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Tyndale University

Developing One's Personal Prayer Life: An Essential Element for Spiritual Formation in the Fundamental Evangelical Community

A Project Portfolio

submitted in partial fulfillment

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Doctor of Ministry

Tyndale University

by

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Toronto, Canada

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ABSTRACT

In this Doctor of Ministry Research Portfolio, the author explored spiritual formation, being formed into the image of Christ, from three perspectives: her spiritual autobiography, instructional model of spiritual formation, and action research project. One of the major themes that surfaced in the author's spiritual autobiography (Chapter II: Getting to Know God—A Lifelong Process) was how God used various aspects of instruction to lead her to a saving faith in the Lord as well as to aid in forming her spiritually. Drawing from this, she developed her model of spiritual formation as an instructional one. Based on the ongoing work of God and the directive of the Great Commission to make and teach disciples, this model (Chapter III: Making Disciples—An Instructional Model of Spiritual Formation) examined instructional considerations and included applications for formal worship and personal and public practices. The third perspective of spiritual formation in this portfolio involved an action research project that used the author's instructional model and another theme that emanated from her spiritual biography, prayer. This action research project took the form of an online prayer workshop (Chapter IV: An Online Personal Prayer Workshop Designed for Vulnerable Evangelicals) and was designed to explore various aspects of prayer, while also considering the impact of one's personality type and spiritual temperaments. While participants reported an enhanced prayer life and a deeper relationship with God, recommended modifications to the model are noted in Chapter V. Overall, this workshop and portfolio both demonstrate that instruction can be an effective means to foster spiritual formation.

DEDICATION

This research portfolio is dedicated to the Lord Jesus Christ for his steadfast love and commitment to my good for his glory. This journey from the beginning to the end has been one wild ride. Without you, Lord, it would have never come to pass. Praise your holy name, Lord Jesus.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research portfolio would not have been possible without the encouragement and support of some special individuals.

First, I want to thank my professors and members of my cohort. Each of you have profoundly impacted my life and growth in the Lord. A special acknowledgment to Dr. Mark Chapman who kept encouraging me to complete what I had started. I include my advisor, Dr. Bill Thornton, here as well. He uncannily offered support and space with impeccable timing along with his expert advice and guidance, helping to make this portfolio possible.

Although they remain unnamed, I want to thank the women who volunteered to participate in the Personal Prayer Workshop. What a special group of ladies you are. You all had busy schedules, yet you stepped up to help make the project successful. Your participation showed your love for the Lord and your desire to grow in him. Each one of you is such a blessing to me.

I also want to thank my sister and her husband, Judy and Joe Williams, who gave me a place and space to complete this portfolio. I love you both and appreciate all the support you offered. It means more to me than you know.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ESV: English Standard Version
HIPAA: Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act
IFCA: Independent Fundamental Churches of America
MBTI: Myers-Briggs Type Indicator
NASB: New American Standard Bible (1995)
YMCA: Young Men's Christian Association

CHAPTER I:

INTRODUCING KEY CONSIDERATIONS

> A lawyer asked Jesus a question to test him:
> "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And He said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets." (Matt. 22:36–40)

In one sense, this portfolio is a culmination of three years' work on a Doctor of Ministry degree in Spiritual Formation from Tyndale Seminary, but truly it is but one more step in my personal spiritual growth, drawing me closer to God, which overflows into loving others more deeply. It equally serves as a record of the progress in my own spiritual life as well as showcases my understanding of the process of spiritual formation. This portfolio has given me an opportunity to apply my understanding of the process of spiritual formation through a discipleship ministry with a focus on the two great commandments of loving God and others (Matt. 22:36–40; all biblical quotations are from the New American Standard Version unless otherwise noted). One of the most encouraging outcomes of my work at Tyndale Seminary has been tracing some major themes that are evident throughout this portfolio, testifying to the fact that God uses so many things in my life to form me into the image of Christ and then to use them in and through me to serve others and ultimately to glorify God himself.

The Portfolio's Context Clarified

Born from my personal story is the appreciation and burden to minister to those within the Fundamental Evangelical community. However, because the terms Evangelical and Evangelicalism are used in many ways in today's context, it is necessary to describe in more detail the specific community of believers that provides the context of this portfolio. Any attempt to define Evangelicalism today is a difficult task but defining it from a historical perspective provides a starting point. For example, Philip Janowsky (1994, 12–13; author's emphasis) identified three essentials found in historical Evangelicalism: "Jesus Christ is very God and very man," "justification is solely by faith in the finished work of Christ," *Sola Fide*, and "the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments . . . [are] the *final* authority on all matters of faith and practice," *Sola Scriptura.* Bebbington (2005, 20) agreed with Janowsky and further identified the hallmarks of the Evangelical Alliance in 1846 as including "a stress on the Scriptures as the source of faith, conversions as its beginning, redemption as its object and activity as its consequence." In addition, the Fundamentalists of the IFCA (Independent Fundamental Churches of America) International also help to distinguish the community I serve. They adhere to separation from all forms of apostasy and groups that are contrary to faith, and they espouse personal separation from worldliness as well (Montoya 2014, 36). Furthermore, they hold to the cessation of the sign gifts, and they hold to a dispensational interpretation of scripture (Montoya 2014, 37).

For the sake of clarity and simplicity, I will adopt Janowsky's (1994, 12-13) description of historical Evangelicalism and incorporate the Fundamental

distinctives mentioned above. So, while the contents of this portfolio are appropriate for all believers, the point here is to present content that works within the historical, Fundamental Evangelical framework in a manner that respects and honours its theology, convictions, and heritage.

My church experience has largely been within the context of Fundamental churches. These churches, although many were not official members of the IFCA, espoused their Fundamental beliefs. It is within these churches that I have found loving care, fellowship, and encouragement to grow and to live a godly life. These churches held to a qualified male leadership, yet women were appreciated, respected, and encouraged to use their giftedness in all other areas except church leadership. I was openly sought after and recruited to teach in Christian schools and in other children's ministries, while other women were encouraged to minister in women's ministries, hospitality, and other parachurch ministries. The elder's wives were mature Christians, and many served as mentors to younger women.

The pastors and elders were generally humble men who were committed to following and teaching the scriptures. Based on several conversations I have had with those outside the church or occasional attendees, there was the impression that the churches I attended were legalistic in certain aspects. However, looking at it from the inside out, the issue seemed to be more a matter of perspective. From without, some viewed these churches as restrictive. From within the church, the leadership was committed to calling believers to live a godly and holy life before God and others, to be examples of the faith, and to

invite others to the same. They had no problem with saying any specific path was not a good path, based on their knowledge of the Bible, and they could cite pertinent verses to support their stance. Yet, they were equally open to helping anyone who desired to grow in the Lord.

What most impressed me about the churches I attended was that both the leadership and many of the lay people knew the Bible. Their Bibles were often well worn and marked up from their studies. Many were also prayer warriors. I never had to struggle alone in these churches because I knew many were praying for me. I am deeply appreciative for their ministry in my life and indebted to them for the depth of my spiritual life today.

One concern with spiritual formation from the perspective of my church communities is the potential of involving the mystical in its practices. This would bring about serious concern from the church leaders and more mature members of the church. This is a major concern that necessitates the following clarification that only spiritual formation practices that honours the teaching and convictions of Fundamental Evangelical churches will be addressed in this portfolio.

A related issue for Fundamental Evangelicals is the concern that spiritual disciplines could engender works of righteousness or a way to earn merit with God. This is no light issue. The truth is that anything can become works of righteousness, depending on the attitude of the one doing the action. The point of any spiritual discipline should be to create space for God in one's life; it is a means to an end. Dallas Willard (2009, 158-159) spoke of disciplines more as concepts, such as frugality, chastity, sacrifice, study, worship, prayer, and

fellowship. This approach to disciplines may be one that can fit well within the Fundamental Evangelical framework. The goal is spiritual formation rather than a model or system of specific activities. In short, it is a "life of fully formed, fully flourishing Christian character" (Wright 2010, 32).

One way to approach spiritual formation in the Fundamental Evangelical community is through discipleship. It is both a biblical term and mandated by the Lord before his ascension (Matt. 28:19–20). Discipleship is a means to engender spiritual formation in believers, and it makes sense since the impetus of discipleship is the "radical commitment to the person of Jesus" (Boa 2001, 382). Such radical commitment would necessitate "personal dedication, self-denial, and the obedience of the Cross" (Boa 2001, 382). Both discipleship and instruction with the goal of spiritual formation, specifically in the area of prayer, are themes that run throughout this portfolio.

The Portfolio's Content Outlined

This research portfolio consists of three components: my spiritual autobiography, my philosophy of prayer as a means of spiritual growth, and a field research project. My spiritual autobiography (Chapter II: Getting to Know God—A Lifelong Process) traces the development of my relationship with the Lord. It tells my story of being drawn to an irresistible, mysterious, immanent yet transcendent God and my subsequent spiritual walk with him. It is a story that traces my journey from insignificance and purposelessness to finding significance and purpose in the Lord through an ongoing and growing faith and relationship with him as I become more conformed to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29).

Although it might not be as readily evidenced in my story because of its personal nature, prayer has been an important and overarching part of my formation. Likewise, discipleship is an important part of my own spiritual walk, manifesting itself most prominently in the mentoring from my youth pastor, formal instruction at Detroit Bible College, and modeling and support from my church family. It is also evident in my burden to see others follow the Lord, and it has shaped how I interact with people in general.

Drawing from the Great Commission to make and teach disciples (Matt. 28:19) and my own passion for believers to have a healthy prayer life, my philosophy of spiritual formation for this project focuses on developing the prayer life of believers (Chapter III: Making Disciples—An Instructional Model of Spiritual Formation). It offers principles from the perspective of both the learner and the instructor. This framework includes the foundational and ongoing work of God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—in the lives of believers. Teaching is a major component in spiritual formation (Matt. 28:20) for both knowing God and in understanding how one should engage his or her world. This instruction in my own life took on many different forms from nature, everyday experiences, fellow believers, books, and even to the more formal instruction of Bible college and seminary. Instruction, when done well, creates space to make room and time for God. It is important, therefore, to clarify that teaching or its related word, instruction, is not a mere imparting of information with the goal of having the believer accumulate merely more facts. It is given with the intent of the individual

to engage the heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30) and is done in concert with the working of the Holy Spirit.

Certainly, God can and does use anything he desires to grab an individual's attention to bring him or her either into a relationship with him or to deepen it. God's ongoing work in the life of believers is relational and invites them to respond to him through formal worship, personal prayer, and a life of service. Of those, personal prayer has been especially meaningful to me, but it has also been a struggle for many Christians. Thus, it seemed like a fitting subject to address for my action research field project (Chapter IV: An Online Personal Prayer Workshop Designed for Vulnerable Evangelicals). This research project focuses on prayer as an avenue to enrich one's relationship to God while considering the uniqueness of the individual. It uses an online, instructional format, consisting of eight modules, that invites the participants to engage with the material as they apply it to their personal prayer life. Elements of the instruction provided for participant interaction, which permitted support and encouragement from the others. All three participants who completed the course found it to be beneficial and reported that their prayer life and relationship with God had improved as a result.

It should be noted that working within a Fundamental Evangelical context, certain aspects of spiritual formation will be overlooked and only those aspects that have a biblical basis as its foundation are considered. For example, meditation will be limited to the type that is described in the Bible. Extra-biblical forms such as those found in New Age meditation will be excluded. The

scriptures do teach a form of contemplative prayer, but clearly it is distinct and in contrast "to a distorted, truncated view evident in New Age or eastern pantheism or panentheism, particularly as they are reflected back into ancient Platonic, Neo-Platonic, and Origenic views of contemplation" (Coe 2014, 141). In contrast, Coe (2014, 150-151; source's italics) argued that "true, biblical contemplative prayer is simply an appropriate obedience or response to the Indwelling Spirit, which is reflected in Paul's prayers for us *to open more deeply to and attend* to the Person and work of the Spirit," citing Ephesians 3:14-19 as an example. It is this type of contemplative prayer that is addressed in this portfolio.

A second, broader but related issue is mysticism. It is a broad topic and difficult to define. Generally, however, the terms mysticism, mystical, and mystics raise concerns for Fundamental Evangelicals. Granted, there are instances of mysticism found in the Bible, such as the Word becoming flesh (John 1:14), imagery like the vine and branches (John 15), Christ's prayer for union (John 17), or Paul's rapture into the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:1–4; Elwell 2001, 807). However, extra biblical experiences are met with suspicion. Therefore, for the purposes of this portfolio, spiritual practices that are generally considered to include extra biblical mystical aspects are not considered.

Scripture principally has been taken from the New American Standard Bible® (NASB), updated 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Scripture quotations marked English Standard Version (ESV) are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles.

Key Terms Defined

Given the philosophical nature of my prayer model and the complexity of my field research project, definition of some key terms may be beneficial.

Spiritual Formation

Howard (2008, 23) described spiritual formation as "all attempts, means, instructions, and disciplines intended towards deepening faith and furtherance of spiritual growth," yet making it clear that spiritual growth is to be toward Christlikeness (Howard 2008, 21). Boa (2001, 515) gave a simpler definition: "The grace-driven developmental process in which the soul grows in conformity to the image of Christ." While Howard's focus was on the efforts intended to develop spiritual formation, Boa emphasized God's work of grace to grow believers into the likeness of Christ. A key Bible verse on formation is Galatians 4:19: "My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you." Louw and Nida (1996, 584) states that formed in this sense means "to form the nature of," in this sense "until Christ's nature is formed in you." Spiritual formation, then, is the ongoing development of a closer, deeper, and more committed relationship with God wherein the nature of a person is increasingly conformed to the image of Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit, who then lives it out in the world. Even so, some Fundamentalist Evangelicals are somewhat suspicious of the term spiritual formation, being unclear as to its meaning. More familiar for Fundamental Evangelicals would be terms such as growing in Christ, sanctification, and spiritual growth. Whichever term is used, it happens when God is at work in the believer to test (Rom. 5:1–5) and to form him

or her into Christ's image. In other words, that it is God at work in believers' lives yet acknowledging that believers are to be actively engaged in the process so they can walk in a manner worthy of the Lord (Eph. 4:1), to please him by bearing fruit through good works and increasing in the knowledge of God (Col. 1:10). Spiritual formation, in this sense, is growing in Christ or working towards spiritual maturity.

Character Formation

Another term, character formation, focuses on human agency and the heart or soul of a person. Yet, Boa (2001, 299) identified character development as the inward work of the Holy Spirit. From a human perspective, it is about how individuals choose to act and the choices they make, which can reveal what they hold most dearly and what things are more important to them than being like Christ (Willard 2009, 265). From God's perspective, the Bible reveals that character will be formed through testing (Rom. 5:4; 2 Cor. 8:2). With a mature and healthy character formation, a person can choose to act righteously and responsibly in this world. Character formation guides one's choices in ways that are consistent with godly living. This aids in spiritual formation as another means of providing space and direction for spiritual formation. For example, those with mature character formation can choose a disciplined life and spend time in prayer and Bible reading, even when weary. In that sense, godly character formation helps individuals to walk in a good and pleasing manner. Additionally, character formation, because it can be observed by others, becomes an outward witness to the world of the spiritual transformation within.

Spirituality

Howard (2008, 472) defined spirituality as "the relationship with God as lived in practice, as dynamics are formulated within a given approach to lived relationship, and as the lived practice and dynamics are explored through formal study." His definition shows the complexity of spirituality. Additionally, D. A. Carson (2011, 378) made an important clarifying statement: "It is simply not possible to increase one's spirituality without possessing the Holy Spirit and submitting to his transforming instruction and power." Spirituality is a product of God's transforming work and power in a Christian's life. Although this term is developed more in Chapter III, Christian spirituality can be defined as life lived in and through the Spirit, which develops and matures as one's relationship with God grows and moves the believer in his or her ever-growing walk of faith to join God in his kingdom purpose to glorify and enjoy him forever. This spirituality includes all the actions, thoughts, attitudes, and practices that live out or proclaim the Gospel.

Discipleship

A key component of my spiritual formation model is discipleship, so it is important to define it and explain the relationship. Boa (2001, 377) described discipleship as a process that incorporates the dynamics of exposing, equipping, and encouraging or exhorting. These dynamics "relate not only to knowing (teaching) and doing (training) but also to being (character)" (Boa 2001, 377). J. Dwight Pentecost (1996, 10) took a more of a relational perspective, stating that it was about "a man's relationship to Jesus Christ as his Teacher, his Master, and his

Lord… a relationship based on the knowledge of the person of Christ, a love for the person of Christ, submission to the person of Jesus Christ, and obedience to the commands of Jesus Christ." Although there are many more facets and nuances to discipleship, incorporating both facets mentioned above yields a workable definition for the purpose of this portfolio that gives both the dynamics and goal of discipleship. Thus, discipleship is an external process, principally through instruction in any of various forms, formally and informally, wherein space is made available for the disciple to respond and follow through on the truths of the Gospel and done with the goal of greater spiritual formation within the individual as he or she responds to the working of the Holy Spirit in his or her life. It is a vehicle for instruction and accompanied with support, encouragement, and invitation but empowered by God.

The terms spirituality, spiritual formation, and discipleship are closely related. Spirituality speaks to the Christian life that is lived according to one's relationship with God and submitting to the teaching of the Holy Spirit. The focus is on the relationship with God and obedience to him. Spiritual formation, however, focuses on the developmental processes that aid in deepening one's relationship with God. Discipleship is one of those developmental processes, namely instruction, with a focus on believers knowing God and following the teachings of Christ through the power of God.

Mentoring

According to Boa (2001, 439), mentoring is a type of discipleship where mentors "expose, equip, encourage, and exhort others in their walk with Christ."

It is a more formal and structured form of soul care that has a more pastoral or shepherding bent to it (Boa 2001, 439). The application of teaching is personalized and can include some sort of accountability, along with support and encouragement. Newton (2004, 96-97; italics in original) gave the following description of mentoring, stating that it "is a relational process between an older, more mature, more knowledgeable, *or* more skilled person and another person who learns in some intentional way." Thus, mentoring is a form of discipleship that emphasizes the relational component, accountability, and intentionality.

Intentionality

Spiritual formation does not just happen. God calls for Christians to be disciplined in their lives so that they may live lives pleasing to him. Freewill gives Christians choice wherein they can make good choices. When coupled with commitment, believers can become intentional in their lives and spiritual growth. This intentionality is another key component for those who want to be conformed to the image of Christ. Oswald Chambers (1874-1917) had an interesting take on intention, presenting it as a way of knowing. He stated that one "cannot teach another what is the will of God. A knowledge of the will of God comes only by insight into God through acting on the right intention" (Chambers 1936, sec. Intention and Insight). As to instruction, Chambers (1936, sec. Intention and Insight into Instruction) noted that "Studying our Lord's teaching will not profit us unless we intend to obey what we know is the immediate present duty." In other words, Chambers taught that Christians are to be intentional in their efforts to know God, and that intention should be to obey the will of God.

Intentionality in the form of a driving curiosity to know God and the importance of discipleship and prayer through instruction and mentors can be seen in the next chapter as I offer my spiritual autobiography, detailing my growing relationship with the Lord and his commitment and good work in me so that I might be "conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29). This learning was a huge influence on my personal development, both in a general sense and a spiritual one. In addition, although personal prayer is difficult to track in another's life, hopefully, readers can garner a sense of an ongoing life of prayer brought on by a growing relationship with God and difficult life circumstances. These two key thoughts come together in my spiritual autobiography, and they show up again in my philosophy of spiritual formation and my research project on personal prayer

CHAPTER II:

GETTING TO KNOW GOD—A LIFELONG PROCESS

One of my counseling mentors often reminded me that a person cannot take others further than he or she has gone himself or herself. If that is true of counseling, it is equally true, if not more so, regarding spiritual formation. The aim of writing my autobiography is specifically to explore my relationship with the Lord. The process included prayer, self-examination, and meditation, which are all practices conducive to spiritual formation, making this process an exercise of spiritual formation. However, if the process aided me in developing a deeper relationship with the Lord, then the product itself did so even more. My prayer is that readers will be as blessed in reading my autobiography as I was in the writing.

Tagging Along

> "For I know the plans that I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope … You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart." (Jer. 29:11-13)

Many may begin their story with their birth, but people are shaped even before that. Two unique people come together to create another unique human being, sharing their genes, DNA, and ancestral histories and more. Thus, my story begins with my parents, Wayne and Marie Kirkpatrick. Both had a strong work

ethic and were morally decent people, typical of the white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant background from which they came.

My mother was the youngest of her family, and as she tells it, she was her father's favourite, but he died before I was born and so did my mother's oldest sister, Cora. The middle sister, Nellie, had contracted polio and wore braces on her legs. She lived with my grandmother. I remember going with my mother to visit them on Sunday afternoons when I was young, but they both died shortly after I started school, so I did not know them that well. My mother's brother, Clarence, had twelve children, but they were all adopted out when his wife went to live in Dixmont State Hospital for some unknown psychiatric illness. Clarence was an alcoholic, and I only saw him on rare occasions when he would stop by to see my mother. The only family on my mother's side that would stay connected with my mother was my cousin Johnny and his wife, Violet, and their five children; yet that was only occasional.

My father's side was equally distant. My father's father died before I was born as well, so I did not know him. Dad also came from a family of four children. He had two sisters, Sarah and Grace, and a younger brother, Arthur. Both Sarah and Grace were widows, and their families were grown by the time I was born. Arthur and his family moved out to California, so I only saw him one time when his family came back to Pennsylvania for a visit. Sarah and Grace and their families lived further east, and I would see them perhaps once a year. My grandmother for some reason did not collect social security, so she depended exclusively on my father to take care of her, and that is how she came to live in

the little house adjacent to ours, which shared a common porch. Extended family existed, but there was so little interaction with them that I felt virtually no impact from them, except for Grandma, my father's mother.

My parents got off to a rough start with the deaths of their first three children: a boy, a girl, and another boy. The three of them became known as the babies. After this, my oldest sister, Jeannie, was born. Jeannie was three-years old when my mom and dad bought a farm outside Ellwood City, Pennsylvania, where my siblings and I grew up and where they both lived until their deaths. For three more years Jeannie would live as an only child. She was and is very personable and loves to talk. She is the only one in our family that had friends come over and hang around. As I listen to Jeannie tell stories of her childhood, they are quite different from mine. She tells stories of interactions with friends and neighbours and of fun times that just are foreign to my story. Jeannie is ten-years older than I am, and a lot must have happened in those ten years. She often describes herself as a mother to my brothers and me, but then she goes on to tell stories of her mothering my younger brother, but she never mentions incidents with my older brother or me. I did not experience her the way she saw herself, although I would say she is a very caring person. I saw her as a good big sister, but I really did not know her that well growing up. Six years after the birth of Jeannie, my next sister, Judy, was born.

With the birth of Judy, the family dysfunction begins to show itself in visible ways. In trying to unlock some of the secrets of the family, Jeannie shared that she remembers Dad telling my mother that she needed to stay home and take

care of us. I am not sure whether that was in reference to Jeannie and Judy or to my brothers and me. In either case, it seems that my mother did not stay home and Grandma, my dad's mother, became Judy's chief caregiver—so much so that Judy lived with her. With this came obvious favouritism from both my grandmother and my father. What Judy wanted Judy got. Since our house and my grandmother's house shared the same porch, it was not like I did not see Judy regularly. I saw her every day. We all ate lunch and supper together, and in the evening we would all gather in the living room and watch television together, but when it came time to go to bed, Judy and Grandma would go back to their house. Two years after the birth of Judy, my older brother Richard, or Dick, as we called him, was born and the dysfunction continued.

I would think that, as a farmer, my father would have been elated to have a son, but for some reason Dad and Dick did not get along. The two of them were distant at best, but there were some clashes between the two of them that left me afraid of my father. As a result, I worked very hard to stay out of trouble.

Although the details are sketchy, I did find that my parents were legally separated in January of 1949, when my brother was a year old. The details of what happened in the interim between the separation and my birth in December of that same year are unknown. I know that Jeannie stayed with Dad, and that was likely when Judy, who would have been three years old at the time, moved in with my grandmother. Dick was with my mother during the separation. I do not know how long the separation lasted, but I presume they got back together before I was

born. That completes the family, except for my younger brother, Greg, who was a year younger than me.

Greg was everyone's favourite. Even Dad would play with him and let him crawl up in his lap. I remember trying to grab some of the attention when Dad was playing with Greg, and time and time again, the play would stop as soon as I tried to join. It was not that Dad mistreated me. Greg and I would often accompany my father as he worked in the fields. As he drove the tractor, Greg would sit on one leg and I on the other. As we got older, we shifted to leaning on the fenders of the tractor. In our early years, Greg and I were inseparable, but still Greg was favoured, and I was a tag along. Even though Dick was not Dad's favourite, Dad would favour Dick over me, and I knew that I was at the bottom of the line when it came to my father's attention.

When it came to my mother, she was not as present in the lives of my siblings and me as my father and grandmother because she worked during the day. However, she seemed more drawn to Dick and me, perhaps because she saw we were the least favoured in Dad's eyes. As I grew older, I became somewhat attached to her. I would tag along with her whenever she invited me just so I could get away from the farm where I felt tolerated at best and because I was afraid of my father and did not think my grandmother liked me very much either. Even so, my mother never showed me affection that I could remember. I do not remember anyone in my family, showing anyone affection at all. The closest my family came to affection was pairing off as we watched television in the evenings. The typical pairing off was Judy with Grandma, Dick with Jeannie, Greg with

Dad, all on the couch together. Mom would sit on the matching easy chair, and she would allow me to squeeze in beside her. She never invited me to sit with her; I would always have to squeeze in or sit on the floor at her feet. Such were these early years where I lived life through the lens of an outsider looking in, tagging along, and observing.

Getting Acquainted with God

> I love those who love me; And those who diligently seek me will find me. (Prov. 8:17)

My life really began to change when I began school, and, as such, school had a huge impact on developing me as a person. Unique for that time, my parents had a choice as to which school my siblings and I could attend. Our farm, and even our farmhouse, straddled two different school districts, and because of this my parents could choose the school district my siblings and I would attend. The choice was easy for them; based simply on economics, they chose the district that had the lowest taxes, and thus my siblings and I attended the poorer country school rather than the city school that had more resources. I do not regret their choice because I am very appreciative of most of my teachers and classmates.

First grade was an adventure, and my world burgeoned. Rural Hill was a one-room school building that housed both the first and second grades for the community. The room was heated by a big coal furnace in the back of the room, and drinking water was obtained either from the well at recess or from the water jug inside the classroom. Outhouses provided the other necessary comforts of a long day at school. The first graders sat on the left side of the room, while the

second graders were on the right. A blackboard stretched across the front of the room and alphabet cards were displayed above the chalkboard. The area in front of the blackboard was a raised platform from which Mrs. Beatty, our teacher, taught. On the left side of the platform was an old upright piano to assist in our music time. Along the right side was a row of windows that faced the road. Here our artwork would be displayed, if it was of satisfactory quality, for passersby to enjoy.

There was ample time for socialization with morning and afternoon recesses. The playground was basically a mowed hayfield with swings and a slide. At times, we would also sit on the fence and watch the goats on the farm that butted against the school property, providing additional entertainment as friends would catch up with one another. At lunchtime, we would all sit at our desks and eat our lunches, which were brought from home, usually in lunch boxes, but a few of the poorer students only had sack lunches. Typically, my lunch consisted of half a baloney sandwich, a candy bar, and an apple or sometimes a banana. A thermos of chocolate milk rounded out my lunch. Occasionally the baloney was swapped out with chipped ham for variety. Once a week we had the option of buying lunches that were shipped in from the high school. That was a treat!

Mrs. Beatty loved and enjoyed children. She had a quiet demeanour and often had a smile on her face. She was kind and caring. I remember my oldest sister complaining one time about how she would make Jackie K. sit behind the piano as though she was trying to ostracize him and hide him away. Jackie was in my class, and apparently a few classes before me; he was mentally low

functioning and had some hygiene problems that could be distracting to other students. What my sister saw as ostracizing and mean, I saw as kind and thoughtful in a less than perfect situation. She was protecting Jackie from ridicule from other students while protecting other students from being grossed out by various behaviours. There was something deeper about Mrs. Beatty that I had not seen in any other adult. Although I could not have named it at the time, I believe she was a Christian. As was the custom at the time, the school day would begin with reading a portion of the Bible, reciting the Lord's Prayer, and saying the Pledge of Allegiance to the American flag. Reflecting back on that time, she just seemed too familiar with the Bible not to have been a Christian. At any rate, she provided me with my first experience with the Bible. Because of Mrs. Beatty, I was very open to the Bible and Christianity.

The best part of school, though, was learning. There was no greater fun than learning to read, write, and do arithmetic! These were the best games and topped even recess! I loved learning new things. With teaching two grades, Mrs. Beatty would first teach a lesson to the first graders and then assign a worksheet or other activity, and then she would teach the second graders their lesson, and so forth. I loved to quickly finish my worksheets so I could sit and listen to the second-grade lesson.

Second grade was almost as much fun. Mrs. Beatty was again my teacher, and I was able to continue learning and enjoying new experiences. School provided a place for me where I did not feel like an outsider. Here I could excel, I could participate, and I was very much a part of the class; I was on equal footing

with all the other students. School thus provided a place of belonging, purpose, and hope.

One day, when I was six years old, in first or second grade, out of the blue, my mother asked me if I would like to go see the movie The Ten Commandments directed by Cecil B. DeMille in 1956 with her. I had never been to the movies and was not sure what brought on this occasion, but I was up for the adventure. Thinking back on it, I find it curious that my mother just invited me and none of my brothers or sisters to go with us. What an awesome experience for a little girl who barely got off the farm to view on full screen the epic story of The Ten Commandments. This was my first exposure to the Bible as a story about God and his interaction with humankind. I took it all in. After it was over, my mother and I went home and went about life as usual. There was no discussion about it and no explanation. I was left on my own to process it all. It was obvious to me that there was some important stuff in the movie, but I did not know what to do with all of it, so I tucked it away. My takeaways from that movie were that God is real, he is powerful, and he is involved in the lives of people. The movie left me wondering what this meant for me and whether or not God was interested in me at all, even if not like the Israelites. I wondered about whether or not God still actively worked today and, if so, what that might look like. These were some of the things that I would keep in mind as I continued to observe life happening around me.

This movie served as my first real Bible education. I came away from it with an understanding that the Israelites were God's chosen people; the movie also formed my picture of God, which continues to this day. In the movie, God

appeared as a powerful voice with no body. God to me, in my mind's eye, was a formless, non-corporeal being who is powerful and involved in his creation.

Third grade brought more new experiences. I attended a different one-room school building, which housed the third and fourth graders, still with a coal stove and no indoor plumbing. It was a much plainer room. There was no front platform and no piano. The windows did not face the road, so artwork was not as readily displayed. My older brother had loved Mrs. Johnston, the teacher, but I did not find her to be as personable as Mrs. Beatty, yet she was not unkind. She was more about teaching than enjoying the students. I also felt like I was walking in my brother's shadow and not my own person with her. Still, there were some milestones during that time. The class learned to write cursive and were issued pens to use in penmanship exercises, a sure sign we students were maturing.

Mrs. Johnston invited us students to explore more of the world and took the class on our first field trip, a tour of the Heinz 57 pickle plant in Pittsburgh about sixty-five kilometers away. It was interesting, but the best part of the trip was my first exposure to frozen custard. On the way home, Mrs. Johnston stated that we had enough money left over to get either a bag of chips or frozen custard, and she asked for a show of hands to see which it would be. I voted for potato chips because I knew what they were, and I liked them; I did not know what frozen custard was. The majority chose frozen custard, so frozen custard it was. I was a bit apprehensive until I tasted it, but I remember thinking afterwards how fortunate I was, and curiously, I added the thought that I was glad that God did not let me have my first choice. I attribute that partially to the continued exposure

to Bible reading at the start of each school day, but more so to the fact that my mother had started taking my older brother and me to Sunday School and church with her.

Although I did not know it at the time, I later found out that a cousin of my mother was assigned as an itinerant pastor of the little Methodist church not far from our house. While he was there, we attended that little church. During that time, I learned two things: Satan is real, and Jesus loves me and will take me to heaven when I die—if I am a good girl. The outcome of that teaching would shape me for several years to come. I was determined to be a good girl, and when I failed, I would try to at least keep up appearances as best I could. I guess on some level I was thinking I might be able to fool God or at least get some credit for effort. The truth is I was never a bad girl to begin with. I was much too afraid of my father to disobey. However, my sin showed up more in attitude than actions, and I soon discovered the power of passive-aggressive anger.

When I was in third grade, a big event was the May Day celebration. For this one-time celebration, all the schools in the district were to come together and put on a performance for parents and other family members and friends. All third graders in the district had learned to dance the heel-and-toe polka. On the day of the celebration, we all came together, and I was paired with Kenny S. I did not like Kenny. As I had observed him, he did not always do what he was told, and I thought he was an obnoxious show-off. As we were waiting in line for our dance, Kenny began talking with some boys behind us. I was bored, so I tuned out and entertained myself by daydreaming. The line started to move, but I did not notice,

so he told me to take his hand and move forward. I immediately, instinctively complied as I gathered my wits about me and returned to the present. Kenny, feeling empowered by my quick compliance, decided to show off to his friends and ordered me to take his hand again. I looked at him, did not say a word, and remained non-compliant. Without saying a word or doing a thing, I was able to shame him in front of his friends. I had not felt this kind of power before. This quickly became a primary strategy when I felt disempowered, fearful, or challenged. On the other hand, I also learned from this that I do not have to follow the crowd. I have freewill, and I can do my own thing regardless of whether others agree or not. Through this silence, I was able to own my voice and gain greater awareness of who I was and what I wanted, even when the voice remained silent. A streak of independence was beginning to emerge, but it was still tempered by a pull towards God.

Fourth grade was an exceptional year. The one-room schools had been closed and consolidated in what used to house the high school. The building had indoor plumbing and a combination gymnasium and auditorium; it was exciting to be part of something so big, even though it had only eight classrooms. If Mrs. Beatty in first and second grade opened the world up to me, then her daughter, Miss Beatty, the fourth-grade teacher, made me feel valued and invited me to step into life more and to enjoy it. She gave me freedom to play. Two of my five closest friends in fourth grade had parents involved in ministry and another openly shared her faith. This classroom became a safe place to explore more what being a Christian might be like.

My mother had given me a little white Bible for my birthday, and I took it to school to follow along as Miss Beatty read the scriptures during the opening exercises. Once, when a student asked her a question about the Ten Commandments, she asked me if I would look it up for her in my Bible and read them to the class. She more than anyone opened up the Christian life to me. She made it attractive and encouraged me to pursue it. Miss Beatty made me feel as though I mattered.

With the consolidation of the school district, fifth and sixth grades were held in a school about nineteen kilometers away from home. This gave even more time for socialization because of the increased time on the buses, and it exposed me to more and more friends. However, this was also the beginning of dividing the classes according to ability, so some of my friends went to other classes, while only a few of the students I started with in first grade remained. By the time I reached high school, there was only one other student in my classes that began first grade with me. While I thoroughly enjoyed the challenges of being in the most advanced class, it also served as a reminder that life and growth bring change.

Of special note during this time were the character building classes that were offered by students from a local Christian college. When I was in sixth grade, each Wednesday students from Westminster College came into the classroom and presented a lesson on a character-building topic. Although the lessons clearly had a Christian base, they were presented in a generic, secular fashion that would not offend non-Christians. I not only found this to be

disappointing, but it caused me to wonder why they were not being more open about the Christian aspect. Ironically, this was my first experience of censuring the Christian message. Those classes created some confusion because of it, but they also encouraged me to continue to be a good girl in order to please God.

Generally speaking, my elementary and junior high experiences proved to be an arena where I was exposed to the Christian faith in an innocuous but inviting manner, which proved to be both a safe and intriguing way for me to begin to explore the things of the Lord. All in all, my first eight years of school provided a healthy environment for my early growth.

Finding God in Nature

> The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech, And night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; Their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their utterances to the end of the world. In them He has placed a tent for the sun. (Ps. 19:1-4)

Outside the classroom some amazing experiences also were at work to shape me. Summertime was spent enjoying the outdoors on my bicycle. My bike represented an expansion of my world and freedom. No longer was it relegated to the sand pile and playing in the backyard. My world quickly expanded to the outer limits of the farm, and with a one-kilometer lane leading from the farmhouse to the main road, the expansion was huge for a nine-year-old. After morning chores were completed, the rest of the day was virtually free for my brothers and me to explore every aspect of the farm. However, since the farm

butted up against a state park, the woods began beckoning the three of us to even greater adventures.

