their own words, it would be less biased than if the researcher had reported for them.

This project also used principles from Participatory Action Research (PAR). The participants were considered "stakeholders" interested in growth gains due to interaction with the methods in this research project (Stringer 2014, 15). The project methods started with the individual but were taught and analyzed in community, which lends to the methodology being also categorized as participatory. However, the data collection and analysis were based on individual narratives, which were analyzed to report group themes of growth as the basis of the research. Therefore, the methodology was influenced by narrative research, using participatory action principles of interaction, resulting in stakeholder growth. When the report was finished, each participant was emailed a copy. They

were asked to read the report to suggest any necessary changes. Only Green responded that she felt no changes were required.

Methods

The methods of data collection (Appendices Five through Seven) used in this narrative research project were a self-evaluation form given pre- and post-teaching sessions, weekly journals, a final narrative, a final recorded discussion session, and the researcher's observations. The researcher developed the forms to guide the participants to report what they learned physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually as they interacted with the curriculum. The forms were created to get data that answered the research question. The researcher met with a fellow lay minister from FCC to test the forms. She suggested that definitions were needed for specific terms on the forms. As a result, a key-term form (Appendix Eight) was created and given to the participants in the first lesson.

The self-evaluation form was designed to motivate the participants to start holistically investigating the current state of their lives. It became an evaluative baseline that they used to compare their life with after the learning had occurred. The pre- and post- evaluations become reference points to compare what had been learned and experienced. A narrative has a beginning, a middle and an end. The pre- and post-evaluation forms helped establish the beginning and part of the ending of each participant's reporting.

Each lesson introduced new concepts to be learned and implemented by doing homework. Every week, the participants were given a journal form at the

end of the study. The journal specifically led them to discuss what they had learned that week about potential physical, mental, spiritual and emotional growth. After the fifth class, the participants were given the post-evaluation. Their homework after this lesson was to take their pre- and post-evaluations, journals and what they had learned in class to fill out the final narrative form. The journals helped show the story's beginning, middle, and end and whether the participants experienced change. The final narrative showed the end of the story as the participants reviewed what they learned and experienced during the project.

The participants brought their completed forms for collection to the sixth session. All the data was scanned on the researcher's scanner and was stored confidentially on her computer. All original documents were returned to the participants. The sixth week of class was a debrief session, and it was recorded. The researcher promised to destroy the digital copies of the data and recording as soon as it was no longer needed for the degree.

Phases and Timetable

Table 5: The Timeline of the Research Project

Date	Action
Mid-April 2022	DMSF 0943 – Ministry-Based Field Research class starts
August 2022	Draft project proposal and Research Ethics Board (REB) application submitted to professor
September 2022	Final project proposal submitted to professor and REB application

Date	Action
Mid-September – October 2022	Finding research participants
October 2022	Approved project proposal and REB application
November 2 nd – December 5 th	Dates of the research project
March 2023	The research report finalized and submitted
May 2023	Report distributed to the research participants

Ethics in Ministry-Based Research

The researcher is not a pastor or a leader at Fellowship Community Church, nor is this research project under her ministry responsibility at FCC. The only authority I, as the researcher, had over the group was the power differential between the teacher and the participant. The researcher was more concerned about the perceived spiritual power differential of being a missionary. People tend to put pastors and missionaries on a spiritual pedestal as if these positions automatically guarantee holiness, which they do not. Every session reminded the participants that the researcher was, like them, on a renovation journey to become like Christ. The researcher was a facilitator in these sessions, not an expert. As the researcher developed the healing curriculum, she added personal stories of wounds and their effects. These stories reduced the power differential by demonstrating that all people need healing, whether ministry leaders or those receiving ministry.

The participants in the project knew the researcher as a missionary and student of spiritual formation doing a research ministry project. Ethically, the

researcher created an environment conducive to sharing and conducted the classes so people felt free to share without judgment (see Appendix Two). It was clearly stated that the participants had the personal choice as to what they might share with the class and what they would not. Each participant had complete control over when and if they shared in class. At the start of each lesson, it was repeated that sharing was voluntary and not expected from anyone, and the idea of confidentiality was reinforced.

To identify and manage the participants' expectations, the researcher provided them with communicative information sheets and consent form. The Tyndale Research Ethics Board was given copies of all the forms and approved the research project proposal. Every participant met with the researcher and had an opportunity to ask questions before they signed the consent form. Multiple times throughout the sessions and always at the end of the lesson, there was a pause to ask if anyone had questions or comments. Each participant was given the researcher's phone number, home and email address for contact if there were any further questions. The researcher made herself available to meet with the participants outside of class. The participants called and texted as needed.

Findings, Interpretations and Outcomes

Before the researcher started the project, a consultation with a colleague who had experienced deep trauma in life convinced the researcher that this topic should only be taught with the structured support of the community of faith in prayer for the participants. The researcher has an email-based group of over four

hundred prayer supporters who were asked to pray in general for the research project and its participants. Another request from the researcher asked if any of those supporters wanted to pray for the participants specifically. Six women responded to this request to pray in detail for the five women who took the course. The course participants gave verbal permission for the researcher to request prayer. The researcher cannot determine to what extent prayer affected the outcomes of this project. By faith, the researcher believes that prayer, which led to the freedom of movement by the Holy Spirit, is one of the reasons why participants in this project experienced very positive outcomes.

Action research authors Coghlan and Brannick's (2010, 15) description of a project explains, "In our view, a good action research project contains a good story, rigorous reflection on that story, and an extrapolation of usable knowledge or theory from the reflection on the story." Parts of their definition can be attributed to this research project report. The In Vivo statements showed part of the "good story" the participants wrote after interacting with the curriculum. "Rigorous reflection" occurred as the researcher wrestled with analyzing the data. Finally, the conclusions and implications section is the "extrapolation of usable knowledge or theory."

Findings

The following section contains information about participation involvement, a summary of all the data sets, relevant facts about participant

reporting, an overview of the coding styles, decisions made about analyzing data, and an explanation and example of an In Vivo Diagram.

Participants

The following background information about the participants was learned in conversation with the ladies and during the “small talk” times before and after lessons. All five women were retired, with an age range of 62 to 80 years old. All five women had spent the majority of their lives attending a Christian Church (four Protestant, one Catholic – later turned Protestant). Two women had done short-term missions in the past (one to three years overseas), and one of the women is a Bible study/small group leader. All five participants were married with children, and two had become widows within the past two years. All of the women recognized trauma in their lives and chose this time in their spiritual journey to walk on a path of healing as the Trinity was renovating their hearts.

To preserve anonymity, the researcher refers to the five participants with colour names Orange, Pink, Yellow, Green, and Blue. The group planned to meet once a week on Wednesdays for six sessions. See Table 6 for a summary of the participant’s involvement.

Table 6: Summary of Participant’s Involvement

Session date	Wed. Nov. 2, 2022	Wed. Nov. 9, 2022	Wed. Nov. 16, 2022	Mon. Nov. 21, 2022	Wed. Nov. 30, 2022	Mon. Dec. 5, 2022
Date changes	As planned	As planned	As planned	Date moved due to U.S. Thanksgiving	As planned	Date moved due to a time conflict
Session date	Wed. Nov. 2, 2022	Wed. Nov. 9, 2022	Wed. Nov. 16, 2022	Mon. Nov. 21, 2022	Wed. Nov. 30, 2022	Mon. Dec. 5, 2022
Who attended	Orange Pink Yellow Green Blue	Orange Pink Yellow Green Blue	Orange Yellow Green Blue	Orange Pink Yellow Green Blue	Orange Pink Yellow Green Blue	Orange Pink Yellow Green Blue

There were two scheduling conflicts, so the participants decided on a new meeting day and time. The sessions were well attended. Only Pink missed a single session due to an unplanned scheduling conflict. The researcher and Pink tried to find a time to meet together to make up the session. Due to scheduling conflicts, they could not meet. The researcher gave Pink a copy of the lesson plan to review, containing all session information.

Summary of all Data

Table 7: Summary of Data Collected

All Data	Two Self-Evaluation Forms		Five Journal Forms					One Final Narrative
When assigned	Before 1st lesson	After 5th lesson	After each lesson					One after 5th lesson
When collected	Nov. 9	Dec. 5	Nov. 9	Nov. 16	Nov. 21	Nov. 30	Dec. 5	Dec. 5
Who Returned	All	All except Pink	All	All	All except Pink	All except Pink	All	All

There were a total of eight documents that could be received from each participant. Four participants (Orange, Yellow, Green, and Blue) returned all the documents. One participant (Pink) returned five of the eight documents due to unexpected life circumstances. Out of a potential forty documents, thirty-seven documents were received. There was a high data return rate, with 92.5% of the data received from all participants.

Self-Evaluation Form

The Self-Evaluation form was given twice – before and after the curriculum, which provided a starting and an ending point for the participant’s narrative.

Table 8: Summary of the Self-Evaluation Form

Self-Evaluation Form	Why this question was asked
<p>Q. 1 - Do you feel that difficult circumstances from your past have affected your life today? How or in what ways have difficult circumstances affected you? (A difficult circumstance can be anything that has caused you pain in life.)</p>	<p>Motivation and preparation for course objective one: Examine their life to identify and compile an initial list of wounds in their lives</p>
<p>Q. 2 - Emotions: In the past week, what emotions can you remember feeling? (Write down as many as you can think of, and use the feelings wheel if needed.)</p> <p>Q. 3 - Based on the emotions you wrote down, would you say that it is easy or hard for you to know what you are feeling? Why do you think it is easy or hard for you to recognize your emotions?</p>	<p>Both questions 2 and 3 relate to the second objective of this course: Recognize and categorize their emotions related to their wounds. It was also motivation to be introspective with their emotions.</p>
<p>Q. 4 - Compare your spiritual life to an oak tree. Are you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -An acorn just planted (new Christian) -A sapling putting out branches (growing Christian for a few years) -A young tree with more branches starting to bear acorns (growing for more than ten years) -A mature tree with many branches and a full crop of acorns (you continue to grow in relationship with God and help others to grow in their relationship with God). <p>Discuss why you feel you are at the level you chose.</p>	<p>The research question needed data to evaluate the participant's spiritual condition. This question motivated the participants to consider their spiritual life and rate it by levels of growth. It also challenged the participant to think about spiritual growth as a journey occurring over time.</p>

Self-Evaluation Form	Why this question was asked
Q. 5 - Do the hurts from your past affect who you are as a person today? Why or why not?	A motivational question that prepared the students for the process of healing they learned. (Related to objective three – Explain the Structures of Healing chart.)
Q. 6 - When someone hurts you, does that hurt affect you mentally? If you answered yes, also write down how you think it affects you.	This question was related to the research question of expressing growth mentally and to objective four – Start to identify lies about themselves.
Q. 7 - What is happening with your body physically currently? (Sleeping patterns, eating habits, exercise - describe your general physical state right now.)	It motivated the participant to be aware of the physical dimension. Related to the research question of expressing their physical state and whether growth had occurred.