Although my parents were far from religious, Sundays offered a more relaxed schedule. Only emergencies, such as the need to bring in new mown hay because rain was looming in the distance, interfered with the day off, but mostly it was a day when my brothers and I would head to the woods for a day of adventure and exploration. I was mesmerized by the raw, natural earth that lay before me. Here was land that was untilled and unscarred by strip mining. Here lay earth in all its pristine glory. And glorious it was. Gone was the fear and worry of displeasing my father. Gone was the need to try to figure out what was expected of me. Gone was pressure to perform to my parents' expectations. Here I was free just to be me; it was here that I began to get the first glimpses of who I was without being forced into being what someone else wanted me to be. Here I could breathe, and the air was fresh and clean. I was free, but that was only a small part of what the woods brought to me.

Even at such a young age, I sensed that there was something, or Someone, much greater than I. Despite the fun and freedom I found in the woods, this Presence was what drew me back to the woods time and time again. The woods became another classroom where this Presence would teach me about himself through his creation. The steep hills that could not be cultivated by farmers made it easy for me to imagine the abiding presence of this Force caring for the forest throughout all time; thus, this place became special, even sacred, to me. As I

would romp through the woods, jumping from one point of interest to another, I absorbed much of what I would come to know of God in my formative years.

One of the first things that fascinated me was the rich, dark, and damp soil that was present at the forest's floor. This untilled land lay in stark contrast to the rock-infested clay of the farmland located adjacent to the woods. What amazed me was that this thin layer of rich soil, which lay on top of limestone that frequently jutted to the surface, supported huge trees and a plethora of other forest flora, and all this happened without any human interference. God, as husbandman, is much more productive than the best of farmers.

The second great lesson I learned was that there are many things and glorious surprises to be discovered when one is willing and careful to observe. God wants to be known. It is amazing what overturning a leaf will expose. The forest floor teams with life. Alongside the majestic trees with years and years of growth lay new growth of white-stemmed plants with yellow, yet unfolded leaves, and insects, not normally seen, scurrying about and carrying on the business of their life cycles. The whimsy of touch me nots or the aroma of wild mint speaks volumes of God's personality, as does the tenacity of burrs and even the protection of delicate flowers and delicious berries afforded by the thorns or prickles they possess. God rewarded my curiosity and encouraged me to seek him through exploration of his creation.

These times in the woods helped me to know myself better as well. I realized I was also a part of God's creation and that I was inextricably tied to the Creator, and, as such, belonged to God. Thus, the woods gave me a sense of

belonging that I had but tasted in school and had not experienced in my family. The woods gave me a type of home, but I knew it was not my home. If school gave me a taste, the woods was a meal that satisfied—temporarily. The woods was neither a place where I could take up a permanent residence, nor was it a place that would completely satisfy. The lure of the Presence was far greater and invited me to continue searching for a greater place called home.

Although I do not believe my brothers followed the same call to the woods as I, we all would often spend the entire day exploring the woods, starting off early in the morning and not returning until suppertime. I remember only one time where my parents became concerned because we had not returned. With familiarity, we ventured further and further from home, and the woods became ours. I felt truly alive there; elsewhere I was an observer, but in the woods, I was a participant. I was the one out in front leading the expeditions, driving my brothers and me farther and farther along, and both my brothers willingly followed my lead without challenge. The woods both energized and invigorated me, and I became the natural leader of our troop, no longer a tag-along. Yet, for all the energy the woods engendered, it was also a place that provided rest and safety and a sense of peace.

In all the hours at play in the woods, my brothers and I only crossed paths with one snake, and that was a harmless black snake, which was quite common for the area. Fear was not an issue at that time, and my brothers and I never tired of spending time there. In looking back, I can see how the Lord provided that respite for me to learn of him and become more curious about him and to discover

more of myself. Even today I find great solace in walking in the woods, but more importantly, it is still a place where I can meet with God in a way that is quite different from other settings. These times in the woods have given me permission to walk my own walk, following the true Leader, the Creator of all. Keeping connected to the God of the woods is essential to my soul and to living out my purpose as well. Without it I could quickly fall back into becoming an observer or spectator of life, detached from both myself and the Lord. I shudder to think what my life might have been had I not had my experiences in the woods. The confidence I gained from them helped me through my difficult high school years and into young adulthood.

Hearing a Personal Invitation

> … Behold, the sower went out to sow; and as he sowed, some *seeds* fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. Others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. And others fell on the good soil and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. (Matt. 13:3b–8; italics in original)

If the woods provided rich, dark soil for young growth, outside the woods lay unfavourable soil that threatened my fragile state. I was sitting in a Thanksgiving assembly in seventh grade when the principal walked onto the stage and announced that President Kennedy had just been shot. The next year found two United States destroyers fired upon by the North Vietnamese in the Gulf of Tonkin. Around this same time, Bible reading and prayer were removed from public schools. These incidents along with others jolted the culture of my

community from innocence to disillusionment. Although the hippie culture and accompanying drugs were slower in coming to my community, my teenage years could certainly be labeled as confusing and uncertain in turbulent and unstable times, a great contrast to the years of my childhood.

High school presented itself as part of the turbulent times. Instead of teachers being encouraging and acting like they enjoyed their students, for some it was merely a job, one they did not seem particularly to enjoy. For the most part, I continued my pattern of learning through observation. This worked well, except for a few instances. There was one teacher who just did not like me, but I was never able to figure out why. He taught science and was not the most popular teacher, except for perhaps some of the more science-oriented students. His teaching amounted to assigning chapters to be read in the textbook, and then he would use the publisher's tests to quiz the class. Typically, most of the students would do poorly, but since he graded on the curve, no one complained. However, I would typically do well. According to his practice, the class would take the test, exchange papers, and we would grade one another's papers; we would then read off the scores so he could record them. One time when it seemed that everyone was doing worse than usual, he came to the student who graded my paper. I had missed five, while the next highest paper had missed eighteen. He asked the student whose paper he had. When the student told him it was mine, he responded, almost under his breath but loud enough for the class to hear and with what seemed like a hint of disgust in his voice that he figured as much. I, along with several others in the class, was shocked; I would think he would be delighted

to have a student do well. This comment confirmed what I had sensed from him for some time, and it discouraged me from caring about working hard in school. If that was not bad enough, this teacher's attitude toward me presented itself in other incidents.

A second incident that stood out to me occurred shortly after the first. On a day when this teacher genuinely decided to teach a little, he began his short discussion on mass, density, and weight. To demonstrate the principle, he displayed four different objects all the same size. Then he called on students to order them according to weight with the heaviest first. He called on one student to identify the heaviest. The first was most obvious, being iron. The second was also easily identified. Of the last two, one was made of plastic and the other of wood. This teacher called on me to choose which was heavier. Realizing this was a difficult choice because it depended on both the type of wood and plastic used, I took my time to determine rationally the correct order. I reasoned that soft plastic would likely be heavier than hard plastic given my experience with the two, and the object looked like it was hard plastic. The wood did not look like hardwood and, in fact, looked like light balsa wood. Since the objects were obviously part of a kit, I also took into consideration that both the makers of the kit and the school district would go for the cheapest product, thus I determined that the plastic rod was heavier than the wood. When I stated that the plastic rod was heavier, the quick and derisive retort came back regarding my lucky guess. Luck had nothing to do with my answer, and everything within me wanted to expose his foolishness. However, I settled for the unsuppressed glare. Fortunately, my

friends were as incredulous over his comment as I was, and that helped modulate my reaction. Happily, this class fulfilled all the science requirements needed for graduation, so I just had to suffer through that year and be done with him.

According to reports that I heard, this teacher also taught Sunday School, and his unwarranted attitude and actions towards me were the first negative experiences I had had from anyone claiming to be Christian; this led me to question the idea of what being a Christian meant and what it should look like. At the time this was a negative thing, although looking back at it, I can see where it helped me to want to live my life as authentically Christian as possible, because I wanted to be a consistently true and kind person. Fortunately, instances like this were few in high school; however, one other incident also impacted me negatively.

Math had been a favourite subject for me, and I could really get engrossed when working on math problems. One day I was really involved in the process as my math teacher was teaching geometry. For some reason, none of the other students were raising their hands to answer his questions. I had not noticed that, and I raised my hand for each question posed. This was fun stuff to me. Frustrated, he told me to put my hand down; he wanted others in the class to participate. Looking back, I can see that he was frustrated with the class, but although he did not mean it as an offense to me, in that moment, I felt like he was shaming me. I realize now that if I had more confidence in myself, I would have likely seen his comment as shaming the class rather than shaming me. However, what I took from the experience was that in a class where I was clearly

participating rather than observing, I was asked not to participate. I felt silenced. Additionally, his comment singled me out from the rest of the class. I had been feeling more and more a part of the class and enjoyed the sense of belonging to it. Singling me out threatened that, and I resented this teacher for it. This came from someone who was working on getting his license for preaching, which also left me a little confused with what I saw as conflicting behaviour.

Even so, I still respected this teacher; he was obviously a thinker and generally would respond to students' comments in ways that would make us think. For instance, when students complained about something being unfair, he did not take the usual authoritarian attitude, but he would say something like life is not fair. Later, as I grew in Christ, I began to understand more of what he meant: It was not fair that Christ, the just, should die for the unjust. I am glad that life is not fair and even more so that God is not fair. This math teacher taught me to think for myself and not to accept something just because it was common and familiar. He taught me to be an independent thinker. I admired him because he seemed to live true to himself and was not so interested in banality. Looking back, I have to say my high school teachers were a mixture of good and bad. While a few of my teachers impacted me, some for good and some for bad, for the most part, it was other students and my friends that impacted me most.

I knew where I stood with my friends, but one incident stands out that shows the respect the class members had for one another. Towards the end of my junior year, one of the students remarked to me in a study hall that she was surprised that I had not been elected to the National Honor Society while another

student who had poorer grades and was less involved in extracurricular activities had been. I replied sarcastically that I was not a brownnoser like him. The other student nodded in agreement, showing that she then understood. I happened to look up at the teacher in charge of the study hall. She had heard the exchange, and it was like I could see the gears whirling in her head. The brownnoser had been one of the science teacher's pets. The science teacher pulled a lot of weight because of his time in service to the school, and it was clear that the student was there through his recommendation. After seeing that teacher's reaction, it came as little surprise to me that I was elected the next year. However, because of the brownnosing and political aspects of the process, my negativity towards it took away any honour and further cemented ugly feelings towards that science teacher's Christian character. Although my confidence in Christian adults was waning, fortunately my friends were becoming more vocal in their faith.

Maryann Bessell, whom I met in Miss Beatty's fourth grade class, quickly became one of my best friends and went on to become my best friend throughout high school. Her faith was strong and consistent. She and all her family embraced the teachings of The Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, a small denomination which was characterized by other students as the denomination that did not use musical instruments in their worship services and prohibited dancing in general. Maryann's parents were also farmers, and we had a lot in common. I wanted to be a good girl, and Maryann was a good girl, so I found it easy to be around her. I think I would have veered from a good path a few times if I had not followed her lead. Although I often wanted to explore and experience many

things, if Maryann declined to join in, I would back away as well. She became a trusted friend whom I admired for her conviction. I wanted the assurance she had. However, there were things that separated us, such as dancing, which caused me to turn to other friends as well.

Phyllis Pratt was one of those new friends. Our relationship grew as we worked our way through geometry. Our friendship came about quite by accident. We never really talked about faith or God at all, but one day our geometry teacher asked the class if everyone was going to the prom. I teasingly stated that Phyllis was not. She quickly shushed me and told me that she did not believe in dancing. I was shocked. I thought she was a Christian, but I was pretty sure she was not Reformed Presbyterian. She roused my curiosity; I thought only Reformed Presbyterians did not believe in dancing. As we talked, I think she realized that I did not have much knowledge of what it really meant to be a Christian. The summer after our high school graduation she invited me to join her in the summer at a Christian camp where she worked. I accepted her offer because I had never been to a camp, let alone a Christian one, and I thought it would be fun, certainly better than hanging out on the farm.

For one week that summer I was totally immersed in an authentic Christian culture that matched and even surpassed my expectations. Jesus was real to the workers, and they seemed to genuinely love the Lord and care about the campers. They obviously wanted to be there, even the ones who worked hard in the kitchen. I helped Phyllis with whatever tasks were assigned to her as payment for staying at the camp. Mostly we set and cleared tables, and we had a lot of free

time. That week the guest speaker was Ding Teuling, who brought the Bible stories to life through his chalk drawings, using black light for even more of a dramatic effect. I had never seen anything so amazing. I was captivated. I did not respond to any of the altar calls, but true to my form I observed and absorbed all that I saw. With each presentation, I gained more understanding of the Bible stories, but I had not quite put together God's plan of salvation, other than what I learned back in Sunday School in third grade—be a good girl and Jesus will love you. Before I left camp that week, Phyllis introduced me to the Camp Director, Floyd Hazen. He took me aside and presented the plan of salvation to me one-on-one. That was the first time I really understood that I could never be good enough and that God sent his Son to die in my place. It was a wonderful offer that I could not refuse. I wanted to know for sure that I would be going to heaven when I died. When the director asked me if I would like to pray the sinner's prayer with him, I followed his lead, asking Jesus into my heart on that non-descript summer afternoon in the summer of 1967, but little changed. My time at the camp was ending, and I had begun shifting my attention to my next great adventure, school in Pittsburgh.

From the time I was a little girl, I would dream and make plans of leaving the farm and all it represented to me. I wanted to taste life, to experience all that it had to offer. For most students in my class, attending college after high school was a given. However, this was not my case for a couple of reasons. Judy, the favoured daughter, wanted to go to college, and that was the only time I ever heard my father refuse her. Immediately I realized that if college would not be an

option for Judy, it would be impossible for me. That did not stop my dreaming nor prevent me from exploring options. About the same time my eighth-grade math teacher, Mr. Shaw, out of the blue caught me as I was exiting his classroom one day and remarked that the state would provide a college education for free if I were willing to teach in an at-risk school. I appreciated his encouragement and tucked that information away; there were options out there. My high school teachers, however, were not as encouraging. My class endured countless lectures about how our performance was not up to par with college level, expressing concern about our capabilities to navigate the rigors of college-level academics successfully. They had been to college, and I had not; I chose to give their words more weight than what was merited and began looking for other options. In all fairness, I must say that I frustrated many of my teachers. My advisers did not know what to do with me. One suggested I take mechanical drawing, partly because my brother was really good at it and partly because I had scored within the ninety-nine percentile in the area of mechanics in an eighth-grade aptitude test; mechanical drawing was the only course that came close to anything mechanical. I declined because I did not want to follow in my brother's footsteps, and I did not want to be in a classroom of all boys. Looking back on it now, it really could have been a lot of fun.

As graduation loomed on the horizon, I began to get more serious about firming up some plans. I absolutely did not want to be stuck in New Castle operating a cash register after graduation, which likely would have been my lot without additional training. Fortunately, the school had begun a push to help

students to explore options and to nail down plans for further education. One day, a representative of The Institute of Computer Management in Pittsburgh came to our school and presented the programs they offered. One that aroused my interest was a ten-month course in computer programming. Both Maryann and I were drawn to this program as a potential plan. While a four-year college would be out of the picture, perhaps, hoping against hope, my parents would allow me to go through a ten-month program in Pittsburgh. One thing I had going for me that Judy did not was that my parents had leased their farm out for a second stripping of coal, so money was available for me, if they so chose. I was shocked when my parents agreed, and I wasted no time in getting all necessary papers signed to prevent them from backing out should they have a change of mind. At last, I would be able to realize my dream and move off the farm and step into living.

Neither Maryann nor I had a lot of money to spend, so we shared a bedroom that we rented from an elderly woman on the northside of Pittsburgh. Maryann's parents would drive us down on Sunday afternoon, and my parents would pick us up on Fridays and shuttle us back home for the weekends. This worked out very well. As it turned out, Maryann's parents put us in touch with the Wisners, a family they knew from their denomination. Alan and Hugh were about our ages and were equally as committed to their faith as Maryann. They would pick us up on Sunday evenings and take us to their church for the evening worship services. Often after the service, we would then meet up with other college-age young people, many of whom attended the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary located downtown, and we would participate in Psalm

sings. I absolutely loved it, and Sunday evenings became the highlight of my week. That is not to say that I did not feel awkward, and I certainly felt inferior to the seminary students as I stepped into this unfamiliar world, but they were very gracious and inviting, and I leaned heavily on Maryann, taking my cues from her when I was uncertain how to respond.

When we got back to our bedroom on Sunday nights, I would often quiz Maryann about certain things from the service or the Psalm sings. I was more familiar with the Methodist and Baptist form of worship than of the Reformed Presbyterian. In the end, I appreciated the time I spent with the Reformed Presbyterian, but it seemed to me that much of their emphasis was on what a Christian cannot do. This was far different from the God of the woods that I knew who enjoyed playing, enjoying life, and celebrating. In many ways, their God was much smaller than I saw God to be. Even so, I continued going with Maryann to the services and Psalm sings, and I took from these experiences whatever I could. They certainly gave me a different picture of God that I had not seen before, and I had another picture of an authentic Christian community. With the experience at the Christian camp and the community I saw here, it was beginning to rouse in me an even deeper curiosity; I was beginning to wonder what belonging somewhere would be like and if it would be for me, but I had no idea of how to go about finding such a place.

Towards the end of my training at the Institute of Computer Management, representatives from the United States Army visited the school to interview several students for job openings in Warren, Michigan, a suburb of Detroit.

Maryann was not interested in moving that far away from home, but I saw it as an adventure, a way to move away from home and an open door of opportunity. About a dozen students accepted positions at the Army's Tank Automotive Command. Marsha Gustafson, another girl in my class, also took on the challenge, and we decided to go together and share an apartment. Instantly my eyes were focused on the horizon, and I could not wait to get started. True independence awaited me at last.

It surprised me that my parents were supportive, and with the help of my brother-in-law they even found a cheap car for me, so I would have transportation until I could afford something better. Unfortunately, it broke down before I even started on my way, and I had to borrow my brother's car until mine was repaired. So here I was, an eighteen-year-old farm girl going off to a big city where a year previous had been one the worst riots in the history of the United States in a borrowed car packed with the few belongings I owned. My parents sent me off with a wave and a smile; I think they were clueless about the riot. Fortunately, Marsha's parents were a bit more protective and accompanied us to Detroit to help us find an apartment and get it set up.

What lay ahead in the next few years changed my life forever. The northern suburbs of Detroit seemed untouched by the riots, and Marsha and I were able to find an inexpensive apartment in a brand-new complex. Work went well, and I learned the job quickly. Because so many of us came from Pennsylvania, there was a camaraderie among us that made the job even more fun. Even so, because many would party with drugs and alcohol, which I did not find interesting

at all, I found myself being a part of the group, but on the fringe again. During this time, I was busy establishing myself at work and trying to figure out where I fit, so although I had made a profession of faith at the Christian camp the year before and attended church regularly with Maryann in Pittsburgh, I lacked spiritual input during this time. Apart from spiritual aspects, I did well, so well that within three years I had accomplished all the goals I had set for my life. I had a good job and was earning more than my parents. I had a fun little '67 Camaro that I absolutely loved, a motorcycle, an apartment of my own, and enough money to be able to play. Granted, my goals may not have been set high, but accomplishing them all in such a short amount of time left me wondering about the purpose and meaning of life.

I became bored and began to fall into a mild depression. I remember thinking that, if this is all there was to life, then it is not worth living. That thought scared me; the implication was to seek an alternative, meaning an ending of life, suicide. It was not that I was contemplating suicide; I was just reasoning out my choices. The thought of suicide as a choice scared me. In my thinking at the time, if I killed myself, then I would go to hell. I did not want to spend eternity there, so in a moment of frustration I wrote to my high school friend, Phyllis, and was uncharacteristically open and frank about where I was. She wrote back, and one specific question in her response hit me like a punch in the stomach. She asked if I was going to church anywhere. That question jolted me, and instantly I knew that I needed to find a church, a place to connect with God.

Finding a church became my challenge. In the past, I had visited Methodist, Baptist, Reformed Presbyterian, and even a Roman Catholic service once with Marsha, my roommate. I settled on searching for a Baptist church, since that was the denomination of both Phyllis and Reverend Hazen, who presented the plan of salvation to me. Even with settling on a Baptist church, I still had to decide which Baptist church. At this time, I also started listening to Christian radio stations. I found one Evangelical station and one that offered more of a Charismatic perspective. Seeing that the teachings differed significantly, I turned to the Bible and began reading it for myself. As I read and studied the Bible, I found that I leaned more toward historical Evangelicalism, which supported my search for a Baptist church. As I worked my way through the Bible, I understood more and more and became convinced that the church I wanted to attend needed to be one that was serious about understanding and following the Bible.

I reasoned that if a church was serious about studying the Bible, then people attending would be carrying their Bibles. As I continued my search for the right church for me, I would go to various churches and sit in the parking lot and observe how many people carried their Bibles. If few did, then I would simply move on to the next one. This continued until I found Fellowship Baptist Church in Warren, Michigan. A significant number of people came with Bible in hand, so I decided to check this church out in greater detail. In most ways it was the typical Baptist church, but I found it to be so much more. Just like the Bible teaching on the radio, I found the preaching laid open the Bible for me to have greater understanding. And typical of most Baptist churches, it had an altar call at the end

of each service. As weeks grew into months, I found that instead of just being uncomfortable during these times, I found myself grabbing and grasping hard the pew in front of me. I was committed not to make a spectacle of myself by walking forward. That would be more embarrassment than I could endure. God was patient with me, but that would not last forever.

One Sunday, May 23, 1971, during the altar call, I was positioned in my then familiar, white-knuckled stance, holding onto the pew in front of me for all I was worth. The church was busy singing an invitational hymn, but the hymn faded away, and, in my mind, an unmistakable quiet yet authoritative voice declared that I needed to walk forward or forfeit another chance. Immediately I released the pew in front of me. I was not about to tempt the patience of God further than what I already had. Down the aisle I went. I did not care what people thought; there was no thought of embarrassment. God had spoken, and I was going to comply. Quickly making my way down the aisle and unsure of what to do next, I took a seat on the front pew. A deacon met me and took me into a side room where he gave me a card and asked me to fill it out and to select the reason why I came forward. I began selecting them all. The deacon stopped me at that point, unaware that I had just heard the voice of God, and stated that that was sufficient for now. He reviewed the plan of salvation and led me in the sinner's prayer. I did not mention God speaking to me because it did not seem from the deacon's reaction that he could handle it or would even understand, so I quietly prayed a prayer to dedicate my life to the Lord. Going forth from that point, I had no doubt of my salvation, and I walked out of that church that day with a sense

that my life was changed forever. The fighting within had ceased, and there was a strange sense of peace within that I had not had before.

Pursuing the Christian Life

> Jesus said, "And those are the ones on whom seed was sown on the good soil; and they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold." (Mark 4:20)

The next Sunday morning brought eagerness to my spirit. I was no longer going because of a sense of obligation, instead I found myself looking forward to going to church. At last, the sin issue in my life had been resolved. Sin in my life had not been the usual fare of acting out in untoward behaviours; rather, as an observer and introverted thinker, sin was displayed far more in my thoughts and attitudes where only the most observant would see. For me, sin found its lodging in the inner regions of my heart where it reigned and kept me enslaved by giving me a fear of living and of what others thought or would do, and most prominently by my own selfish desire to control my own life and to be ruled by no one. Resentment filled my heart as anger towards others went unexpressed. However, with my surrender and commitment to the Lord, all that began to change; I was now ready to move forward in my Christian life.

The service that morning was typical, and I was encouraged in my new walk with the Lord. After the service, though, things seemed to take a turn. As everyone was lining up to file out and, in typical fashion, shake the pastor's hand, I felt a soft tap on my shoulder. I turned around expecting to see a face but saw a belt buckle. I continued my scan upward to where the face would be on a tall person, and still I only saw his chest. It took a third attempt before I saw an

intimidating, stern-looking man looking down at me. Without smiling, he quietly and as a matter of fact asked to speak with me. I immediately turned back around away from him and wondered what I had gotten myself into. As I shuffled along keeping up with the line to the pastor, I tried to find a way to escape, but for some reason the aisle was packed that morning, and I was stuck. Once through the line, I knew I would have to face this man, not knowing who he was or what he wanted.

I tried to find a quiet spot to hear this man out. When I turned around this time to face him, he had a much softer, more inviting look. I was considerably relieved yet still apprehensive. As it turned out, the man, Dave Daley, was the youth pastor, and he wanted to invite me to the youth group and to help me get connected to other young adults in the church. Dave quickly became an influential force in my Christian life. He was in his thirties and married with young children. He had been recently converted with a radical change from a life where his intimidating looks and size worked well at convincing people to comply with his wishes. He took his new life in Christ seriously and had a great impact on many of the youth. I saw in Dave a man who was not only an authentic Christian, but he overcame many obstacles to do so. Dave's conversion meant a lifestyle change. From being very successful in his former ways, he was now leading the youth group and cleaning the church to make ends meet. As busy as he was with all this and caring for his family, Dave was also going to Detroit Bible College. The whole youth group loved and was greatly impacted by his example and passion for the Lord.

I quickly saw what it meant to be wholly committed to the Lord, and I wanted that too, which meant being baptized. The Baptist tradition of being dunked presented a problem for me as I was afraid to put my face underwater. I decided to take swimming lessons at the YMCA with the intention of at least feeling comfortable enough to put my face underwater, if not to swim. In the end, I managed to swim the length of the pool, and I deemed myself ready for dunking. All this happened rather quickly, and five weeks after my conversion experience, I was baptized by the pastor. Although some may think it rather silly to take swimming lessons in order to get baptized, in the end I am glad I did; it helped me to be able to focus on the spiritual aspects of the process rather than the physical or mechanical aspects. This observer was now clearly and publicly a follower of the Lord. The next Sunday, however, posed another major decision for me.

The Lord's Supper, or Communion, had presented an uncomfortable situation for me in the past. I took the warnings of partaking unworthily seriously and had up to this time just observed uneasily, knowing that I was not committed to the Lord and I had not been baptized. This time was different, but I had not had time to think things through, so when the bread was passed, I hesitated. Fortunately, I was sitting beside an older member of the youth group who encouraged me to partake. I accepted the invitation and participated in the Lord's Supper for the first time. I am not sure whether it was the Holy Spirit or just that I had become aware that I was surrendering to the Lord more and more, but I felt exuberant. I had not really noticed how obvious it was until some of the youth group after church that evening noticed and commented on it. I then realized that I

had crossed another milestone in my Christian walk. Active participation was beginning to feel very good, and it was even comforting to belong to something. My experiences at Fellowship Baptist Church were the first ones I had where I felt like I belonged and where I wanted to belong. I officially joined the church shortly after that and continued growing in my faith.

I remember browsing a Christian bookstore one day during this time. On the sales rack I saw a short biography of George Müller (the title and author of which has been long forgotten). I had enjoyed biographies in the past, and when I read the back cover and saw that he was a man of faith who had a heart for orphaned children, I bought the book and began reading it. This book was my first exposure to what living by faith really meant: As a Christian I did not have to worry; God would take care of me. The thought that God could care that much about me deeply impacted me. I was not yet convinced that he would care for me like that, but I believed he could. Even today, I am still challenged by George Müller's faith and reliance on God. A second book I picked up around the same time was Brother Lawrence's (1967) *The Practice of the Presence of God*. It had an equal effect on me that also carries on to the present. God has been a dear and faithful companion who has never left me alone.

I continued reading my Bible, but now I wanted to do more in-depth study. One member of the youth group who was planning on attending seminary, showed me how to use a concordance, and a new world of Bible study came alive to me. I continued listening to the more Evangelical Christian radio station, and I discovered the use of Bible commentaries. With that, it was not long before I

invited a few of the women from our youth group to my apartment to study a book in the Bible together. Somehow, we chose the book of Joel. I soon realized I was in over my head and really did not feel as though I understood the book, let alone teach it. Somehow, though, the women assured me that what I was teaching made sense and they were getting something from the study, so we continued studying. I knew in myself how little I really did know of the Bible, but I wanted to know more. One of the members of the group had just graduated high school and was planning on going to Detroit Bible College in the fall. Hearing that and thinking about Dave going there as well allowed me to entertain the idea of me going too. Dave encouraged me as well and helped me fill out the application, and by fall of that year, one year after my conversion, I was enrolled and beginning my first college-level Bible classes.

My time at Detroit Bible College was wonderful, albeit a bit intimidating and confusing as well. The intimidation stemmed from my mind replaying the old tape of past lectures from high school teachers warning my classmates and me that we would not succeed in college. I mediated this by reducing my schedule and took only twelve credit hours rather than the typical eighteen of full time students. It was also confusing because there were rules in place that seemed rather restrictive. The dress code was conservative. It was the early seventies, and everyone wore jeans, but here they were not acceptable attire. I did not understand the need for a dress code among Christians. Harder for me to accept was the curfew. Students under the age of twenty-one had to be in the dorm by ten o'clock at night. Fortunately, students over twenty-one could be out until eleven. I had

been living on my own since I was seventeen, setting my own dress code and curfew; I thought this was unnecessarily restrictive. Nevertheless, I was willing to accept the restrictions as a necessary trade off to learning the Bible, something I wanted more than anything because I knew this would help me know God better.

When the classes began, excitement quickly overshadowed any restrictions and confusion, making them a non-issue. The faculty was composed of exceptional men of God, and each introduced me to more and more of the Christian life and experience. As each opened the Word of God, I sat mesmerized at the depth of knowledge. I was like a sponge soaking in all I could and still wanting more.

The student body at Detroit Bible College was a varied lot, with some coming because their parents sent them, some coming for the Christian education, but most coming because this was their first step in preparation for future ministry. I was impressed with two men in particular; however, only one of them seemed to notice me. Our relationship grew, but still I was rather awkward in the relationship, feeling far less experienced and knowledgeable than he. I enjoyed his intellect, and it was fun to listen to him as he shared his knowledge. Simply put, I enjoyed our time together, and I had never had someone who paid that much attention to me, and he seemed to genuinely want to spend time with me. Even though I did not feel adequate in the relationship, I loved him. He had great potential and seemed like he wanted to serve the Lord. I quickly placed him on a pedestal, which also added to inequality in our relationship. Even so, when this man whom I adored asked me to marry him, I accepted. However, I had some

reservations. I remember a particularly telling night when I prayed for the Lord to show me unmistakably if he did not want me to marry this man. Since I did not get a clear no from the Lord, this confident, well-dressed guy with a promising future and this barefoot, jeans and T-shirt kind of girl with a low sense of self were married on December 29, 1973.

Finding My Voice

> Be gracious to me, O God, be gracious to me, For my soul takes refuge in You; And in the shadow of Your wings I will take refuge Until destruction passes by. (Ps. 57:1)

The first few months of marriage were rough. My husband lost his job, and I ended up going back to work at my old job to make ends meet. Fortunately, at the same time I was also gaining confidence in my own academic ability and continued taking classes even as I worked, so that by the time my husband received his degree, I had taken just about all the Bible courses offered, along with theology, Greek, and an introduction to Hebrew. This ended my education for a while as my focus shifted to supporting my husband and our efforts to become missionaries to France.

I had no model for marriage other than that of my parents. From that model I learned that the wife should be quiet, go along with the husband, and do whatever is necessary to accomplish set goals. Add to this the fact that I had my husband on a pedestal and felt he was far superior to me intellectually; as a result, I mostly kept quiet and helped in supportive roles to help get us to France. I would occasionally contribute in what I thought was common sense or easier

ways to accomplish various tasks, but when it came to interacting with others or ministry-related things, I stepped back and willingly followed my husband's lead.

I soon began feeling somewhat lost in the marriage. There was a disconnect between my experience of the Christian life and learning about God in Bible college and the life I was now living, which was being more withdrawn and having limited outside input into my spiritual life. It was too easy to hide behind my husband. In short, I fell back into being a tag along. I am so thankful that God wanted more for me and that he was committed to growing me into something more, even though the path was difficult.

The birth of my two sons, Nathaniel and Timothy, born a year apart, brought joy and life back into me, and I occupied most of my time in caring for them. They were delightful. So, while I did not have great parenting models either, somehow my love for them allowed me to step outside any models to nurture and care for them. I could not be a quiet tag along and be a good mother. I learned so much about the Lord from these two little guys. Nathaniel's tender, good heart and patience as he waited for me when I needed to give Tim attention reminded me of God's love and patience with me. Tim's spunk and exuberance reminded me of when I was a girl romping in the woods, and that invited me to reevaluate my choices to quietly remain in the background, tagging along.

God truly had been gracious and loving as he placed people in my life to remind me of who I was. One time my husband administered an IQ test to me as one of his assignments; the results validated my intelligence and suggested that I indeed did have something to offer. God brought other people into my life to

confirm this. One college professor validated my words on an occasion when I did speak out. Three different pastors on three different occasions remarked unexpectedly that I was the strong one in my marriage, catching me completely off guard each time, but with each occurrence, I believed them a little bit more. There were other incidents and experiences, some of which I will share later. Little by little, I was beginning to discover who God was making me to be in Christ, and the idea that I had something to contribute to my marriage and family was becoming more apparent to me. I started refocusing on the Lord and began to realize that this would mean removing my husband from the pedestal and replacing him with the Lord, the rightful owner of that position. This was not an easy process, but a person's faith is most often tried in the storms of life.

Three things came together to create a perfect storm: my increasing desire to pursue God regardless of the cost, some poor choices my husband was making, and concern for my children and their welfare. As I engaged my husband, the turbulence increased. I continued to pursue and hold tightly to the Lord, and he became my strength. Concern for my children increased, and my love for the Lord and my children compelled me to stay engaged to challenge my husband on some of his choices. As a result, the last couple years of our marriage were very difficult and frightening. I felt like I was being pulled apart by two opposing forces, and I did not know how I was going to survive. In the end my marriage did not survive, ending in divorce after twelve years. Even so, God is faithful beyond all measure and his mercies are new every morning (Lam. 3:22-23), but before sharing how God was at work in the aftermath of the demise of my marriage, I

need to go back and relate some incidents that occurred while my husband and I were engaged in our missionary endeavour.

Receiving the Call

> To the angel of the church in Sardis write: ". . . Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die." (Rev. 3:1–2)

Missionary work is difficult and raising support can be even more so. Since my conversion at age twenty-one, I had a heart for missions. There is something that opens my heart to those who have little to no chance of hearing the Gospel. My husband indicated that he had a call to France. Since my heart for missions did not entail a specific people group, I could easily join him in France to help evangelize the lost there. In that sense, I can say that I did not have a call to France in the sense that I experience a call of the Lord now. Even so, God confirmed our efforts in many different ways, at many different times. Two incidents stand out because of their extraordinary nature.

On one Sunday in particular, my husband, our sons, and I were on our way to a church service to present our ministry in hope that the church would support us. We had barely gotten out of town when our car started acting up, so we pulled over and were trying to decide what to do. Almost immediately a car pulled up behind us and a man got out; he quickly assessed the problem and rerouted some hoses, and we were able to continue on our way. As my husband and I were getting back in our car, we figured the man returned to his car and pulled away. We tried to spot his car down the road, but it was nowhere to be seen even though we were able to see far into the distance. We were both convinced that this was no

ordinary man and wondered aloud whether or not he might have been an angel. Although this encounter was short and rather nondescript in the telling of it, it nevertheless continues to be a reminder to me of God's presence and provision in my life.

Finally, however, support had been raised and deputation was over. My husband had gone on before the boys and me to procure housing and get it set up for us before we arrived. That left me to fly to Paris alone with the boys, ages two and three. The departure went well as I had family and my pastor and his wife to help me with the boys. The arrival in Paris was a different matter. After disembarking from the plane, the boys and I were met by a massive sea of people who flooded Customs. Afraid that my children would be crushed in the crowd, I scooped them up into my arms. There I was, carrying two diaper bags and two little boys, and I did not see how I could possibly last long enough to make it through the Customs line. My strength began failing quickly. I fervently prayed for strength and for the Lord to help me; suddenly from behind a man had placed his hand on my shoulder and was guiding me over to a special location apart from the crowd where I could be processed without delay. He then directed someone to help me, and as quickly as the man came, that is how quickly he disappeared. I believe this man was an angel, but even if he was just a man, I am convinced God sent him to rescue me and keep the boys safe from being pressed by the crowd. Once again, God's abiding presence was there to care for me in my neediness. The skeptic might say this was a coincidence or happenstance; however, three difficult questions would need to be explained: How did this man see me in the

middle of the press of the crowd? How did he get there at the exact time my strength was exhausted? And how did he part the sea of people so that we could move through the crowd when I could not move to the left or right and could only move as I was being shuffled by the crowd? This incident has been a testimony of God's care, grace, provision, and mercy that has stayed with me as assurance that God will provide and care for me. I have reflected on this scene often as a testimony of God's love and protection. It has helped sustain me when I have become discouraged over the years and even to today.

God, at times, is extravagant. For some, he uses dreams to reveal his plans and purposes, for others he gives visions, but for me he led me over six thousand kilometers away from my home in the middle of a once flourishing Christian nation now destitute. With a communist mayor, the Voice of America radio broadcasts being jammed by the Soviet Union, and graffiti on walls that boldly incited death to Americans, Limoges, the town where we settled, was not a particularly inviting setting. Even some of the French Christians had the attitude that they could evangelize France on their own and did not need help from the Americans. It broke my heart to see such hatred and lack of concern for the things of God in France. Yet, what I could offer was limited. Even though my husband was fluent in French, I was not. I could do little more than minister to two English women and fill other supportive roles that did not require much communication. Had we stayed in France, that likely would have changed, but God had other plans.

One day, on a drive through the countryside to enjoy the scenery, I was especially taken in by empty, run down churches and well adorned cemeteries. The dire spiritual condition of the country in contrast to their rich history struck my heart, and the Holy Spirit pressed into my heart the call to go back home and strengthen the church in the United States so that it would not become like France. This was a particularly strong encounter where it seemed like this call was being pushed into every cell of my being, taking up residence as a new, integral part of me. Even so, I had no immediate draw to leave. I just tucked it away, feeling no compulsion to act on it right away; I returned to the apartment and waited on the Lord to orchestrate the timing. I did not feel led to share it with my husband. It was my own personal call, and a very personal thing at that. It would remain private until after we returned to the United States and I began teaching.

Finding Life and Purpose

> For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. (Eph. 2:10)

Returning from France brought several years of being unsettled as my husband moved from one position to another. The year my youngest son, Timothy, was to enter kindergarten, the pastor from one of our supporting churches in Tennessee, where we were living at the time, offered me a position teaching kindergarten in his church's Christian school. I readily accepted the position for three reasons. First, I wanted my children to have a Christian-based education, which was far superior to what I saw being provided by the public school. Second, this was a dream come true. Even as a little girl I wanted to teach,

and here, at last, I had the opportunity. Third, this was one way of living out my call. I see now that God used my years of teaching in Christian schools both to give me stability and to grow me in my faith.

That first year of teaching went well. My self-confidence was growing and for the first time I felt like I was actively involved in a ministry in more than just a supportive role behind the scenes. My teaching was actively changing lives for the good. At the end of that first year, following my husband, we moved back to western Pennsylvania, where our home church was located, as were several other churches that supported us while we were in France. The pastor of one of those churches, Dr. Ford, offered me a position teaching kindergarten and first grade at Parkstown Christian Academy, which met in his church. Once again, I jumped at the chance.

Pastor Ford proved to be a God-send as he encouraged me and showed great confidence in my abilities as a teacher. God's timing could not have been better than to place me under the leadership of this dear man. In the two years before his death, he not only was my boss but my pastor and adopted father figure. His support helped me through the hardest time of my life, the breakup of my marriage and what I thought would be the end of my ministry because of the divorce. I was hurt, I was angry, and I was living below poverty level with two little boys to take care of; the situation was bleak and about to get even worse. Dr. Ford's health was poor, and one Wednesday evening a few months after my husband had left, Dr. Ford preached his last sermon sitting on a stool. Those at the service, I think, sensed as I did that something was wrong. Many rushed to talk to

him, but not wanting to add to his burden, I chose to walk down the outside aisle to make my way out the door to my car. About halfway down the aisle I looked at him and he looked at me. As our eyes met, and the message in his eyes seemed to communicate that I would be alright. I cannot explain how that could possibly happen as no words were exchanged, but the message was loud and clear, and those words would lend me great support in the coming months as my situation worsened. With the death of Dr. Ford, the school could no longer stay open, so within the space of seven months, I had lost my husband, my father figure, my divorce had become final, I was out of a job in an economically depressed area. Furthermore, I assumed that any chance of future ministry would be over. This was a very low time in my life, but I had a God I loved and wanted to serve, and I had two little boys who were depending on me. There was no choice but to keep moving forward in faith.

My situation was desperate. I had no other option than to go on welfare to provide for my children. It gave me space to pray and plan my next steps. I had gotten both my teaching jobs because the pastors knew me, but my network for other positions was depleted, and the fact that I did not have a degree, let alone a teaching degree, severely limited my options. However, I discovered that resources were available to me to attend the nearest state university, and so I enrolled at Slippery Rock University to pursue a bachelor's degree in elementary education, beginning in late August 1986. It would not be easy, but at least I was preparing for a better future. Then another amazing thing happened.

About two weeks before my classes were to begin at Slippery Rock, I got a call from David Searle, the principal at Sharon Christian Academy. He had a teacher who had to quit unexpectedly, and now he had a position open that needed to be filled immediately. I had not heard of the school, but he had heard that Parkstown had closed, so he called the church to see if any of the staff would be interested in the position. The church secretary gave him my name. I drove up to the interview and decided to be very open and frank. I did not have a degree, I was divorced, and if they still wanted to hire me, I needed to know right away so I could switch my day classes to evening classes at Slippery Rock. To my surprise, I was offered the position on the condition that I would continue working on my degree. I accepted, and for the next three years the boys and I made the fifty-five-kilometer trek to Sharon Christian Academy in Sharon, Pennsylvania where I taught a combined third and fourth grade class full time with no free time for lesson preparation or grading. At the end of the school day, the boys and I would travel back to my parents' house where I would drop the boys off before driving for another forty kilometers in another direction to Slippery Rock University for evening classes. When the classes were over, I would go back to my parents' house, pick up the boys, grab some leftovers, and take the boys home and get them into bed before I began grading papers and any other lesson preparations that were necessary for the next day. When that was done, I would then do my assignments and reading for Slippery Rock. I averaged three to five hours of sleep a night, and usually there was one night a week where I did not sleep at all.

Brandishing a good cup of coffee in my hand at all times and experiencing the sustaining grace of the Lord kept me sane, functional, and successful.

God's presence was obvious, daily. There would be times I would panic at a fork in the road because I could not remember whether I was going to work or to school. I took the left fork for work and the right for school. I learned to eat things like spaghetti sandwiches while driving a stick shift on the way to my evening classes. One can get very creative when free food is available. There were times when I was literally counting pennies between paychecks to make ends meet. My home church helped out tremendously, often surprising me with a check from the Benevolent Fund. The staff and parents at Sharon Christian Academy supplied lots of encouragement, and occasionally I would be slipped a little extra money. When my mother-in-law died and I had to take the boys to Tennessee for her funeral, someone anonymously checked out my car to make sure it was fit for the journey there and back, roughly a twenty-two hundred kilometer trip. Between my church and Sharon Christian Academy, I could not have asked for a better community. I was showered with blessings time and time again, too numerous to count.

Besides the finances and sleep, I think the biggest hurdle I had to negotiate was completing a semester of student teaching. I had no idea how I was going to leave my job and student teach for three months, provide for my family, and manage transportation to school for my children. But God is gracious, and he graciously provided. First, I decided to go to Slippery Rock and see if I could get a waiver of some kind since at that time I had been teaching for five and a half

years and I had experience teaching every grade except second. I was amazed and beyond ecstatic when they agreed to reduce my student teaching to six weeks. Furthermore, it was arranged that I could do my student teaching in Sharon, which meant transportation for the boys was no longer a problem. Finances were the last issue. To my surprise and amazement, the mother of one of my students, Mrs. Fuge, who did a lot of volunteer work for the school, graciously volunteered to substitute for me at no pay with the understanding that I would continue to be paid. I was overwhelmed with amazement, joy, wonder, so many things. God was so good to me. In June of 1989, I received my Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education. Nat and Tim were in the audience cheering loudly and with great excitement for me that day. In many ways, they had earned that degree as well, because they and their support kept me going through those exhausting three years. That God would love me and provide for me in such unfathomable ways still leaves me speechless with tears flowing freely. I had no doubt that God was directing my paths and even going before me to make them straight (Isaiah 42:16).

By the time the boys reached junior high, money became tight again. Teenage boys eat a lot and grow out of their clothes quickly. Once again God prepared the way. Both Nat and Tim played basketball on the school team. One day as I was helping at one of the games against Portersville Christian School, I saw Mike Charles, who was a pastor of another one of our supporting churches when we were in France. He came up to me and mentioned that Portersville needed a computer teacher and that I should consider applying for the position. I

was flabbergasted that he even remembered that I had a computer background, and I had no idea that he was so involved with the school that he would know their needs. Since the school was only sixteen kilometers from home versus fifty-five kilometers from Sharon, I applied. I was offered the job at a salary that was roughly double what I made at Sharon. Once again, God provided—very graciously.

Since I had earned my degree and did not have as far to travel to work, I was able to focus a little more on myself. My anger towards my husband, now ex-husband, was turning into bitterness. I did not like who I was becoming, so I started meeting regularly with my pastor to work through my anger. This became life changing. Not only was I able to forgive my ex-husband, but I was profoundly humbled as I faced the darkness in my own heart. In Matthew, Jesus talked about the judgment that awaits those who not only kill, but those who are angry with their brother or sister are liable to judgment, and as Jesus continued, he talked about lust as being the same as committing adultery in the heart (Matt. 5:21–28). These two thoughts became pivotal in helping me to see my own darkness and sin. Before my divorce, although I had not directly asked God to be my hitman, I did present to God a possible scenario where if my husband were to die, say in a car accident, then I would not have to go through life as a divorcee. A widow could retain a certain degree of honour in a Fundamental Evangelical community that a divorcee could not. There I stood before God with my murderous heart; there I stood before God with my idolatrous heart several times over. Countless times I had kept my husband on a pedestal above God, and countless times I had

put myself on the pedestal as I tried to protect my own self and honour—idolatry. I stood condemned, but God, rich in mercy and love, offered forgiveness. During this time a scene from Joseph's life became especially meaningful to me. After Jacob had died, Joseph's brothers became concerned that he would retaliate for the harm they had caused. Joseph responded by stating that what his brothers meant for evil, God intended it for good to accomplish good things (Gen. 50:15-21). This message sunk deeply into my heart, and God has graciously used it to reorder my perspective on so many wrongs that have occurred in my life. Anger dissolved, forgiveness was extended, and I gladly accepted God's working for good in my life through those difficult times. This step became a milestone in my life.

As I held fast to that victory in Christ, I began to see new opportunities opening and a shift in my ministry. Running the computer lab was different than teaching in a regular classroom. Besides developing curriculum for kindergarten through grade twelve and then teaching it, I was also the advisor to the yearbook, simply based on my knowledge of computers. I had exposure to all the students at Portersville Christian School. As advisor to the yearbook, it was important to foster an atmosphere of freedom and creativity. The computer lab became a place where students would come instead of going to a study hall. I had a lot of time and opportunity to sit with students and listen and talk with them about things that teachers usually do not. This was the unofficial start of a counseling-type ministry. What I found was that I really enjoyed talking to them about weightier things than just reading, writing, and arithmetic. At about this same time, I

attended a workshop on sexual abuse, called *The Wounded Heart*, by Dan Allender (1995). I had attended a couple of times previously, but this time he introduced a new school he was in the process of starting for the purpose of training mental health counselors. As I listened to his presentation, I envisioned myself as a trained counselor listening to people and carrying on deep conversations to change lives. By this time both of my sons had graduated and were established in college. As I prayed about it, there was nothing stopping me from going to Dan's new school.

In the spring of 1997, I informed Portersville Christian School that I would not be renewing my contract. I spent the summer preparing for the move out to Seattle, scheduled for the middle of August. In celebration of my upcoming adventure and as a parting gift, a friend gave me an autobiography of J. Edwin Orr (1993). I read the book in total amazement of how God prepared the way for this man of faith, providing for him each step of the way. He courageously followed God's lead even when common sense and reason would suggest he do otherwise. When I closed that book, I remember thinking that I would like to have that kind of remarkable faith. Then I quickly let God know that, although I wanted that kind of faith, I did not want to go through what it would take to develop that faith. I closed that prayer with half a chuckle, knowing that God knows my heart better than I do. It seemed the development of faith was going to begin sooner rather than later.

Two days before I was scheduled to leave, I received a letter from Western Seminary in Portland, Oregon, the main campus of the school under which Dan

was opening his. Although the folks at the Seattle school, called Mars Hill Graduate School, told me I had been accepted, the Portland office said I was not. Operating under the assumption that it was a paperwork mix up, I chose to believe the folks in Seattle, since that was the campus I would be attending. Since I did not have a check in my spirit about heading out to Seattle even with no definitive answer, I loaded my car on schedule and proceeded by faith. The paperwork did get cleared up. Even so, I was not prepared for what lay ahead. It seemed like a whole new world.

Aside from the usual faith growing experiences a person would expect when immersed in a setting different from his or her own, a few noteworthy experiences stand out. The first good gift God gave to me there was Ken Wilson. Ken was a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary, and he taught most of the Bible classes; I latched on to him as my anchor. Almost all my pastors to that point had been graduates from Dallas Theological Seminary. I knew where they stood, and I trusted them. I knew where Ken stood, and I trusted him and took comfort in knowing I could go to him if things got too wild for me. Having Ken there allowed me the freedom to explore all the other things that were placed before me. It was also in one of Ken's classes that I found a major piece of the puzzle for me.

I had always thought I had a reasonably good understanding of myself, but it seemed like there was something missing that I could not quite put my finger on. In an Old Testament Survey course, Ken presented the roles of prophet, priest, and king. Briefly stated, according to my recall, the role of the priest was to

establish the laws of God and to represent the people to God. The role of the prophet was to represent God to the people. Speaking outside the community, they critiqued the culture and energized the people, calling them back to God; it was the role of the prophets to produce hope in the people (Brueggermann 1978, 1-127). According to Ken, the king's role was basically to live with one foot on the earth and the other in heaven. I clearly did not identify with the role of king, and I was certain that a great deal of me related to the priestly role, since I had been the Junior Church lady in my church and that pastoral role suited me well. But the more I read about the role of a prophet, the more I realized that was the missing piece in my puzzle. That piece fit wonderfully and made sense of the whole picture. Now it seemed as though all the cells of my body were aligned as they fell into place and, strangely, I felt a sense of rest.

In another class, however, I found some insight from a professor to be quite disturbing. Don Hudson was the leader of my small group, so he got to know me quite well. One day, part of the discussion was on the topic of how individuals reflect the image of God and each reflect God's image differently. Most of the group was thinking in big categories like grace or hope, but Don was thinking more specifically. Also, most people are not aware of how they specifically reflect God's image. When I asked Don about it in our one-on-one time, he stated very confidently that I expose the foolishness of others. His statement shocked me to say the least. It certainly is not something a quiet woman in a very conservative, male-dominated community wants to hear. Quite frankly, I did not embrace his statement the way I embraced the idea of my role as prophet,

although I could see how they could go hand in hand. Where the role of the prophet brought a rest to my soul, this statement caused my stomach to churn. I understood what he meant by that, I thought, and how he could have seen that in my life, but it was something I did not want to embrace because of the potential ramifications and disturbances it would bring. At various times I have accepted it more so than at others, but mostly I hold that statement loosely, unable to let go of it completely. It haunts me, yet I saw it to be true in my marriage and with many men in my life.

The last big thing I took from my time in Seattle was an image of what life could be like when it comes to following God and leaving self and the world behind. Heather Webb was another professor who supervised me in counseling exercises with another student. As I met with Heather one-on-one, we had a series of conversations about spiritual growth and following God. Through our conversations, I adopted the picture of it being like freefalling from a high cliff, and if I was to survive, it would be because the hand of God had reached out and caught me in the palm of his hand. God wanted me to be all in as I chose to leave sin, the world, or the flesh behind—no lifelines for me to depend on other than God himself. Now, in my quirky humour, I also envisioned the floor of the valley below being chock full of giant, white, puffy flowers; just in case God chose for whatever his purpose not to catch me, I wanted to pretend I would have a chance of surviving when I landed on the big, puffy flowers. The ridiculousness of the flowers saving me from certain death should the Lord choose not to catch me, reminded me of my own foolishness when I tried to live life my way. Even today,

I usually end up chuckling to myself when I contemplate this picture and the silliness of my flowers. The way to life is a freefall, a letting go completely, into the hand of a loving and faithful God.

My time at Mars Hill Graduate School prepared me both professionally and as an individual to invite others to step more fully into their walk with God and life in general. Training alone is not enough to lead people well through the turbulence of life; experience is invaluable, and I was about to get some more.

Discerning God's Leading

Teach me Your way, O Lord; I will walk in Your truth. (Ps. 86:11)

After finishing my coursework at Mars Hill, I returned home to what I naively thought would be a quieter, slower life with few struggles as I began my counseling practice. In many ways I was right about the slower, quieter life. Living in an economically depressed area with an older population generally will not generate a large caseload quickly, but I was willing to wait and watch the Lord move. I had a lot of time to think between clients at this time. At one point I began replaying how I came to know God. For years I had treated my Sunday school experience with some resentment because of the lesson I took from it, which was that I needed to be a good little girl so that God would love me and take me to heaven when I died, in other words, a system of works. For some reason, something different clicked in me that day, and I saw that my motivation had not been to be a good girl or to go to heaven; I wanted to know and experience the love of God. It was a quiet but powerful revelation. Many things shifted that day as I came to realize the motivation for my life had been to know

and experience the love of God. Resentment vanished and I was able to see in more and greater ways how God had led and kept me in love throughout my life. Where people in my life had failed to love me, God had not. The love of God had been my sustaining force, and it would continue to be as more difficult times would ensue.

Those difficult times began with little things at first. My church has always been very supportive of me, and since the pastor offered me office space in the church, I assumed the leadership were all in agreement. The elders were mature men, who loved the Lord and took their roles as elders seriously, praying for and watching over the flock. Of that I have no doubt; I had experienced it myself with multiple gifts from the Benevolent Fund and numerous prayers for my children and me. The first rumblings of my ministry being an issue surfaced over where my name should be located on the weekly prayer list: Should I fall under leadership, ministry, missionary, or personal? I certainly did not want to be an issue of division, so I told my pastor just to put me under the personal category and let it be the cause of no further division. I was just happy that people would be praying for me at all, but he would not relent, and the issue remained a contentious one with the leadership.

Then a more serious issue arose that impacted the church as a whole and left me largely fending for myself. Some sin had been exposed in the pastor's life, forcing him to resign. The whole church was shocked, hurt, and feeling somewhat lost. The leadership had bigger issues to deal with than me. I was now listed under the personal category on the prayer list and largely ignored. No longer feeling

openly welcome and with my practice still being too small to support myself, I began to pray and look for other options. I was confident that God had called me to a counseling ministry, but I doubted that it was a good choice to keep my practice housed in the church.

My options were virtually limitless. I could go anywhere; exactly where to go was the issue. A friend from Mars Hill told me of a start-up ministry in North Carolina for sexually abused women. I contacted the director, and after a series of correspondences, I felt it was worth visiting in person. Although a start-up ministry could be risky, I felt it was no riskier than staying where I was. The visit went well. The director was a strong woman with vision, and I envisioned the ministry moving forward. I returned home without any concerns about moving forward and joining that ministry. However, as typical for me, I asked God to close the door if it was not his will for me. Since the door remained open, I accepted the director's invitation and began to prepare for the move to North Carolina.

I had begun closing my practice and referring clients to other counselors in the area. However, shortly before I was to move, I sensed a check in my spirit. I felt strongly that I needed to make another visit before I finalized the move. Two weeks before my move was to take place, I flew down to North Carolina and met with the director and one board member again. Several things came to light in that visit that became problematic for me. The first was that the director stated that she expected me to attend her church. Having visited her church on my previous visit, I knew it would not be a good fit for me. Second, in the couple of minutes I had

alone with the board member, I learned that she was a woman who would not disagree with the director because she wanted to keep unity at any cost. I could see this door of opportunity closing, but a third issue clearly slammed the door shut. To help me get started, the director had arranged for me to live in a house rent free for a year. However, since my last visit, my oldest son decided to move with me as he needed a fresh start as well. I did not see where that could possibly be a problem, but the director adamantly stated that I could live in the house, but my son could not. As we negotiated the arrangement, the director relented, stating my son could stay in the house with me for three months. I was stunned. Then when I asked her if she expected me to throw him out of the house after three months if he could not find a job and a place to live within that time, especially considering he did not have a college degree and had no contacts in the city. She firmly stated yes, and the thud of the slamming door echoed in my ears all the way home.

The whole flight back to Pittsburgh from North Carolina was surreal. I found myself shaking my head and replaying my doubts over and over. I tried to attune myself to the presence of the Lord to gain comfort and direction from him, but I could not. Instead, it seemed like the Lord had withdrawn from me and was unavailable. The only sense of him was an ever so faint glow in the darkness, not a real glow but in my spirit or mind. I had a sense that he was in the shadows, watching me, but he was not making himself available to me in the familiar way I had come to know. I was in shock. First the ministry opportunity was forcefully slammed shut at such short notice, and now I felt alone in it without God to offer

comfort or direction. I was still reeling in shock after arriving home, so I spent the night in prayer; it was all that I knew to do.

The hours wore on to become days, and the days became weeks. I knew I needed to do something, but the Lord was still not giving me any greater sense of himself or direction. I phoned my clients who had not transferred to other counselors and continued to work with them, but I did not feel it right to seek new clients without specific direction from the Lord. My resources were dwindling to nothing, and the church was still in crisis. I was feeling more desperate day by day. I hit a breaking point five months after that traumatic visit to North Carolina and decided to have it out with God. There was fear and trembling in that decision, to be sure; however, I was as desperate as I have ever been, and I did not want to move forward on my own without direction from the Lord. In this case, I think it is fair to say that desperation trumped fear. In one sense, I felt I could relate a little to Jacob wrestling God and not letting go until God blessed him (Genesis 32:24–32). I wanted the blessing of God's presence, comfort, and direction in my life again.

Normally, I would have headed to the woods to meet God, but for some strange reason, I found myself making a one-hundred-sixty-kilometer trip to a deserted beach on Lake Erie on a beautiful fall day in 2000. I think I wanted nothing between God and me. I did not want the trees to block any chance I might have of seeing God; I wanted face-to-face conversation. I was serious. I meant business.

When I found a secluded spot, I began to pour my heart out to the Lord. I do not know how long I was there, but it was long enough for me to release all I was feeling, all my frustrations, all my needs, and all my desires. When I was spent, I stood before God empty handed, still waiting. Finally, I reached a point where I acknowledged that God is God and he can do whatever he wants, and if he chooses not to answer my prayer or chooses not to reveal himself to me again, I will accept it because he is God. I sat in silence, and in that silence, I heard the inaudible voice of God confirming that he had heard my prayer and was going to answer it. His voice was powerful and unmistakable, and I was overcome. I sat in silence a while longer, hoping and waiting to see if he would offer me some direction, but nothing else came, and the presence of the Lord seemed to retreat back into the shadows. I sat on the beach a while longer, contemplating all that had transpired. Even though God had retreated back into the shadows and I still did not have any more direction than before, the uncertainty of my situation was now intermingled with an inner peace and assurance that God was still at work and he was still listening; he had heard me, and my prayer was answered. As I was preparing to leave, I knew I wanted to mark this day. What had occurred there was extraordinary and needed to be memorialized. I thought about the memorial stones of the Israelites when they crossed the Jordan River (Joshua 4:4–7) and thought this would be a fitting way to remember this day, so as I walked along the beach gathering twelve stones, I placed them inside an old paper cup I found and decided to keep them there until I could set them up at my yet-to-be-revealed destination.

Two weeks later I attended another of Dan Allender's conferences in Detroit, Michigan. As I chatted with him on a break and filled him in on what had been going on in my life, he volunteered to contact a counseling center in St. Louis, Missouri, on my behalf. I knew he would not recommend me to a place that he did not think would be good for me. It felt good to have someone I trusted intercede for me, especially after feeling alone in my situation for so many months. Given the North Carolina incident, though, I was filled with ambivalence, not wanting to get too excited, yet I was hopeful. I found myself praying that I would be able to recognize the details as they unfolded while still praying the prayer of the closed door.

It was several months later, in the spring of 2001, that I found myself sitting in the offices of the CrossRoads Christian Counseling in St. Louis. Two days of interviews with various staff and board members left me confident that the Lord was leading me here. I was also seeing a return of the Lord from the shadows. It was wonderful to experience the presence of the Lord again. The communion was different, though. I had a greater understanding of what it means to trust him even when he chooses not to be seen. I had even greater confidence in the Lord and could more easily trust him without needing to understand everything.

Embracing the Call

> I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service. (1 Tim. 1:12)

Starting over meant I needed to build a caseload again. In the interim, I needed another job so I could pay my bills, and God once again provided. The Children's Ministry Director at Central Presbyterian Church, Cher Curtis, needed a director for the church's nursery. I had not thought about nursery work, but I had worked in the children's ministry for years and felt I could do the job, so when she offered me the position, I accepted. I really enjoyed speaking into the lives of the women on the nursery staff and helping to equip them so that they felt more confident and appreciated. Cher was a great director and encouraged me as well, especially by recognizing my passion and placing her confidence in me. I felt more like I was working in a cooperative association with Cher rather than for her. It was a good relationship of mutual respect. Not only did God once again provide for me, but he also provided an opportunity for me to experience a radically different leadership style than I had previously experienced.

Working at the counseling center stretched me in many ways. The director and associate director were strong men who very decidedly ran the center from a top-down perspective. This was in huge contrast to my association with Cher and her leadership style. In the beginning I could work within the parameters of this type of top-down leadership of the counseling center. I was a new counselor, and I appreciated direction. Both directors and many of the other counselors approached counseling from a perspective similar to how I had been taught, so it was an excellent place for me to hone my skills as a counselor, and I am truly

appreciative of the opportunities I had at the center and for the supervision and additional training I received there.

I am grateful for one counselor in particular, Diane Powell. Diane and I hit it off instantly. She was open and inviting, and I felt I could be open and real with her with no judgment or rejection. She is a wild, intelligent, strong woman who loves the Lord. She became a kind of role model, yet there was mutuality in our relationship. She was more of a friend than mentor, but I learned much from here. She was a friend to whom I could gripe and complain, talk at deep levels, and share hopes and dreams. I had not had a friend like this since high school. She was a great encouragement and someone with whom I could tag along.

Diane's relationship with the Lord impressed me so much that I decided to expand my church experience by attending a church in the same denomination, the Evangelical Free Church. Although the denomination is considered by most to be conservative and in line with historical Evangelicalism, it was a step away from my ultra-conservatism. It was a good step, as I was able to build a small community of friends outside of the counseling center. With the experiences in the church I was attending, Cornerstone Community Church, and with Cher and others from Central Presbyterian Church, I was beginning to see that variety of worship as a good thing and that relationship with God brought unity to the Body of Christ, not similar theology. This gave me the freedom to explore the possibility that just as God created me uniquely with a plan and purpose for me, perhaps my worship and relationship with him might also be unique. It was not that things changed on the outside; it was attitudinal and a matter of the heart.

At the same time, I continued to grow professionally; I took on more responsibilities at the counseling center. The responsibility I enjoyed the most was the supervision of counseling interns, largely supplied by Covenant Seminary. Supervising these young interns felt like a natural fit for me. I loved challenging them, encouraging them, and helping them to think through what they were offering their clients and how they were doing it, but especially to think biblically about it. Granted, I could exercise my pastoral and prophetic parts of me with my clients, but because the relationship was different with my interns, I was able to do this to a greater degree with them. With my clients, I was making a difference by working with each one at a time. Working with the interns, I could make a difference with several at the same time. That was doubly exciting to me!

For the most part, my time in St. Louis was very good, allowing space and time for me to grow spiritually and professionally. Yet, one does not usually grow without conflict or pain in some fashion. As the years at the counseling center played out, the top-down leadership would prove to be a source of frustration. I felt I had gone as far as I could. To grow, I would have to go elsewhere. During this time, I visited a friend in Florida. This was my first visit to the state, and I found it to be palatable outside of the tourist areas. The following winter, after a big ice storm and spending three days without heat or electricity in my apartment, I was ready for a warmer climate, but the move would not be an easy one. I would have to develop my counseling practice again, and, again, I would need income to pay the bills until my caseload was built up.

Wandering in the Desert

> For He has satisfied the thirsty soul, And the hungry soul He has filled with what is good. (Ps. 107:9)

Once in Florida, I contacted a Christian counseling center in the area, passed the interview, and was told I could start counseling there as soon as I obtained my Florida mental health counselor's license. I found the paperwork for my license was taking longer to be processed than my budget could comfortably endure, so I decided to move forward with applying to Liberty University to get the process going for an online teaching position. In the meantime, I was also looking for other opportunities to supplement my income while I built up my caseload. I also contracted with another counseling center, and counseled part time there. As it turned out, I began all three jobs at roughly the same time. However, each of the three jobs started out slow, so I was not overly busy. Even so, God was supplying, so I was able to pay my bills. Looking back, I am not quite sure how that happened, but God has worked some strange math for me in the past, so I accepted his provision with gratitude and without question but always with amazement.

The two counseling centers looked promising at first, but both closed within months, so I opened my own private practice. Private practice suited me well. I did not have to waste my time and energy by distractions from those in charge; I was free to design my ministry as I saw the Lord leading me. Two important things came out of my private practice. The first was that I began to realize how perfect God's plan is. For years, I had dreamed about being on staff in a church as a counselor where I could just sit and talk with people without having

to charge them for my services. Yet as I thought about my experience with counseling in churches, I could see how the Lord was keeping me from a restrictive environment and inviting me to live out more of the prophetic role in me. In my own office I found myself redemptively engaging my clients in areas that challenged their view of God and their relationships with him, allowing them to grow more fully in his grace. I felt myself coming more alive. I finally laid down that dream of working in a church and embraced what I knew was a truer, better plan that suited me more fully. However, as much as I enjoyed working with my clients, this was not enough. I found myself enjoying more and more the online classes I instructed, which leads to my second revelation. Even though I left teaching to counsel, I realized that the pull to teach is just as strong as it has ever been. To deny that would be to miss a big part of what God has for me. I decided to limit my practice to allow time for my online classes, and this balance has seemed to work out well with one exception.

Florida stands as an enigma to the rest of my life in many ways, especially with respect to relationships. It is the largest metropolitan area I have lived in, but I have never felt so isolated. Although I came down to Tampa knowing no one, that was not unusual. I have lived in several places where I knew no one before I moved. I thought it would just be a matter of time before I would make some friends and enjoy a small but rich community of friends. This has not been the case. As is typical for most people, I usually make friends through family, church, and work environments. I had no family in Tampa. My work environment consisted of me in private practice, and, of course, my online work provided only

distance relationships. As with my private practice, most of my relationships place me in a leadership position, which prevents friendship to avoid a dual-role relationship. To my disappointment the church in Tampa has not filled the gap either. Lack of friends has caused me some concern because of the ramifications that could follow. Sadly, I have found the lack of meaningful relationships to be problematic for a lot of people in the Tampa area. It seems that Tampa is a desert where relationships do not readily thrive. I am alone, but as an introvert that does not bother me on a social level. I am involved with others on a service level, so I can live out love to others. However, where this desert has taken its toll was in lack of stimulation, both creatively and spiritually.

School has been a consistent source of stimulation and growth for me, so it made perfect sense for me to begin to explore what schools had to offer. After a few months of surfing the internet to see what was out there, I found myself narrowing the search to Doctor of Ministry programs in Spiritual Formation. The more I read about this area of study, the more I was intrigued and the more it seemed to fit my interest and passion. One day in my search, I landed upon the website for Tyndale Seminary and their Doctor of Ministry in Spiritual Formation program. I was immediately drawn in and instantly Tyndale topped my short list of potential schools. I kept revisiting their website, wondering and praying if this might be the school and if this might be the right time. Still, echoes from my high school teachers would come back to haunt me, telling me I would not be able to do the required work. In the end I contacted the school by emailing them and expressing my interest.

As a United States citizen, I needed to get my passport and a study visa from Canada. The passport was no problem, but Canada denied my application for a study visa. My heart sank. When I contacted Tyndale with the news, everyone was so supportive, and I was encouraged to reapply for my student visa. This set me back a year, but after stepping back and reflecting on the experience and searching out God's will, I remembered that my original aim was to first complete the church history courses and then begin at Tyndale the next year. Although it was disappointing, I saw the whole visa experience as God closing, or better said in this case, delaying the open door. He knows me better than I, and the second time around was God's perfect timing. I have connected with a wonderful community of brothers and sisters in my cohort. Time and time again God reaffirms that closed doors simply mean that he has better plans in store for me.

I smile as I think of how I have grown in this past year alone. I have discovered a meditative part of me that I was quite unaware even existed. A second area of growth showed itself in a paper I chose to write for the Introduction to Spiritual Formation course that critiqued a portion of the textbook. For me to purposely choose to critique a textbook written by the professor is living on the dangerous side. I have rarely felt authority figures to be safe, but given the sweet spirit of the professor, Evan Howard, I felt it was worth the risk. My judgment proved to be accurate, and I realized afterwards that my voice and confidence are getting stronger as I grow in the Lord. When I think about whom I

have come to be over the years, I find myself smiling and enjoying the person God is making me to be, but the work is not finished.

Moving Forward

> Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; *I am* God, and there is no one like Me. (Isa. 46:9; italics in original)

The more I know God, the more I want to know him, but I am also seeing the importance of love in a greater way. A person cannot love God without loving his or her neighbour (Mark 12:29-31). I have had a heart for people for as long as I can remember. I am finding more and more freedom to slow down and talk more with my students about their relationship with the Lord. I focus more deliberately on my clients' relationship with the Lord. My students and my clients are so receptive and appreciative. As I engage my clients and students in this way, I myself am coming more alive and am more excited to go to my Heavenly Father and spend time with him. Sometimes I think life cannot get better than this, but I know it can.

My goal as I continue to seek a fuller vision of the Lord is also to look for further opportunities to invite others to grow more and more into the image of Christ and to experience the Lord's grace and mercy in new and glorious ways each day. I want as many people as possible to deepen their relationship with the Lord. Sometimes I sense a familiar restlessness, wondering if it might be God gently prompting me for a change in ministry or even location. I do not know yet, but I continue to keep my focus on the Lord, and he will let me know in due time.

The call to strengthen the church while it still remains has not changed. However, how to accomplish that might change, and I am open to the Lord's leading.

In some ways nothing has changed since I first heard at age eight that Jesus loves me. That is still my driving force—to experience God's love and to invite others to the same. As I review my life, I am reminded of these words of the Apostle Paul:

> Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. (Rom. 5:1–5)

This scripture encapsulates my life, and I cannot think of any scripture more fitting to describe how God has worked and continues to work in me. My prayer is that this scripture will continue to be the operative pattern of God's working in my life and that it will be reflected to those with whom I interact to help them find greater peace, faith, hope, and love for and of God. May God be glorified.

Post-Script: Reflecting on the Process

The journey of writing this spiritual autobiography has been an interesting and surprising process. I assumed there would be an investment of time, especially to write about the span of a lifetime, but I was not aware of all that would be required of me. I entered the process thinking that it would be a matter of setting time aside to reflect on my past. It was all that and more; I became a researcher to get to the truth behind incidents and episodes. At times I played the

role of detective, and at other times I was a fact checker. As I took on these roles, I began to get a sense of the importance and power of truth in the telling of my story. The further I got in my story, the more I found myself in prayer and self-examination as I reflected on my choices and motivations. Themes and patterns of behaviour emerged from this process.

The most prevalent pattern is my default stance of observation versus actively engaging. Change does not happen by observation, and the Lord has graciously and unceasingly invited me to follow him and to live out my purpose and calling to his glory. Through this process I have been convicted to tag along less and to let my voice be heard more. On one level, I was aware of this pattern, so it did not come as a shock to me. However, it surprised me that this pattern was so pervasive and caused so much of my spiritual struggle over the years. Clearly, God's persevering with me on this shows that it is an important lesson for me to learn. Not all was about conviction, however. God graciously revealed some positive aspects as well.