The first time the participant interacted with the form, the form was designed to stimulate introspection as the students examined their lives. The participants' answers were evidence they had inspected these four areas of life. The questions also related to the research question by helping the participants evaluate whether growth had occurred physically, mentally, spiritually and emotionally. The initial form became a baseline before the teaching. The second time, the form was answered in light of what the participant learned during the course to determine if growth occurred. This form introduced bias to the participants as it informed them they would be learning about these topics.

The questions on this form focused on obtaining data to answer the research question and were based on the objectives of the curriculum. The

questions were formatted carefully and motivated the participants to study based on their interaction with the questions. After having taught the lessons once with these data forms, the researcher now realizes there are opportunities for improvements on these forms. Revising the questions would be an evaluation step in a Participatory Action Research spiral (Stringer 2014, 9). If the researcher were to do this project again, there would be a formal assessment of the questions and how the participants answered them to craft better questions. For example, on the Self-Evaluation form question four about spiritual life, all the participants chose what level of spirituality they felt they had achieved. However, few discussed why they thought they were at that level, which would have been beneficial information. This question needs to be evaluated and revised to produce answers which would be more illuminating.

Journal Form

Most questions on the Journal form were constructed to elicit data directly responding to the research question. A question was also asked about what idea the participant found interesting in that week's lesson.

Table 9: Summary of Questions on the Journal Form

Journal Form	Why this question was asked
Q. 1 - I found this topic/idea interesting from our study this week	Participant has freedom of expression and introspection focused on healing.
Q. 2 - Emotionally – this is what is happening in my emotions as I study this week’s lesson (if nothing, record that):	Get data to answer the research question, introspection focused on observing/recording emotions.

Journal Form	Why this question was asked
Q. 3 - Mentally – as I studied this week, here is what I was aware of happening mentally (if nothing, record that).	Get data to answer the research question, introspection focused on observing and recording mental interaction with the material.
Q. 4 - *Spiritually – as I am studying, here is what I sense is happening spiritually (if nothing, record that).	Get data to answer the research question, introspection focused on observing and recording spiritual status.
Q. 5 - *Physically – as I studied this week, this is what I noticed happening physically (if nothing, record that):	Get data to answer the research question, introspection focused on observing and recording physical status.

The first question assumed the participant had learned something and was included to give them the freedom to express their individual experience of learning. Being an educator, the researcher has observed that students always learn more than the objectives being taught. Including this question meant the participant could comment on where the lessons and the Holy Spirit took them that week. Sometimes, this question brought the most exciting revelation on the entire form. For example, this question in journal form four elucidated that three out of four participants who answered this question found a lament beneficial. No other question would have found this potentially interesting information, which might indicate further research is needed on lamenting.

Narrative Form

The final data form was the Narrative Form. It was similar to the journal form as the participants were directed to give examples of how they saw growth emerging in their lives holistically. The narrative was the final form given to them after they had experienced the entire curriculum for the course. The form's timing allowed the participants to look back over the previous five weeks to report how they saw growth initiated due to their self-examination and journey with the Holy Spirit as they interacted with the materials. Again, a question was given to report anything else they had experienced while taking the course.

Participant Reporting

On all data forms, the participants were given tremendous freedom to report. The positive side of allowing openness to respond meant each participant was free to answer the question according to their experience. The negative side of asking open-ended questions was that the answers varied tremendously. With five participants and the divergence in response, examining the data for themes was difficult. For less complex data to analyze and report, the researcher could have given fill-in-the-blank answers on the forms. This type of form would have been quickly tabulated, had a greater possibility for homogenous data reporting, and would have been less time-consuming for the participants to pick a bubble rather than immerse themselves in introspection. Despite the challenges that diverse data delivers, the researcher is confident that the data shows that growth was initiated in the participants' lives.

The participants reported strong growth across three dimensions: spiritual, emotional and mental. The researcher expected to find growth in the participants in these areas. For trauma to heal, one must work with emotions, which naturally tends to cause emotional development. The curriculum focused on taking wounds to Jesus for healing. The participants were exercising their relationship with God in the process of healing, so growth and renovation were also expected spiritually. Mentally, the students were learning to interact with their wounds and were challenged to apply the process. Thus, growth was also expected in this area. The participants were taught the curriculum, and development started to occur holistically across these dimensions.

This holistic growth shows how these human dimensions are integrally linked. “Christian psychologists alert us to the synergistic relationship between the spiritual, emotional, relational and intellectual dimensions. Furthermore, medical doctors continue to identify the interconnectedness between our physical health and spiritual life” (Chandler 2014, 22). Counsellors have become more aware of how trauma affects a person holistically. Bessel van der Kolk, a Dutch psychiatrist and author, wrote about how trauma affects a person physically.

If an organism is stuck in survival mode (because of trauma), its energies are focused on fighting off unseen enemies, which leaves no room for nurture, care and love. For us humans, it means that as long as the mind is defending itself against invisible assaults, our closest bonds are threatened, along with our ability to plan, play, learn, and pay attention to other people’s needs. (Van der Kolk 2014, 76)

Van der Kolk shows a physical “organism” reacting to a wound mentally (“mind is defending itself”) and emotionally (“no room for nurture, care and love”). The

researcher also believes there is a suggested spiritual impact as the emotional damage also affects the person's ability to relate to God. Peter Scazzero, a pastor and author of books on emotional health, argues for a link between emotions and spirituality, "it is not possible to be spiritually mature while remaining emotionally immature" (Scazzero 2015, 17). A human being is inextricably bound together to experience life mentally, emotionally and spiritually. In this project, there was a high probability that growth would occur across these areas as participants interacted with the curriculum.

While the project data shows promising evidence of growth across three dimensions, there was little evidence that the participants experienced growth physically, which surprised the researcher. This curriculum was taught once before, and the student experienced growth in all areas, including physical. The researcher had this prior experience and some understanding of science to expect growth physically. Modern scientists Darwin and Pavlov (van der Kolk 2014, 76-77) wrote about the connection between the body and the brain. "Intense emotions involve not only the mind but also the gut and the heart" (van der Kolk 2014, 76). Van der Kolk showed the interconnectedness between a person's emotions, mind and physical state.

Charles Darwin, an English biologist, also saw a correlation between dimensions. "When the mind is strongly excited, it instantly affects the state of the viscera; so that under excitement there will be much mutual action and the reaction between these, the two most important organs of the body" (Darwin

1998, 71). Darwin connected the mind to a physical reaction. If the curriculum caused growth in the participants emotionally and mentally, and emotions are linked to the body and the mind, one might also expect some growth physically.

Another mental connection to the body is the vagus nerve, which is “the longest and most complex of the cranial nerves. [It] runs from the brain through the face and thorax to the abdomen” (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. “Vagus Nerve,” Accessed February 9, 2023 <https://www.britannica.com/science/vagus-nerve>). This nerve connects our brain to our gut. “The vagus nerve [...] registers heartbreak and gut-wrenching feeling. When a person becomes upset, the throat gets dry, the voice becomes tense, the heart speeds up, and respiration becomes rapid and shallow” (van der Kolk 2014, 83). This nerve connects the mind to the emotions and the emotions to the body, showing the interrelation of mental, emotional and physical spheres. Van der Kolk's entire book is a testament to the interconnectedness of these dimensions.

Based on how a human being is wired with connections physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually, the researcher understood there was potential for physical growth to be reported from the participants. Unfortunately, the researcher is left to question why little growth was reported. Was the curriculum inadequate to cause growth physically? Should the researcher have given more focus to spotting and reporting physical data? Were the participants so focused on mental, emotional and spiritual growth that they did not recognize what was happening physically? Did the placement of the “physical” category on

the forms cause the participants to subconsciously treat it as a lower level and thus feel it was unimportant to report? In general, do human beings prioritize physicality less than other areas of the body? If this research project is taught again, these and other questions should be analyzed. However, the data shows very little growth initiated in the participants physically.

Coding

The data was entered into an Excel file, and the researcher looked for themes across these diverse data statements. A chart was created in a Word document to analyze these themes further—the broader picture of what the data was trying to show eluded the researcher. Unsatisfied with presenting only diverse themes and determined to explore the statements with the genuineness they were given, the researcher went back to study the data further. While interacting with the participant's statements, the researcher was impressed with the participants' sincere introspection and profound vulnerability. The researcher then used In Vivo Coding as the first cycle method of analyzing the data.

In Vivo means taking “a word or short phrase from the actual language found in the qualitative data record” (Saldaña 2013, 91). Johnny Saldaña is a professor emeritus and author of qualitative research books. Reading Saldaña's book on coding and working with the participant's candid statements led the researcher to conclude that using the participant's own words would be a powerful data-reporting method. “In Vivo Coding is appropriate for virtually all qualitative studies, but particularly for beginning qualitative researchers learning

how to code data” (Saldaña 2013, 91). Due to the researcher's lack of experience and the richness of the data expressed by the participants, In Vivo Coding was an excellent choice for the first analysis of the data.

The researcher returned to the Excel file and highlighted key expressions from the participants, then created a new Word document to chart the In Vivo phrases. Seeing the data In Vivo was extremely helpful, as it removed the extraneous information. The researcher turned again to Saldaña to help determine how to analyze the data in a second cycle of coding (2013, 187). Operational Model Diagramming was chosen to diagram the In Vivo phrases (Saldaña 2013, 202). Each participant’s journey was mapped out from beginning, middle and end with the research question’s four categories of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. Using both In Vivo and Operational Model Diagramming Coding (see section In Vivo Diagram), the researcher could visually represent the participant’s entire journey through the six weeks of the research project on a single page for each participant.

Decisions Made in Analyzing and Reporting the Data

When the research project was initially designed, the researcher anticipated using the chart from Table 10 to analyze the data and write the narrative research report.

Table 10: Expected Analysis of Data

Timing	Beginning of the story	Middle of the story	End of the story
Data used	Self-Eval. form 1 Journal 1	Journal 2, 3, 4	Journal 5 Self- Eval. form 2 Narrative form

However, when the researcher started writing the report, there was a complication due to the richness of the three data streams. Therefore, the researcher only reported on the Journal data to solve this conundrum. The Self-Evaluation and the Narrative forms were used as supporting data when needed. Journal forms represent a narrative with a beginning (form one), middle (forms two-three) and end (forms four-five). Journal one is the introduction and starts the curriculum. Journals two and three are the middle section and complete the structures of healing learning. Journals four and five are additional lessons to support the structure of healing and form a natural conclusion to the materials presented. Primarily, using the journals gives a comprehensive amount of material that shows an accurate picture of the narrative's beginning, middle, and end.

There was a second difficulty in reporting the data. The narrative research report must show a beginning, middle and end for four categories (emotional, mental, physical and spiritual) during the six-week journeys of five participants. The researcher was perplexed about how to present all this information for each participant in a single, concise chart. After multiple attempts and failures, the

researcher abandoned the idea of a single chart for the entire research project and chose to create a single In Vivo diagram for each participant.