I think a lot about faith, hope, and love (1 Cor. 13:13) and their interconnectedness, especially with respect to my life. Before writing my spiritual autobiography, I would have judged hope to be the predominant factor. When I interact with my clients who are low on hope, especially those dealing with depression, I often find myself offering some of my hope since I have plenty to share. However, I cannot pinpoint a specific part of my story that explains the amount of hope I have. I would have listed faith as the second prevalent factor. I base this on my reactions to the many times I have prayed for increased faith and

the impact from reading the biography of George Müller and the autobiography of J. Edwin Orr. God has been so faithful to me over the years. I want to think that some of that has transferred to increased faith on my part, and perhaps my faith in God's past care and provision allows me to hope for the future. As for love, the realization (back in 1999 in my first counseling office) that love had been my driving force spoke powerfully at that time. However, I saw it only in the context of the message given by my Sunday School teacher when I was in third grade. I now see that my pursuit of the love of God has spanned my life and is what I pursued most diligently. Although this surprised me, I was taken aback at the healing I found in some of the more unpleasant parts of my story.

I found that the process of writing my spiritual autobiography required prayer and discernment to determine what to include or exclude and to understand why I chose some things but not others. Where this discernment was particularly important was in reference to some of the more difficult parts of my story that had the potential of casting a disparaging light on certain individuals. The process I used was to write my story unfiltered to get my thoughts on paper. What came out on paper was the private version I have told only to close friends. As I reread the section, I became aware that I had presented it more from a psychological perspective than a spiritual one. There was also still a great deal of pain attached to that version. As I rewrote it keeping the focus on my spiritual life, I found that the specifics of the context became less important and even unnecessary at times. Keeping the focus on what was happening in me spiritually through the experiences helped me to write my story as an actor rather than a reactor, which

was very powerful and healing. Whereas before, I saw myself as a victim of my circumstances, now I see myself as an actor, growing in the Lord through the spiritual wrestling of my soul. The pain I had felt was replaced by greater pity and compassion for others involved. Although I was saddened about the incidents, I was also thankful that God used it to grow me more into his likeness, and I found that I was at a point of peace rather than just acceptance. This was a very powerful and redemptive part of the process, and I praise God for it.

One of the most poignant moments in the process was when I paused and read through part of my story. I was impressed by those who impacted me for good, like Mrs. and Miss Beatty, Phyllis Pratt, Maryann Bessell, Dave Daily, Dan Allender, Diane Powell, and others, and I realized that my story was also a tribute to each of them. God was at work through each of them, and they provided sacred spaces and safe places for me to know God more intimately. Thus, my story became a means to honour them for their part in my sacred story. God has brought a great community to me over the years. I see the interconnectedness of my stories with each member of the community and theirs with mine. When I consider the impact of the autobiographies I have read, this community expands even more, and the unifying piece that brings the stories together is God at work in each life.

This unifying work of God in one's life is an essential aspect of spiritual formation. A spiritual autobiography is written, in part, for that reason. Because of this and by its very nature, spiritual autobiography is a key practice for spiritual formation. Several years ago, I wrote a story of my life from a psychosocial

developmental perspective, and while it was somewhat enlightening, it did nothing to bring me closer to God or my calling. However, telling my story as an experience with God helped me to better understand my life. As a person's relationship with the Lord grows, there will be a greater desire to love others. Spiritual autobiographies should impact others.

Spiritual biographies and autobiographies are written to be read by others. George Müller (2012), J. Edwin Orr (1993), C. S. Lewis (1956; 2001), Corrie ten Boom (ten Boom, Sherrill, and Sherrill 1971; ten Boom and Buckingham 1976), and others have spoken into my life through their autobiographies; they have challenged me and encouraged me to grow deeper and love more openly. Spiritual autobiographies not only speak to the authors but into the lives of their readers. Each one shows the large brushstrokes of some aspects of God, such as grace, mercy, love, and so forth, but each also bears nuances and intricate designs that show God and his care for his children that just could not be seen in any other way.

Spiritual autobiographies are invitations to know God better and to join him in a vibrant, deeper relationship, all within the unique medium of each unique autobiography. However, spiritual autobiographies also offer the potential to change via conviction and repentance. In my own autobiography I was convicted to engage more and to own my voice. In Corrie ten Boom's, it was to forgive the unforgivable. The autobiographies of George Müller and J. Edwin Orr exposed my weak faith and challenged me to walk more by faith. Here again the broad strokes are the same, but each had nuances that spoke to me very differently.

Müller challenged me to go to God in prayer and allow God to work in others' hearts to supply what is lacking. Orr's autobiography resonated with me because of his passion for the church; his walk of faith while following his call exposed my weak faith, but it also encouraged me to emulate him and walk a life of faith by trusting God to supply my needs along the way.

In summary, writing my spiritual autobiography has been a rich, rewarding experience. In the process of writing my story, I engaged in prayer and meditation, along with self-examination. I was challenged and convicted of sin, and I was also encouraged by the growth I saw. Most importantly I became more aware and confident of God's working in my life. The writing process incorporated many practices which promote spiritual formation, and the results of the process have brought me closer to God and to living out my call more fully. I believe God has been glorified through my spiritual autobiography and the process it took to write it. I have been humbled and honoured by the experience.

In response to my own spiritual autobiography and the others that I have read, I am convinced that spiritual formation happens in many ways, each tailored to the individual. Spiritual formation happens as one pursues God in developing an ongoing relationship with him and responds to life as it happens with an intentional, Godward focus. It is my desire to help other believers grow to spiritual maturity. I envision developing several online courses with the end goal of the participants becoming conformed more to the image of Christ. In my life, as hopefully the reader has gleaned, prayer has been an essential element in my relationship with God. Thus, an online course on prayer is like a good starting

point. However, since I want to develop a series of online courses on other spiritual practices, such as Bible reading, mentoring, and writing a spiritual autobiography, it makes sense to first build a foundation that will work for all these practices. The next chapter, Making Disciples—An Instructional Model of Spiritual Formation, will present a model of spiritual formation that is broad enough to be used for several online courses. It is also the model used for the online Personal Prayer Workshop that was field tested in this portfolio.

CHAPTER III:

MAKING DISCIPLES—AN INSTRUCTIONAL MODEL OF SPIRITUAL FORMATION

> An Ethiopian eunuch…had come to Jerusalem to worship, and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah. Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go up and join this chariot." Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" And he said, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. (Acts 8:27–31).

One of the distinctives of the Fundamental Evangelical community I serve is the primacy of the scriptures as the highest authority of faith, the doctrine of the cross of Christ as the sacrificial way of salvation that is procured through faith, the supernatural work of God in a person's life, and living out the gospel, most often expressed through evangelism and making disciples. With the primacy of the scriptures being a key distinctive, Bible study is one of the main avenues to help people grow in the Lord and to become more like Christ. This is generally most often done through the preaching of the Word, Sunday school classes, or Bible study groups. Not all these teachers are formally trained in the Bible or in education. Additionally, there are other aspects of the Christian life and spiritual growth, such as prayer or mentoring relationships, that could be utilized better to aid in developing one's spiritual life.

One of the goals of this chapter is to present an instructional base that could help instructors understand some important considerations to help them understand their students better and to encourage character and spiritual formation in the process. From there, the spiritual life of believers is approached through three venues: public, leader-led, formal worship; the believer's personal, private life with God; and finally, the believer's life within the community of believers, all with the goal of developing spiritual growth of the believer.

Because the focus of this model is geared specifically to the Fundamental Evangelical community, it might be beneficial to review some of the distinctives and common terms within this community.

Simply put, the distinctives of Fundamental Evangelicalism are the primacy of the scriptures as the highest authority of faith, the doctrine of the cross of Christ as the sacrificial way of salvation that is procured through faith, the supernatural work of God in a person's life, and living out the gospel, most often expressed through evangelism and making disciples. Additionally, they hold to separating from all forms of apostasy and groups that are contrary to faith; moreover, they hold to personal separation from worldliness (Montoya 2014, 36). Furthermore, Fundamental Evangelicals hold to the cessation of the sign gifts and to a dispensational interpretation of scripture (Montoya 2014, 37).

Based on various conversations with the community I serve, the term spiritual formation is often equated with a focus on human efforts and the striving for human perfection, generally using practices brought in from Roman Catholicism or elsewhere. One prime example would be contemplative prayer.

There are many approaches to contemplation today that incorporate unbiblical and sub-Christian approaches to contemplative prayer—New Age, Hindu, and Buddhist, to name a few. These approaches "represent the attempt of human effort and natural fortitude to meet the deep hunger for God apart from the true revelation of God in Christ and the empowering work of his Indwelling Spirit" (Coe 2014, 144). Yet, it is unmistakable that the Bible encourages meditative prayer. Thus, care must be given to present practices that align with the scriptures but are void of syncretism. Other examples that would be identified as counterfeit ways to develop one's spiritual life within my community would include centering prayer, Eastern mediation, yoga, and prayer labyrinths, among others (Wilkin 2010, 1001).

Given the negative connotation of the term spiritual formation from those within my community, the term may present unnecessary obstacles that could be avoided by using another term. More common to the Fundamentalist Evangelical community are terms such as growing in Christ, sanctification, and spiritual growth. Thus, in order to work within the framework of the community I serve, my philosophy of spiritual formation from an instructional viewpoint that is laid out in this chapter will adopt a narrow approach toward spiritual formation that will align with the Fundamental Evangelical community and will be referred to more commonly as spiritual growth. With this point of view defined, the definition of spirituality can now be addressed.

One simple yet beautiful definition of spirituality is "life in the Spirit" (Sheldrake 2013, 2). As elegant as it is in its simplicity, this definition begs to be

unpacked for deeper considerations. A Bible word search of the word spirituality (or more accurately, spiritual) yields an interesting observation: The idea of spirituality is a New Testament concept. Of course, this makes sense considering that the Holy Spirit came to indwell believers at Pentecost. In the Old Testament economy, the Holy Spirit was actively working in people's lives much as in the New Testament. Evidence of the Spirit's involvement can be seen in examples of the Spirit being "in" people like Joseph (Gen. 41:38), Joshua (Num. 27:18), and Daniel (Dan. 4:8), for instance; of the Spirit coming "upon" some, such as the judges; and the Spirit filling Bezalel (Exod. 31:3, 35:31) for a special task (Ryrie 1999, 401-402). However, the Spirit generally visited certain saints at certain times. This is not to say the Spirit was not present, but that the Old Testament saints experienced the visitation of the Spirit only at certain times as opposed to the indwelling of the Spirit in New Testament Christians. The stance of Old Testament believers was that of being clean or unclean. Those who were clean could approach God, and those who were unclean first had to go through a purification to become clean so they could then approach God. So, while the goal of Old Testament saints was to live a life of being clean so they could approach God, New Testament saints live in the presence and power of God as the Holy Spirit indwells each believer.

Much like the clean and unclean of the Old Testament, the idea of spirituality also has its contrasting element, that of the flesh (Rom. 8:4-13). The fleshly mind is hostile towards God and cannot please him (Rom. 8:7-8). It is equally important to note the relationship between the "natural body" and the

"spiritual body" (1 Cor. 2:14, 15:44, 46). The New Testament also talks about the natural body, which is the state of unregenerate humankind who has not experienced life in the Spirit. Everyone has a natural body, and although this natural body cannot receive the things of the Spirit, it is not at war with God. The Apostle Paul spoke of the need of the natural body to be raised as a spiritual body. This need to be raised in a spiritual body speaks more of a process that provides a necessary step for life in the Spirit. Congruent with this idea, Kenneth Boa (2001, 19) defined biblical spirituality as "a Christ-centered orientation to every component of life through the mediating power of the indwelling Holy Spirit." Both definitions are good starting points, but anyone who desires to live a life in the Spirit quickly realizes both definitions as too simplistic to be helpful. Philip Sheldrake (2013, 7), too, recognized this as he expanded his definition of Christian spirituality as "the way our fundamental values, lifestyles, and spiritual practices reflect particular understandings of God, human identity, and the material world as the context for human transformation." While this definition is more comprehensive than his original life in the Spirit, it is given from a human perspective and omits God's purpose and perspective.

Another factor to consider before settling on a definition is the various applications of spirituality. On a practical level, it is the lived life in the Spirit or one's relationship with God. However, there are also the dynamics of spirituality, which reflects specific teachings (Howard 2008, 16). For example, spirituality from a contemplative tradition will look differently compared to spirituality from a holiness or charismatic tradition, and so forth. The Fundamental Evangelical

view of spirituality will hold the teachings of the Bible, whose central focus is God (Ps. 40:7; Heb. 10:7), to be basic in guiding believers in an ever-deepening relationship with God while dismissing contemplative prayer because of its association with Christian mysticism. This growing relationship comes about by believing in Jesus (John 11:26-26, 12:44) and humbly pursuing life in the kingdom of God (Matt. 6:33) through the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, Christian spirituality is life lived in and through the Spirit, which develops or deepens an individual's relationship with God wherein the believer in his or her ever-growing walk of faith joins God in his kingdom purpose and glorifies and enjoys him forever. This spirituality includes all the actions, thoughts, attitudes, and practices that live out or proclaim the gospel, both the message of salvation and to the work of God reconciling all things to himself.

Ever-growing is a keyword that suggests a maturing process. The New Testament gives a notable picture of this through the image of a child being nourished with milk, then as the child matures, he or she can eat solid food and eventually meat (1 Cor. 3:2; Heb. 5:12-13; 1 Pet. 2:2). Jesus, in what is commonly called The Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20), laid out the process of discipleship: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:19–20).

The phrase, "making disciples," is from the Greek, "*mathēteúō*," meaning a disciple who not only learns but becomes "attached to one's teacher and to

become [one's] follower in doctrine and conduct of life" (Zodhiates 2000, 3100). This idea of discipleship included baptizing and teaching these new disciples to obey the teachings of Jesus as a way of life. The Great Commission, then, outlines Jesus' strategy for expanding the kingdom of God. This process of making disciples, which involves a maturing process of beginning with a diet of milk and graduating on to solid food and finally to meat, then, is spiritual formation. More simply put, it is "conformation to Christ" (Willard 1994, 225), and this focus should unify every ministry of the church.

The beauty of Jesus giving a broad outline of spiritual formation is that it gives an opportunity to utilize and incorporate new knowledge in such matters as how different personalities worship and relate to God and how the application of learning theories can help with discipleship. For spiritual formation to be relevant, it must address socio-cultural issues that individuals must negotiate successfully to keep growing. New technologies and new applications are appearing almost daily, and these can be invaluable tools. All these resources, along with many others, should be utilized in helping individuals mature in their life in the Spirit. The issue is how to integrate these resources and factors in a way that remains faithful to the Fundamental Evangelical tradition and accomplishes the goal of helping individual believers mature in their relationship with the Lord. The following instructional approach attempts just that.

An Overview of the Model

This model was designed with the specific application in mind of developing online courses to help believers become more conformed to the image

of Christ, initially beginning with prayer. Although the historical practice of prayer was field tested for this portfolio, I eventually want to develop other online courses on spiritual formation, such as Bible reading, mentoring, and even address hindrances to exercising various practices. There are two main divisions in this model. The first is the instructional aspect of the model that focuses on instructional considerations that would relate to developing online courses for spiritual formation. This section approaches instruction from both the perspective of the instructor and the learner. A brief survey of instruction from a biblical-historical perspective provides a foundational base on which to add other considerations. Included in this section is a discussion of communication, which is applicable to both instruction and spiritual formation practices, especially prayer. Other considerations included in this first division are geared to understanding the learner. Topics discussed here include personality types, spiritual temperaments, and a discussion of how faith is applied as disciples grow.

The second division of the model is a discussion of spiritual practices applied in three areas of the Christian life. While not all areas are applicable for all spiritual formation practices, all are applicable for prayer. The first is the formal worship service where believers are led in a prescribed order of worship. This is an essential part of the model as too many Christians attend these services as spectators rather than participants. A second area of practice is one's own personal life with God, and this should pertain to all Christians and all spiritual practices everywhere. This area will be the focus of the online Prayer Workshop that was field tested for this portfolio. The third area is applying spiritual practices

as believers engage one another within the body and with the unsaved. Inherent to any model is a concern that the model becomes a means of growth with change happening on the outside with little, if any, growth on the inside. It must be understood that growth happens through the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit and not the model itself. This model is merely a framework to help people follow the leading and work of God to greater conformity to the image of Christ.

Jesus Christ must remain foundational to any model of spiritual formation. Jesus is the "author and perfecter of faith" (Heb. 12:2), the founder and perfecter, as the English Standard Version proclaims. A strong foundation is paramount for any structure to remain firm. The gospel of Christ is "the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Rom. 1:16). This strong foundation is the work not just of the Son but the Trinity. According to Paul, the Father has "rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son" (Col. 1:13). The Holy Spirit also is involved in the foundational level of the spiritual life of believers. A person must be born of the Spirit to enter into the kingdom of God (John 3:5), and the kingdom of God is about righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17). Having this salvific experience established firmly by the work of the Trinity, believers can then begin to live out their lives in the Spirit.

Established on that solid foundation is a base of instruction "for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the Body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature [person], to the measure of the stature which belongs to the

fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:12–13). To that end, this instructional base should impact believers in formal worship services, their personal life with God, and their public life within the Body of Christ.

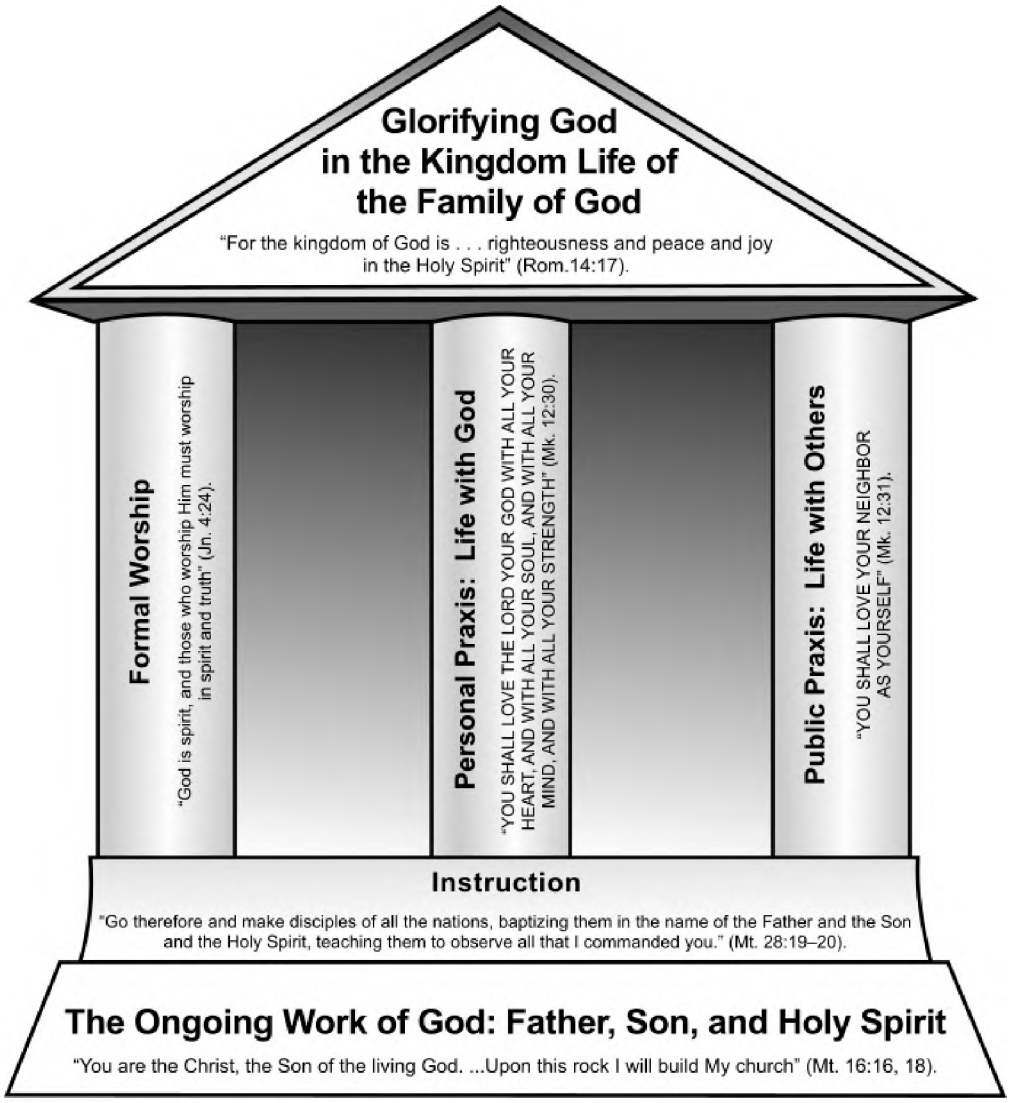


Figure 1. An instructional model for spiritual formation

Figure 1 illustrates an instructional model for spiritual formation. It begins with the foundational work of God, upon which a solid base of instruction further equips believers in their maturing walk with the Lord. Three pillars symbolize aspects of the believers' walk. They represent the life of the believer in leader-led

worship of God, the private or personal life of the believer with God, and a public life lived in relation with other believers but also lived in ministry to others, both the saved and unsaved. The ultimate goal for believers is encapsulated in the pediment, to glorify God as they live out the kingdom life together in the family of God. The foundation, as the work of God, has already been laid. The instructional base and the three pillars, however, need further exploration.

The Instructional Base

Instruction is not only integral to spiritual formation, but "it is the primary means by which Christians are made" (Westerhoff 1992, para. 13). This segment will look at the biblical and historical view of instruction. It also seeks to honour every individual as each is uniquely created in the image of God. Education must be geared to the uniqueness of individuals to help them develop more fully and according to the specific design God has for them. With consideration of people in mind, then the importance of appropriating faith and expressing it will then be explored. The importance of instruction on faith formation is corroborated throughout the Old and New Testament. It is used in both formal and informal settings.

Biblical and Historical View of Instruction

Worship began in the home and was to be an integral part of everyday life. Instruction was to flow from the natural curiosity of children. This is illustrated as Moses instituted the Passover service. As the families observed Passover, Moses commented on the children's inquisitive response and the parental response, saying, "And when your children say to you, 'What does this rite mean to you?'

you shall say, 'It is a Passover sacrifice to the Lord'" (Ex. 12:26-27). Notice also that parents were not only to give an answer but to model reverence to God and obedience to the statutes and teach these things to their children. Moses exhorted Israel not only to "give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, so that you do not forget the things which your eyes have seen and they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and your grandsons" (Deut. 4:9).

Instruction went beyond the cognitive, involving will and emotions as the Israelites physically brought their offerings to the tabernacle and later to the temple. God established several types of offerings: There were burnt (Num. 28-29), grain (Lev. 2:15), guilt (Lev. 4-5), sin (Lev. 6:24-30), and peace (Lev. 7:28-36) offerings. Sin offerings required that the one bringing the offering had to lay a hand on the head of the animal being sacrificed, while the peace offering was for thanksgiving, among other things. The Torah and the historical books kept the memory of God's redemptive acts and love relationship with Israel. The wisdom books sought to increase the understanding and good judgment of followers concerning all areas of life. All Jewish life was immersed in faith practices, which both encouraged a life of holiness and served as a reminder of their relationship with God. In the Old Testament, instruction was for the purpose of "holiness and transformation," and "obedience was the fruit of a faithful response to education" (Pazmiño 1997, 131). Instruction was relational, beginning with the relationship with worshipping parents and then as part of a worshipping community (Pazmiño 1997, 131).

The Gospels record Jesus both preaching and teaching and included instruction as part of the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19–20). Both the Old and New Testaments show a lifestyle of faith, meaning that all aspects of a person's life should acknowledge and include the Lord.

The Greeks in the New Testament age, on the other hand, saw human reason as the way "to discern divine revelation and its implications for all of life" (Pazmiño 1997, 132). In this Hellenistic world, the worth of children was recognized and educating them was important (de Villiers 1998, para. 509-510). The idea of *paideia* was a basic concept in Hellenism, which defined their culture (de Villiers 1998, para. 510); it "represents a culture's consensus about what constitutes human excellence" and "stresses a corporate or communal vision that is imposed upon individuals" (Pazmiño 1997, 133). A key verse for *paideia* in the New Testament is Ephesians 6:4, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." For the early Christians *paideia* referred to nurturing, discipline, and character formation (Pazmiño 1997, 134). The pattern of modelling and teaching mentioned above concerning Exodus 12:26 is again brought out in the larger context when taken in concert with Ephesian 5:29 (italics in original), "for no one ever hated his [or her] own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also *does* the church." The point here is that Christians are to follow the model of Christ even as he nourishes and loves the church to bring it to maturity, and instruction is a valuable means to aid in accomplishing this throughout one's journey to maturity.

To summarize, both the Old and New Testaments endorse an instructional view for teaching and discipling believers. Instruction tapped into the students' natural curiosity and engaged the cognitive and affect aspects, involving both the will and emotions. The Gospels stress a lifestyle faith wherein all aspects of one's life should acknowledge the Lord and his work in a person's life. Instruction included modelling and took on many forms, such as nurturing, discipline, and character and spiritual formation. The goal of instruction is to bring believers to greater maturity, being conformed more to the image of Christ.

Today, competing worldviews can easily lead a younger believer astray and impact the way he or she looks at the world. Thus, the need for developing a strong Christian worldview is paramount to the educational process.

Instructional Considerations

The ultimate goal of instruction is to help equip others so that they can join God in his kingdom purpose, so that all believers may glorify and enjoy him forever. The goal is to make disciples—committed, passionate disciples—who love the Lord deeply—with all one's heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30).

Any moment can be a teachable moment—an opportunity lends itself to instruction and a teacher seizes the moment to take the student further along toward maturity. However, with instruction that is more formal and planned, such as when developing a model for teaching spiritual formation practices, certain factors should be considered. For example, a kindergarten teacher can begin to teach a child to read, but if that child has not learned all the letters of the alphabet somewhere along the line, the child will need to be taught those missing letters. If

a child has little interest in learning, a good teacher will work to increase the child's interest. The principle is the same when instructing adults in matters of spiritual formation. A good instructor will also consider other related matters when it comes to instruction for spiritual formation. For example, interpreting the world through a biblical world lens can help people see truth more easily. Understanding not only how people learn but how sin affects the learning process will help prepare the instructor to aid students in addressing the specific ways sin might be hindering learning in his or her students. Other areas addressed in this section include the communication process, intentionality in spiritual formation, and attentiveness, all with the goal to help instruct students to move them toward the goal of greater spiritual growth, through knowing God better and yielding to the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

Developing a Christian Worldview

One area of concern is the significant number of Christians who compartmentalize their faith and do not know how to integrate it with the things they encounter outside the church. This compartmentalization is a huge problem given that the vast majority of time is spent outside the church and in the world. For example, a study done at Southeastern University's Bayside Campus revealed that at the beginning of the study none of the participants had a biblical theistic worldview and only fifteen per cent had a moderate Christian worldview (Prince 2020, iv). This is not just a concern for Christian universities, but it is a concern across the board. Barna's research reveals "that only 17 percent of Christians who

consider their faith important and attend church regularly actually have a biblical worldview" (Barna Group 2017, para. 1).

Jesus' prayer was not that Christians would be taken out of the world, but that they would be protected from the evil one while in it; protection comes through sanctification by the truth, which is God's Word (John 17:15-19). Many Christians just do not know how to live in the world without being of the world. One key is the Word of God, which many know, but they do not know how to appropriate it to help them navigate the things they encounter outside the church. Simply put, many Christians do not have a Christian worldview. A person's worldview determines what a person thinks about God, his or her openness to accepting God's message, and even how he or she will receive it (Greenwold 2007, 15).

Part of the task of instruction, then, is to help people to develop a Christian worldview that will allow them to think and act Christianly as they encounter the world around them. The fundamental understanding is that truth is absolute and knowable. The living God is "the pillar and support of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15). God is the God of truth (Ps. 31:5; Isa. 65:16), Jesus Christ himself is truth (John 1:17, 14:6, 18:37; Eph. 4:21), and the Spirit is truth (John 14:17, 15:26, 16:13; 1 John 4:6). God's word is truth (John 17:17). Christians can know the truth (John 8:32, 16:13). God is the Creator of all; all truth is God's truth.

It is much easier to see things from a biblical perspective when hearing a sermon or listening to a Bible teacher. It is quite another thing to bring in a biblical perspective when studying sociology at a secular university or when a

new believer is out with friends who suggest going to a risqué nightclub because the food there is so good. When addressing something encountered in the world, it should be examined by looking at it from the perspective of the realm of God and his truth. Some elements or aspects of what is considered will likely conform to God's truth, and others will fall outside it. Another way of saying this is, whatever a person encounters in life, it should be filtered through a Christian worldview to ascertain what is consistent with God, his truth, his character, his purposes, and his plans. Once individuals have done this, they will find that some things align with the kingdom of God quite nicely, while other things can be identified as inconsistent with the kingdom of God and should be rejected.

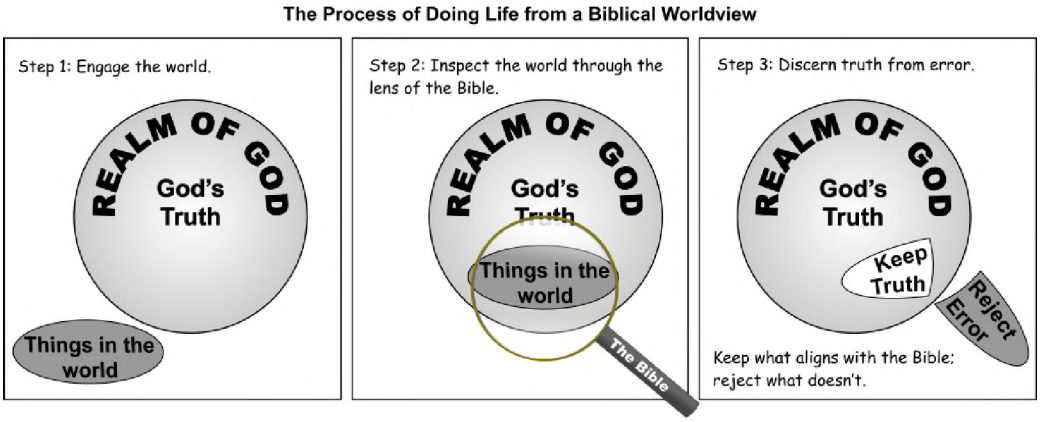


Figure 2. The process of Bible integration

Figure 2 illustrates the process of filtering the things in the world that come to believers so that they can discern what should be embraced and what should be rejected. This filtering process is sometimes quick and relatively easy. For example, if someone suggests going to see a sexually explicit movie with them, it should not take long to determine that would be contrary to God's plan and should be rejected quickly. However, spending time with a friend would be

consistent with kingdom living, so the believer could keep that aspect but suggest some other activity that would be more wholesome and edifying. Often the process is more complicated. For example, if a student is taking a course in psychology and comes across a unit on Carl Jung, matters can get convoluted quickly. Jung is widely favoured among some Christians because of his interest in spiritual things; however, Jung viewed spirituality in a much broader, general sense than would be consistent with a Fundamental Evangelical view of spirituality. To the undiscerning student, this could lead to some problems. To address this, instructors should seek to develop the whole student, utilizing "cognitive, affective, and behavioral objectives through instruction, motivation, and training. What students know, feel, and do should be integrated in a holistic process that permits God's truth to inform personal values and establish moral behavior" (Stevens 2001, 141). With this type of instruction, students should be able to integrate the Bible into their learning process, making it easier to spot any inconsistencies with God's truth and respond appropriately to what is and what is not. Discernment is key, and one's personal theology and conscience may also impact what he or she will accept or reject.

Learning to think, feel, and act Christianly is paramount to living a life that pleases God. Not only can this process be applied to things people encounter in the world, but it can also be used in self-examination to discern the workings of one's own heart and attitudes. Developing a Christian mindset is one key to helping believers develop into discerning, mature Christians whose focus is on living well in the kingdom of God. Decisions are made daily on various areas of

life, such as schooling choices for children or what activities may or may not be appropriate. Often there is no one right answer. However, armed with a Christian worldview, discernment that is from the Lord, and growing maturity, Christians will be more likely to live a life and make choices that are pleasing to the Lord. Therefore, possessing a Christian worldview that embraces a holistic concept of not only cognitive, affective, and behavioral objectives but as well the inclusion of life lived in the Spirit will better prepare students to discern truth. The adage, practice makes perfect, emphasizes the value of practicing various disciplines for godly living. The starting point, however, is developing one's thinking and cognitive abilities, which is addressed in the next section.

Developing Integrative Learning Practices

A second consideration that is essential to Christian growth and formation is thinking as a cognitive function. The cognitive level and maturity of the learner will have a significant impact on the content taught. Benjamin Bloom in 1956 developed a taxonomy of educational objectives that is now known as Bloom's Taxonomy (Adams 2015, 152). This taxonomy arranges cognitive skills from lower-order to higher-order skills: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Adams 2015, 152). A revision of the taxonomy changed the phraseology and the order of the cognitive processes, providing an updated hierarchy: remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, and create (Adams 2015, 153).

Evan Howard (2008, 86-92) takes this taxonomy and broadens the application to stages or states of human experience and presents it as a cycle,

depicting how the various stages work. Howard's terminology reflects the broader application to life in general: being aware, experiencing, understanding, judging, deciding and acting, and integrating. Additionally, Howard (2008, 160) highlighted the impact of sin on the learning process that can prevent people from knowing God, stating that "one's will can be free yet constrained by sin." Every Christian instructor should be aware of sin's impact on students and their learning processes. The following briefly reviews Howard's (2008, 160-161) experiential process from the perspective of the impact of sin: At the first stage, being aware, sin keeps the student from desiring more awareness, which prevents gaining more insights about God. At the second stage, which is experiencing, sin keeps students comfortable with being shallow as well as questioning legitimate perceptions because of their faulty worldviews. At the stage of understanding, students will be hindered from pursuing honest inquiry, preferring to avoid having their thoughts put under scrutiny and choosing to settle for too little. At the judging stage, the students' logic is flawed because their minds are made up or they are afraid to admit they might be wrong. At the deciding and acting stage, the students' commitments are made unwisely, selfishly, and without discernment and tending towards unethical judgments. At the final stage, integration, students will lean towards leaving God outside of their lives. This bent towards a secular worldview underscores not only the importance of teaching from a Christian worldview but of inviting students to become aware of the ways sin impacts even their learning process and the ways they understand their world. A greater awareness of the

impact of sin in one's life can lead to repentance, which in turn presumably will lead to a better understanding of the world and certainly of God.

Whether one uses Bloom's Taxonomy, Adams' revision, or Howard's stages of human experience, each describes "the cognitive processes by which thinkers encounter and work with knowledge" (Armstrong 2010, sec. The Revised Taxonomy). Christians, more than anyone else, should excel at thinking because they know the God of all truth. Some parents who do not think of future ramifications of their demands insist that children comply rather than understand the reasoning behind commands to obey; the result could be blind obedience with a disengaged heart or rebellion, and neither glorifies God. Jesus did not teach for blind obedience. Jesus' response to his disciples shows a different approach.

For example, in Mark 8, after an encounter between Jesus and the Pharisees and Sadducees had transpired, Jesus and the disciples departed and crossed over to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. When they got there, Jesus used the experience as a teaching moment, saying "Watch out! Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod" (Mark 8:15). With this the disciples began to reason among themselves, thinking that his comment was initiated because they forgot to bring food. Jesus' response to them was to join their discussion. With that he asked a series of questions to steer their thinking: "And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, 'Why do you discuss *the fact* that you have no bread? Do you not yet see or understand? Do you have a hardened heart? Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember'" (Mark 8:17-18; italics in original). Here Jesus encourages the

disciples to remember so that understanding would increase. After rehearsing the two miracles of the bread and fish with the five thousand and the four thousand, Jesus again stressed the importance of understanding when he stated, "Do you not yet understand?" (Mark 8:21). Again, Jesus fully expected his disciples to integrate their memory and experiences to gain greater understanding. He did not just give them the answer, but he redirected their thinking and encouraged them to think for themselves. Jesus dialoguing with his disciples sets a great example; parents and teachers would do well to engage learners in meaningful dialogue to encourage students to think and learn as they experience life, encounter new things, and consider the implications of what they have learned.