In Vivo Diagram

There is an In Vivo Diagram for each participant. The diagrams show the beginning (triangle), middle (rectangle) and end (trapezoid) of the In Vivo statements for each participant. The In Vivo statements in the diagram represent the reported journal data. The four colours represent the four areas of the participants' lives: emotional (red), physical (purple), mental (gray) and spiritual (turquoise). The size of the objects refers subjectively to the growth level the participants experienced. All objects/colours are overlapped to show the assumed interconnected nature of these dimensions of the participants' lives.

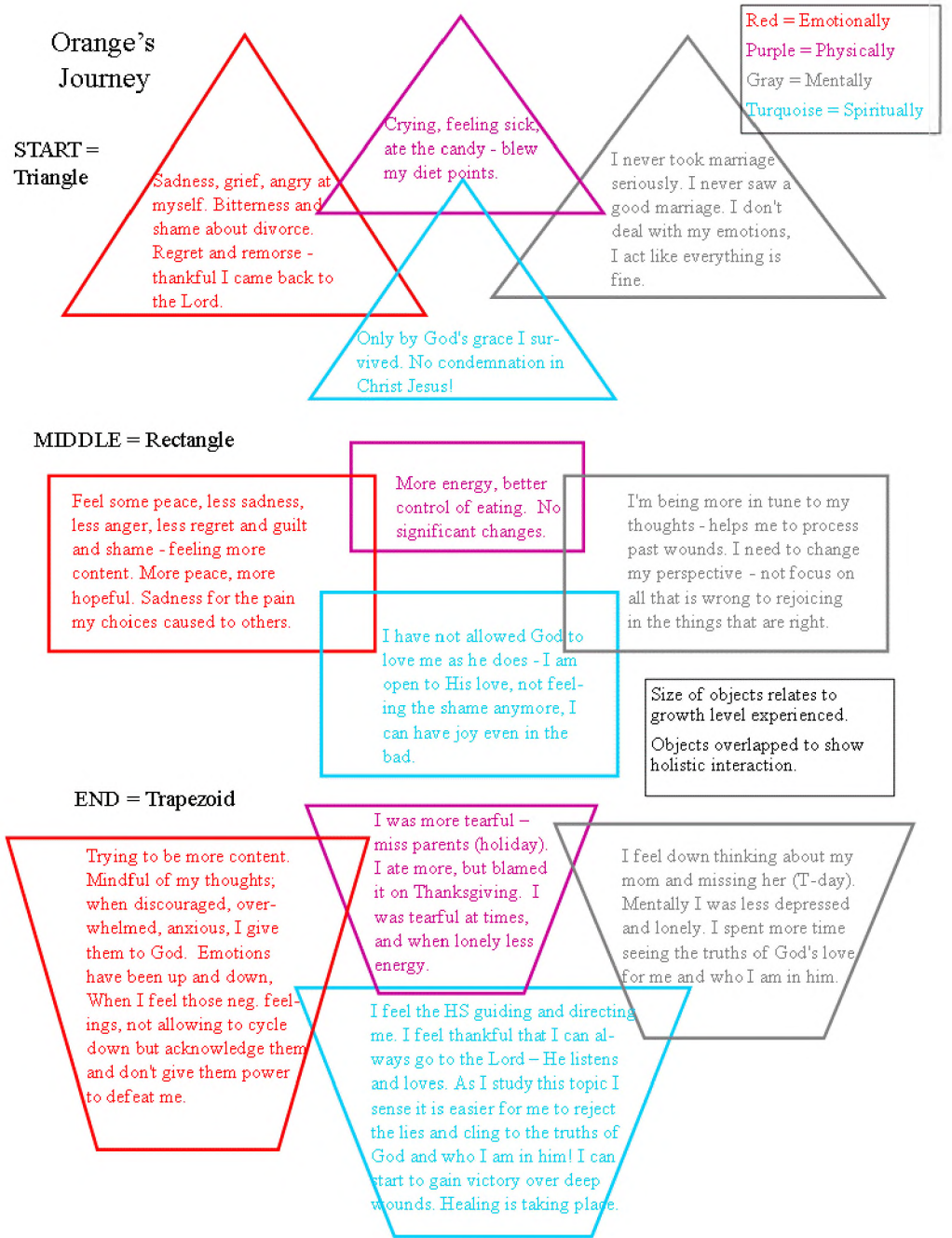


Figure 1: Orange's In Vivo Operational Model

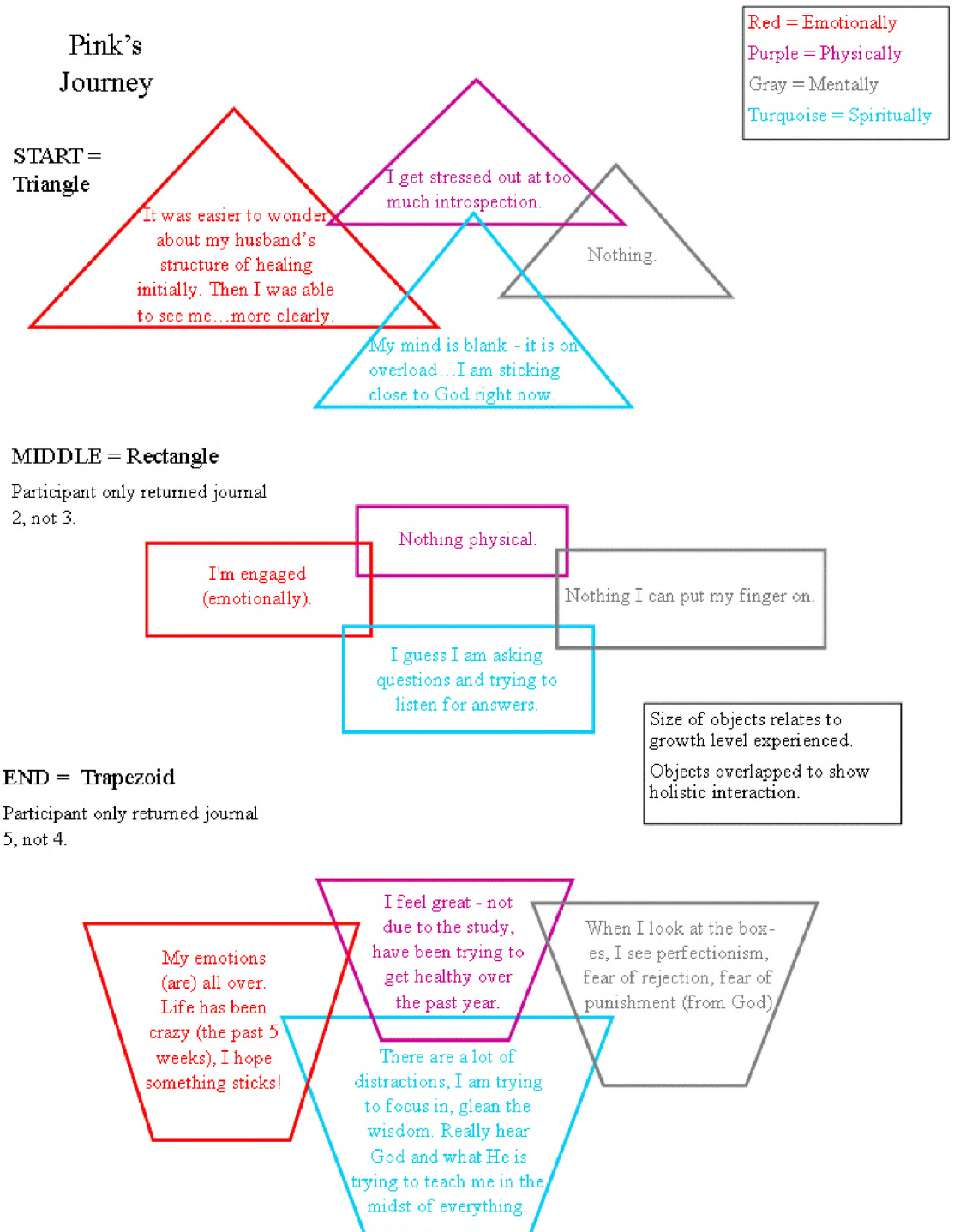


Figure 2: Pink's In Vivo Operational Model

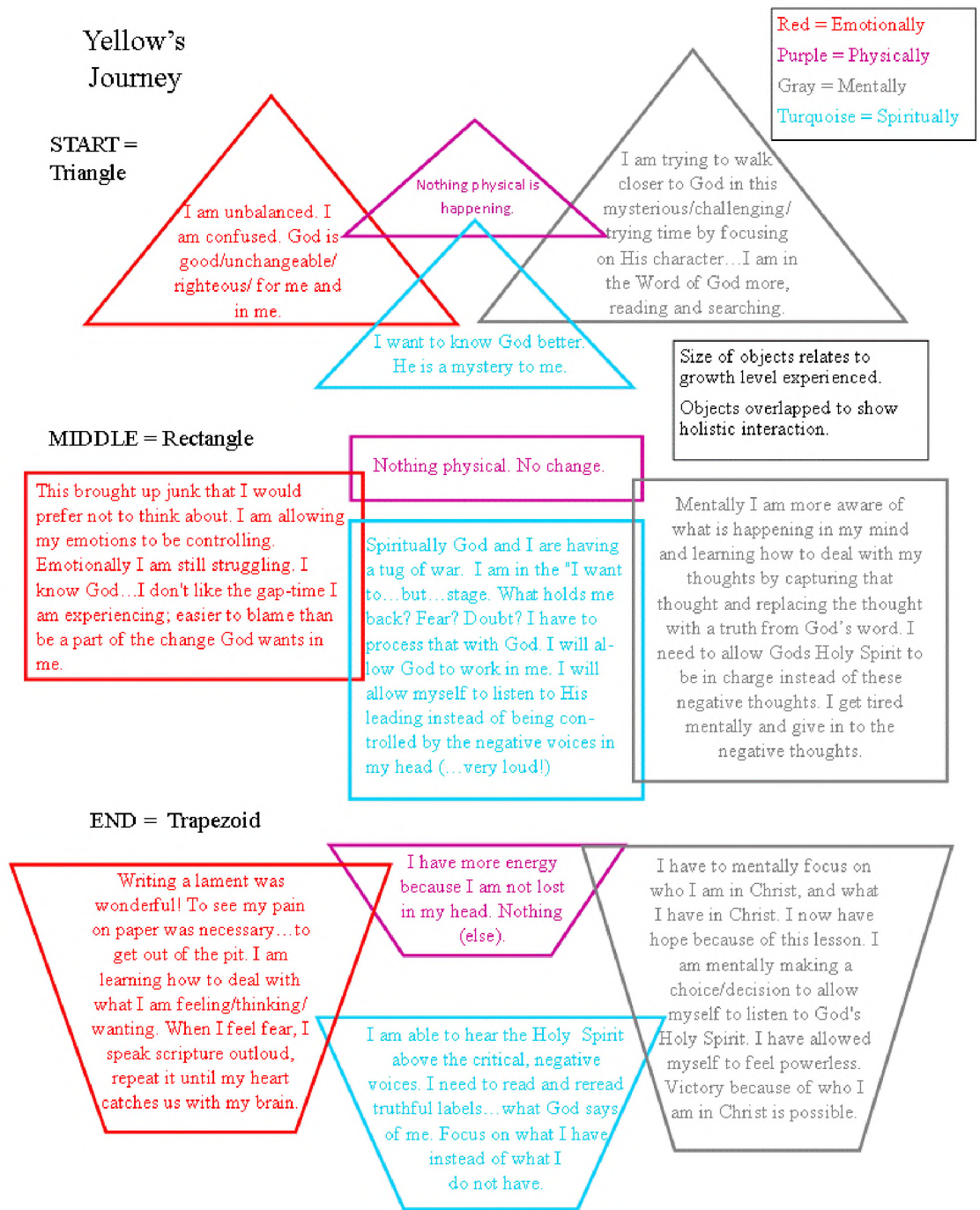


Figure 3: Yellow's In Vivo Operational Model

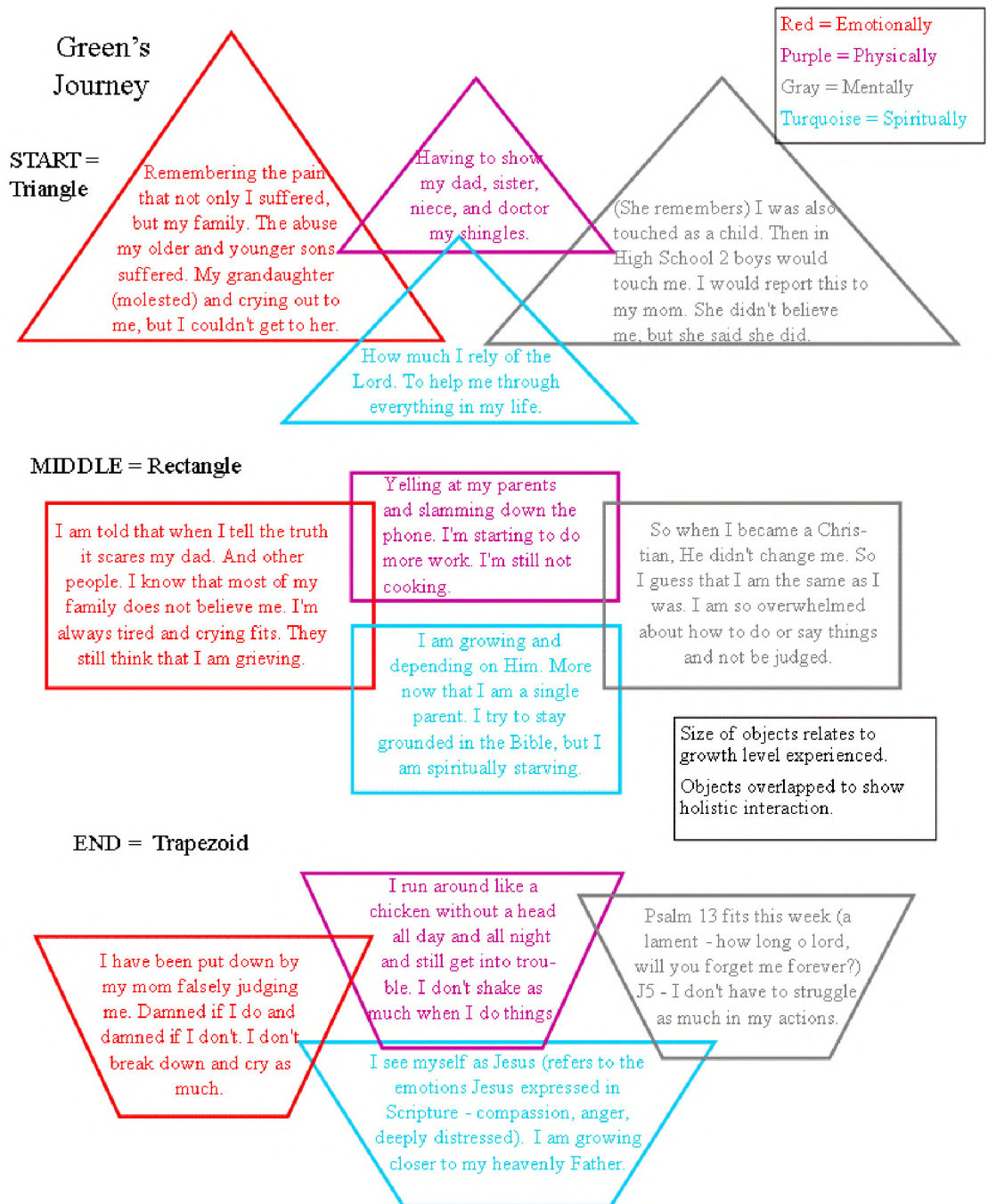


Figure 4: Green's In Vivo Operational Model

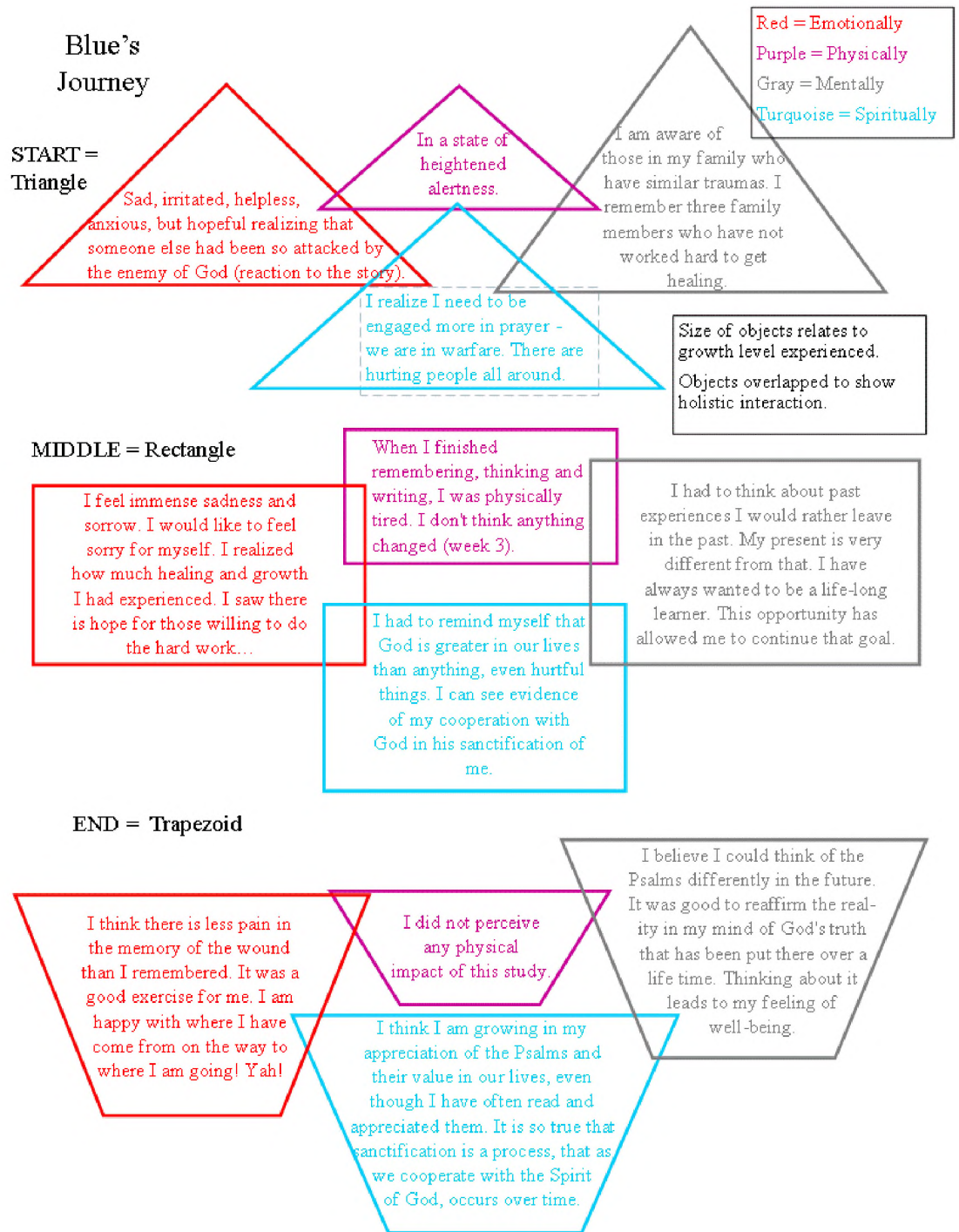


Figure 5: Blue's In Vivo Operational Model

Interpretations

The Interpretations section defines growth and growth levels and holistically analyzes what occurred in the participants' lives.

Definition of Growth

The research question asked what growth was initiated physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually in the participants as they interacted with the curriculum and the Holy Spirit over a six-week project. A definition of growth identifies how to measure if it occurred during the research project. Merriam-Webster's definition of growth is "a) stage in the process of growing, b) the process of growing, c) progressive development, d) increase, expansion" (*Merriam-Webster*, s.v. "Growth," accessed February 21, 2023, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/growth#dictionary-entry-1>). The researcher defines growth as moving forward from a position rather than staying in the same place or moving backwards, similar to Merriam-Webster's third definition of growth as progressive development. Spiritual, emotional, physical and mental growth is defined slightly differently in secular and Christian arenas. This research project represents growth from a Christian perspective. In this project, growth is defined as cumulative progression spiritually, mentally, emotionally and physically.