Developing Communication Processes

Communication skills are vital to spiritual formation as instruction cannot happen without it, and students need to master four core competencies to help them to think, learn, and work: reading, writing, listening, and speaking (Hendricks 2003, 48). Within the framework of the church, the issues that stand out are reading, specifically how to read the Bible, and how to carry on a conversation or dialogue, a process that includes both listening and speaking, with someone, and that someone can be God himself. How to read the Bible will be addressed later under the second pillar of personal praxis. On a fundamental level, prayer is dialogue with God, and dialogue consists of three or four components, depending on the focus. Because much of the application for dialogue will be prayer, this dynamic will also be covered more thoroughly in the personal praxis

section. However, because listening also applies to learning but is rarely taught, some comments on listening can be informative in this instruction section.

Most people in North America are taught how to read and write in the elementary grades at least at a basic level, and speech classes may be offered in high school. Those who go on to college generally become better readers, writers, and even speakers, or at least that is the expectation. However, much less emphasis is put on training students to become good listeners in the United States, as evidenced by the fact that less than half of the states test for listening comprehension skills on their annual English Arts assessments (Listenwise Blog 2021, para.1). Listening can be defined "as a conscious, cognitive effort involving primarily the sense of hearing and leading to interpretation and understanding" (Sayeekumar 2013, 704). This definition is a good starting point, but there are several different types of listening: informative, critical, discriminative, appreciative, relationship, and empathetic (Sayeekumar 2013, 704-705). Informative listening is for understanding the message, critical listening would be helpful when filtering things through a Christian worldview, and discriminative listening is necessary to all types of situations because it allows the hearer to pick up nuances in meaning (Sayeekumar 2013, 705). Informative, critical, and discriminative listening are helpful ways to gather information to process through the cognitive functions and could be used when learning theological truths. Appreciative listening pertains to things like listening to music and could be applied to listening to special pieces offered by the worship team or choir. Appreciative listening could also be applied to the more poetic sections of the

scriptures, such as the Psalms. The appreciative listening process utilizes the affective operations.

Both relationship and empathic listening are of particular interest for spiritual formation. Just as it sounds, relationship listening is listening for information with the goal of using it to improve relationships between individuals (and the Lord), while empathetic listening is for the purpose of seeing things from the perspective of the other (Sayeekumar 2013, 705-706). As with appreciative listening, the affective and cognitive operations are both at work in each of these listening types. Listening requires the listener to be attentive, which will be more likely to happen when he or she either cares about the message or the messenger.

Although good listeners may intuitively draw upon appropriate types of listening, a good instructor will aid his or her students by cuing the students on expectations. For example, if someone is teaching a timeline of biblical events, one learning objective might be for the student to learn the facts (using informative listening), but a second objective may be for the student to respond to the work and plan of God through the ages (using appreciative listening). Good teachers will invite the affective skills of appreciative and empathic listening. Allowing time for reflection or asking reflective questions could also elicit appreciative listening. Another example would be teaching about hospitality. If the teacher elicits only informative listening skills, students may learn the importance of hospitality and even how to offer it, but when empathic listening is encouraged, then the students are drawn to act on what they know and exercise hospitality.

Listening is a process and a skill that can be honed, and how one listens can impact how he or she applies what is heard. Good teachers will help to develop the various listening types in their students while inviting them to move beyond a cognitive exercise to personal application and practice. Additionally, since listening, unlike hearing, is an active and voluntary process that requires conscious effort (Sayeekumar 2013, 706), it also involves the will, which allows listeners to be intentional.

Developing Intentionality

If a student is not intentional about receiving instruction, then learning can be happenstance. Will gives people the wherewithal to choose. Intentionality provides direction. It is the "structure which gives meaning to experience" (May 2007, 223). As such, intentionality can steer the learner's choices. In the context of listening, it can help bridge the gap between the speaker and the listener (May 2007, 225). It can also provide the structure for individuals to actively participate in worship and to engage in learning activities that will help them to grow spiritually. Intentionality moves desire to active participation.

Clarifying a person's intentionality identifies the real struggle, which helps individuals direct attention to what may be hindering or distracting them from true worship or growth (May 2007, 247). Growing spiritually will not just happen on its own or accidently. It will take intentional effort, perhaps even a striving.

There are several examples that show the importance of intentionality in the Bible. First, God shows intentionality in his dealings with people. Hebrews 4:12 states, "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-

edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart." The Apostle Paul speaks of God's kind intention towards those in the Body of Christ (Eph. 1:5, 9).

Joshua 24:15 stands out in the Old Testament as an example of intentionality in the form of a striving or personal resolve where Joshua challenges Israel to choose for themselves whom they will serve. Implied here is not just an exercise of will to choose God or the gods of the Amorites or other false gods of their fathers; it includes ongoing service. It not only gives direction to the choice, but it requires intentionality and also demonstrates the tie between intentionality and the future. This idea is consistent with May's understanding of intentionality as he stated, "Will and intentionality are intimately bound up with the future. Both meanings—simple future, something will happen; and personal resolve, I will make it happen—are present in varying degrees in each statement of intentionality" (May 2007, 243). While Israel could choose God, personal resolve would be necessary for them to continue to serve him. The same goes for believers today.

William Law expresses the importance of intention in living a God-honouring life:

> And it is so far from being impossible now, that if we can find any Christians that sincerely intend to please God in all their actions, as the best and happiest thing in the world, whether they be young or old, single or married, men or women, if they have but this intention, it will be impossible for them to do otherwise. This one principle will infallibly carry them to this height of charity, and they will find themselves unable to stop short of it. (Law 1999, chap. II, para. 16)

However, intention is not the same thing as intentionality. Intention suggests a desire or plan, such as an individual's intention might be to read the Bible every day, but without a commitment to that desire, other things can easily distract and draw that person away from daily Bible reading. Intentionality must include the element of commitment and personal resolve to follow through. Paul called believers to this very idea of personal resolve while modeling the role community can play in encouraging believers to be intentional when he exhorted the Galatians: "Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary" (Gal. 6:9). Sustained intentionality is the foundation of discipline. For individuals to grow into spiritual maturity, it will take a lifelong, sustained effort in practicing the disciplines God has laid out for believers (Hull 2010, 131). An important strategy for sustaining intentionality is through accountability within the church community. This will be covered more in the section entitled, Pillar Three: Public Praxis.

Thus, suffice it to say here that intentionality is necessary within the context of communication and in the broader context of living a spiritually formed life. It is also an essential component of the learning process. As important as intentionality is, it needs to be used in concert with another key element, being attentive.

Developing Attentiveness

A person can be very intentional about reading the Bible, for example, but if he or she is not attentive to what the passage is saying, then the message is lost. All creation declares the glory of God (Ps. 19:1), but if people are not paying

attention, they can miss it. Attentiveness has several nuances of meaning: being present or engaged in the moment with another, paying attention as in observing or noting, or mindfulness, which is more self-focused. These ideas need to be unpacked to understand the potential of each aspect better.

Mindfulness today is most often talked about in cognitive psychology as a process to make one aware of his or her thoughts and experiences and using it as one way to change how to relate to them (Papies et al. 2015, 148). Although this application is often used in meditation that may not conform to the Evangelical mindset, the term, used in the sense of being aware and apart from the meditative aspects, does have value within a Christian worldview and can be used to help in spiritual formation. Mindfulness, or being mindful, can help the mind to be aware of what it is thinking, and awareness can transcend that thinking (Williams and Penman 2012, 31). However, with awareness comes choice, and this is where mindfulness, as prescribed in secular settings, falls short. As believers become aware of their thoughts, then they can respond in an appropriate manner. The Apostle Paul exhorted the Corinthians to take "every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5). Many people live with much stress and anxiety, both of which can hinder worship. Mindfulness can help believers become aware of these burdens, thus allowing them to lay them aside so that they may be free to worship the Lord unencumbered (Heb. 12:1). Mindfulness can have significant value as individuals prepare for worship activities. Worshippers who first take time to be mindful can become aware of any thoughts that might keep them from being able to focus on God in worship. This awareness can be

equally important in relationships. If someone is preoccupied with other thoughts, he or she will not be available to the other person. Mindfulness used this way, or awareness, can free up the individual to engage more fully in both worship and interactions with others.

The second facet of attentiveness seems relatively straightforward: paying attention as in observing or noting. Whereas the focus of mindfulness is inward, the focus here is more about the world outside of self. God speaks to his children in many different ways: through his Word, children at play, a rainbow, springtime, young love, and on and on. All creation speaks of God. Being attentive and noticing these things can be nourishing to the soul: "Everything can bless us, but we've got to be there for the blessing to occur. Being present with quality is a decision we are invited to make each day" (Wiederkehr 1990, xiii). Attentiveness elicits response. Sometimes it is in awe and gratitude at discovered blessings; other times attentiveness requires a different kind of engagement.

Another aspect to this kind of attentiveness is more akin to being careful than to notice or be aware. God was telling the Israelites to pay attention or "be on your guard" in what he told them (Ex. 23:13). In other words, God is telling Israel to obey him. Teachers use this language regularly today. It would not be uncommon for a teacher to caution students to pay attention when they are focused elsewhere. The teacher is expecting an obedient response from his or her class. This facet of attentiveness calls for believers to actively engage the world outside themselves by paying attention and with the intention of seeing or hearing God at work and then responding in a fashion that connects with God and his

purposes. Even so, there is a third facet of attentiveness that requires even more of a person.

Care is another essential component of attentiveness. Care, according to May, is the relationship between people, and "though it goes beyond feeling, it begins there. It is a feeling denoting a relationship of concern, when the other's existence matters to you; a relationship of dedication, taking the ultimate form of being willing to get delight in or, in ultimate terms, to suffer for, the other" (May 2007, 303). He goes on to state, "Feeling commits one, ties one to the object, and ensures action" (May 2007, 303). This kind of attentiveness is necessary for a deep relationship with the Lord. It is necessary for true worship and spiritual growth, but it is an equally important component of life within the body of believers, which is covered in Pillar Three: Public Praxis.

Being attentive in all aspects of attentiveness (being present, paying attention, and care) is important for the disciple but also for the instructor. With almost thirty years of teaching experience, I have seen many students move from failing to passing just by being attentive to their struggles in the classroom and reaching out to them. Attentiveness is a key consideration to exercise when teaching and discipling others. Generally speaking, my experience has been that when I am attentive to students and their needs, the students also become more attentive in their lives also.

This section has covered five instructional considerations: developing the student's worldview to be more comprehensively Christian, addressing how sin affects how one thinks and whether or not he or she receives truth, teaching

students to be intentional in the process, and finally, being attentive. These considerations not only can help students become better learners, but they can help students with character formation and spiritual growth as they learn to apply them to other areas of their lives under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

The focus of the next section is to understand learners with respect to their unique needs, styles of learning, and personalities. Taking these aspects of a person into consideration can help improve the instructional process as well as encourage individuals to worship and live out their faith in a way that honors how God has created them to be.

Understanding the Learner

Each person is a unique individual as each is distinctively created to show forth God's glory. No two individuals are identical. Even monozygotic twins, so-called identical twins, are not identical. There are often slight variances in appearances, and even their fingerprints are different. If this applies on a physical level, it follows with the cognitive and affective systems as well as personality. People learn what is personally meaningful to them (Brandt 1998, 5). The Apostle Paul understood that there were differences between individuals and acknowledged the need to interact differently with them accordingly for the sake of the gospel (1 Cor. 9:19-23). Respecting these differences should be a guiding influence on the church's efforts to develop spiritual maturity in believers and even in reaching out to those outside the church. Understanding and appreciating the various types of personalities is one way to honour God's creative work

within people as well as aid in creating an environment that is conducive to spiritual growth and maturation.

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator®

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI) has long been a standard assessment used to determine personality types. It is the most familiar and widely used tool to assess learning styles (Waters 2012, 121-122; Bruce 2015a). Based on Jung's theory of psychological types, the MBTI was originally intended to aid "parents, teachers, students, counselors, clinicians, and clergy to find a rationale for the personality differences they encounter in their work and daily lives" (Myers and Myers 1980, xvii; Bruce 2015a, 9). The MBTI identifies four dichotomies: Introversion or Extraversion, Sensing or Intuition, Thinking or Feeling, Judging or Perceiving. Introversion or Extraversion distinguishes energy orientation. Introverts favour their inner world and are energized inwardly, while extraverts focus on the outer world and are energized by interaction with it. Sensing or Intuition distinguishes the preferred way one takes in information. Sensing types interpret their world through the five senses and focus on the basic information of present realities, while Intuitive types think imaginatively and conceptually, preferring to interpret information and organizing it into patterns. Thinking and Feeling identifies decision-making processes. Thinking types analyze information from an objective stance, using logic and consistency; however, Feeling types give weight to how people will be impacted and consider special circumstances, and they are more subjective in their decision making. Judging and Perceiving assess people's lifestyle orientation. Judging types like to

decide on a plan and be prepared; they like closure. Perceiving types like to stay open to new opportunities, remaining open and flexible to change. Undoubtedly, no one style of instruction or one style of worship will satisfy all these types.

Extraverts thrive in group settings, while introverts prefer solitude or small groups. A group of eight to twelve people, which would allow members to express themselves without subdividing into smaller groups, is ideal (Gladding 1994; Bruce 2015a, 10). A group of this size is large enough to offer stimulation for extraverts yet sufficiently small to accommodate introverts. Group discussion stimulates thinking for extraverts, but introverts need some quiet time to process their thoughts. Planning for both, such as asking a discussion question and then giving a couple of moments for the group to think about it quietly will help introverts to become involved more in the conversation while beginning immediately after asking the discussion question will prime extraverts for more thinking. Extraverts usually launch the discussion, while introverts will speak later after they have had time to process their thoughts inwardly.

Sensing types tend to focus on rules over insights and are more conservative concerning change (Ross 2012, 833; Bruce 2015a, 10). They may also place importance on religious form and structure, making change difficult for them, and they usually draw clear lines between the sacred and the secular (Hall 2012, 850; Bruce 2015a, 10). Intuitive types, however, tend not to see boundaries between the sacred and the secular and respond to symbols because they enjoy the complexity that is found in religious belief and practice (Hall 2012, p. 851; Bruce 2015a, 10). Accommodating both types could be as simple as lighting a candle; it

would anchor the sensing types while inviting intuitive types into the deeper meaning of the symbol. Thinking types may see spiritual life as a search for meaning and truth, and their faith may involve struggle and intellectual questioning; thus, theology may be of interest to them (Hall 2012, 852). They think in terms of concepts. On the other hand, feeling types will value relationships, seeing them as both a place to express their faith and to reveal more faith; harmony and sensitivity are also of great importance to them (Hall 2012, 853). They think in terms of values. When presented with the story of the Feeding of the Five Thousand, Thinkers will focus on theological truths that can be drawn from the story and could be drawn into a discussion about the connection of Jesus feeding the five thousand with God providing manna in the Wilderness for the Israelites. Feelers would more likely focus on the narrative and the various relationships within the story, such as Jesus' compassion for the people and the disciples' obedience as they followed Jesus' instructions. As might be expected, Thinking and Feeling types will be drawn to considerably different kinds of service as well.

Judging types like closure, order, and predictability; commitment is valued. Their counterparts, the Perceivers, enjoy keeping their options open and prefer spontaneity. Routine will bore Perceivers, while variety and impromptu or impulsive activities may disrupt Judging types. Therefore, Judging types look to religious practices for providing structure, while Perceiving types lean toward religion as a source for enriching experiences (Ross, Weiss, and Jackson 1996, 267). New activities can present problems for Judging types, while Perceivers

would tend to be open to them. Engage Perceiving learners in the activity first and be sure to lay out clear expectations for the Judging types. This way they will have time to adjust and feel more comfortable by knowing what to expect.

Given the diversities found in these four dichotomies, facilitators and spiritual leaders should strive to incorporate a broad range of activities and approaches to accommodate various learning styles. The MBTI can be a useful tool within the cognitive domain to gain an understanding of people and how they interact with the world and make decisions. However, understanding the diversities within the affective domain can also be valuable as engaging the cognitive, affective, and will operations will more likely engage in a way that promotes a learning that fosters change.

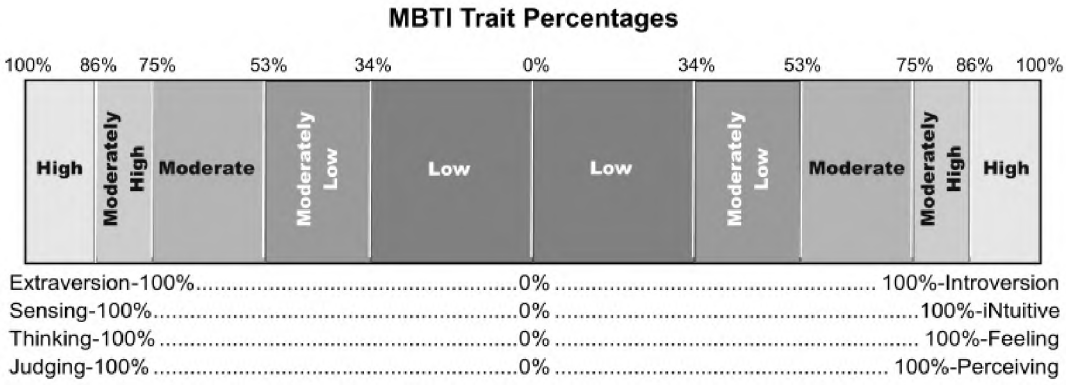


Figure 3. MBTI percentage and continuum

Figure 3 shows the continuum of the four bipolar traits. The range shows that rarely is anyone 100% of any one set of bipolar traits. The percentages follow a bell curve for the bipolar traits, indicating that most people fall within the middle ranges. This means that although there are dominant traits, most people have degrees of the non-dominant trait as well.

Understanding the different personality types has had a big impact on my instructional model. The MBTI is a reminder of how intricately and wonderfully each person is made (Ps. 139:14-15), and one way to honor God and individuals is to respect and enjoy their differences and how they process information and to give students opportunities to learn in ways that are natural to their own personality type. I have taught theories of personality to college students for well over ten years. One of their assignments is to take the Jung Typology Test™, which yields results that correspond to the MBTI and then to reflect on their results. I have read of introverted students who feel less than their counterparts, extraverts, but feel such relief to realize introversion is okay, just different. I have also read the agony of some Feeling students who have somehow carried the idea that making decisions based on Feeling is wrong while making decisions based on examining the facts is the correct way. For these students to realize that the upside of Feeling is that it allows them to make compassionate decisions more easily is a game changer for them. When I developed my research project, I wanted the participants to have a better understanding of their personality and spiritual temperament so that they might have greater freedom to explore and use various prayer activities that suited them best according to how God designed them but also be okay with rejecting what did not.

The Temperaments

Temperaments are not the most empirically based model of viewing people's styles of tackling life, but they can provide additional understanding of various dispositions of individuals and how they impact their engagement in life

and relationships, even relationship with God (Howard 2008, 201). Although many different schemas have been developed over the years, traditionally there are four temperaments based on the four humors: Sanguine people are high energy and get restless quickly and would be drawn more to worship and praise services over one that is more contemplative. Phlegmatic individuals are relaxed, stable, and dependable and would tend to thrive with routine. They would find it much easier to establish a routine of daily devotions than would those who are sanguine. Choleric types are rational thinkers and reserved in affective operations, except anger. They are self-confident and self-reliant and often seen in leadership roles. Once grasped by the truth of the gospel, much like the Apostle Paul, a choleric will do something about it. Melancholic types are deep thinkers and feelers and often highly creative and persuasive. An interior prayer life of contemplation would come easily to melancholic personalities.

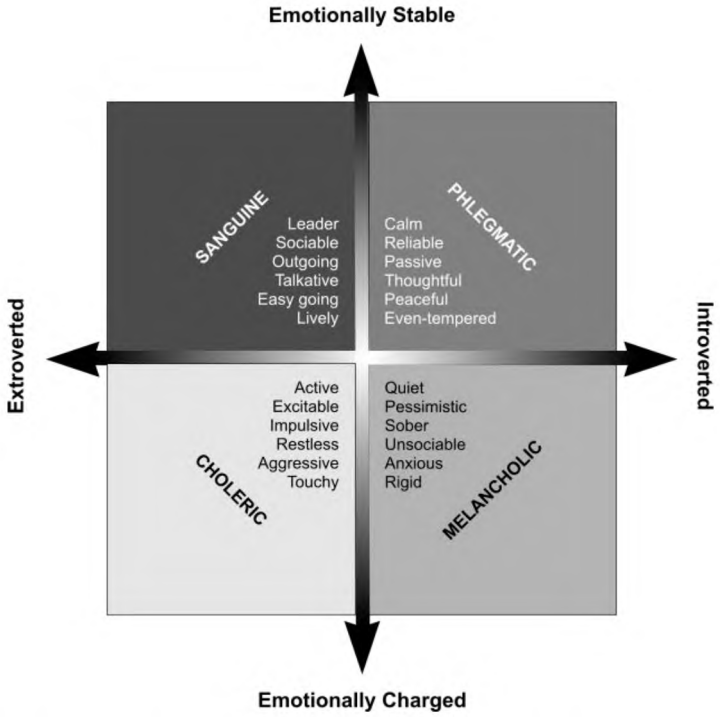


Figure 4. The temperaments based on the four humours

Figure 4 shows a summary of the four temperaments. The arrows demonstrate the bipolar movements from extraversion to introversion and from emotionally stable to emotionally charged dynamics within the temperaments. Although there is no hard distinction between what constitutes temperaments versus personality, temperament is generally considered to be one's predisposition that can be observed in infants and has a genetic and neurobiological basis as well as being consistent over time and situations (De Pauw and Mervielde 2010, 315). In other words, temperaments are tied to one's genetic makeup (nature), while personality traits are developed through life experiences and circumstances (nurture). An example of this would be a child that has a greater temperament bent towards extraversion as an infant, but as that child is reared by introverted parents, that child may develop a less extraverted, more introverted personality.

Even so, that same child may revert to being more extraverted once he or she has grown, moved away from home, and engaged in college life and other experiences. Although personality traits are relatively stable over time, they can change. Temperaments are relatively more stable because of the genetic aspect.

Gary Thomas has presented another schema for temperaments applied to Christian spirituality in which he describes ways people draw near to God (Thomas 2009, 21) with "many different and acceptable ways of demonstrating [one's] love for God" (Thomas 2009, 18). He believed that most people "will naturally have a certain predisposition for relating to God, which is [their] predominant spiritual temperament" (Thomas 2009, 21-22). Thomas (2009, 21) himself seems unclear about the distinction between temperaments and personality traits, as he identifies the MBTI as temperaments. He does acknowledge that people are created with a "variety of dispositions and inclinations" drawn from his study of "biblical figures, historic church movements, and various personality temperaments" (Thomas 2009, 21). The value in Thomas' spiritual temperaments is not so much in the field of psychology but that it gives a framework to use that invites individuals to draw near to God and express their love to him in ways that align with how God designed them. It also allows for appreciation for the Creator God who designed each person in so many different ways. For example, one of Thomas' spiritual temperaments is what he identifies as the naturalist. Nature played a big part in me becoming curious about God as I spent summer weekends in the woods in awe of his marvelous creation. For me personally, the naturalist spiritual temperament is not

connected to my personality as much as it connects to my soul or my spirit and creates a desire to know and enjoy God more. Another temperament that resonates with my spiritual autobiography is the intellectual. Education and learning are exciting for me, and studying the Bible invites me to draw even closer to God. New insight into a biblical truth or reviewing God at work in the Bible draws me into a greater appreciation for God and deepens my worship of him.

Thomas identified nine spiritual temperaments: (1) Naturalists are drawn to God and experience him in nature, and nature invites them into worship. Creation is seen as a holy place that invites the naturalist to prayer (Thomas 2009, 45). (2) Sensates want to be filled with sights, sounds, and smells; they want to be overwhelmed by them, and they are drawn into the awe and splendor through the senses. Often this type enjoys liturgical worship because it stirs the senses (Thomas 2009, 23). (3) Traditionalists prefer a disciplined life of faith and enjoy rituals, symbols, and the sacraments; they have a need for both ritual and structure (Thomas 2009, 24). (4) Ascetics desire solitude and simplicity; they want to be left alone in prayer and want nothing to do with the trappings of religion, which are seen as distractions. A quiet environment gives space for ascetics to worship (Thomas 2009, 25). (5) Defining worship as "standing against evil," activists are drawn to a sense of justice and social action (Thomas 2009, 26). (6) Caregivers love God through serving others. This service may be nursing sick people, but it could just as well be something like lending money to someone in need, working in a soup kitchen, repairing a car, or a myriad of other activities (Thomas 2009,

143). (7) Enthusiasts come alive with excitement and mystery of worship and are drawn to celebratory worship. They are the cheerleaders! Enthusiasts want to know concepts of God, but they also want to experience and feel them and to be moved by them (Thomas, 2009, 28). (8) Contemplatives love God through adoration, loving God as deeply and purely as possible. Images of God as lover, loving Father, and the Bridegroom are typical with contemplatives, and they would be comfortable with an unstructured "prayer of the quiet" (Thomas 2009, 24, 28). (9) Intellectuals need to have their minds stirred for their hearts to come fully alive. They live in a world of concepts. When their minds are awakened by a new understanding of God or his work, then they come alive to worship (Thomas 2009, 194; Bruce 2015a, 12). No one type is the correct type. Thomas (2009, 217) acknowledged that individuals will likely have more than one dominant spiritual temperament and that they can develop over time. Thomas (2009, 218) also recommended that after taking the assessment, people should focus on the three strongest temperaments when beginning to explore and develop ways to implement them.

Table 1 highlights some of the key characteristics of Thomas' nine spiritual temperaments and includes some biblical support or examples of the temperaments. Although not included in the table, Thomas identifies examples from the life of Christ, which he uses to validate each of the temperaments. With such a formidable list, it is easy to understand why there is a need to adjust instructional moments to reach as many as possible with all their different personality types, temperaments, and spiritual temperaments.

Table 1. Spiritual temperaments from Thomas' *Sacred Pathways*

	Description	Biblical support or examples
Naturalists	God is made known through his creation. Naturalists feel closer to God in nature.	Psalms 23, 29, and 84 are psalms that relate to creation.
Sensates	They want to be lost in the awe, beauty, and splendor of God. Involving the five senses is important.	Revelation 4 uses language that would engage sensates.
Traditionalists	They are drawn to elements of the historic faith: rituals, symbols, sacraments, and sacrifice.	Jesus modelled a traditional pattern in Luke 4:16, where "as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read."
Ascetics	They like to be alone in prayer. They want no distractions. They have a rich internal life. Silence and simplicity are key elements.	Mark 1:35 shows the example of Jesus, where "while it was still dark, [he] got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there."
Activists	God's justice is important to Activists. They are drawn to social or evangelical causes and are nourished by the action.	Psalms 7, 10, and 68 reflect the sentiments of activists.
Caregivers	For caregivers, serving others is serving God and is a form of worship. There are many ways to care for people and extend mercy to them.	James 1:27 is a key verse: "Pure and undefiled religion...is this: to visit [those] in their distress." Also see John 3:17.
Enthusiasts	The excitement and mystery of worship are important to enthusiasts. They like a celebratory style of worship.	Enthusiasts can relate to the feasts of the Old Testament. See Deuteronomy 16:13-15, for example.
Contemplatives	They want to have space and privacy to gaze upon God, the lover of their soul.	Psalm 63 exemplifies this spiritual temperament.
Intellectuals	They like to study doctrine and live in a world of concepts. The sermon is worship for those of this temperament.	The book of Proverbs speaks of getting wisdom and understanding (Prov. 1: 5-7, 2:3-4, 4:7).

Source: Developed from information in Thomas, Gary. 2009. *Sacred pathways: Discover your soul's path to God*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. EPub edition.

Incorporating Personality Schemas to Engage Learners

It can be a daunting task for instructors to incorporate personality types and temperaments, let alone spiritual temperaments. The point is to know that there are some major differences in people, and these differences impact the way people learn and respond. For some, the four humours will resonate with them;

others will gravitate to Thomas' schema. Still, others may find the MBTI quite sufficient in and of itself. There are any number of models that can be used to help people understand themselves and others better. With all this diversity in people, which impacts how they view and work in their worlds, appreciating one's own makeup as well as that of students can assist the learning process. From the instructor's perspective, integrating a variety of elements from the various personality and temperament models into instruction can help engage learners to assist in their growth. From the perspective of learners, knowing their personality makeup can help them not only with the learning process, but it can also help with personal application. Knowing that all people are created so wonderfully differently can help people in their relationship with God, but it can also help people to accept and appreciate differences in one another because God created each with different personalities and temperaments. It can allow for more varied expressions of worship and greater acceptance of one another.

The value of considering temperaments is not so much of assessing every learner and formulating individualized educational plans for each one. A more reasonable and practical approach is to realize that there are complexities and intricacies of every individual and then to create an environment that, as much as possible and feasible, offers something for each of the various types. One way would be to think about the aesthetics of the environment. For example, small groups often meet in classrooms that are furnished with uncomfortable chairs and fluorescent ceiling lights, perhaps a white board, and little else. Such a stark room would likely cause class members, except for the ascetics, to shut down a bit. God

is an aesthetic God, a lover of beauty and nature. Bringing in some live plants could make the room more inviting to naturalists and sensates alike. A clean and well-ordered room could make it more inviting for the sensate and traditionalist. Allowing time for quiet reflection along with group discussion could better meet the contemplative and ascetic personalities while adopting a class project to help with some need could bring the caregivers and activists to life. The goal should be to provide an environment and context in which people can most easily meet, connect, and respond to God and grow in his grace (Fender-Allison 2014, 168; Bruce 2015a, 11-12).

Providing an environment that meets some of these criteria can be challenging when one is developing an online course. Forethought will be key in developing online exercises, discussions, and projects. For example, the set for videoing lectures should incorporate objects that, as much as is feasible, offer something for each of the various types, such as a candle, a live plant, and a bookcase. Appropriate lighting can also enhance the video. Lighting, sound, and video quality are important with online instruction; however, research as to the importance of backgrounds is a bit scant. Even so, Gomes (2020, para. 1) stated that the "background can play a massive role in online classes," and "the right background can keep your students engaged and help them learn the most." The point is, students should feel invited into a comfortable, well thought out setting, even if it is only a glimpse through a computer or tablet.

Individuals process things differently and react to the environment differently, yet some commonalities allow people to connect with others. With the

MBTI, rarely, if ever, are people 100% of a particular preference; instead, they operate out of a percentage of any one preference. The same can be said of the four temperaments. An individual is not just a choleric but is so to a degree; people will likely see aspects of each of the elements, but one usually stands out more than the rest. A good way of thinking about the various traits, regardless of the schema used, is to think about the interaction between the dominant hand and non-dominant hand. Most people have a dominant hand that they use most of the time; however, the non-dominant hand still functions but is mainly used for assisting the dominant hand in various capacities, and when the non-dominant hand supports the dominant one, the task can be accomplished more effectively. So it is with personality traits and temperaments. Because of this, extraverts can spend time alone, and introverts can operate in crowds. Also, just as the dominant and non-dominant hand can work in concert with one another to accomplish more, the dominant and non-dominant traits can complement one another within each person. Therefore, the point is to challenge individuals to stretch themselves and develop all the traits within them. The spiritual life of an extravert could be enhanced by solitude, and an introvert could gain a clearer understanding of the importance of community in worship and as part of the kingdom of God by reaching out and building community. The Bible upholds the importance of this flexibility in instruction.

A pertinent verse to unpack when thinking about training children is found in Proverbs 22:6, which says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it." Implications reach to adults as well:

"Educating each child according to [his or] her own way means that we must relax our theories and pay attention to this particular child, adjust our methods to the way in which [he or] she may best learn, nurture her specific gifts, respect [his or] her interests" (Davis 2000, 120). Thus, accommodating a variety of personality types and temperaments serves two purposes: It utilizes people's strengths and allows them to build from what is familiar, and it invites individuals to know and relate to God in new ways (Bruce 2015a, 14). With spiritual growth as a goal for instruction, it would be good to explore some aspects of faith as well.

Strands of Faith and Practice

Faith is necessary for spiritual formation. As Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; and this is smaller than all *other* seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches" (Matt. 13:31–32; italics in original). The concern was whether or not the Son of Man would find faith on earth when he comes (Luke 18:8). Faith demands it to be expressed (Gal. 5:6; 1 Thess. 1:3; 2 Thess. 1:11; Heb. 13:7; James 2:14-26). Although faith is not defined in the scriptures, it seems that faith is the dynamic of a believer's relationship with the Godhead, specifically of the growing degree and application of trust in God that a believer appropriates as he or she grows in his or her walk with the Lord. There are two lines of consideration when thinking about a healthy growth of faith: appropriation and expression of faith.

Appropriation of Faith Applications

Faith is an important consideration when it comes to instruction. Paul gives a classic example of this when he told the Corinthians that he could not speak to them as mature Christians but as infants; he gave them milk, not solid food (1 Cor. 3:1-2). If instructors know their students' faith maturity level, then they can adjust their content and curriculum accordingly. Instructors may or may not know the faith maturity level of their students, so they may have to consider the whole range of faith maturity. For example, a pastor is often preaching to a congregation where there is a wide range of levels of faith with some mature saints down to infants in faith to even the unsaved. If that pastor only preaches to the mature saints, there would be many lost opportunities to invite babes in Christ and the lost to spiritual growth.

Along the lines of growth, there are four applications of faith that believers appropriate as they mature: experienced, affiliative, searching, and owned (Westerhoff 2012, Kindle locations 1436-1437). Faith begins not when one understands theological truths about faith but when one experiences it.

Affiliative faith has three aspects. The first is choosing to identify with an accepting community. The second is the emphasis on the role of the affections: "In terms of faith, actions in the realm of the affections are prior to acts of thinking, which is why participation in the arts—drama, music, dance, sculpture, painting, and storytelling—are essential to faith" (Westerhoff 2012, Kindle locations 1505-1506). The third aspect is the authority of the community's affirmation of the Christian story and way of life. As one identifies with a group, that group's story becomes integrated into the life of that believer.

The third application of faith is searching faith. With this application, there is the testing of one's faith, which includes the action of doubt and using critical thinking. While this can be disconcerting to both the believer and the community, this needs to happen for a person to own his or her faith. The second aspect of searching faith is experimentation by exploring options and testing tradition. The third characteristic is that searching faith brings forth the need for commitment. Where there is a lack of commitment to one's faith, it may be because the believer has not yet appropriated searching faith.

The fourth application of faith is owned faith. With this appropriation, people can put their faith into action and can stand up for what they believe, even against their community (Westerhoff 2012, Kindle locations 1547-1548). Those who are more mature in their faith have been able to reach this point of appropriation.

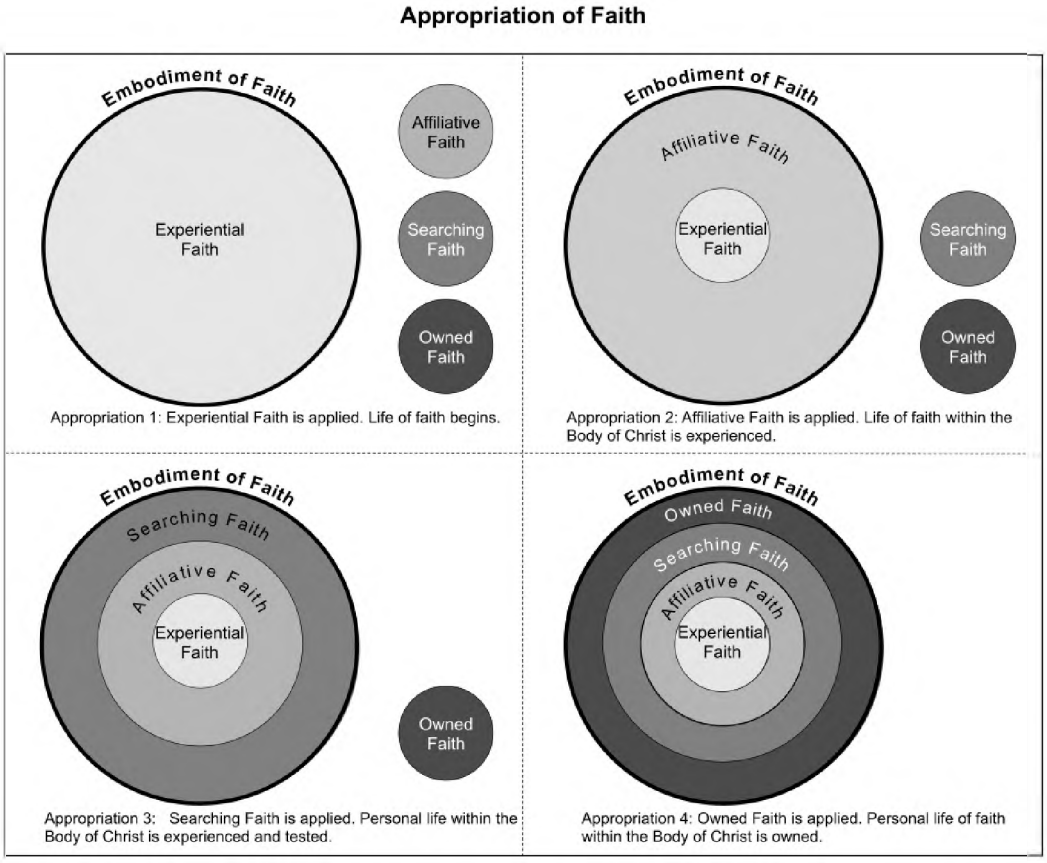


Figure 5. Appropriation of faith applications

Figure 5 shows the applications of faith as they are appropriated by individuals. As people appropriate the various applications, they do not lose the others, but their faith expands to include all styles. For example, when believers have embraced owned faith, they continue to operate from searching, affiliative, and experiential appropriations to create a full embodiment of faith applications. The goal of applying the various forms of faith is to get all believers to the point of owned faith where all applications are appropriated and operational. Owned faith allows believers to be fully engaged as each successive application integrates the ones that come before it. The particular form that faith believers have appropriated can make a big difference on how well they understand and apply biblical truths. Thus, an awareness of these forms of faith can be helpful when

interacting with others to help them grow. However, regardless of the application of faith appropriated, believers express their faith in several ways. Examining these various expressions is an important consideration when thinking about living a balanced and integrative life of faith.