A definition of growth is similar to a definition of spiritual formation.

Chandler defines Christian Spiritual Formation (CSF) as,

An interactive process by which God the Father fashions believers into the image of his Son, Jesus, through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit by fostering development in seven primary life dimensions (spirit, emotions, relationships, intellect, vocation, physical health and resource stewardship). (Chandler 2014, 19)

Chandler's definition of CSF includes the idea of growth, "fostering development" in seven dimensions, four of which this research project studied: spirit, emotions, intellect (mentally), and physical health. Her definition includes the factors of God being at work in the individual, as the individual responds to Him as He cumulatively progresses them into the image of Jesus. Chandler's definition of spiritual formation and the definition of growth for this research project are congruent. This compatibility between the two definitions demonstrates how healing from trauma is related to spiritual formation as God is renovating us into the image of Christ.

Similar elements of growth are also found in 2 Peter 1:3-8.

His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him, who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these, he has given us his very great and precious promises so that through them, you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter shows how every Christian is expected to grow spiritually, emotionally, mentally and physically to be godly people, living as ones who have “escaped the corruption of the world.” Living in this world of corruption causes trauma. God’s grace and power help to heal these wounds and make us more like Jesus. As Christians, healing from trauma cumulatively and progressively becoming more like Christ spiritually, emotionally, mentally and physically is a process that the Trinity desires for everyone as they are at work renovating us.

Levels of Growth Defined

Various spiritual formation models were investigated as potential growth evaluation models. No model was found that could accurately describe the data gathered in this research across the four dimensions of how growth occurred. Therefore, the researcher developed a definition of growth and adjectives to describe that growth. Growth level was described as no initial, limited, good, or substantial growth.

When the participants reported no growth, it was recorded. The initial level was analyzed as the start of development. Limited growth refers to the starting and stopping of growth. Since it stopped, the growth could terminate if not continued. Good growth emphasizes that growth is starting to be sustained, which could lead to permanent change if continued. The category substantial was added as the next potential level of development. A substantial growth level indicates flourishing, sustainable growth. No substantial growth was analyzed in this project, possibly because it was conducted over a short period of six weeks.

But, because the image of Jesus is the *telos* for all growth, there is always a higher level of development that can be attained.

Analysis of Growth for Each Area of Life

Analysis of growth took place in three subsequent stages of analysis charts (tables 11, 14-16), a compilation chart (table 12), and bar charts (figure 6). The researcher analyzed the In Vivo Diagrams using the definition of growth and growth levels to produce the analysis charts. Each table represents one dimension (emotional, physical, mental and spiritual). The analysis further reduced the participants' In Vivo statements, compared them to the growth definition and attributed a level of growth to each participant. After the four dimensions for each participant were analyzed for growth level, a compilation chart was created. The compilation chart was used to create simple bar charts for visual comparison to identify the learning that had occurred.

Tables 11 and 14-16 revealed where there was cumulative progression (growth) for each participant in the four holistic areas of their lives. Growth (or no growth) was reported during six weeks as beginning, middle and end in the table. The expectation of seeing growth is understood within this brief period. The analysis of emotional data is in Table 11. Appendix Eleven shows the physical, mental and spiritual data analyses (Tables 14-16).

Table 11: Analysis of Emotional Dimension

Participant	Emotional Data from Research Project	Growth Level
Orange	Orange started the project with anger, sadness, bitterness, regret and remorse. She moved toward peace and felt more content. She ended the project by trying to be more content, knowing her negative emotions and trying to give them to God.	Good Growth
Pink	Pink started the project needing to process someone else's life before her own. Then she showed the ability to stay engaged, a slight forward movement. She ended with turbulent emotions but with the hope that she had learned something.	Initial Growth
Yellow	Yellow started unbalanced and confused while knowing God's goodness. Going forward, her emotions were in control, and she struggled. She concluded by learning to deal with what she was thinking/feeling/wanting.	Good Growth
Green	Green started by remembering abuse. She continued, having crying fits, tired and with her family not believing her. She ended by feeling judged but not breaking down and crying as much.	Initial Growth
Blue	Blue started emotionally connecting with a story from the lesson and was sad and anxious but hopeful. She continued in sadness over her wounds but also realized how she had already received some previous healing. She ended with less pain, saying it was a good exercise and happy with where she was going.	Good Growth

Once the data for all four dimensions' growth levels had been analyzed and charted, a compilation growth chart (Table 12) could be created using all four dimension charts to make a single chart.

Table 12: Compilation of Growth Levels

	Emotionally	Physically	Mentally	Spiritually
Orange	Good	Limited	Good	Good
Pink	Initial	No Growth	Initial	Good
Yellow	Good	Initial	Good	Good
Green	Initial	Initial	Initial	Good
Blue	Good	No Growth	Good	Good

With this chart, the growth level could be used to develop bar charts to represent the data visually. The researcher used Excel and Publisher to create the bar charts.

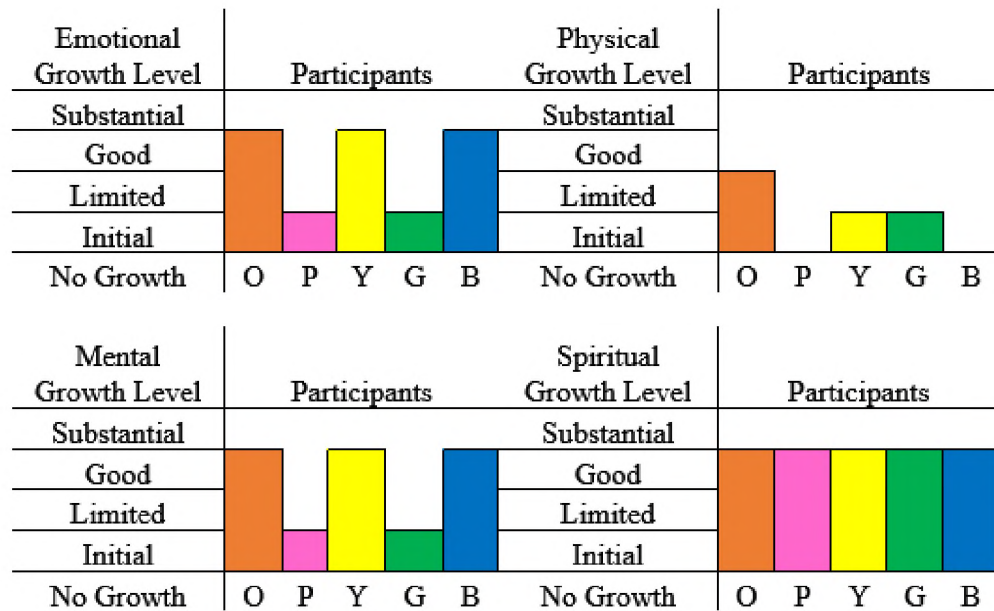


Figure 6: Participant Growth Levels Across Different Dimensions

According to the researcher’s analysis, the highest level of growth recorded was spiritual, and every participant had a good level of spiritual growth.

The next highest levels were mental and emotional. Both dimensions had equal levels of development. The lowest level of growth in this study was physical. It surprised the researcher that spiritual growth surpassed mental and emotional growth. Wounds have strong emotional roots. Therefore, the researcher expected the highest growth in this dimension. The curriculum was developed with a robust Scriptural foundation and a solid pedagogical base to challenge the participants to interact with the material cognitively. Because of this, growth was also expected to be high spiritually and mentally. It was a delightful surprise to see that spiritual growth was the highest. This high rating seems to support the idea that trauma healing is an exercise in spiritual formation.

Across the data, there is strong evidence that good learning occurred and growth was achieved spiritually, mentally and emotionally. The data shows a slight increase in the physical area. Three dimensions with considerable evidence of growth support the idea that the curriculum is sound and promotes progressive development. Even with evidence that growth occurred before the researcher would teach this curriculum again, it would be reviewed to find opportunities for improvement.

The bar charts helped visualize essential factors hidden in the data, which might only have been revealed using this illustration type. Simple bar charts, bar charts – grouped, split or stacked, histograms, line graphs and area charts, the researcher is aware of many different ways to display the data results (Booth et al. 2016, 230-231). The researcher chose a simple bar chart to display the

information to show the data as relevant and beneficial to the report's readers.

However, some growth is more impressive in its In Vivo form than in a bar chart.

Some example statements from the participants' narrative forms written after the final lesson are "I am happy that I took these classes. It has helped me to be able to heal from deep wounds and start to gain victory as I am led by the Holy Spirit" (Orange Narrative Form 2023, 3). Another participant said,

Whenever I am genuinely happy, fear enters in, and I sarcastically wonder what awful thing is around the corner. I have wondered if I am truly allowed to be happy. And I understood this is messed up thinking. So, I am taking a look at joy and happiness. I am looking at the lies I have allowed to plant, and I am attempting to counteract them with Scripture. (Pink Narrative Form 2023, 2)

A last example statement, "Because of these lessons, I now have renewed hope. These lessons went deep, which was necessary for me to get out of the pit. I was on the road to despair, instead of the road to wholeness" (Yellow Narrative Form 2023, 1). Praise God for this growth reported.

Outcomes

Four life dimensions were examined for growth in this research project. In the researcher's opinion (Booth et al. 2016, 129), based upon the analysis of the participants' reported data, the five women who interacted with this curriculum and the Holy Spirit had levels of growth in three dimensions. The researcher expected to see development after teaching this curriculum. The research project data showed that the participants experienced growth. A combination of the Renovation Team's healing presence in a life, learning the lessons, and the

participants' hard work applying the healing process brought this growth. While physical change was minor, holistic growth occurred across three dimensions spiritually, mentally and emotionally.

While growth started during the project, that growth must be nurtured to take root in the participants' lives. The six-week research project period metaphorically planted the seeds for growth and saw them start to sprout as they grew. This spiritual, mental, and emotional growth can be compared to natural seeds planted. In nature, sprouted seeds need continual care to grow to maturity. The same is true with the growth from the research project. If the researcher had continued ministering in the FCC context, a community of practice would have been suggested to further establish the growth that had started during this research project. The community of practice could have provided a forum for the methods learned in this healing curriculum to continue to be practiced and for the participants to give and receive support and encouragement as a community of faith. The researcher fears that the growth will stop as the project has ended.

Conclusions and Implications

This section shows how the healing curriculum might be used with other audiences for renovation and some implications for individual Christians and communities of faith (small groups and churches).

Summary of Project

The research project was carried out as proposed. The six-week project brought growth into the participants' lives. The curriculum developed for the project produced the desired renovation results as the participants applied what they learned. As a result, the project is considered a success and could be taught again in another context. The following section discusses other potential audiences.

Other Audiences

This project evidence suggests that similar growth could occur if this curriculum were taught to a different group of comparably aged, North American cultured, English-speaking, Christian women willing to interact with the material and be led by the Holy Spirit. The critical elements in the success of this project are not the age or gender of the participants. Instead, the essential factors for growth are based on three criteria--a person committed to renovation into Christ's image, willing to do the introspection work, and reliant on the Holy Spirit on their spiritual journey. Whether male or female, old or young, the researcher believes that growth could occur through the Holy Spirit and this curriculum if a person meets these criteria.

Juveniles might also be a potential group for this topic. If the target audience were children or young adults who also met the criteria, this curriculum must be modified. The lessons, objectives, stories, and homework were written for an adult audience. They need to be evaluated and revised depending on the

audience's age. If the lessons were adequately reviewed and rewritten, the researcher postulates that growth could also occur in this audience. More research is necessary to evidence this hypothesis.

The last potential audience for this curriculum is adults from Papua New Guinea (PNG), where the researcher lives and works. The researcher desires to reformat this curriculum with culturally appropriate stories, examples and language to teach these lessons in this context. However, the researcher could not do this alone. A committee would need to be formed to revise the entire curriculum to make it culturally and linguistically appropriate for that audience. If the curriculum were reformatted in these areas, the researcher believes growth can occur by the power of the Holy Spirit in adult Christians who are committed to Trinity renovation and willing to do the introspection work.