Expressions of Faith

This section has a good deal of overlap with Thomas' spiritual temperaments in the last section. The difference here is that Foster is drawing only from the great faith traditions while Thomas also draws from them but adds to them but more significantly, he applies them differently. Thomas' focus is centered more on what stirs people to help them relate to God and develop their relationship from an environmental consideration. For example, for some people, spending time in nature gives them space and a place to spend time with God. For caregivers, serving others is a way to serve God, and for them it is a form of worship. For Thomas, it is about finding the major ways that stir one to worship. Foster's approach, on the other hand, is more about bringing blended worship through his six streams of faith. Because of this, Foster's view is worthy of consideration from an instructional point of view as a model for helping students to integrate the various facets of faith practice in their worship and devotional lives.

Richard Foster (2001, 3-21) identified six dimensions of faith and practice out of which the great faith traditions have been formed: Contemplative, Holiness, Charismatic, Social Justice, Evangelical, and Incarnational. He also used his categories to address the faith traditions, which seemed to have formed as one

dimension or another became more emphasized than the others and took over, as it were, becoming the dominant way of expressing faith in that specific tradition (Foster 2001, 3-21). Foster views his six dimensions as a paradigm for devotional living with the intention of living in imitation of Christ (Foster 2001, 3). Foster's list is a good one to follow; however, I prefer the term Social Justice with Social Action to distinguish the term from current secular and political use and to emphasize compassion and action to implement change. While Foster uses the imagery of streams to relate to the various corporate faith traditions, perhaps a better image for personal expression of faith would be strands that are to be woven together into an integrative whole, allowing individuals to experience the fullness of each dimension as they live out their life of faith.

A balanced and integrated life will embrace each of the following strands: The Contemplative life is a life that meditates on God and his mighty works. This dimension results in greater love, peace, and delight, but also greater longing for God, more passion, greater wisdom, as well as transformation (Foster 2005, 49-51). The life of Holiness seeks to live life virtuously and to bring forth character development (Foster 2005, 61). The Charismatic life draws upon the gifts and empowering of the Holy Spirit, along with nurturing that comes from the fruit of the Spirit. Social Action operates from a heart of compassion to take God's love to others. The themes of justice, lovingkindness, and peace and harmony sum up the life of social action (Foster 2005, 167-169). The Evangelical life has a pressing need for people to hear the gospel and see it lived out. The faithful proclamation of the gospel, the centrality of the scriptures is of utmost importance

to the Evangelical life. The Incarnational life focuses on experiencing the realm of the God as visible and present in daily life. The Communion service is an incarnational experience as it reminds believers of God's past and ongoing active work and encourages Christians to examine themselves. In daily living, the Incarnational life invites God into each moment of the day. A life that integrates all these strands and keeps God as the central focus will be a balanced and well-rounded life.

Unlike faith traditions, which are often divisive because of their emphasis on one dimension over another and often to the neglect of others, these personal expressions of faith can operate within several of the faith traditions. For example, one can embrace the Fundamental Evangelical tradition, which places emphasis on the scriptures as the Word of God as a rule for life and godliness and separation from separation from all forms of apostasy and worldliness. Within that tradition, believers are still called to meditate on God's Word and his works. They are called to live a life of holiness empowered by the Holy Spirit. Operating out of love, they should be moved to help others out of a heart of compassion and have a desire to spread the gospel, as they invite God into each of these aspects daily. The Fundamental Evangelical can embrace each of these personal faith strands while still remaining true to the core convictions of their tradition.

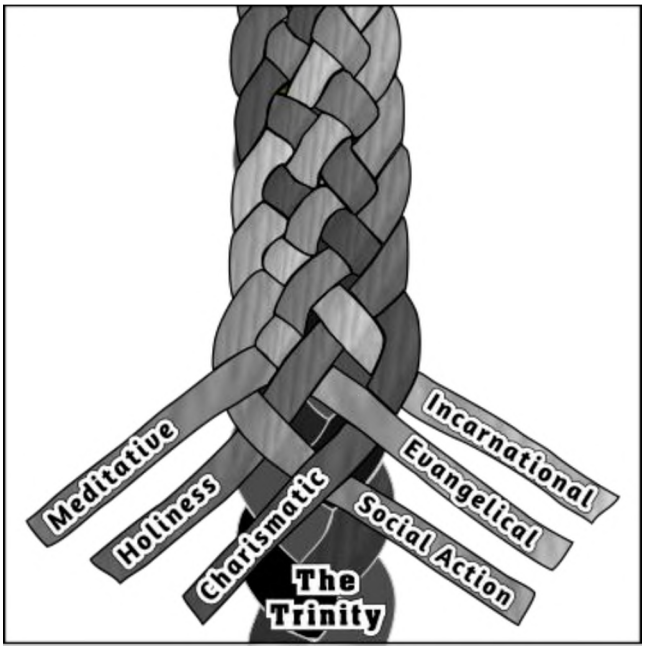


Figure 6. Strands of faith and practice

Figure 6 shows the integration of the strands of faith as they are woven together around the central core of the Trinity with the members of the Godhead also woven together. Just as a rope made by weaving its strands together is stronger than one where strands are wound together but remain separate, the life that weaves these strands of faith together will be able to know and enjoy God more fully. The strongest of all ropes is one that begins with a woven core and adds an outside woven layer as well. Figure 6 represents a life of faith that will not be easily shaken because its strength comes from the core and integrated faith. Just as in personality types, there is usually one strand that is more dominant than the others, yet the non-dominant strands should be exercised in concert with the predominant one to express a faith that fully lives out the gospel of the kingdom.

The goal of instruction is to get the learner to a place where he or she is living out the gospel, integrating it fully into every aspect of life and being fully

engaged in worship and kingdom life in practice. Whether in private, personal devotions, or a public gathering, worship should be an integral part of individuals' relationship with God. It should both grow spontaneously from one's private times with the Lord and interactions with others in informal worship, yet historically formal worship has been important as well. Worship comes in many forms, and students should be encouraged to express themselves to the Lord in a manner that connects with the individual and honors the Lord. Yet they should also be encouraged to try various strands that might be unfamiliar to them in order to expand their worship. Instructional goals, when it comes to worship, should not be so rigid as to restrict a believer's worship of God. One of the saddest illustrations of a worship leader not grasping this is Eli judging Hanna to be drunk because of the way she was praying (1 Sam. 1:13). Life with God is not a cookie-cutter enterprise. Instructors should be aware of the goals and where and how students need to grow and to include opportunities for students to worship God in ways that might be new to them. One of the major goals ultimately in spiritual formation is to worship God more fully.

This brings this section on the instructional base to a close. To briefly summarize this portion, several aspects of instruction have been discussed. Education from a historical view, highlighting instruction as found in the Old and New Testaments helped define the importance of instruction for developing one's walk with the Lord. Other important considerations included the importance of helping students to develop a Christian worldview. The impact of sin on how one learns was discussed using Howard's (2008, 160-161) experiential process.

Communicating well is an important consideration for an instructor. It is especially important for the instructor to help students listen well and utilize appropriate listening skills to get the most out of any lesson. Other factors included encouraging students to be intentional and attentive, not only in specific learning activities but as a way of approaching life and developing relationships with God and others.

Instructors are teaching students, so it is vital to know who one is teaching. The personality of students was examined, along with temperaments and especially Thomas' (2009) spiritual temperaments, emphasizing the differences among people and the need to accommodate students as much as is reasonable. These can be useful in understanding that different people have different ways of engaging their world. The more a teacher can present information in ways that serve as many students as possible, the better the results will be. The final area that was addressed was the issue of faith. Where people are in their walk of faith, how much they integrate it into their lives, and how they choose to express it through worship are all factors that could determine how an instructor should approach his or her teaching practices and content. The hope of this section is that students will take what they learn and apply it to their lives lived out in Christ.

Next in the model are three pillars which represent three arenas where believers live out their lives: in leader-led worship of God, the private or personal life of the believer with God, and a public life lived in community with other believers. While there are many similarities, there are some aspects unique to each pillar. The first pillar to be explored is formal, leader-led, corporate worship.

Pillar One: Formal Worship

This section will look at historical worship in the Old and New Testaments. It will also look at the worship activities, such as reading the scriptures and prayer, and lastly it will look at hindrances to prayer within corporate worship. Understanding corporate worship activities can help Christians to worship more deeply and can be applied to personal, private worship as well. This is a major way that believers glorify God by living out the kingdom life in the family of God.

Learning to worship God in a leader-led, public worship service can aid the believer in learning what worship is, how to worship, and ways to worship, which can then be carried over to all other areas of his or her life. This is important because genuine and pure worship, which is to be God-centered, is vital to the spiritual formation of believers because it fosters awe of who God is and engenders gratitude for what he has done. Psalm 150:1-2 encapsulates this God-centered focus quite well: "Praise the Lord! Praise God in His sanctuary; Praise Him in His mighty expanse. Praise Him for His mighty deeds; Praise Him according to His excellent greatness." Note the three themes presented here: the person of God himself, his excellent greatness, and his mighty acts. Worship should focus on these aspects of God (Barrett 2006, 61).

Another consideration concerning worship is that it was done in community in both the Old and New Testaments and the early church. Individual worshippers come to God together as part of a larger community (Webber 1993, 4). Just as certainly as believers come together to worship, they also worship in private. Any personal time spent with the Lord and personal devotional times with

reading the scriptures should lead one to pray both for a greater understanding of who God is and climax with awe of God and his greatness and with gratitude for mighty works. So, although much of the knowledge gleaned from the scriptures about worship is primarily dealing with corporate worship, it can and should be applied to personal worship. Before proceeding to discuss worship, however, it is necessary to explore what exactly is worship, or how is worship defined.

The etymological meaning of worship conveys the idea of acknowledging the worth of something (Merriam-Webster's Dictionary, 11th ed., s.v. "worship" [accessed December 27, 2017, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/worship]). This idea of worship in English is an abstract idea, but the Bible presents a more concrete idea of worship when considering the several different words used in the Bible to describe worship. A primary word for worship in the Old Testament is *shachah*, which transmits the idea, along with worship, of bowing down, obeisance, and reverence (Strong 1995, 7812), and the New Testament counterpart is *proskunéō* (Strong 1995, 4352). There are, however, several other words used in both the Old and New Testaments that carry the idea of worship as well: to praise, to bless, and to serve (Faithlife Corporation 2016). Although the terminology and vocabulary between the Old and New Testaments are similar, there is a notable shift. The Old Testament applied these terms to "describe external acts or features of worship," while the New Testament uses them in referring to the inward significance of the life and work of Jesus Christ (Webber 1993, 13). Thus, there was a major shift in how Christians were to

worship, and any external worship was to come from within, with worship to be done "in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:3).

Although the break with Judaism was inevitable, the significance of shared vocabulary, images, and meeting places shows that there is still much that Christians can draw from the Old Testament to gain a greater understanding and appreciation of the person and work of Christ as well as enhance personal and corporate worship. From this, the church incorporated much of the liturgy but with the change of perspective that Christ brought. Bible reading, prayer, teaching or proclaiming God's Word, and singing are common elements drawn from Jewish roots and continued in the early church. The early Church Fathers also corroborate this liturgy. Justin Martyr, who lived in the second century, wrote that the reading of the Word of God, teaching and exhortation, prayer, the Lord's Supper, and a voluntary offering comprised the Sunday worship service (Martyr 1885, 186). These elements are worthy of greater study as certain ones involve both corporate and individual worship and some are reserved more for corporate worship. Much of the discussion of the liturgical elements that follows is centered on corporate worship. Some points are easily transferred to private worship. Other aspects relating to individuals and personal worship practices will be covered in later sections related to individual praxis.

Whether the focus is individuals or corporate, "true worship arises from the knowledge of God" (Barrett 2006, 59). Therefore, greater knowledge of God will produce a more significant experience of authentic worship, and the greater the true worship, the greater the experiential knowledge of God. One begets the

other, and believers are to engage in worship wholeheartedly. There is no such concept of passive worship in the scriptures. Worship is a spiritually formative venture whenever people are engaged and "overwhelmed by the work of the Holy Spirit enabling a vision of God that is true and transformational" (Averbeck 2008, 69), and all liturgical elements should aim toward this end. While it is impossible to separate individual and corporate worship, there are different considerations that should be addressed. This section will focus on worship within the body of local believers, which is primarily the worship service. Worship as it pertains to the individual will be covered in the section on personal praxis.

Reading the Scriptures

Bible reading seems to be the most natural place to start when the aim is to know more of God. The centrality of the Bible as a means of knowing God better and celebrating his works should be apparent; however, reading the Bible can easily degenerate into a perfunctory reading if care is not given by both the reader and hearer. The scriptures are "a means of grace whereby the Lord reveals Himself to us" (Barrett 2006, 78-79). When seen in light of a grace gift, the reading of God's Word should hold a special place in the worship service. The readers should prepare their hearts for such a sacred ministry, while the listeners should be given an opportunity to prepare to receive this gift of grace. Of such importance is the reading of God's Word that Jesus himself customarily went to the synagogue on the Sabbath and read from the scriptures (Luke 4:16). Undoubtedly, the reading of the scriptures needs to be elevated as a high priority in the hearts of contemporary worshippers if it is not currently.

The scriptures should be "read with a high and reverent esteem of them; with a firm persuasion that they are the very word of God" (Westminster Assembly 1851, 337-338). If the scriptures are to be read this way, they should also be received this way with the understanding that God "only can enable us to understand them; with desire to know, believe, and obey the will of God revealed in them; with diligence, and [attention] to the matter and scope of them; with meditation, application, self-denial, and prayer" (Westminster Assembly 1851, 338-339). Admittedly, the ones receiving the Word usually take their cues from the reader, and if the Word is read in a hurried and perfunctory manner, it leaves little room for meditation and prayer over what was read. Thus, listeners are rushed onto the next item on the order of worship without time to unwrap the gift of grace they just received. Overall, from my personal experience, too little time is built into most Fundamentalist worship services for Bible reading, and although the subject of meditating on God's Word will be covered later on, it is sad to note that often even less time is given for meditating on the scriptures and praying.

Praying

Prayer is a natural response to the reading of God's Word and an essential means of worship. Prayer connects believers to God and unites the Body of Christ. This powerful effect of prayer is clearly seen lived out in the book of Acts (Acts 1:14, 24, 4:23–24, 31, 9:40, 10:2, 11:5, 12:5, 12, 14:23,16:9, 25, 20:36, 21:5, 22:17, 28:8). "The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much" (James 5:16). Clearly, prayer was an integral part of the community life of the early believers. The early church was a praying church, and this church even

in its infancy offers another lesson with respect to prayer, the attitude of being in one accord (Acts 1:14, 2:46-47, 4:24). From what I have observed as I have visited many Fundamentalist churches, prayer is limited to the opening and closing prayer and a pastoral prayer, offered by the worship leader or pastor. Paul's pastoral prayers to the various churches are great examples that show a pastor's heart and desire for those under his care (1 Cor. 1:4-9; 2 Cor. 13:7-9; Eph. 1:3-6, 1:15-23, 3:14-21; Phil. 1:3-6, 1:9-11; Col. 1:3-14; 1 Thess. 1:2-3, 2:13-16; 2 Thess. 1:11-12). The pastoral prayer can be a source of encouragement and strength and even conviction when someone is falling short. As in the reading of the scriptures, the worshippers should not be passively observing but joining in one accord in agreement with the one voicing the prayers. Prayer is a rich and vital practice whether it is corporate or done privately. The importance and power of prayer in the life of the church is perhaps nowhere better stated than in the statement made by A. T. Pierson as quoted by Edwin J. Orr in his opening remarks on *The Role of Prayer in Spiritual Awakening*: "There has never been a spiritual awakening in any country or locality that did not begin in united prayer" (Orr 1976, 1). More discussion on prayer as a practice will be taken up again in the personal praxis section.

Preaching the Word

The preaching of the Word in many Fundamental Evangelical churches is the pinnacle of the worship service. The early church held this in high esteem as "they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching" (Acts 2:42). The preaching of the Word gives worshippers opportunities to learn more directly

about who God is, what he is like, and what he does, thus providing additional opportunity for worship. Care is to be given to provide meaningful growth; as the Apostle Paul charges Timothy, pastors should "preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction" (2 Tim. 4:2; italics in original). Any pastor who does this should provide many opportunities for spiritual growth and formation to those under his or her care. Sadly, however, there are those in the congregation who will be drawn away to teachers more fitting to their desires and who tickle their ears (2 Tim. 4:3). The consumer mentality of current society fuels this, along with a lack of understanding of what true worship is. Fortunately, preaching and teaching are connected. In fact, Jesus went about "teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom" (Matt. 4:23, 9:35; cf. 11:1). Also, "every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus *as* the Christ" (Acts 5:42; italics in original). Paul and others likewise both preached and taught (Acts 15:35, 28:31; Col. 1:28). With this marked connection between preaching and teaching, the pastor can take advantage of instructional and learning theories as talked about in the previous section to help people learn and grow. Especially apropos is Philip Jacob Spener's (1635–1705) sixth proposal that preaching should be for the intention of edification, "that sermons be so prepared by all that their purpose (faith and its fruits) may be achieved in the hearers to the greatest possible degree" (Spener 1964, 115).

Singing

If preaching stirs emotion and controversy, the fourth element common to both Old and New Testament worship, singing, arouses even more. Jewish worship had an abundant supply in the Psalms, and the practice went back at least to the time of Moses as he sang a song commemorating Israel's crossing the Red Sea (Ex. 15:1-17). The impact of singing carried over into the early church with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Worshippers are to make melody in their hearts to the Lord (Eph. 5:19). The psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs can also be used to teach and admonish while being sung with a thankful heart to God (Col. 3:16; cf. 1 Cor. 14:15). Christians are also instructed to sing psalms when cheerful (James 5:13). With so many different types and applications of singing, singing might cause more controversy in the church than any other aspect of worship.

Singing connects with the emotions. To worship in any activity, the mind, will, and emotions need to be moved as they are all connected (Keller 1995, 180). As individuals connect the mind, will, and emotions in music, so should the mind, will, and emotions be connected when actively receiving from the reading of the Word of God, attending to corporate prayer, and learning from the preaching of the Word. Nothing about worship should be passive, and those who actively engage in the various elements of worship both honour God and are blessed by him.

Observing the Ordinances

Each of the activities explored above can be done both on the corporate and individual level. However, some worship activities can only be done at a

corporate level. The ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper invite the worshipper both to remember and to engage the worshipper in God's unfolding story. The act of remembering is tied to both Old and New Testament worship. The Jews were to remember the Sabbath, which was tied into the creation story (Ex. 20:8). Time and time again Israel was reminded to remember how God brought them out of bondage in Egypt (Deut. 5:15, 7:18, 9:7, 15:15, 16:3, 12, 24:18). In fact, the Passover was instituted so that Israel would remember her deliverance from Egypt (Ex. 12:14). Nowhere is the connection between remembering and worship clearer than in Isaiah 46:9 (italics in original): "Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; *I am* God, and there is no one like Me." For Christians, baptism recalls the story of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12). The Lord's Supper, as well, is to be done in remembrance of Jesus' broken body and shed blood on behalf of all believers (1 Cor. 11:24-26). Each time communion is served, it is a remembering of Christ's work on the cross, and as worshippers partake of the bread and cup, they are drawn into God's larger story of redemption.

Although remembering is not an ordinance itself, it is clearly part of both the Lord's Supper and Baptism. Thus, it seems appropriate to say a few words about remembering as part of the act of worship. Remembering is both connected to worship and the believer's personal story of God working in his or her life. Although in my experience sharing testimonies of what God has done and is doing in the lives of believers has declined over the years as has the gospel services that provided space for them, there seems to be some growing interest in

giving space for them again as part of worship and spiritual formation. The scriptures provide a solid directive for Christians to give testimonies: Psalm 66:16 declares, "Come *and* hear, all who fear God, And I will tell of what He has done for my soul" (italics in original; see also Pss. 22:22, 35:28, 71:15-16; Dan. 4:2). The New Testament also speaks of giving testimonies (Mark 5:19-20; John 9:24-25, 15:27; 1 John 1:2-3). Sharing testimonies, these snippets of stories of faith, can help to bring the Bible and the gospel message to life in contemporary experiences by people who can be touched and known personally. That is powerful and potentially life changing as well as glorifying to God.

Giving

The offertory is the final activity of worship to be addressed as worship. Offerings were part of Old Testament worship, which were kept in the treasury of the Lord (Josh. 6:29; 1 Chron. 28:11-12). Even as early as Genesis 4, Cain and Abel are seen giving their offerings to the Lord. It is an age-old practice of giving homage to God. However, Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain (Heb. 11:4), and offering God the best is what he expects (Mal. 1:7-8). These offerings establish the idea of sacrificial giving, culminating in the New Testament with the offering of believers' bodies as "a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* [the believer's] spiritual service of worship" (Rom. 12:1; italics in original). Offerings were voluntary in the New Testament and seemed to arise out of needs of others (Acts 2:45, 4:35), as opposed to the system of tithes and offerings prescribed of the Jews by the Law. However, Paul instructed the Galatian and Corinthian churches to put aside money for "the

collection for the saints" on the first day of every week and to save it up so that there would be no collection when he came (1 Cor. 16:1-3). The offering was a gift rather than an obligation. He later reminds the Corinthians that everyone should give as each "has purposed in his [or her] heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7). Paul also described the gift from the Philippians as "a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God" (Phil. 4:18). In other words, giving is a form of worship. Additionally, by the second century, receiving an offering after the Lord's Supper for the orphans and widows, the sick, and anyone else in need was a regular practice. Those who gave, gave willingly, and each was to give what each thought fit (Martyr 1885, 186). Giving was a matter of the heart: "Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of *our* God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, *and* to keep oneself unstained by the world" (James 1:27; italics in original). These offerings for the needy truly meet the heart of God and are indeed worship if the attitude behind the giving is to honour God and join him in his work. Probably giving more than any other act of worship brings forth the issue of the heart, but every element of worship is a heart matter, and the condition of a believer's heart can significantly impact worship.

Hindrances to Worship

It appears worship should be the natural response and outflow of grateful Christians. Yet, there lies a problem within the church and, more specifically, within the heart of every Christian. Whether the activity is giving, preaching, prayer, or Bible reading, it must be approached with a heart that is struck by God

and his greatness and mighty work. With all the opportunity in the worship service to gain a better understanding of God and his kingdom purposes, it remains that many Christians can be shallow in their faith and their worship weak. As I have talked with various Christians over the years on this subject, at least four major hindrances seem to keep believers from having a more powerful worship experience.

First, there is a lack of understanding of what worship is and how the various activities of the worship service fit into the framework of worship. In one sense, this is understandable. From my personal experience and observation, many people grow up in the church and approach worship as something they have always done without giving much thought to what they are doing. Others who became new Christians as adults often begin engaging in church activities with little instruction. However, the inductive method does not always provide enough information for new believers to understand the underlying reasons for the elements of worship. There are several things that can be done to help address this issue, whether it is through offering a class on worship, having the worship leader or pastor instruct the congregants before entering into each of the activities, or perhaps the various elements of worship could be the subject of the sermon and repeated as needed. Jesus both preached and taught. Teaching about worship could substantially impact the amount and depth of worship in the lives of the congregants as they learn how to participate in the worship service. Experiencing deeper community worship is essential if believers are to carry it over into their individual lives and with their families throughout the week.

A second hindrance is time. Spiritual growth is a process and takes time, so new Christians are not expected to worship to the depth of more mature ones, generally speaking. However, there is also the issue of time in the sense that often the service moves quickly from one activity to another, which does not give an opportunity for the worshipper to reflect on the Bible reading and the message as well as the other parts of the service. Apart from exigent circumstances, some pastors may be constrained to begin and end at a specific time, but doing so models a priority other than true worship of God; the clock becomes a god. A lesson could be learned from the sense of time used in the New Testament. Two words are used for time: *chronos*, a linear time; and *kairos*, which carries the meaning of opportunity (Anderson 1995, 192). Worshippers should view the time spent worshipping God as an opportunity to draw near to God so that they may know him better.

The third hindrance is a lack of priority. It truly is difficult at times to lay aside the cares of this world and to quiet oneself to worship the Lord. The culture, especially in the United States, is a fast and busy culture with as much crammed into each moment as possible. Multitasking is seen as commendable and is highly valued, and the more people can flood their lives with activity, the more favourably they are perceived. It is easy to understand how difficult, then, it must be for the undisciplined to leave that behind and focus wholly on God. For the multitasker, two or three text messages can be sent out to friends during the call to worship, a shopping list can be completed while the Bible is read, and so forth. Not only must worshippers go against the culture, but they must also slow down

their minds and hearts to allow them to focus on the one thing that truly matters, God.

The need to quiet the mind and heart leads right into the fourth hindrance, a lack of discipline. The weighty things of God are revealed to his people by his Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:10). To hear the Holy Spirit, one must be willing to be still and know that God is God (Ps. 46:10), who is the "self-revealed [one] in the creation of the universe and of [humankind]" (Henry 1999, 182). God wants to make himself known. Jesus' invitation is to "take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matt. 11:29). Here, then, Jesus lays out an order to follow to become true worshippers: submit to his authority, learn of him, and the soul will find rest, which will put the individual in a position to worship God wholeheartedly.

Another hindrance to be discussed here is the possibility that the pastor and other spiritual leaders do not rightly understand worship and thus cannot lead the congregation in worship well. Even so, all Christians are called to be disciples, learners. Jesus taught his followers, the Apostles taught other Christians, and the invitation is for Christians to learn more of God. Accepting this invitation will decrease the effect of the hindrances and open the way to greater worship. While I have seen these hindrances at play in the lives of some within the community I serve, I have seen churches who have addressed or forestalled potential hindrances well. I am grateful to them and have been blessed by them. Even so, everyone is called to serve Christ and learn of him for this is where believers will

find rest. Regardless of how well-equipped church leaders are, every individual is invited to develop his or her own personal life and relationship with the Lord.

Pillar Two: Personal Praxis

One's personal life lived out with God could well be described as the major area of focus for spiritual formation. It is the life of the believer in relationship with God. While corporate worship is essential to spiritual growth, so is one's personal spiritual practices. The online course of prayer, as discussed in Chapter IV, and several future online courses will be developed from the spiritual practices found in this section.

The scriptures are plain that everyone must give an account to God (Rom. 12:10). Additionally, Paul urged Timothy that he should study to show himself approved of God (2 Tim. 2:15). As a reminder, however, the focus of personal or private faith practice is about deepening one's relationship with God; it is about loving God more. This section is about helping individuals develop an alone time with the Lord, which should include praying, worshiping, and Bible study, along with some other practices that go beyond a typical quiet time. There are some things that believers can do on their own to deepen their one-on-one relationship with God.

Organizationally, this section is divided into three main parts. The first will address some of what has historically been called spiritual disciplines. Spiritual mentoring and story, the second and third parts, are also discussed here because of the internal focus of both. Each of these sections is written from the focal point of the Great Commandment of loving God with all one's heart, soul,

and mind (Matt. 22:37-38). The content has been chosen because of the emphasis on individualized growth where every believer assumes responsibility for growth to happen. However, such growth cannot and will not happen apart from the working of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers, regardless of the amount or type of spiritual practice in which believers engage. This truth should never be far from the heart and mind as believers engage in practices to develop and deepen their relationship with the Lord: "'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the Lord of hosts" (Zech. 4:6).

Spiritual Practices

A portion of this section is about what has been called spiritual disciplines in some traditions. For some, that term may be a point of resistance, yet certain practices have been around since the beginning of the church. To remove needless struggle over terminology, the terms spiritual practices or exercises will be used here. However, regardless of the term used, active engagement in the practices, intentionality, and attentiveness are needed for developing a healthy relationship with the Lord. The short list of exercises below has scriptural support and, if followed, should assist believers in deepening their love for God. The goal for each of these is for the believer's personal relationship with the Lord to grow deeper, meaning there will be greater love, commitment, and desire to follow and please him. The caution remains, however, that spiritual practices apart from life in the Spirit will not result in spiritual formation. In all things, the work of the Spirit needs to be acknowledged.

Prayer

Prayer is important. One of Jesus' primary roles was as a teacher; he taught on prayer most frequently (Gangel and Wilhoit 1994, 191). The prayer life of believers is often weak and inconsistent. Sadly, "one of the main reasons for a lack of Godliness is prayerlessness" (Whitney 1991, 66), and one of the reasons for prayerlessness is because believers assign little value to it (Bounds 1999, chap 5, para. 8). Prayer needs to be a top priority for a godly life: "The [people] who have most fully illustrated Christ in their character, and have most powerfully affected the world for him, have been [those] who spent so much time with God as to make it a notable feature of their lives" (Bounds 1999, chap. 7, para. 3).

Prayer comes in many types and shapes, ranging from Peter's cry for help as he was sinking (Matt. 14:30) to Jesus' all-night prayer (Luke 6:12). Jesus taught his disciples how to pray via the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:5-15; Luke 11:1-13). Often new believers and children are taught the A-C-T-S method of prayer, consisting of adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication. There are many methods, and they can be a helpful guidance for young believers as they learn how to pray. These types of prayer are expressed or voiced prayer.

There is also another kind of prayer in which individuals wait with an open and receptive attitude to God that offers simple but loving attention to God; this type of prayer is often identified as contemplative prayer (Jones, Wainwright, and Yarnold 1986, 567), but Fundamental Evangelicals may find the term meditative prayer more acceptable.

Prayer is not talking to God; it is a conversation with God. However, prayer is not just dialoguing with God; it is also a silent but attentive being with

God. Both types of prayer are necessary. Several other considerations are discussed below to help believers develop both kinds of prayers.

Set Times of Prayer

In the faith community I serve, set times of prayer may not be a familiar concept. Understanding that there might be some sensitivities to this concept among Fundamentalists, I simply offer a description of the practice and how it might be beneficial. Praying at specific times stems from the historical fixed-hour prayer, which is corporate prayer said with the church (McKnight 2006, chap. 1; Bruce 2016b, 1). The idea of fixed hours is based on scripture with morning, noon, and evening prayers being most common (Ps. 55:17; Bruce 2016b, 2); however, in Psalm 119:164 the psalmist prayed seven times a day—a practice still maintained by many monastic communities. As a corporate practice, prayers often follow a prayer book (and there are several of them) at the set times. The result is the same; prayer is being lifted to God around the world at the same time, at least those within the same time zone. Although this is not specifically a practice found among Fundamental Evangelical churches, if one is not averse to joining the Church at large by praying the same prayers, this could be a meaningful experience of praying in concert with other Christians across the world.

If the idea of praying from a prayer book is disconcerting, then praying from the scriptures or impromptu praying are certainly excellent options as well. Although it would diminish the corporate feeling, it would make it more of a personal time with the Lord, which is equally important. More important than using a specific prayer book is to use something that is workable for the

individual. If prayer books go against the convictions of the believer, then using prayer books will not work. Christians should follow their convictions on this and use a prayer style that works for them. Although the term fixed hour refers to the time of prayer and not the length, some individuals may find the word to be intimidating. Think of it as fixed times in the day to interrupt a full and harried schedule to refocus on God and give reverence and respect due him. More important than specific fixed hours is to find times in the day to regularly schedule time for the Lord and to let those be set times for prayer on a regular basis, not in a legalistic way but as a dedication to God.

Fasting

Fasting is another discipline that has its foundation in the Bible. Jesus had fasted before he was tempted by the devil (Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13), and he taught about fasting (Matt. 6:16-18, 17:21; Mark 9:29). It was both practiced and taught in the New Testament church (Acts 10:30, 13:2-3, 14:23; 1 Cor. 7:5; 2 Cor. 6:5). Sometimes fasting was used to express repentance (Neh. 9:1), but fasting can also be used as a means of dedication and preparation (Matt. 4:2; Acts 13:1-3; Eyre 1995, chap. 10). Prayer always accompanied fasting, usually for major decisions and events (Acts 13:2-3, 14:23) or during times of trial (Acts 27:1-38). If led by the Holy Spirit, such a time of dedicated fasting and prayer can be especially meaningful as a time set apart for the purpose of communing with the Lord.

Practicing the Presence of God

Practicing the presence of God is a practice borrowed from the medieval monk, Brother Lawrence (1967). As applied here, it is acknowledging and engaging in the ongoing relationship with the Lord on a continuous basis. Prayer is most often thought of as a coming into God's presence, and when ended, the one praying goes out, and prayer life becomes a series of coming in and going out. Being continually in the presence of God is not to assuage those specific times of prayers; they are grounded in the scriptures and necessary to Christian living as well. However, the Holy Spirit indwells believers (1 Cor. 6:19), thus practicing the presence of God acknowledges this truth.

It is through the working of the Holy Spirit that spiritual formation takes place. Practicing the presence of God makes the believer more readily available to sense this work of God as the Spirit also fills, guides, gifts, and empowers people to live life in the kingdom of God. The key to developing this practice is to continually converse with God (Lawrence 2011, Kindle locations 23-24; Bruce 2015b, 1). A life of simplicity allows believers to focus more fully on the Lord because the heart is less distracted (Lawrence 2011, Kindle locations 268-270; Bruce 2015b, 2-3). Believers practicing the presence of the Lord can maneuver through the day with more confidence and assurance because they are never alone and have a greater awareness of the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Praying the Scriptures

Some Fundamental Evangelicals end up, sometimes unwittingly, praying the same prayers over and over. When praying for others, for example, a common

prayer might be reduced to asking God to be with a loved one. Prayer can quickly become generic and empty, bordering on vain repetition. The phrase be with is so general that it becomes meaningless, and if prayed on behalf of a believer, God already is with that person. One way to add depth and focus and to ensure that prayer is according to God's will is to pray through the scriptures. Praying through Psalm 23:4 for a friend should be more meaningful and specific. One could ask God to cover one's friend as he or she is going through a present trial. One could pray that the friend may not be afraid but find assurance and courage because God is with him or her to guide and protect. Praying the scriptures can powerfully impact prayer time, not only for supplications but when praying for one's own needs and concerns.

Silence and Solitude

Being silent is a listening skill. In prayerful silence, the listener intently and attentively waits on God: "Be still, and know that I *am* God" (Ps. 46:10; italics in original). Paired with silence is solitude, which is about being alone with God. It is about protecting that alone time with God so that the individual can wait in silence without disturbance or distraction. Silence by itself or paired with solitude speaks of the believers' desire to develop an intimate relationship with the Lord. People carve out time to be alone with the one they love, and they listen intently when their loved one speaks. The believer's part is to be still; and the result is that he or she will know that the Lord is God. Transformation happens just by being in the presence of God; it is the product of the work of the Holy Spirit.