Conclusion

First, a conclusion is drawn from within the chapters of the portfolio. The curriculum from the research project in chapter four and the spiritual discipline tools listed in chapter three have an indirect connection. During the oral hearing for this portfolio, the committee commented that the participants used the tools from chapter three when they were taught the curriculum in the research project. I concur with the committee's observation. The exercises were not labelled as tools, and the specific details of the spiritual disciplines were not taught in the healing curriculum. Nevertheless, the participants were using some of these tools in their process of healing and being formed into the image of Christ. Throughout the five

lessons on healing, the participants used the following tools: practicing the presence of God, prayer, silence and solitude, engaging with Scripture, discernment, and learning together in the community of faith. Perhaps other readers will find this connection interesting as well.

The following conclusions in this section are based on the research project. By choosing to work with wounded people, the researcher should have expected to hear traumatic stories. Reading the participants' data was overwhelming. The researcher never anticipated such intense pain to be experienced by five random people. The women in the project are remarkable. Their data proved how hard they worked. Working with these women was a reminder to look at all people with eyes of grace, for there is no way to know what trauma the person next to you may have endured. In a world where terrible injustices occur daily, and sin is rampant, may grace increase all the more (Rom 5:20) and may those who follow Christ be known as practitioners of grace.

Christians must learn to recognize the needs of hurting people around them. Churches need to be ready to help wounded people. There are many ways to support people dealing with trauma. It would be beneficial to have counsellors on staff at local churches where possible. If a congregation cannot offer this service, they can refer those wounded to trusted local counsellors. Other community of faith groups can be started, such as Celebrate Recovery, Grief Share, and Divorce Recovery. Many of these groups have a recognized path of helping people with trauma to receive healing.

Christians should care about the wounded because God loves wounded people and is a healer. In Exodus 15:26, God claims, “I am the LORD, who heals you.” One of God’s names in Hebrew is “יְהוָה רֹפֵאֵךְ” (StudyLight.org 2023, Ex 15:26), “Yahweh Ropaeka” literally “the LORD who heals.” In another Old Testament passage on healing, Judah is reaping the consequences of sin in exile. God spoke through the prophet Jeremiah, “Since my people are crushed, I am crushed; I mourn, and horror grips me. Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is there no healing for the wound of my people?” (Jer 8:21-22). He is Yahweh Ropaeka, the God Healer. The Trinity sincerely desires to heal the wounded and renovate lives. There is a God to heal, and programs are available to be the “Balm of Gilead” and “to make the wounded whole” (Public Domain 2023, “Balm of Gilead”). This research project prompts the question, will we allow the Renovation Team access to renew the rooms of our hearts to bring us into abundant life by leaving hurting to find healing?

CHAPTER V

RENOVATED REPRESENTERS

“Spiritual formation prepares us for a life in which we move away from our fears, compulsions, resentments, and sorrows, to serve with joy and courage in the world...”

-Henri Nouwen (2010, pt.10, introduction)

Introduction

This final chapter includes a review of the four previous chapters. It also shows the outgrowth of renovation, namely the believer’s resulting representation of Christ in the world. Lastly, it proposes potential audiences and spiritual formation topics to teach to others.

Review of Renovation Chapters

Chapter One showed the Trinity’s relationship as “interdependent and interconnected” (Ware 2005, 93), operating out of mutual love for each other. The Trinity created human beings in their image and offered a relationship to them. Humanity relinquished that relationship with God to be independent and self-reliant. They exchanged a loving relationship with the Trinity, which was a “spring of living water,” to dig “their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water” (Jer 2:13). God was not content to allow people to languish in the deadly desert of their own desire. The Trinity tasked the Master Architect to

design a plan (Eph 1:3-9) to redeem humanity and renovate them into the image of Christ through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as the Onsite Coordinator of the renovation project.

Chapter two showed scenes from my personal renovation journey, as the Trinity brought me into this holy relationship. Through many amazing stories, the Trinity was seen at work restoring and rehabilitating the house of my life, room by room, into imago Christi. Chapter three detailed the Trinity's renovation tools through the Christian Spiritual Formation process. CSF was exemplified through these verses, which list four statements of growth.

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. (Col 2:6-7)

Listed in this chapter were ten spiritual growth tools the Trinity uses to renovate people into the image of Christ. As mentioned previously, there were seven of these CSF tools from chapter three were used in the curriculum for the research project (chapter four). These tools were not formally taught or assessed in that project but were used to a certain extent as the participants practiced the activities they learned in class.

Chapter four was the heart renovation research report, detailing how the Trinity goes into the hidden and locked closets of pain and trauma in people's lives to restore. The report described the restoration growth in five women's lives as they were taught a healing process. The curriculum focused on the growth achieved in four dimensions of their lives: emotional, mental, physical, and

spiritual. After the project, it was found that good growth had occurred in three dimensions (spiritual, emotional and mental) and that there was little growth physically. The curriculum could be taught again to other audiences, but the lessons must be revised first.

The four previous chapters feature the Trinity's blueprints for renovation, a brief picture of my personal renovation journey, some tools the Trinity uses for renovation and the research report based on healing trauma during the renovation of the heart. Chapter five looks at one of the purposes of this renovation in the life of believers – how we are a reproduction of Christ on display and represent Him in this world.

Renovated Representers

This portfolio used the metaphor of the Trinity being the Holy Renovators. Each human life was depicted as a house in desperate need of restoration. The Father is the Master Architect for the repair designs, Jesus is the Master Craftsman at work in each life making alterations, and the Holy Spirit is the Onsite Coordinator directing the restoration. The renovation blueprints call for people to be conformed to the image of Christ. Believers are remodelled to be lovers of God and others rather than themselves (Mk 12:30-31).

Paul wrote another renovation metaphor from Scripture to the Corinthians. He used a military image to describe one outcome of the Trinity's renovation. Paul painted the picture of God as a mighty military warrior, a Conqueror leading

His captives in the victory parade. However, instead of humiliating and binding His captives, the Trinity allows its subjects to be the fragrant aroma of love!

But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. (2 Cor 2:14-15)

As the Trinity is renovating us, we become the fragrant odour of Christ to those around us. This aroma can draw non-believers into a relationship with Him. It also has a heartening aroma that encourages other believers.

Following the restoration theme specified in this portfolio, a model home is another example of a renovation picture. Each Christian under restoration is like a model home. These models are not the picture of perfection typically seen in new subdivisions. It is an old subdivision, ravaged by sin, under the management of Satan, and the houses require repair. As each room is renovated in a home, friends are invited to the newly refurbished room. Stories of the room as it was before are compared to the new restorations that were just completed. It is a picture of the faithful testimony of the saints as they proclaim the mighty ways the Trinity has been at work, conforming them to the image of Jesus. As these testimonies are shared with other believers (Rom 1:12), some are encouraged to allow restoration in their lives as they see the incredible design and master craftsmanship of the Trinity uniquely refurbishing lives. This renovation causes us to glorify God (2 Cor 3:18).

As the Trinity is renovating us, we are drawn into communities of faith to worship God and encourage one another (Heb 10:23-25). Through these communities, we can practice loving God and others.

We find our delight in our friendships with other people, which moves us toward the Trinitarian nature of human community. The Trinity is the model of life as it is intended to be in human existence, the basis for Christian community. (Willard 2012a, 74)

Our communities of faith should be an example to others of the relational unity that exists within the Trinity.

A community of faith is not only a witness of God's love to those who are believers. This community is also a testimony to non-believers of a relationship with the Trinity.

God has always had a people, a community through which God draws the world to himself. If we want to understand the character and purpose of God we must look to the community of God's people. Embedded in the story of God's people is the story of God creating, saving, preserving, guiding and reclaiming. God fulfills his divine purpose in and through very real people. The church of Christ is the actual expression of his presence in the world. (Plass and Cofield 2014, 117)

The body of Christ in the world is a living picture of the possibility of a relationship with the Trinity. A believer's relationship with the Trinity should show others that God does exist and is at work in the world.

Loving God and loving others means that while the Trinity renovates us, we are called to "go and do likewise," like the Good Samaritan who had mercy on his neighbour (Lk 10). The Trinity is renovating us while giving us the ministry to help others to be reconciled to God to start their renovation journey. While we yearn to be in our heavenly home, "Christ's love compels us" to the ministry of

reconciliation to a world desperately needing the righteousness of Christ (2 Cor 5:2, 14, 20-21). We are called to become ambassadors of Christ, helping others who don't know God to come into a relationship with Him. As Christ's ambassador, we who are renovated become the representation of Christ as His community and a fragrant aroma to an independent, fragmented, lost, and dying world.

Jesus was the first one to be an ambassador for the Trinity. He said to His disciples after his resurrection, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (Jn 20:21). Jesus was the first One sent by His Father, then gave that job to His disciples and ultimately to us.

Jesus' statement is thus not merely motivation by example— you are sent because I am sent. There is an actual correspondence between his sending from the Father and their sending from Christ. Each assumes a union. Just as Christ is sent as the Son in union with the Father, so now they were sent ones because of their union with Christ, by the Spirit he was about to breathe into them. The Spirit would mediate the presence of Christ in them so that they would be his body, his hands and feet on earth. This is the miracle of *theosis*, the union of Christ with his church. Note that this is a communal or specifically ecclesial reality, though it also related to each individual person in the community. (Hastings 2012, 83)

We are called as individuals in a community of believers to abide in Christ (Jn 15:4) and, through that union, to continue in the good works which He has prepared for us (Eph 2:10) as we take out the gospel in our towns, districts and even to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

Matthew records Jesus' command to His disciples (including us in this age) to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Mt 28:19-20). Believers are the presence of the Trinity in the world at work to make Christ known and help others

to come into a relationship with Him so that they may also be renovated into His image.

Conclusion

The Trinity created human beings for relationship. All other created creatures, including animals and angels, were not given the opportunity for salvation and a relationship with God (1 Pt 1:1-12). If one could reduce the content of the entire Scriptures into a single word, I believe that word would be relationship. Our most important relationship is first to the Trinity, followed by our relationship to others – love God, love others (Lk 10:27). Much to our disaster, many people prefer to focus on loving themselves and their desires. However, God did not let people created in *imago Dei* languish in the chains of their sin.

God's design and desire for each one of us is to live freely, joyfully and intimately. His invitation is to live with a radical receptivity toward him and others. God longs for us to express our giftedness and to believe that he delights in us. God is eager for us to live beyond strategies of coping and protecting our estranged souls. He wants us to live in and from our true selves in Christ. (Plass and Cofield 2014, 82)

The Trinity created a master plan of redemption and renovation to bring people back to *imago Christi*.

Paul was an example of the Trinity's renovation. Once a persecutor of Christians, he met Jesus on the road to Damascus and started his renovation journey (Acts 22:1-23). As the Trinity worked on renovating him to *imago*

Christi, he became a world ambassador to bring others to be formed in the image of Christ. His love for God and others is seen in these verses.

How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you? Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith. Now, may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you. (1 Thess 3:9-11)

He also prayed for the Thessalonians.

May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones. (1 Thess 3:12-13)

As believers spend time with God, they are filled with His presence to reach out into a world desperate for a relationship with the Trinity. Being in a relationship with God leads to reaching out to others so that they also may come into a relationship with the Trinity.