Bible Reading

Besides prayer, no spiritual practice is more important than some form of taking in the Bible, whether it be through hearing, reading, or studying it. Hearing the Word has been addressed in the section on worship. Bible reading and study are discussed below.

Devotional Reading of the Bible

A devotional reading of the Bible brings prayer into the process through meditation. Meditation as a biblical practice is seen in Moses' exhortation to Joshua to meditate on the Book of the Law (Josh. 1:8). The Psalms are rife with references to meditation. They present meditation as a style of life (Ps. 1:2, 112:1, 119:35, 47, 92), and it is connected to the heart (Pss. 19:14, 49:3, 77:3, 6; Bruce 2016a, 2).

> Meditation can be done inwardly or outwardly, it can be used of silent reflection or of rehearsing aloud, and if the subject matter is unpleasant, it can take the form of a complaint (Cohen 1999, 875-76). Psalm 77 shows the breadth of this word and the value of the meditative process as the psalmist moves from complaining (v. 3) to contemplation of God's absence (v. 6) to meditating on God's mighty deeds (v. 12; Cohen 1999, 876). Meditation here provides both healing and spiritual growth for the psalmist. (Bruce 2016a, 2)

A word often used for meditate, *hāgâ*, can carry the ideas of "a low sound, characteristic of the moaning of a dove (Isa 38:14; 59:11) or the growling of a lion over its prey (Isa. 31:4)" (Wolf 1999, 205; Bruce 2016a, 2). In the New Testament, the verse that probably most captures the same idea as in the Old Testament is Colossians 3:16 (italics in original): "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with

psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God" (Bruce 2016a, 3).

Clarification should be made that biblical meditation is unlike many modern secular meditations. Some secular meditations direct practitioners to empty their minds and strive for mental passivity, while Christian meditation involves filling the mind with God and his mighty works and other constructive mental activity (Bruce 2016a, 6-7). Biblical meditation links "prayer to God and responsible, Spirit-filled human action to effect changes" (Whitney 1991, 47; Bruce 2016a, 7). Meditation, as shown in the Bible, is an intense labour of the heart with both mind and heart fully engaged, working together to remember and ponder God and his mighty works.

There are five essential terms to address when considering biblical meditation: attention, remember, wait, be still, and intentionality (Bruce 2016a, 7). Numerous examples in the Bible connect attentiveness to the hearing of God's Word (Prov. 2:2, 4:1, 20, 5:1, 7:24, 27:3; Isa. 34:1, 51:4; Jer. 6:17, 29:19; Hos. 5:1). Attentiveness is needed to see and hear God at work, and this gives Christians choices. Remembering is important. According to Wilhoit (2008, 105), Israel's overarching spiritual problem was forgetfulness. "Time and time again God calls his people to remember him and all that he has done for them. This remembering should lead believers to greater awareness of their need for grace and mercy and, thus, to awe and worship" (Bruce 2016a, 8). Waiting brings in the element of hope. It also includes the idea of being silent and still, often in the context of some catastrophe or deep loss (Harris, Archer, and Waltke 1999, 193;

Bruce 2016a, 9). Psalm 107:29 depicts this in a memorable word picture: "'He [God] made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed.' Thus, believers are to wait in calmness of soul and spirit, untroubled by the catastrophes and losses of life" (Bruce 2016a, 10). Implied in waiting is the element of time, so believers need to be intentional to schedule time for waiting on the Lord. Keeping these five elements in mind will encourage a meditative environment.

Meditation itself can be diverse and uniquely suited to each individual and each current circumstance. Having a model to follow can be beneficial, especially when first beginning the practice. Bayer (2008, 32-35) explains Martin Luther's three rules on prayer that may be a helpful guide. According to the rules, individuals begin with prayer to enter into God's presence with humility to gain understanding from God's Word. Meditation on a specific passage would follow. Here the readers can engage heart and mind but also the physical body as the prayer and Bible reading can be aloud or silent, and different body positions can be chosen, such as sitting, standing, kneeling, lying down on one's bed, or prostrate on the floor. The third rule is then for the individuals to experience the truths of God and take them with them throughout the rest of the day. Such a practice can easily flow into a lifestyle of meditation or the practice of the presence of God. An older, pre-Reformation model, *lectio divina*, is a "structured form of meditation includes four steps: a *reading* of the scriptures, a period of *reflection* on the reading, a time of *response* follows wherein the heart speaks to God, and the final stage is a period of *being still and waiting* for the Lord" (Bruce 2016a, 10; italics in original). Although *lectio divina* with its mystical approach

will not be accepted by most Fundamentalists because of its reputation, meditative reading of the scriptures, as a spiritual practice, is a worthwhile option as it goes back to the early Church Fathers. Origen encouraged righteous prayers, self-denying exercises, and meditation to live a holy life (Origen 1885, 668). Augustine of Hippo also encouraged others to strive for "more profound meditation" and to "improve this divine blessing" (Augustine of Hippo 1886, 233).

However, "meditation is not meant to be a replacement for scholarly Bible study (2 Tim. 2:15); it is intended to be an additional means to holistically engage in a relationship with the Lord through prayer, Bible reading, and meditation" (Bruce 2016a, 10).

Studying the Bible

Bible study is essential to deepening the believers walk: "Reading gives us breadth, but study gives us depth" (Bridges 2016, 32). Bible study requires greater use of cognitive skills and diligence; it takes work. Jerry Bridges shared his Bible study of Proverbs 2:1-5 to highlight five principles regarding Bible study: The student should be teachable, intending to obey, using mental discipline, depending on prayer, and diligently persevering (Bridges 2016, 33). Paul charged Timothy to continue in the things he had learned, because they are "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man [or woman] of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Additionally, Timothy was to study to show himself approved of God (2 Tim.

2:15). Bible study may take work, but the results can lead to a better understanding of God and produce a life that pleases him.

There can be several reasons why people do not study their Bibles as they should. Laziness seems to be one of the biggest issues with Christians not studying their Bibles (Sproul 2009, 20). Therefore, believers should give due diligence and intentionality for this practice to be profitable. A second caution concerns the type of attention given the Word of God. If it is read or studied just for information, it is a misuse of the text (Mulholland 2000, 49-63). All reading should change the reader, so motive and attitude become essential. One should not approach the scriptures only to gain information but for formation. Having the desire to be changed by the Word and an attitude of humility to accept the truths learned and to confess errant ways when discovered can make informational reading formational as well. Thus, all reading and studying the Bible should be for the intent of transformation.

Retreats

Jesus had a regular pattern of retreating after engagement with crowds of people, and there he would spend time in prayer (Matt. 14:23; Mark 6:46; Luke 6:12, 9:28). A retreat is a change of place and pace with time dedicated to prayer and Bible reading. The time of retreat is an opportunity to commune with God in a different way than a familiar place would offer. In the hectic, hustle and bustle of today's culture in the United States, a retreat seems like a luxury, but it is vital.

In the story in Mark 6, the disciples had returned from a tour of preaching (v.12), and Jesus "said to them, 'Come away by yourselves to a secluded place

and rest a while.' (For there were many *people* coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.)" (Mark 6:31; italics in original). The disciples' ministry produced much fruit, but they still needed rest, but it was not something that would come effortlessly. The crowds saw them leaving and ran after them (v. 33), and Jesus had compassion on them and ministered to them (vv. 34-44) before getting back to pursuing their retreat where "Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go ahead of *Him* to the other side to Bethsaida, while He Himself was sending the crowd away" (Mark 6:45; italics in original). It seems that the idea of retreat was at least twofold. A retreat was an opportunity to come away from intense engagement in the work of the ministry to reconnect with God through prayer. Secondly, it was an opportunity to rest, to replenish one's energy. Jesus recognized the weakness of the physical body and acknowledged the need for self-care. A retreat should allow for time for individuals to reconnect with the Lord as well as allow time for the body to rest.

Following through on retreats may not come easily as the things of this life will encroach. Intentionality and perseverance may be necessary. However, with prayer and thoughtful planning, a retreat can bring necessary rest to weary souls and offer times of silence, solitude, and meditation on the Word to connect deeply with God and to strengthen one's connection with the Lord.

Sabbath

Certainly, there is Old Testament justification for the Sabbath as it was given as part of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:8). Jesus' reaction to the Sabbath is worth noting. Jesus, as Lord of the Sabbath (Matt. 12:8; Mark 2:28; Luke 6:5),

stated that the Sabbath was made for humans (Mark 2:27). In other words, "the Sabbath was instituted in order to bless humanity and enhance its well-being" (Edwards 2002, 96). New Testament saints observed the Sabbath (Acts 13:27, 42, 44, 15:21, 16:13, 17:2, 18:4). Paul, however, seems to have taken a "stand that Sabbath observance need not be kept by all and that no one should pass judgment on those who do not observe it" (Col. 2:16; Bruce 2016c, 6). Moo (2008, 220) supports this view, explaining that the Sabbath, although a distinctly Jewish phenomenon, was occasionally observed by Gentiles. Even so, the writer to the Hebrews declares that "there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His" (Heb. 4:9-10; Bruce 2016c, 6). The Sabbath rest remains, and it is to bless and improve the well-being of those who observe it.

Keeping the Sabbath has psychological benefits. When God delivered Israel out of Egypt, he restructured their rhythm from the ten-day cycle of Egypt back to the seven-day cycle of creation and assigned the seventh day as the Sabbath rest, putting all of Israel into a collective rhythm. "There is rhythm to the music of the universe and the human body. Imagine the dissonance of being out of step in a large band; imagine marching to an entirely different beat. The Sabbath is meant to draw people back into harmony and rhythm of all creation and of the Creator himself," and "rest is an integral part of rhythm" as well (Bruce 2016c, 6-7). Along with the obvious meaning of rest, to stop working and to settle down, it includes the ideas of "happiness and stillness, as peace and harmony" (Heschel 2005, Kindle locations 401-403). It even incorporates the idea of

celebration with "joyous repose, tranquility, or delight" (Allender 2010, 28; Bruce 2016c, 7). Even so, the idea of keeping the Sabbath among some Evangelicals is often seen through a restrictive lens, even devolving into legalism, rather than of celebration and so deserves some comment.

Going back to the first occurrence of the Sabbath, God "rested on the seventh day for all His work which He had done" (Gen. 2:2). The Sabbath is a rest from work. Genesis 2:15 reveals that God intended humans to work as "man" was "put into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it." Work is a good thing; it is a copy of God's model of work in creation and, thus, raised to a noble venture (Mathews 1996, 178). Even so, Genesis 2:3 states that God blessed and sanctified this day of rest. Hebrews 4:10 adds an interesting perspective: "For the one who has entered His [God's] rest has himself also rested from [the person's] works, as God did from His." The point is to join God in his holy and sanctified Sabbath. To do that is to rest from one's work. The emphasis is on joining and enjoying God on the Sabbath, not (in a twist of irony) creating a legalistic work of not working on the Sabbath, which is also often and ironically moved to Sunday. The Sabbath for the Christian should not be about work restrictions, nor should it be about mimicking the Jewish Sabbath, which was part of the Old Testament Law; for the Christian, the Sabbath, if observed, should be about celebrating and enjoying God's rest to which believers are invited.

For Christians especially, the Sabbath should be a time to realign with the rhythm of God, to enjoy his rest, and to celebrate and delight in the Lord of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a full expression of beauty, delight, joy, celebration,

relationship, and grace (Muthiah 2015, 78; Bruce 2016c, 12). The blessing of rest is that it refreshes and replenishes that which was drained emotionally, physically, and spiritually from the other six days (Bruce 2016c, 12). In this rest, "silence can work its work and expose individuals for who they are and how God intends things to be; in silence, people can see where they are not yet aligned with God and his intentions" (Muthiah 2015, 78; Bruce 2016c, 12). The opportunity to regroup from the frays of the week, join God in his creative rhythm, find rest and refreshment, and delight in the Lord makes keeping the Sabbath a major practice for nurturing the soul as well as worshiping the Lord.

Mentoring Relationships

Mentoring relationships are included in this section on personal praxis because of the individualized nature of the relationship. The mentoring relationship is an intentional relationship that is driven by the needs, desires, and interests of the individual mentee and where the mentor is committed to the mentee to offer wisdom, insight, and guidance to help the mentee live out his or her full potential for the sake of the gospel (Dallas Theological Seminary, 2017).

The most prominent relationship of mentoring in the Old Testament is the example of the relationship between Elijah and Elisha. Barnabas is a primary example of mentoring in the New Testament as he took Paul on just after his conversion and mentored him while the other disciples were still afraid of him (Acts 9:27). Later Barnabas also mentored John Mark (Acts 15:37). The case of John Mark is interesting because Barnabas saw something in him that Paul did not see at the time. Because of this, Paul did not want to take John Mark with him on

his missionary journey, and in the end, they split up with Barnabas and John Mark going to Cyprus and Paul taking Silas as he went through Syria (Acts 15:36-41). Later, however, Paul asked for John Mark to come to him because Paul saw that he was profitable for the ministry (2 Tim. 4:11). One can assume that Barnabas' mentoring of John Mark, along with other formative practices, was a catalyst in John Mark's spiritual growth, making him a greater asset to the ministry.

In each of these examples, it seems that the mentor chose the mentee; however, there is nothing that should hinder someone who wants a mentor to seek one out. Doing so would show the sincerity and desire of the mentee and thus increase the potential for a successful relationship. However, there are two leading reasons why people do not enter into mentoring relationships: Either they do not want it, or they do not think they need it (Curry 1998, 316). If there is hesitancy to pursue a formal mentoring relationship, consideration should be given to more informal arrangements. A third option would be historical mentoring by gleaning wisdom, insight, and guidance obtained from spiritual autobiographies of other Christians. In many rural areas and smaller communities, this may be the only viable option available to some. Certainly, personal testimonies and the life stories of saints that have lived faithfully through difficult times can powerfully impact those who take time to listen.

Personal Story

Christians are a storied people, bound up in God's story of creation, reconciliation, and redemption (Fackre 1996, 8; Johnson 1989, 96). God's story changes people because it demands a decision, makes a claim, and calls for a

response (Johnson 1989, 96). The appeal made by story is to embrace all of life, good and bad, which is transformational for the Christian as his or her story entwines with God's story. It is a call to remember God at work in the world and the life of the believer. It is a call to engage in God's story as he continues his redemptive and reconciling work in each person's life. God's story is ongoing; the believer's story is in the process of being written as God writes individuals into his story (Johnson 1989, 102).

Writing a spiritual autobiography could be a life changing experience, and many books are readily available to help believers to write their story. However, not everyone is put together to be able to accomplish such a daunting task. If writing a spiritual autobiography is not an option, individuals should consider writing about some of the major spiritual events in their lives. The events, collected together over the years, could serve as a memoir and still offer some insight into the intersection of God's story with the individual. Even so, not all stories need to be so labour intensive.

Another option is to keep a daily journal of where and how God has worked in the life of the believer. Journal keeping could be especially beneficial when combined with self-examination (1 Cor. 11:28; 2 Cor. 13:5). This self-examination should include thanks for how God has worked in the individual's life, but it also requires grace and humility to address sin and to repent. Believers should not enter self-examination alone. As the psalmist implored the Lord to search him and reveal his wicked ways, individuals today can call upon the Lord to reveal those areas in need of repentance (Ps. 139:1-4, 23-24). The Holy Spirit

will guide believers into all truth, even truth about themselves (John 16:13). This act of examination and repentance over sin is a crucial element for those who desire a growing and dynamic relationship with God. Believers who do not repent of known sin risk missing out on "times of refreshing [that] may come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19).

The concept of one's personal story overlaps with many other spiritual practices. In the process of writing or journaling one's story, it is possible for that exercise to become an opportunity to engage in many of the other spiritual practices. For example, as one considers his or her own story in light of the gospel, it can become a testimony of praise or a prayer for forgiveness. Considering one's story can lead one to the scriptures to review and remember Bible stories, promises, or corrections that connect with his or her story. The Bible is God's story that connects to each Christian's story, which should draw one to reading the Bible in response to his or her story. Examination and repentance are also a part of God's story in the lives of all believers.

Peter encouraged believers to be "ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence" (1 Pet. 3:15). Believers should be aware of their ongoing spiritual story so that they might be able to share their testimony, which may be lengthy and extensive or as short as the time it takes to ride an elevator up to the office. Opportunities for those kinds of testimonies can be plentiful for those who practice the presence of the Lord or make it a practice to review their spiritual life frequently.

Each believer's story, long or short, verbal or written, should reveal Christ in the individual, which is the hope of glory (Col. 1:27). Every believer has a story to tell, and it should not be silenced. Other Christians need to hear it, and those outside the kingdom of God need it even more so.

Each of these six spiritual practices (prayer, Bible reading, retreats, Sabbath observance, mentoring, and story) were chosen because they are common and familiar to the community I serve. The goal is not to reinvent the wheel, as the adage goes, but to help believers use these practices in ways that will help them to grow even more in the Lord, being evidenced by an even greater love for the Lord, along with a greater commitment and desire to follow and please him. As growth happens, it should have an impact on the community life of the believer.

Pillar Three: Public Praxis

Spiritual formation does not happen in a vacuum. It is about relationship; one's relationship with God and with others. In this last pillar, the individual's responsibility, or choice to respond, to others is explored. The focus here is spiritual formation through interaction with others and on enlarging life in the kingdom of God through ministering to others, both those already in the kingdom and those who are not. Four aspects will be explored. The first will be the relationship of the individual to the church, focusing on the individual's engagement in corporate worship and everyday life in the local body. The second section attends to preparation for ministry to others. The third focuses on the

individual's responsibility to minister to those of the household of faith, while the last section deals with ministering to those outside the kingdom of God.

Community Life within the Church

Some distinctions should be made about the church. First, all believers, past, present, and future, are part of the universal Church. A buzzword today for the local church is community. A comparison of several modern translations reveals that the term seems to be more of an Old Testament idea referring to the community, or congregation, of Israel. The term community worked well for Israel because their community, faith, and faith practices were all connected as part of their unique culture. Christianity, in contrast, is worldwide and crosses many international and cultural boundaries. As such, community and cultural expressions of faith can vary widely, especially if the church is modelled on community. A church in a small southern town in the United States will look and feel quite different from a large church in Korea. A large church in New York City will likely look and feel different from a small church in the rural Midwest.

There are several instances in the Bible where the Jews and Gentiles within the church often clashed. These differences were often caused by the differences in the Jewish and Gentile cultures, some by Judaizers, and some by false prophets. These differences called for the church leaders to intervene and bring clarity to the situation. The church communities of the New Testament where "all those who had believed were together and had all things in common" (Acts 2:44). This suggests a close-knit bond of a group where members are familiar with one another. The average church in the United States usually attracts

less than ninety adults per average weekend (Barna Group 2003). A number of these smaller churches and even small groups within the larger churches provide the opportunity for many to experience a close bond that nearly resembles familial ties. This desire for a close friendship perhaps more than anything speaks to the need to return to a New Testament paradigm of the family or family household (Gal. 6:10; Eph. 2:19; 1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Pet. 4:17).

The family household is one of the chief metaphors used to describe the church in the New Testament. Jesus taught his disciples to pray to the Father and described his mother and brothers as those "who hear the word of God and do it" (Luke 8:21). John 1:12 refers to believers as the children of God (see also Rom. 8:14-15; Gal. 6:10; Eph. 1:5, 2:19). For Paul and others, the idea of the family and household also became a missionary strategy to spread the gospel and to build the church, often identifying the whole household as being converted (Filson 1939, 111). Paul also taught about the various relationships within families (Eph. 5:22–6: 9). Thus, it is worthwhile to look at the family and accompanying household as a core metaphor for the kind of relationship that was important to the early church and one which should be revisited today.

The social status of early Christians speaks to the diversity of the early church. Granted, the poor always outnumber the wealthy, but there were traders, workers, educators, and so forth; thus, the early church contained a cross section of society and was not just comprised of the poor and disenfranchised (Filson 1939, 111). The early Christians lived counter-culturally to those around them. Indeed, they were situated in a hostile environment: "In all his [or her] public and

private life the Christian was surrounded by the tokens of another worship, and no day passed during which he [or she] had not to settle with his [or her] conscience the doubtful line beyond which lay actual betrayal of the Christ" (Wand 1963, 54). While the New Testament does not categorically state that the church made a concerted effort to stop slavery, there is one instance where Paul seems to suggest that Philemon should give Onesimus his freedom (Philem. 15-16). Even so, slaves who were brothers and sisters in Christ joined their masters at the Lord's Table (Wand 1963, 55). It was common in Roman society to expose unwanted infants, especially girls, to the elements; Christians did not do this, leaving a marked witness to the world of the sanctity of human life (Wand 1963, 55).

Although nearly two thousand years have passed since the days of the New Testament church, society and cultural issues have changed little in some ways and much in others. Still, amid persecution and a hostile culture, the early church not only survived but thrived, and the house church with close, familiar relationships seems to be a key factor by providing the means, method, and opportunity for believers to mature and the church to grow. The house church played a crucial part in the ongoing survival and spread of the early church, and it should be revisited and considered as a model for the church today.

According to Wand (1963, 55), the house church in New Testament times was a place of worship, which included the singing of hymns and spiritual songs, reading of the scriptures, praying, and the Eucharist. Wand (1963, 55) also described the house church as providing a small, intimate gathering where members could be held accountable for their walk by example, exhortation, and

call to repentance. It was a means for encouragement as the believers came together to worship and praise God and his mighty works. These house churches provided stability in an uncertain world, so when confronted with conflicting morals and messages from the culture or persecution, believers had a support system in place to render encouragement and strength to remain faithful. When the Dispersion (James 1:1; 1 Pet. 1:1) came, the church stood firm because the uprooted families had a stable structure in place with the individual house churches. Banks (2020, 45-96), applying metaphors from the New Testament, described life in the early church. Major points from his discussion that have not yet been discussed are that each member was cared for, and everyone contributed to the care and upkeep of the household. Engagement in the duties and activities within the household was expected.

A second key factor comes from Luke's description of the early church: "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:42). The early church was a devoted group, and devotion in this sense means "continuing steadily, intensively, with focus, strong purpose and intentionality" (Icenogle 1993, 257). This devotion is akin to Paul's exhortation to the Corinthians to "be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in* vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58; italics in original). Bound by common passion and devotion, believers were of "one heart and soul" and had all things as common property to all of them (Acts 4:32). Such commitment indicates that

fellowship went beyond the relationship itself, showing love for God and of God by caring for one another.

A third key factor in the early house churches is hospitality. Hospitality was an important duty for Israel, but the importance of hospitality extended to other cultures as well. For the Romans, their chief deity, Zeus was the god of hospitality, and for the Egyptians, hospitality helped to secure favour in their future life (Ryken et al. 2000, 402). Thus, for many of the ancients, hospitality was a sacred duty. The Jewish idea of hospitality was carried forward to the New Testament church, where strangers were to be accepted as guests and given provision and protection. Jesus, who had nowhere to lay his head (Matt. 8:20; Luke 9:58), was very dependent on hospitality and defined hospitality toward others as ultimately being shown to him (Matt. 25:35). As Jesus sent out the disciples, he instructed them to rely on the hospitality of others (Matt. 10:9-14; Mark 6:7-10; Luke 9:1-4; Ryken et al. 2000, 404). Paul exhorted the church to practice hospitality (Rom. 12:13), not to neglect it (Heb. 13:2), and church elders were to be hospitable as a qualification of that position (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8). Not only does hospitality model the heart of Jesus, but it also speaks to life in the kingdom where Jesus will come to those who hear his voice and will dine with them, and they with him (Rev. 3:20; Ryken et al. 2000, 404). While hospitality is about caring for the stranger, there are others that need more intensive interventions, calling for Christians to go out of their way to love with God's love.

This fourth factor is a call to social action: "to visit orphans and widows in their distress" (James 1:27). It is seen in the early church as Christians sold

property and possessions and shared with those who had need (Acts 2:44). In Calvin's thinking, piety is tied to both Christian behaviour and social action (Anderson 1986, para. 15). Today, there may be adequate resources available to large churches to develop various ministries to meet the needs of individuals, such as feeding the homeless, developing foster care programs, or any number of other ventures. However, for smaller churches collaboration with parachurch organizations may be a more practical way to show Christian charity. On a simpler level, it may just be a matter of attending to the needs of one's neighbors. Regardless, the point is to encourage members of the household of faith to live out the love of God through action that is coming from the heart.

Mentorship to the Body of Christ

The house church became the training ground for Christian leaders to build the church (Filson 1939, 112). Spiritual growth was accomplished through modelling where various disciplines, love, and ministry became a style of life emanating from the heart rather than merely being taught. In following Jesus' pattern with his disciples, "truth was not taught in abstract doctrines or regulations; it was caught in the experience of their shared life" (Coleman 1987, 146). The essence of Jesus' training program was in "just letting his disciples follow him" (Coleman 1993, 37). Without Jesus in the flesh, young believers need a more mature Christian friend or mentor to guide them, one who can offer a "personal guardian concern for those entrusted to their care" (Coleman 1993, 47). Younger Christians learn to pray from hearing mature ones pour their hearts out to the Lord. The less mature discover the importance of reading their Bibles as

they see the worn Bibles of older saints who know their Bible well. Younger Christians discover the importance of ministry as they join more mature saints who are actively engaged in service. Less mature Christians get a better picture of what it means to love the Lord by observing that love in more mature saints and hearing them talk about it. In other words, the family household model for the church provides a natural setting for discipleship through mentoring and sharing.

Every Christian from the moment of salvation has a story to tell, a testimony to share; all Christians, no matter how young or new in the faith, can minister to others. Sharing a testimony may be a starting point; however, as believers grow, responsibility to serve others increases. God has given some people certain roles, namely apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, for helping saints to mature so that they, in turn, might minister to others for the purpose of building up the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:11-12). Additionally, God has given spiritual gifts for service (Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:8-11; 1 Pet. 4:10-11). As Christians grow, the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22) also gives evidence of growth and maturity in the life of the believer. In all these matters, the work of the Holy Spirit is fundamental to growing and Christian ministry. This growth process and working and gifting of the Spirit in the life of believers is ongoing and should be received with humility, knowing that it is by the grace of God (1 Cor. 15:10).

There are no extra people in a family household, meaning everyone is responsible for something. As toddlers on a farm can help feed the chickens, pick up toys, or any number of other acts of service, according to their abilities, so new believers can pass out church bulletins, greet newcomers, or help set up tables and

chairs for an after-service meal. As those new in the faith grow and the gifts and calling of God are made known, their responsibilities shift and increase accordingly. It is the responsibility of the church to aid in this process and help every believer to identify his or her particular purpose and fit in the household of faith. There are tools available to help accomplish this, such as spiritual gift inventories, but more importantly is the Word of God. There is no better source for instruction and preparation for ministry: "The more at home the Word of God is among us, the more we shall bring about faith and its fruits" (Spener 1964, 87). Prayer and discernment, of which the church should exercise more frequently on behalf of its members for the sake of the kingdom, should go hand in hand with the study of God's Word.

It is in this day-to-day activity, formal or informal, that instruction is most active. In many ways, this is the life of the church where congregants learn through instruction, modelling, and interactions with other believers what it means to live a full and dynamic life in Christ. Although some teaching is done in formal worship, believers often receive more direction and guidance through close relationships with one another. What is learned here is then taken into public worship and their personal lives as they develop their relationship with the Lord. Christian faith must be expressed by acting on it: "It is by no means enough to have knowledge of the Christian faith, for Christianity consists rather of practice" (Spener 1964, 95). Life together in the household of God should help prepare believers to take their faith out into the world.

Some may be called to a vocation in ministry, but many believers will be called to minister in lay and even secular work. Regardless of the setting, every Christian should be seeking to carry on the Great Commission of making disciples. Some may have more of an evangelistic thrust, while others may be drawn to disciple others. Both are important, and both are elements of the Great Commission, and the church should take an active role in helping to develop all Christians to be able to fulfill both aspects as the Lord leads and provides opportunities for believers.

Ministry to the Household of Faith

Jesus' primary approach to teaching was to establish a consociational **r**elationship with his disciples, meaning an intimate fellowship that "accentuated the aspect of together-ness" (Krallmann 2002, 53; Bruce 2016d, 2). In this close association, Jesus could then teach by modelling. He taught and modelled the need to have clear priorities: The Father and his kingdom were of highest priority, and his relationship with the disciples and people in general followed, and the second thing Jesus modelled was an attitude of servanthood (Bruce 2016d, 2). Jesus taught that "in God's economy as every follower should be living in imitation of Christ and serving as a model to others," thus "all Christians are called to [be] leaders to those in their community" (Bruce 2016d, 2-3). The best leaders, the best mentors, will be the ones who most imitate Christ and are consistently abiding in him (1 Cor. 11:1; Eph. 5:1; Krallmann 2002, 142-145; Bruce 2016d, 4). These are essential considerations when it comes to serving the Lord.

A particular ministry for each believer is less defined but is often guided by spiritual giftedness, opportunity, natural giftedness and inclinations, and a willingness to be used where and how God directs. Areas may include leading small groups, supportive roles like working in the church nursery, taking care of the facilities, ministering through prayer, and the list could go on and on. Service, however, does not need to be formalized. Often the most powerful ministries are those informal relationships that develop along the way where one believer makes himself or herself available to another, and this availability and offering of one's presence in a relationship can impact the other for the sake of the kingdom far more than any formalized ministry. The informal acts of having spiritual conversations with other believers may provide the space necessary for others to engage in spiritual truths in ways that they might not otherwise. This idea reflects the consociational relationships mentioned above, but it also ties in with the instructional aspects of the communication process, intentionality, and attentiveness. These informal acts of spiritual conversations are akin to simply but authentically living out one's deepening relationship with the Lord and inviting others to the same. All ministries, formal or informal, should have at their core a lived spirituality that draws and invites others to live more fully in Christ as well.

Based on my experience within the community I serve, a prayer ministry could develop out of these consociational relationships and spiritual conversations. It is almost impossible for individuals not to be moved to pray for the other when engaged in such intimate and caring relationships. Prayer in these cases may be simple and informal, or they may be included in the prayer ministry

of the church or just added to one's personal prayer time. Regardless of how intercessory prayer progresses, it is sure to be a blessing both for the one being prayed for and for the one praying. This same principle of blessing and being blessed transfers to all ministries, formal and informal. These kinds of interactions in the household of faith mirror those expressed in Spener's reflection in his second proposal:

> Every Christian is bound not only to offer [him or herself] and what [one] has, [one's] prayer, thanksgiving, good works, alms, etc., but also industriously to study in the Word of the Lord, with the grace that is given him [or her] to teach others, especially those under [one's] own roof, to chastise, exhort, convert, and edify them, to observe their life, pray for all, and insofar as possible be concerned about their salvation. (Spener 1964, 94)

When the church structure is such that it resembles and operates as a household of faith, Spener's proposals can be employed in very powerful and life-changing ways.

Ministry can also extend beyond the walls of the church to parachurch organizations or even ministering to others in a secular environment. Although those working in secular environments are more likely to see a crossover into missions, all believers live in the world and are called to bring the gospel to those who are not yet part of the kingdom; therefore, attention to some principles for missions is needed.

Mission to the World

For some Christians, nothing evokes fear and dread quite like the topic of evangelism. Some have a conviction that they should be doing more, and others fear that they will be sent halfway across the world away from family and friends

to evangelize in foreign lands. These concerns largely come from a lack of understanding of what evangelism is and what God calls Christians to do. The Great Commission makes it clear that all Christians are called to make disciples (evangelize) and to teach (disciple) them. Both can be more easily accomplished when Christians have a growing and deepening relationship with the Lord. The focus of this section is on mission, going to those outside the kingdom and into the world to invite them in. That may be across the world, or it could be next door.

There is an important distinction to be made when thinking of going into the world: The Christian should not go into the world for God, rather Christians "are called to be in God for the world" (Mulholland 2006, 48). The first expends resources while acting as the agent for change; the second expends the believer for the sake of the gospel with God remaining in a position of pre-eminence and the true agent of change. God must remain central to all mission work. Living in God for the world speaks to the relationship with God, a Spirit-filled lifestyle, rather than consuming one's energy on usurping what should ultimately be the work of the Lord.

When considering evangelism, believers should be aware of the ramifications of interacting with cultural issues. All evangelism is a counter-cultural experience. First, Christians have two cultures, an earthly culture and that of the kingdom, and the culture of the kingdom should take precedence. As a Christian engages an unbeliever, he or she must be aware of the unbeliever's culture, meeting the person on his or her own familiar ground, so to speak. There

is an additional stepping over cultural barriers as a person places his or her faith in the Lord. This new believer now belongs to the kingdom of God, and as such belongs to a new culture, that of the kingdom. That is not to say that all Christians everywhere live in one Christian culture, but believers do need to learn how to navigate living in their specific cultures on earth without compromising the culture of the kingdom of God. Such a consideration should bring about change in the way Christians engage earthly cultures (John 17:14-15). One of the saddest states of affairs is when there is no difference between the culture of Christians and those who do not know the Lord. When this is the case, it can be assumed that they have "not grasped Jesus' teaching about Christ's reign within their hearts" (Coleman 1987, 27).

North America is firmly entrenched in a post-Christian culture, and having strategies in place to clarify what are the cultural expressions of the Christian faith and what are the non-negotiables is crucial. According to Krallmann (2002, 147-209) and Bruce (2016d, 4-5), there are six non-negotiables that believers should follow to rise above cultural issues: (1) Believers should maintain a proper relationship with God, which should then positively impact other relationships. (2) Believers should adopt an attitude of Christlike servanthood, serving with humility, having a teachable attitude, loving those they are serving, and developing a consociational relationship as Jesus did with his disciples. (3) Believers are to be holy and culturally relevant; this will keep holiness preeminent. (4) Believers should integrate theory and practice to make truth usable to the learner. Obedient application of the truth strengthens one's

testimony. (5) Believers should mentor others so that they can go forth to evangelize and disciple others. (6) Believers should go forth with divine power (Krallmann 2002, 147-209; Bruce 2016d, 4-5).

There is more to missions than a person having a winsome Christian personality and being culturally sensitive. Prayer is an essential element to leading others into a relationship with Christ. Jesus exhorted his disciples to pray because "the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest" (Matt. 9:37-38). Every great missionary biography tells the story of prayer as being the success and triumph of missionary endeavour: "Every conspicuous step and stage of progress [in missions] is directly traceable to prevailing, believing, expectant supplication" (Pierson 1894, 352). This kind of power in prayer does not happen easily: "We simply cannot talk to God, strongly, intimately, and confidently unless we are living for Him, faithfully and truly" (Bounds 1999, chap. 8, para. 10). Engagement in prayer for the sake of ministry or mission requires a growing relationship with God where life in Christ is being lived out. Prayer for missions and missionaries is one major way to co-labour with those who are called to missionary service, but there are other ways to become involved.

Denominational churches often give to missions as part of the church budget, and congregants may or may not even be aware that their church supports missionaries. In other churches, missions operate on a faith basis and are dependent on individual churches to support their missionary endeavours. In these churches, congregants may be more familiar with their missionaries because a

closer relationship may be developed due to increased correspondence to individual supporting churches to acknowledge their support and share news of the ministry. The early church collected offerings to help the needy, and an argument could be made that there is none as needy as those who do not know the Lord. Giving to missions and missionaries is another viable way to co-labour on the mission field.

A third way to engage in missions without physically going is to develop an ongoing relationship with the mission and missionaries supported by the church. Foreign missions can be a lonely place with little comforts and familiarity of home. In this electronic age, people can regularly connect with missionaries to keep abreast with their work and personal lives. Based on my experiences from attending both denominational and smaller Fundamentalist churches, it seems that the closer people are to the missionaries they support, the more likely prayer and giving will be consistent and meaningful. Mission work is not just for those who are called to specific mission fields.

All believers are called to be evangelists or missionaries and to teach disciples. Fulfillment of both components will happen when it is modelled in the church and caught by maturing believers who are captured by the love of God and want to live their lives for him. Paul's expression of love for the Corinthians seems like a fitting close to this section as he so eloquently expresses his being "in God for the world" on their behalf: "I will most gladly spend and be expended for your souls" (2 Cor. 12:15). Even so, the work of the ministry can only come from those whose hearts are tuned to God, hid in Christ, and lived by the Spirit in

an ever-deepening relationship with the Trinity. Ministry must come from a place of being in God, and from there, believers can step out and do the work of the ministry.