If the church is an icon of the Trinity, then similarly, it will be characterized by a profoundly deep relationality in its inner life, but this relationality will have an orientation toward the world. The nature of the missional church of the missional God will be bidirectional. It will be deep and wide in its relationality. Mission is an appropriate term for what the church is as gathered and what it does as scattered, and its gathering will always have sentness in mind, and its scattering will always have bringing in mind. (Hastings 2012, 87)

Our mission as the body of Christ is to love God and, out of that unity, to love others the Trinity brings across our path as we journey with them. We are sent ones to bring the love of God to the nations.

Looking at how the Trinity has been renovating my life motivates me to help others come to know God. Writing my spiritual autobiography (chapter two) encouraged me to see how God had been renovating my life. As I shared the

stories with others, I saw how it strengthened them to see the Trinity's handiwork in my life. Writing a spiritual autobiography is a tool to encourage ourselves and strengthen others. This realization has caused me to contemplate how I can share this tool. I desire to write a spiritual autobiography curriculum to teach others how to examine their lives to write and share their spiritual autobiography. As a person writes about how God has been at work in their life, they survey how God has been renovating them. When they share stories of renovation with others, it causes the community of faith to grow in relationship with each other and the Trinity.

Similarly, as I look at how I have used renovation tools (see chapter three) in my life for growth, I pondered how to teach others about these tools. On the weekends, I have been creating a table of the different spiritual formation topics I can teach and what materials I have already prepared that can be used to create a curriculum about these renovation tools. I hope to develop and present the renovation tools curriculum to two audiences of fellow expat missionaries (materials in English) and the national PNG translators (materials translated into Tok Pisin) with whom I work. Perhaps one day, a manual/book for spiritual formation can be created from these lessons.

Lastly, seeing how the Hurting to Healing curriculum caused holistic renovation growth in the five participants' lives, I would like to teach these lessons to others. The materials are prepared in English and are ready for an audience. I am praying for the opportunity to present these materials to our member care staff to ascertain if I can offer the course at the mission base. If the

lessons have positive results, I will conduct casual research to see if the material can be translated to teach it to Papua New Guineans. Based on the research project results, I believe there will be opportunities for renovation growth for other audiences that take this course.

Spiritual growth is the reason that I wanted to take these Dmin studies at Tyndale University. I sought the opportunity to go deeper into my relationship with the Trinity. I also desired to develop tools to help others achieve a new depth in their journey with God. As this portfolio is read, I believe the growth that has occurred in my life is evident. I pray that the Trinity will continue to give me opportunities to help others become renovated into the image of Christ by using some of the new renovation tools I have acquired during these years of study. As I continue the journey, I believe God will bring others into my path for mutual learning and encouragement.

In our journey with the Trinity, we are renovated to be like Christ. There is a growing depth of relationship, and we help others come into a relationship to grow with Him. God the Father is the Master Architect of the renovation blueprints, Jesus is the Master Carpenter in the restoration, and the Holy Spirit is the Onsite Coordinator in the renovation. “One of the amazing things about the human being is that it is capable of restoration, and indeed of a restoration that makes it somehow more magnificent because it has been ruined” (Willard 2012b, 63). Like all house refurbishing, it always costs more than you can imagine and

takes longer than you would like. However, in the end, it is always worth the blood, sweat and tears it took for the renovation to occur.

To the glory of the triune God, may we learn to embrace the manifold ways that God has designed human life to reflect the wonder and glory of the God who is eternally one and three. (Ware 2005, 105)

Holy Renovators, be glorified as You continue this project of human restoration.

APPENDICES

Appendix One – Curriculum Overview

Table 13: Curriculum Overview

	Objective(s)	Content	Homework
Lesson One (Do a self-eval. before class)	Examine their life to identify and compile a list of hurts they are currently aware of in their lives	Overview of the structures of healing: Wounds, False Beliefs, Emotional Upheaval, Dysfunctional Behaviour, Life Situation (Wardle 2001, 137)	Start developing a wound chart listing hurts (Ages 0-9, 10-19, 20-29, 30-39, 40-49) Journal entry
Lesson Two	Recognize and categorize their emotions related to these wounds Explain the Structures of Healing chart	Work through a wound together, identify different stages of a wound using the structures of healing	Pick a wound from their wound chart, process that wound with the structures of healing chart (false beliefs, emotions, dysfunctional behaviours) Journal Entry
Lesson Three	Present a hurt to Jesus for healing in a safe place	Review Homework, Work through the victory side of structures of healing: Healing and wholeness, truth and acceptance, comfort and peace, empowered living, life situation (Wardle 2001, 140).	Take last week's wound homework and work it through the victory side of the structures of healing. Journal Entry

	Objective(s)	Content	Homework
Lesson Four	Write a lament to God with the help of the Holy Spirit to help process the pain of a wound	Learn about emotions, study some of Jesus' emotions, Look at Laments in the book of Psalms	Take one of your wounds, write a lament about it
Lesson Five (Do a self-eval. after this lesson)	*Start to identify lies they have believed about themselves and recognize what dysfunctional behaviours they have been using to deal with pain in their lives *Compile a list of lies they have believed about themselves and create a list of truths of who they are in Jesus Christ	Share their lament, Dealing with lies about ourselves – countering those with God's truth about us. Dysfunctional behaviours: Performance Trap, Approval Addiction, The Blame Game, The Shame Trap (Wardle 2001, 180).	Go through the list of lies. Write down lies that you have been learning that you have believed about yourself. Then, counter those lies with who God says you are. Journal Entry Write a Narrative for next week.

The curriculum included stories and information from these two books:

Boyd, Gregory A. 2004. *Seeing is Believing: Experiencing Jesus Through Imaginative Prayer*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Wardle, Terry. 2001. *Healing Care, Healing Prayer: Helping the Broken Find Wholeness in Christ*. Abilene, TX: Leafwood.

Appendix Two – Group Guidelines for Sharing

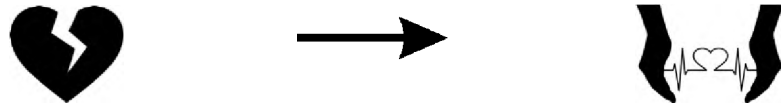
Start each class by reading these guidelines:

As we practice this spiritual exercise together, we are becoming more like Christ as we give Him our hurts to be healed. In order to do this effectively during our group discussions, we agree to the following guidelines as we share our stories:

1. **Confidentiality:** What is shared in this room stays in this room. This helps us to trust each other and create a healthy environment to share.
2. **Work on Self:** We are here to improve our relationship with God, not to improve other people. We share our own experiences, insights, and feelings – knowing that what works for one person may not work for another.
3. **We Offer Feedback Respectfully:**
Feedback is NOT: giving advice, moralizing, telling long stories, or shaming.
Feedback IS: sharing related emotions (“I feel sad about hearing your story” or “That makes me angry/happy too”), offering support – “How can I best support you?” or “You are more than the emotions you are feeling right now.”
4. **Sharing is a choice:** No one is expected to share. You share when and if you want to share.
5. **Equality:** We carefully treat all members equally so everyone feels included.
6. **Limit Sharing:** We allow time for everyone to speak by limiting our feedback to a few minutes per person.
7. **Listen Carefully:** We support those talking through eye contact, posture and feedback. We avoid interrupting people, asking many questions, and “cross-talk” (dialogues between two people).

(Guidelines based on Rudner 2022, Interview)

Appendix Three – Participant Information Form



Destination Abundant Life: The Process of Leaving Hurting to Find Healing

To be human is to have faced pain in life. Life wounds can cause us to believe lies about ourselves and experience erratic emotions. People often use dysfunctional behaviours to contend with the pain from these wounds (Wardle 2001, 137). As a person is taught the spiritual disciplines of examining heart wounds, confronting the lies they believe about themselves, and identifying their emotions and dysfunctional behaviours employed, they see the need for healing. Five lessons will be taught on the process of abandoning hurting for healing to see how applying these truths to their lives will produce God's healing. As the Holy Spirit interacts with the participants' lives through the material taught, healing is anticipated holistically in each person's life: spiritually, emotionally, mentally, and physically. This curriculum is not a counselling course; I am not a counsellor. Instead, this is an in-depth discipleship course. It is a spiritual formation exercise designed to help us grow deeper in our relationship with God by recognizing and taking to Jesus our hurts that need healing. With healing, we are enabled to love God and others as a fuller experience of the abundant life that Jesus promised us (Jn 10:10).

Objectives - the lessons will teach people to:

- Examine their life to identify and compile an initial list of wounds in their lives
- Recognize and categorize their emotions related to this hurt
- Explain the Structures of Healing chart (taught in class)
- Start to identify lies they have believed about themselves and recognize which dysfunctional behaviours they have been using to deal with pain
- Present their hurts to Jesus in a safe place to start the process of healing
- Write a lament to God with the help of the Holy Spirit to process the pain of a wound
- Compile of list of lies they have believed and create a list of truths of who they are in Jesus Christ

It is also a research project:

* You are invited to join this ministry class, taught in a research project. Part of the research means that Beth Fuller will write a research report about changes in people's lives as they are taught about this healing process.

* Each participant's name will remain confidential in the final report, and Beth must follow strict ethical guidelines as she teaches and writes about the ministry project.

* Each person will sign a consent form.

* Each person will decide whether they permit Beth to write about them anonymously.

* Each participant will receive a copy of the research report.



The Action Research Question to be answered:

In what ways do people begin to experience life change spiritually, emotionally, mentally, and physically as they study this curriculum and God



Small Group Details

- Small group sessions – only 6-8 people (not more than 10)
- A total time commitment of six weeks, meeting once a week.
- Beth will teach five sessions. Each session would be one and a half hours long and have some homework – probably thirty minutes to an hour each week. (The task could be done during a devotional time during the week).
- The sixth session is an exploration of growth. Together as a group, we will express in what ways we have seen growth in our life over the past five sessions. This session will be recorded as data collection.
- Estimated dates – September 20 – October 25, 2022.
- The group will decide the day and time to meet each week and the location to share personal stories

Participant Tasks and More Information about the Course

- Homework is optional but strongly encouraged (half to one hour per week)
- Complete an evaluation form before the first class and after the fifth class
- Write one journal entry per week
- The participant will use the evaluation forms and journals to help them write a short narrative about how their life has changed due to the interaction with the Holy Spirit and the applied materials from these courses.
- The researcher will make copies of the evaluations, journals, and narratives to cite stories anonymously. These documents will be analyzed to look for themes in growth. One year after the class has been taught, all paper data will be shredded, and any digital copies or recordings will be permanently deleted. (Participants may keep their original documents.)
- The results of this research will be written in two papers: A written research report and a chapter included in a portfolio for a doctorate. The portfolio will be readable as part of Tyndale University's Library.

Potential Benefits and Risks of taking this course:

*Potential Benefits: growing in your relationship with God, learning a process for dealing with hurts, learning how to express emotions, and finding healing in Christ.

*Potential Risks: Working with hurts may bring up issues that need further counselling from a qualified counsellor and may bring up uncomfortable emotions.

Interested in joining this research project? Contact Beth Fuller at 520-331-7523 or email beth_fuller@sil.org

Appendix Four – Consent Form for Research

Ministry Action Research Project – The Process of Leaving Hurting to Find Healing – 20 September - October 25, 2022

Name, Position, and Address of Researcher:

Elizabeth Fuller, Student of Tyndale University 1536 W. Ruth St., Tucson, AZ 85705 520-331-7523, beth_fuller@sil.org

1. I have read and understood the information form for the “Leaving Hurting for Healing” research project and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I may continue to ask questions through the study and beyond.
2. I understand that my participation in this research project is voluntary.
3. I choose to take part in this research project.
4. I give my permission for the sixth lesson to be recorded to collect data.
5. I agree with the use of anonymized quotes in publications. (Anonymize means to remove details that are identifiable to a person.)
6. I give permission for two outside consultants to analyze my anonymous data.

Please Initial:

Name of Participant Date Signature

Email address to send a copy of the research report: _____

Name of Researcher Date Signature

Your legal rights are not waived when you participate in this project. This research project has received approval from the Research Ethics Board of Tyndale University. For more information about a research participant’s rights, please contact Mark Chapman at mchapman@tyndale.ca or Tyndale’s Ethics Board at reb@tyndale.ca

This form is based on a document found at: <https://www.sampleforms.com/research-consent-form-sample.html>
- accessed 4 June 2022.

Appendix Five – Self-Evaluation Form

Self-evaluation Form – From Hurting to Healing (The same form given pre-lesson one and post-lesson five – the feelings wheel and definition of terms are also given. When printed to give to participants, this form was two pages long.)

Do you feel that difficult circumstances from your past have affected your life today? How or in what ways have difficult circumstances affected you? (A difficult circumstance can be anything that has caused you pain in life.)

Emotions: In the past week, what emotions can you remember feeling? (Write down as many as you can think of, and use the feelings wheel if needed.)

Based on the emotions you wrote down, would you say that it is easy or hard for you to know what you are feeling? Why do you think it is easy or hard for you to recognize your emotions?

Compare your spiritual life to an oak tree. Are you:

- An acorn just planted (new Christian)
- A sapling putting out branches (growing Christian for a few years)
- A young tree with more branches starting to bear acorns (growing for more than ten years)
- A mature tree with many branches and a full crop of acorns (you continue to grow in relationship with God and help others to grow in their relationship with God).

Discuss why you feel you are at the level you chose.

Do the hurts from your past affect who you are as a person today? Why or why not?

When someone hurts you, does that hurt affect you mentally? If you answered yes, also write down how you think it affects you.

What is happening with your body physically currently? (Sleeping patterns, eating habits, exercise - describe your general physical state right now.)

Appendix Six – Journal Entry Form

Journal Entry Form – From Hurting to Healing – Do one weekly form, lessons one - five. Date: _____ (When printed to give to participants, this form was two pages long.)

*I found this topic/idea interesting from our study this week:

*Emotionally – this is what is happening in my emotions as I study this week’s lesson (if nothing, record that):

*Mentally – as I studied this week, here is what I was aware of happening mentally (if nothing, record that).

*Spiritually – as I am studying, here is what I sense is happening spiritually (if nothing, record that).

*Physically – as I studied this week, this is what I noticed happening physically (if nothing, record that):

Appendix Seven – Narrative Form

Narrative Form – From Hurting to Healing – Given after class five, complete and bring to class six. (When printed to give to participants, this form was three pages long.)

In what ways have you started to see growth emerging in your life spiritually, emotionally, mentally, and physically as you have studied this course? (If there is nothing in an area, state that. You can use the definitions sheet and the feelings wheel if you desire.)

Spiritually:

Mentally:

Emotionally:

Physically:

Is there anything else you would like to report after taking these classes?

Appendix Eight – Definition of Terms

You will write about how your learning affects you spiritually, mentally, physically and emotionally. Here are some definitions of those categories to help you. Also, you may find that you have a word like peace that would fit into multiple categories. For example, **Emotionally** – peace may mean you have a calmness in your emotions. **Mentally** – you may feel peace as the absence of strife in your thoughts. **Physically** – you may feel at peace in your physical body because your muscles are relaxed and not tense. **Spiritually** – you may feel at peace as you trust in God, even amid a chaotic situation. Please choose the area where you feel peace the most and put it into that category.

***Emotionally** – What are you feeling? Why are you feeling that way? – Emotion definition:

“1 A: a conscious mental reaction (such as anger or fear) subjectively experienced as strong feeling...and typically accompanied by physiological and behavioural changes in the body

B: a state of feeling

C: the affective aspect of consciousness: feeling” (Merriam-Webster, s.v. “Emotion,” accessed on Sept. 2, 2022, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/emotion>).

- Use the Feelings Wheel (located in the packet of papers given to you) to help you identify what emotions you are feeling.

***Mentally** – What is the state of your mind? Mental definition:

“1: in the mind or 2: with regard to the mind or its capacity” (Merriam-Webster, s.v. “Mental,” accessed on Sept. 2, 2022, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/mental>).

Some questions that might help you to consider what is happening mentally:

- What are you thinking about?
- Report what your mind is processing as you are learning in these lessons.
- Describe the state of your mind.

***Physically** – What is happening with your body? Physical definition:

“1: in a physical manner or 2: in respect to the body” (Merriam-Webster, s.v. “Physical,” accessed on Sept. 2, 2022, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/physical>).

Some questions to help you ascertain how you are feeling physically:

- How does my body feel? What is my body telling me?
- What do I notice about my body? (tired or rested, agitated or peaceful, how am I - eating, sleeping, exercising?)

***Spiritually** – Spiritual growth is the process of becoming more like Jesus. The Holy Spirit continually transforms us to be more like Jesus in all areas of our lives (Rom 8). Christianity is a relationship with God. As we journey through relationships in life, we learn how to love God and others. We will be known by what fruit grows in our lives, and that fruit should be: “love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Gal. 5:22-23). We aim to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet 3:18). To grow spiritually, we must spend time with God in prayer, read and study the Bible, and be a part of a community of faith.

Some questions to help you ascertain how you are doing spiritually:

- If my family describes my behaviour, how would they describe it?
- How am I currently becoming more like Jesus? (Or, how do I need to become more like Jesus?)
- What area of my spiritual life is God presently working on?

Appendix Nine – Wardle’s Structures of Healing

The following are descriptions of the healing terminology used in the lessons.

- “Life Situation” – any circumstance that wounds or triggers a reaction.
- “Dysfunctional Behaviour” – any behaviour employed to deal with the wound’s pain. Generally, it is a negative behaviour that causes more harm than good to the person.
- “Emotional Upheaval” – emotions out of control due to the pain or triggering of a wound.
- “False Beliefs” – lies we believe about ourselves birthed by and rooted in our wounds.
- “Deep Wounds” – painful and traumatic situations experienced in life.
- “Healing and Wholeness” – what a person experiences as Christ is healing a wound.
- “Truth and Acceptance” – God's Word applied to our lives helps combat false beliefs.
- “Comfort and Peace” – What we experience in our emotions as Christ heals, and we are rooted in the truth of God's Word.
- “Empowered Living” – When Christ heals us, we no longer squander our strength dealing with the pain of our wounds. We are set free to live life boldly, looking out into the world to see where we may minister rather than looking inward to tend to our wounds.

Based on Wardle’s Structures of Healing (Wardle 2001, 137, 140).

**Appendix Ten – Analysis of Data Physical,
Mental, and Spiritual Dimensions**

Table 14: Analysis of Physical Dimension Data

	Physical Data from Research Project	Growth Level
Orange	Orange began the project crying, feeling sick, and over-eating. She moved on to more energy and better control of eating. She concluded tearful and had less energy when alone.	Limited Growth
Pink	Pink began stressed out with introspection and then had no growth. Continued with no growth from the lessons.	No Growth
Yellow	Yellow began with nothing happening physically. She continued with no physical changes and ended with having energy because she was not lost in her head.	Initial Growth
Green	Green began with getting shingles. She continued yelling at family members and slamming down the phone. She started to do some work. Despite the work she did, she feels she is in trouble. She found that she does not shake as much at the end.	Initial Growth
Blue	Blue began in a state of heightened awareness. She continued by being tired and having no changes. She ended with perceiving no physical changes due to this study.	No Growth

Table 15: Analysis of Mental Dimension Data

	Mental Data from Research Project	Growth Level
Orange	Orange commenced by not dealing with her emotions and acting like all was well. She began to be more in tune with her thoughts and processing wounds. She desired to not focus on the negative and rejoice with the positive. She ended up less depressed and lonely. She spent time seeing the truths of God about her.	Good Growth
Pink	Pink had nothing to report at the beginning and middle of the project. Ultimately, she reported recognizing perfectionism, fear of rejection, and fear of punishment from God.	Initial Growth
Yellow	Yellow commenced by walking with God and being in His Word. She moved to being aware of what was happening in her mind and learning to capture her thoughts. She got tired mentally and gave in to the negative thoughts. She reported hope from the lesson and chose to allow herself to listen to the Holy Spirit. She realized that she could have victory in Christ.	Good Growth
Green	Green reported remembering being molested as a child and thought her mother did not believe her. She proceeded to feel she was not changed when she became a Christian and felt overwhelmed by judgment. She identified with Psalm 13, feeling forgotten by God. She felt she did not have to struggle as much with her actions.	Initial Growth
Blue	Blue commenced by remembering there were family members with trauma who needed healing. She thought about her difficult past experiences and how her life is different now. This project helped her to continue her goal of being a learner. She reaffirmed God's truths in her mind, and that brought a feeling of well-being.	Good Growth

Table 16: Analysis of Spiritual Dimension Data

Spiritual Data from Research Project		Growth Level
Orange	Orange started the project by realizing God's grace in her life. She moved to realize that she had not allowed God to love her, and she became open to His love. She felt the Holy Spirit guiding her and started to gain victory over deep wounds, and healing was happening.	Good Growth
Pink	Pink started with her mind on overload and sticking close to God. She moved to asking God questions and listening for answers. Despite the distractions, she focused on God to hear Him and what He was teaching her amid everything.	Good Growth
Yellow	Yellow started with the desire to know God better. She had a tug-of-war with God. God won. She decided to allow God to control her rather than the negative voices in her head. She ended by hearing the Holy Spirit above the critical voices and focusing on what she has rather than what she does not have.	Good Growth
Green	Green started by realizing how much she relies on the Lord to help her through everything in life. She moved to grow dependent on Him even though she felt she was spiritually starving. She ended by saying she is growing closer to her Heavenly Father.	Good Growth
Blue	Blue started by realizing she needed to pray more for hurting people around her. She moved to reminding herself that God is greater than anything, even hurtful things. She saw evidence of her cooperation with God in sanctification. She grew in her appreciation of the Psalms. She saw evidence of the truth that God is at work in the sanctification process.	Good Growth

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