The spiritual life of Christians as the body of Christ is to be an active one, not only engaged in worship of the Lord but in service to one another and the world. One metaphor for the church is that of the family household, suggesting a close-knit bond of believers who are committed to one another's welfare, encouraging and helping one another when needed and having all things in common and freely sharing where there is need. Growth is a second aspect of community life for believers. Following the example of Jesus, who chose the Twelve Disciples and then taught them and mentored them to prepare them for their ministry after his death, the church today might benefit from a ministry of mentoring, whether formal or informal. The natural outflow of being in a close-knit church and being mentored should be towards ministry, either within the church or toward the mission to a lost world. One's public practice, whether locally or to the world, should be active and bountiful.

Conclusion

It should be abundantly clear that the issue of a weak and shallow church is a spiritual issue where believers fail to develop their spiritual life to conform to the image of Christ. A healthy spiritual life happens as a believer's life is lived in an ever-growing, ever-deepening relationship with God, thereby joining him in his kingdom purposes while glorifying and enjoying him forever. Thus, spiritual formation, the process of making disciples or moving believers into a deeper,

more mature relationship with the Lord, should be the primary goal for the church. This formation is through the foundational and ongoing work of the Trinity. As evidenced in the Bible and by the example of Jesus, instruction in concert with the working of God is a primary means for spiritual formation to move people to maturity in Christ, which is evidenced by a vibrant, growing life that brings glory to God.

The goal of instruction should be to develop the spiritual lives of individuals. Certain qualities are helpful to the process, such as developing a Christian worldview, listening well, and offering one's presence in a relationship. Intentionality and attentiveness are also essential to spiritual growth, yet without instruction, believers may not develop these qualities.

Instruction can best be done in concert with the work of God, by respecting and honouring the individual, and with consideration of the uniqueness of each person. Therefore, differences in personality and temperaments should be considered. People embrace faith differently as they grow spiritually, and they express their faith differently as well. Any instruction within the church should take these things into account. This approach to instruction demonstrates God's love and care for each individual and models how Jesus interacted with people to whom he ministered. Instruction that misses this will fall short and most likely end up teaching facts rather than people. Instruction, when used optimally, will permeate every aspect of the church, including public worship, personal praxis, and corporate life.

The worship service serves both as worship to God and as a model for worship and spiritual growth in the interior life of believers. When a worship service is conducted well, it is a good model, but often the service comes up short, requiring additional instruction. The worship leader and pastor are key figures to accomplish this through better modelling or by teaching about the various elements of the worship service.

The church has a responsibility to provide opportunities for expression of spirituality in the form of worship and to offer instruction in ways that are helpful to believers and conducive to learning. Even so, Christians are responsible for their own interior life to God. Two major practices, prayer and Bible reading, when exercised in cooperation with the work of the Holy Spirit can foster growth. Both these practices should be significant in a believer's life. However, there are other worthwhile options to aid in developing one's spiritual life. Practices like developing a mentoring relationship involve at least one other person and transitions into life in the body. Story is another practice that relates a believer's story with God's story, but it also likely connects at points with the body of believers. One cannot love God without also loving others. Both are inextricably linked together.

Operating as a household of faith provides opportunities for believers to grow spiritually and to love others in an environment that is conducive to both. In an active, healthy household, modelling and mentoring occur almost naturally. Ministry to others may be formal or informal, but all believers are called to serve one another through their spiritual gifting and service. At the same time, all are

commissioned to share the gospel with the world. Believers can engage in evangelism by praying, giving, or going to the lost, either at home or abroad. Regardless of any specific service, all ministry of the church should have Christian spirituality and growth as its central core. Its goal should be to glorify God by promoting Christian worship and fellowship, by proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, by teaching Christians through the instruction of God's Word and training them for ministry in the church and mission to the world. All of this cannot be done without the work of the Holy Spirit and the centrality of God in all aspects of growth, worship, and ministry. When this is done, believers will be able to live their lives in an ever-deepening relationship with God and thereby join him in his kingdom purposes while glorifying and enjoying him forever. To summarize this model visually, including the spiritual practices, see Figure 8.

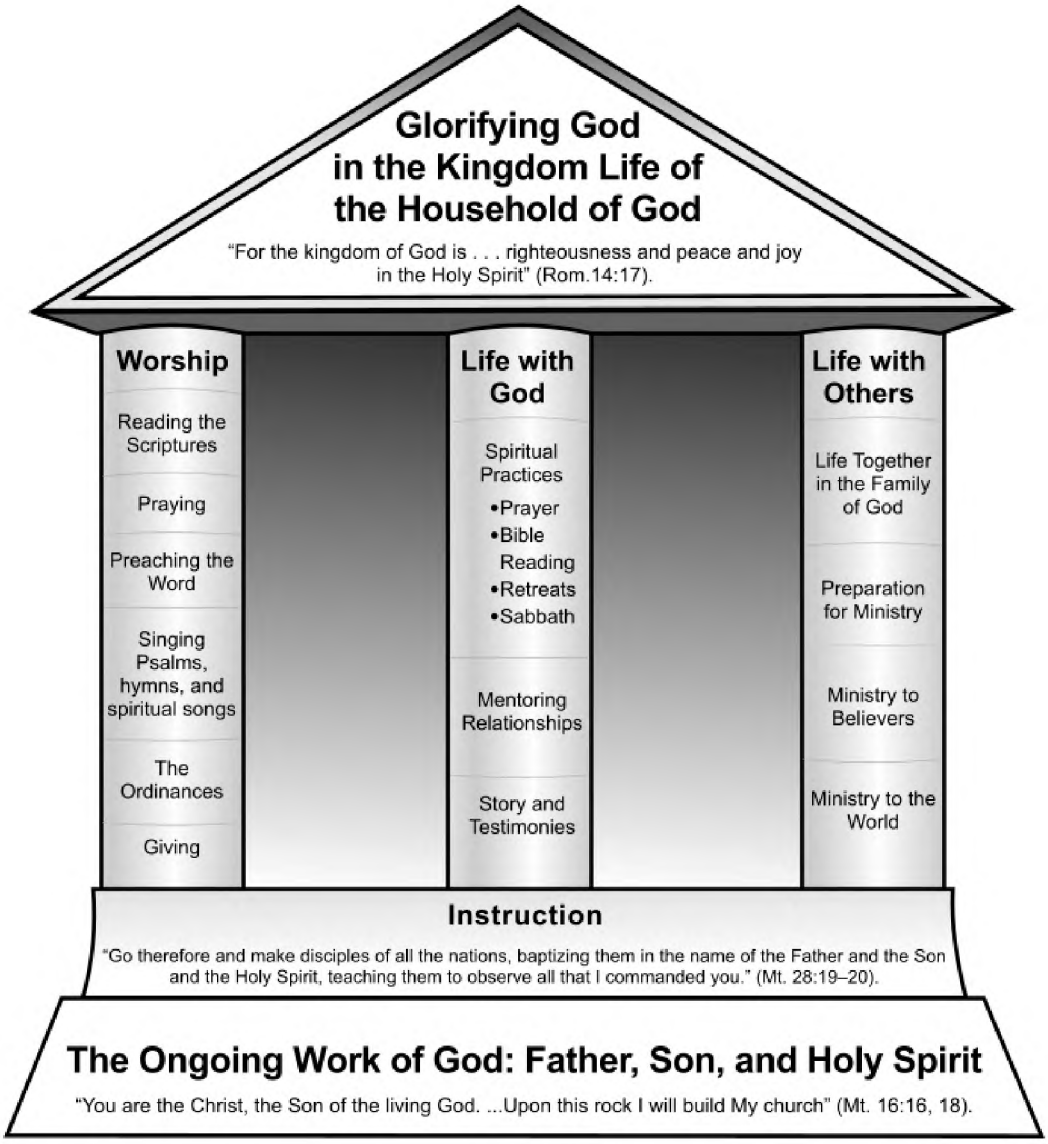


Figure 7. An instructional model for spiritual formation highlighting the spiritual practices for each pillar, which symbolizes various aspects of one's spiritual life

As mentioned above, there are two major practices that individual Christian can do personally that are just between God and him or her, without the involvement of others: prayer and Bible reading. There is a plethora of material available to aid the Christian with both prayer and Bible study. However, these are often presented from a perspective that worked well from the author's perspective but might not work well for another. Additionally, with the average

church attendance being fewer than ninety adults per average weekend (Barna Group 2003), an online curriculum that considers a person's unique personality and spiritual temperament could help fill the gap for Christians in small churches or where there are other exigent circumstances that prevent Christians from turning to their local church for help in these areas. The next chapter reports on a research project designed to consider believers' unique personality and spiritual temperament as they experience and engage in different types of prayer, using an online, interactive environment.

CHAPTER IV:

AN ONLINE PERSONAL PRAYER WORKSHOP

DESIGNED FOR VULNERABLE EVANGELICALS

> Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart. (Luke 18:1)

This chapter describes a research project aimed at discovering whether or not an online course on prayer that considers one's personality and spiritual temperament would be a helpful and viable option as well as how it was helpful.

Problem and Project Overview

There are four areas that need greater clarification before delving into the research study itself. This section will briefly describe the problem and how it will be addressed, along with defining key terms and reviewing oversight and permissions involved in the study.

Problem and Opportunity

Many people with mental health issues feel "alienated, marginalized and stigmatized" (Dixon, Holoshitz, and Nossel 2016, 18). This problem is also reflected in the church (Jongbloed 2014; Ed Stetzer, The Exchange, entry posted April 9, 2013). Because of this, it often makes it difficult for those with mental health issues to engage in church activities that promote spiritual growth, but the problem seems to be more basic than that. Many of my mental health clients

report not feeling good enough to approach God or that he seems far away, so even their relationship with God is deeply affected. Yet, this is not a problem just for people with mental health issues or those who are marginalized for other reasons. My experience suggests that these issues can affect even those who are quite successful in life. There is a need for opportunities for these individuals to obtain instruction that respects and embraces who they are as image bearers of God, uniquely created by him for their good and his glory, but any opportunity for spiritual growth needs to be in a safe, non-threatening environment. From my experience, this need is not being met for many with mental health issues within the community I serve.

Online instruction may well fit that need. Many people with mental health issues regularly take advantage of online forums designed to address specific mental health issues. As an online professor at Liberty University for over ten years, I have had thousands of students, several even with mental health issues and many with learning disabilities, who have completed online courses in the active pursuit of obtaining their bachelor's degree. Many of my students with mental health issues have commented that they chose Liberty University's online program rather than an on-campus experience. Some of these students have reported that they struggle with face-to-face interactions, while others benefit from the flexibility of an asynchronous online format that allows them some flexibility in the schedule to allow them to work on their assignments as they are able. Given these students' positive experiences with the online program, it seems to make sense to explore online instruction as a potential aid for those who need a

safe, non-threatening environment or those who do not readily have access to needed instruction within their local churches and communities.

Researchers have debated the effects of religion on the mental health of people, whether to the good or detriment of the individual, prompting research in that area. Recent studies indicate that conversational and meditative prayer has a positive effect on mental health (Winkeljohn Black et al. 2017). There are also indications from other studies that conversational and meditative prayer is positively associated with well-being and happiness but negatively associated with Christians with anxiety and depressive symptoms (Maltby, Lewis, and Day 2008; Winkeljohn Black et al. 2015; Winkeljohn Black et al. 2017). Since this research project will enlist subjects who are mentally healthy, prayer (specifically conversational and meditative) seems to be a good focus point for instruction as many people with mental health issues and students alike report that they struggle with it. It is suspected that this struggle with praying extends beyond students and the mental health population to Christians in general.

Response or Innovation

Operating under the principle of doing no harm, this project was an initial foray to determine whether or not an online workshop on prayer could result in participants engaging in a more meaningful prayer life and a more intimate relationship with God. This study included four individuals who were to complete an eight-module course on prayer that invites the participants to engage in prayer according to their unique personality type and spiritual temperament. All of the participants are healthy individuals who actively desire to develop their spiritual

life and would not be considered marginal or in need of mental health counseling or any clinical attention. An analysis of data from before and after questionnaires, assessments, and participants' assignments showed an improvement in the participants' quality of prayer life and relationship with God.

Definition of Key Terms

For this research project, a few definitions should be reviewed or clarified because of their use in the Prayer Workshop. Although most of these terms have already been discussed in chapter III, an explanation of the terms as they are used in the workshop might be helpful.

Deeper or Deepen

The terms deeper or deepen, which were used significantly in Chapter III in the section entitled Pillar Two: Personal Praxis, refer to a movement toward God, growing to maturity, and growth in likeness to Christ. Croft M. Pentz (1975, 54) identifies two aspects of Christian maturity: growth and godliness. He goes on to clarify that growth is both spiritual (growing in grace and knowledge; 2 Pet. 3:18) and mental (having the mind of Christ; Phil. 2:5). Pentz (1975, 54) also lists three attributes of godliness: godly attitudes (fighting the fight of faith; 1 Tim. 6:12), godly actions (walking in the Spirit; Gal. 5:16), and godly ambitions (knowing Christ; Phil. 3:10; and living by faith in Christ; Gal. 2:20). A deeper prayer life or deeper relationship with God then would show growth in godliness.

Prayer

Prayer is defined as conversation with God. Just as conversation with other people takes on many forms (e.g., informal connecting, interviews, planning, making requests, and so forth), prayer also takes on many forms, but the essence of prayer is that it possesses the qualities and characteristics of conversation. There is the speaker, the listener, and silence in between as the speaker finishes his or her thought and the other formulates a response, and then the actual response of the other; this cycle continues as the conversation progresses. God has initiated the conversation through the scriptures. As Christians pray, they should first listen to the Word of the Lord before formulating responses. Prayer was most notably used in Chapter III in Pillar One: Formal Worship and in Pillar Two: Personal Praxis. However, the concept of prayer as conversation is also discussed in Chapter III, under the topic of Instructional Considerations, specifically the section on Developing Communication Processes.

Meditative Prayer

The concept of meditative prayer needs to be distinguished from modern and secular thoughts on meditation. The biblical teaching on meditation differs from some forms of its counterparts in two major ways. First, the Bible is an integral part of the process. Second, the mind remains actively engaged in the process as those who are meditating focus on a portion of the scriptures. Some modern forms of meditation direct the subject to empty the mind and focus on a

mantra. See Chapter III, Pillar Two, Devotional Reading of the Bible section for more on meditation from a Fundamental Evangelical perspective.

Listening

With prayer being defined as conversation with God, the element of listening comes into play. As applied to prayer, listening encompasses five processes: Being attentive or paying attention to what God is saying in his Word allows individuals to respond to God rather than talking at him. Remembering invites believers to remember God specifically as well as his mighty works. Remembering all that one knows of God and recalling his mighty works to the children of God collectively or personally will move the conversation to depths not typically experienced by the hurried prayer. Waiting is the third element and carries the idea of tarrying and confident expectation and trust (Gilchrist 1999, 373). Similar, but different, is being still. Inherent in being still is the idea of calmness of soul and spirit and untroubled by the difficulties of life. Last is the vital notion of being intentional. Intentionality will see to it that the other four factors are carried out. It is related to discipline, which can lead to increased regularity in prayer. Without being intentional, one's prayer life can deteriorate into banality. This concept of listening can be reviewed in Chapter III, under the topic of Instructional Considerations, specifically the section on Developing Communication Processes.

Supervision, Permission, and Access

As I am a self-employed mental health counselor, certain considerations need to be addressed. This project followed the guidelines established by the

Research Ethics Board (approval granted January 16, 2018) and the administration and faculty of Tyndale Seminary. As a Licensed Mental Health Counselor in the state of Florida, I also adhered to standards set by the Florida Board of Clinical Social Work, Marriage & Family Therapy and Mental Health Counseling, Florida Statutes and Administrative Codes for this project to ensure compliance with ethical standards. As a mental healthcare professional, I also fall under the mandates of the United States Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services; HIPAA). However, because this study does not involve therapeutic exchanges, the HIPAA regulations do not apply. Even so, their mandates of confidentiality were followed to ensure the privacy of the participants. Each one signed an informed consent form, and pseudonyms were used to ensure confidentiality. Participants were reminded of confidentiality at the beginning of the course and in the introduction to each of the forum exercises. As part of the informed consent, a protocol to address and concerns of ethical behaviour was followed. Additionally, Senior Pastor Kirk Johnston of Community Church in Tampa, Florida, served as someone with whom I have consulted concerning issues related to my parachurch ministry; he also agreed to be available to offer oversight for this project and was a contact listed on the consent form as well. All participants were healthy and functioning members of their communities, so no extra considerations for mental health issues were necessary.

Context

I am a Licensed Mental Health Counselor with nineteen years' experience, specializing in Christian counseling, and I work extensively with relational issues (for a description of my counseling style, see Allender 2000). Also, I have been involved in teaching in a Christian environment for over thirty years; for ten of those years, I have been an online instructor of psychology at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia. Counseling and education are closely knit. Many of my clients, as they progress in their healing, become more interested in spiritual things, and their desire to grow in the Lord increases. Counseling at that point takes on an instructional and discipling framework that is individualized to that person. These clients flourish because they learn what is personally meaningful to them (Brandt 1998, 5), and each is treated with respect and honour (cf. 1 Cor. 9:19–23). Doing so also honours God's creative work within others while creating an atmosphere that promotes spiritual growth.

I have always enjoyed the differences people brought with their personalities and how that impacted the way they engaged their world. The last nineteen years as a counselor I have sought to help people discover and embrace how God has uniquely created them, which prompts them to pursue their life more fully to God's glory as they embrace God's handiwork in them. Teaching personality theories for the past ten years has reinforced the idea that personality and temperaments do impact the way people interact with others and, by extension, with God. Recent research has also corroborated this (cf., Gilson 2001, 118; Landuyt 2007, 60). Considering the spiritual disciplines, prayer seems to be

the most obvious choice when it comes to people approaching and interacting with God.

Prayer is important to one's spiritual development. Jesus taught on prayer more frequently than other matters (Gangel and Wilhoit 1994, 191). In working with my clients, I found that many prayed in ways they thought were expected of them or in imitation of prayers they heard from others. As I began working with these clients to help them gain a better sense of self and how God has uniquely designed them, I also saw them starting to pray in ways that were more fitting their personality and temperament. As they gained a better understanding of themselves, their prayer life came alive, and their relationship with God became more intimate than before. Building on this work with my clients, the curriculum for the Prayer Workshop project is about helping people to discover how to develop their prayer lives through embracing their unique personalities and temperaments with the ultimate goal of developing their intimacy with God, producing greater spiritual maturity all around.

The idea of developing an online workshop came from my positive experiences with online learning, both as a student and as an instructor. Over the last ten years and three thousand students, I have seen online education work to disseminate knowledge but also to produce students who are growing spiritually. Online courses have become quite sophisticated over the years, and for some students, they offer opportunities for growth that would be difficult to obtain otherwise. For example, class lectures that are recorded can be stopped so the viewer can take notes as needed, and they can be played multiple times for added

review. Course materials can be accessed via the course website. The use of discussion boards allows for the class to discuss the material or assignments. Additionally, the instructor can offer feedback within the discussion boards or individual assignments. Because the course is available twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week, the student can engage the course materials at a convenient time for him or her. When constructed well, these courses can provide opportunities for all participants to engage, sometimes more so online than in traditional classrooms. Given the success I have seen with online instruction, the workshop seems like a natural progression for those with whom I work while providing a resource that could be used to address more than one client at a time. This project was developed with that in mind; however, to avoid the risk of establishing dual relationships and potentially harming the therapeutic relationship, no current clients or former clients I have seen within the last two years were considered for this project.

Demographically, my clients vary in age, generally from young adults to seniors. They vary economically from poverty to upper middle class, and I serve a variety of ethnicities but predominantly Caucasian, Hispanic, and African American. I attempted to replicate this demographic pattern with the participants selected for the study. However, my sample size, consisting of four participants, was small and was more homogeneous than I had hoped for. There was variety in age and economic status, but all were female and Caucasian.

Models and Other Course Material

Research studies are influenced by the researchers' understanding of the problem, which is then interpreted by their philosophy. The understanding of the problem is further enhanced by other literature that is consulted in developing a study. Therefore, it is important to note both the model of spiritual formation and other sources that were used in the development and the interpretation of the results

Model of Spiritual Formation

One of the major themes that runs throughout my spiritual autobiography is the negative impact of living one's life according to the expectations of others. I did not have a clear identity of who I was in Christ. Like many others, I prayed as I thought Christians should pray. Even though I knew God knows everything, I hesitated to express what was on my heart in an authentic and honest manner, thinking it was not proper. The more I understand who I am, how God designed me, and who God is, the more real and open I became in my prayer life, and the result is a deeper, richer intimacy with God. Instruction was a chief means God used in my spiritual formation. Thus, this project flows from my spiritual growth but also from my model of spiritual formation.

This model of spiritual formation is an instructional model that honours the individual as a unique creation of God, who is designed for relationship with God himself and with others. In honouring the uniqueness of one another, God, the Creator, is also honoured and glorified. Two major means of discipleship stem from the reading of God's Word and through prayer, and most other discipleship

ministries are either built on these or incorporate them as major elements. Although the focus of this project is prayer, God's Word is inextricably tied together with it, and both are incorporated into the curriculum by way of meditative prayer and praying the scriptures.

The Bible also attests to the importance of honouring people as they come before God, and in honouring individuals, the Creator is also honoured. It is no wonder then that the Bible gives examples of many ways to connect with God: through nature and creation (cf. Pss. 23, 29, 84); Jesus went to the synagogue "as was his custom" (Luke 4:16); activism (cf. Ps. 7, 10, 68); giving care to others (James 1:27), et cetera. Not everyone is drawn to God in the same way, and some ways attract certain people more than others. Participants in this study had opportunities to experience prayer styles, environments, et cetera, with the goal of helping them to experience prayer in a way that is meaningful to them and ultimately of developing a closer relationship to God. The workshop drew heavily on The Instructional Base from Chapter III, especially the section entitled Understanding the Learner to develop aspects of how personality impacts even one's relationship with God. The approach to prayer focused on various types and related aspects from personal prayer found in Chapter III, Pillar Two: Personal Praxis. In addition to the instructional model, other sources were consulted in developing the workshop.

Other Literature

Literature used to support this project falls into three broad categories. The first group focuses on the psychological aspect of personality and spiritual

temperaments, especially concerning prayer. Gill Hall's (2012) research, entitled "Applying Psychological-Type Theory to Faith: Spirituality, Prayer, Worship and Scripture," served as an impetus for this research project. Otto Kroeger and Janet M. Thuesen's (1988) *Type Talk* served as a handy reference for general discussions on personality type. Ruth Fowke's (1997) *Finding Your Prayer Personality* was beneficial for applying the types to prayer. The major source for support for spiritual temperaments came from Gary Thomas' (2009) *Sacred Pathways: Discover Your Soul's Path to God*. The Spiritual Temperament Assessment was pulled from Thomas' book and used to identify participants' spiritual temperaments. This book was a foundational source both for the identification of temperaments but also to help participants understand how their distinct temperament might impact their prayer life. Initially, as I was creating the workshop, I was undecided as to whether to approach these temperaments as Thomas did or to go a different route, using Foster's (1998) six streams as motifs or Howard's (2008, 350–352) version on faith traditions for the participants to explore. I ultimately decided to use Thomas' paradigm because it related to the individual and, as I looked at his sources, he relied heavily on the scriptures. In designing the course, I relied heavily on the scriptures as well.

The second category of resources dealt with prayer. Several resources informed the content for the various modules focusing specifically on prayer. The unit on the Lord's Prayer as a model prayer relied upon insight from two books: *Alone with God* (MacArthur 1995) and *Praying the Lord's Prayer* (Packer 2007). Both sources provided in-depth studies of the Lord's Prayer. *Praying the*

Scriptures (Howard 1999) added support for the concept and process. The *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters* (Hawthorne, Martin, and Reid 1993) provided support from a theological perspective for developing some of the other units. For a unit on meditative and listening prayer intended to help participants understand the differences between secular meditation and biblical meditation, along with helping them to learn how to pray meditatively, I leaned heavily on a study I had done earlier (Bruce 2016b). Several articles from the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Cohen 1999; Gilchrist 1999; Harris, Archer, and Waltke, 1999) provided additional theological support for this unit. Two other sources, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Whitney 1991) and *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered* (Wilhoit 2008), also contributed to the understanding of biblical meditation.

The third category of resources focused on the research process. Five primary sources were especially helpful as they presented what might be considered primers for action research. Tim Sensing's (2011) *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* does an excellent job of guiding the novice through the action research process. As the title suggests, the specificity for Doctor of Ministry theses made this resource invaluable in understanding the process. Sensing presented the concepts of action research. The second work, simply entitled *Action Research* (Stringer 2014) supplied the help necessary to implement the process by logically and strategically taking the reader through the action research process step by step. Stringer's book was helpful for organizing the contents and processes for this

project. Stringer's work was also very helpful with the application process. Another useful resource was *Curriculum Action Research* (McKernan 1996). The benefit of James McKernan's book was that it is curriculum specific. Because this research project required participants to work through a course on prayer, *Curriculum Action Research* provided processes and strategies for research, but it also helped with designing this project to elicit feedback from the participants as to the effectiveness of the curriculum and the online platform. By far, however, the most valuable resources for settling on an approach came from John W. Creswell's (2013) *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design.* In this book, he describes and compares five approaches, of which I found the Case Study approach most appropriate for the context of my workshop. For mental health counselors, case studies are a common way of studying individuals, so it seemed to be a natural fit both for the research situation and for me as I analyzed the data. The final resource that was also beneficial for further understanding the case study approach was Robert K. Yin's (2014) *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*.

Finally, I found three sources to be especially helpful to develop a plan for coding data. The first, already mentioned, was John W. Creswell's (2013) *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design.* His description of lean coding was helpful for organizing the data into major categories to make further coding more manageable. *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (Saldaña 2009) proved to be a valuable instruction and operational manual for the coding process.

It explained several different methods, accompanied by examples, which was useful when determining which methods would be most useful for this project.

With this arsenal of personal preparation, a personal philosophy of spiritual formation, and resources listed above, a research project was born to test whether or not an online workshop on prayer could be beneficial in developing one's relationship with God.

Methodology and Methods

Several considerations need to be examined concerning the development and implementation of this research project. The following will elaborate on these matters.

Field

This project was designed as an online workshop, consisting of eight modules wherein the participants engaged the course at their convenience over a three-week period in January and February of 2018. Given time constraints for the project, a final questionnaire was completed one month later, in March 2018, to evaluate whether or not there was ongoing effectiveness of the course and to help determine any changes or additions to the course might be helpful. The course was designed to mimic the structure of a live workshop on prayer that might be offered at a weekend conference in a church. The workshop began with preliminary matters, a welcome, and details of the schedule. Workshops are usually broken up into segments where instruction is given, and then often the participants separate, complete some related activity, and come together again either as a whole or in small groups to discuss the activity. At the end of the

workshop, there is a closing, and evaluation forms are passed out for participants to complete.

This online version roughly followed that pattern. Preliminary matters included a signed Consent Form, an instructional video on how to maneuver around the course, and, of course, a welcome. Each section had an instructional video, along with pertinent exercises, which were done individually, and then the group came together through the online forums to discuss their assignments. In addition, the curriculum and course delivery were evaluated as the course went along. This showed itself to be important because some of the participants reported that some of the videos were blurry when viewed full screen. To compensate for this, the PowerPoint presentations that formed the basis for the instructional videos were uploaded and made available as resources. As in a live workshop, participants typically come away with several resources; this online workshop also made several other resources available. The online workshop ended with a closing session to tie everything together as one would expect in a live workshop. (See Appendix 3 for a more detailed description of each of the sessions.)

Originally this project was conceptualized out of concern for my clients who were struggling with a variety of mental health issues. Most of my clients are adults, ranging in age from their early twenties to late sixties. There is also a mixture of ethnicities, predominantly Caucasian, Hispanic, and African American. The ratio of female to male clients is approximately four to one. All my clients, with one exception, are computer literate and have no problem using the computer

for common applications. This population became the impetus for this study. However, in considering potential participants for the workshop outside of my client base, the value this workshop could have for other marginal people, students, and those from small churches without many resources became readily apparent.

Because my clients are a vulnerable population, certain ethical concerns must be addressed to avoid risk of harming them. A second consideration is a risk of harming the therapeutic relationship with a client who would participate in a collaborative study. Therefore, participants came from outside of my counseling practice and included only individuals who were healthy and well-functioning in their communities. Initially the goal was to obtain six to twelve participants; however, this proved to be more difficult than anticipated. Volunteers were sought from my Facebook database of acquaintances to ensure that participants would have adequate skills to participate in an online course. An announcement was sent out to members of my database who fell within the demographics of my clients to introduce this research project. Five people responded back expressing interest. An information letter and Consent Form were then sent to those five. Four of those became participants that took part in this project. Even though an attempt was made to parallel the demographics of my clientele as closely as possible, the participants did not parallel the demographics of my clients. All the participants were female. Age wise, the demographics matched; however, the youngest participant withdrew after partially completing the second module, making the participants an older group than my clients. The three remaining

participants were Caucasian women between the ages fifty-seven and seventy-eight and lived in various states across the United States. Concerning personality and spiritual temperaments, the three participants were rather homogenous. The participants engaged in the workshop as learners, but they collaborated in the project by evaluating the curriculum, the Moodle™ platform, and overall ease of use.

Scope

This project aimed to explore whether or not a greater understanding of one's personality and spiritual temperament as applied to prayer will help participants to develop a deeper, more intimate relationship with God by using an online workshop. The focus of the study was on fostering personal spiritual growth through application of personality type and spiritual temperament to different prayer styles and types. Therefore, this study was limited to the participants' personal prayer life and the specific expressions of prayer presented in the workshop. Because the course was online, prayer was expressed in written form; however, with each assignment where prayer was part of the assignment, the participants had the option to either post their written prayer or to share their reflection on the process. The content of the prayers followed the curriculum, which limited the prayers to using the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:9–13), which included modeling a prayer after it, a Bible passage of the participant's choosing and using it as a basis for her prayer, meditative prayer, and intercessory prayer. These prayers were chosen because of the familiarity of these types of prayers within the community I serve. The participants, therefore, should have at least

some knowledge of the concepts, and progressing through the workshop would give them the opportunity to build on what is already present. As participants progressed through the course, they were encouraged to incorporate things from previous lessons but not required to do so.

Psychological aspects of this study were limited to assessments of personality (based on Jung's typology) and spiritual temperaments, so participants could gain a greater understanding of how they understood and processed their world and how that understanding could impact their spiritual life, specifically for their prayer life. All personality types and spiritual temperaments were not represented in the group studied. Theological, moral, or social issues associated with prayer were not examined. Any implications for corporate prayer were not investigated, nor did this study examine the cogency of this workshop outside this present context.

Methodology

The methodological approach used in this study arose from both an instructional model of spiritual formation that celebrates the uniqueness of the individual as an image bearer of God and the goal of determining whether or not applying an understanding of one's personality and spiritual temperament to the individual's prayer life promotes spiritual intimacy with God. Because of the person-centered nature of this project, which relied on participant feedback, an approach that used some of the principles and ideas from participatory action research formed some of the foundational elements. This study viewed the problem through the lens of each participant's personal growth, the participants'

interaction with one another, and the instructional impact of the training elements of the online workshop. A qualitative approach, then, became the obvious choice because it "seeks to make sense of lived experience" (Sensing 2011, 57). This approach also allowed the data to appear without preconceived theories or structures forced on the study while it looks for meaning in the events (McKernan 1996, 7).

Furthermore, a multi-methods approach was employed. This qualitative approach is one that "allows various perspectives to engage in a critical dialogue that leads to several sets of rich data," the result of which is the possibility for deeper understanding from the data (Sensing 2011, 55). Data collection for this project included personality assessments, discussion boards, interviews in the form of questionnaires, and feedback on the course content, instruction, and method of delivery.

The purpose of this project was to discover whether or not participants in an online personal Prayer Workshop deepened their relationship with God as they applied their personality type and spiritual temperaments to their prayer life. Several factors needed to be explored to determine the effectiveness of the online Prayer Workshop.

Tracking of the participants' response to the workshop and application of the traits and temperaments was necessary to determine whether growth took place. Growth, in this sense, would be determined by the participants' reports of their prayer life as being more frequent and their relationship with the Lord as becoming more intimate. A narrative approach was taken to capture each

participant's story, as well as their shared story, through the workshop. A narrative approach has advantages. It approaches problems from a postmodern perspective, which values experience and acknowledges that the world is made up of more than just facts (Savage and Presnell 2008, 42). The narrative approach allows engagement with the participants' stories to achieve discernment instead of measurement (Savage and Presnell 2008, 44–45). Thus, given the self-reflective nature of these assignments, the postmodern narrative approach seemed the best option to capture any change and transformation that took place in the "snapshots" of each assignment (Savage and Presnell 2008, 110). Stories relating to the participants' prayer life were gathered in the form of questionnaires at the beginning and after the intervention to gauge whether or not there was movement and, if any, what type had occurred during the intervention. Each of the eight sessions of the workshop included forum assignments. In these assignments, participants added to the unfolding narrative of their workshop experience.

The second choice in methodology was to include action curriculum research to analyze the curriculum, instruction, and delivery method of the workshop. To ensure that adequate data were collected, feedback from the participants on these various aspects were built into the workshop and actively sought.

The learning objectives of this workshop were to enable students to experience a greater understanding of their personality traits and spiritual temperaments and to facilitate experiential opportunities for them to relate to God in prayer in ways that are in keeping with their unique design. Therefore, adding a

curriculum development component enhanced the methodological approach. Both experiential and social constructivist learning theories (Riding, Fowell, and Levy 1995, 4) are particularly suited for this project, and principles from these theories formed the bulk of the teaching strategy used. Simply put, the experiential learning theory emphasizes the importance of experience in the learning process, while the social constructivist theory holds that social interaction fosters learning. The assignments throughout the workshop called for the participants to experience praying as discussed in the modules. In turn, the participants were to engage in discussion boards to either share their prayer or their reflections on their experience. The online nature of the workshop supported the use of "computer-mediated communication technologies" (Riding, Fowell, and Levy 1995, 4); email and asynchronous discussion boards aided the learning process by promoting reflective opportunities while also providing additional means of data collection. The use of these technologies supplemented the workshop and overall curriculum, giving three major categories to consider: curriculum, instruction, and environment. Curriculum refers to what is being taught, the content or material to be covered in the course or courses. In the case of the workshop, prayer is the content. Instruction concerns how the curriculum is taught or delivered and how students are engaged with the curriculum. Instruction for the workshop included lectures via PowerPoint presentations and video clips, along with written material for the students to access. Instruction also included assignments related to the topic that was discussed and the use of discussion boards for the students to benefit from interaction from one another. The environment refers to the setting,

such as a classroom, an online environment, some other setting, or a combination of settings. The setting for the prayer workshop utilized an online platform exclusively. These three categories were encompassed within curriculum action research. This approach along with the narrative approach formed a broader base for data analysis.

Therefore, this multi-methods approach offered the greatest potential of gaining additional insight, which could lead to future improvement of the curriculum. An improved curriculum, then, could potentially lead to greater growth in the lives of its future participants over the original.

Methods

Data triangulation, which uses "a variety of data sources" in a study, is one way to provide "a complex view of the intervention;" this, in turn, will make a more substantial interpretation possible (Sensing 2011, 72). Accordingly, several tools and means were used for gathering data.

Semi-structured interviews were completed online at the start (pre-intervention, session 1) and conclusion (post-intervention, session 8) of the workshop in the form of questionnaires to establish any qualitative changes in spiritual growth. The questions were open-ended to provide more flexibility; however, a few items in both the pre- and post-interviews use a five-point Likert scale to gauge change in a summative manner. The pre-intervention interview aimed to gather data concerning the participants' prayer life before the workshop. The goal of the post-intervention interview was to assess any changes that have occurred during the workshop. Another written semi-structured interview was

garnered one month after the intervention to examine whether or not any changes were sustained. The questions for this interview were open-ended with one question using a five-point Likert scale like on the pre- and post-questionnaires. These semi-structured interviews kept to the focus of the problem and purpose of the project (Sensing 2011, 106).

In the beginning modules of the intervention, participants completed two assessments: the Jung Typology Test™ and Thomas' Spiritual Temperament Assessment. The rationale for using these two instruments is discussed in Chapter III: Making Disciples, The Instructional Base section, in Incorporating Personality Schemas to Engage Learners. The Jung Typology Test™ is available from HumanMetrics.com and is available free of charge for educational purposes (Humanmetrics Inc.; see Appendix 2). Zondervan (Harper Collins) granted permission to use Thomas' material for the spiritual temperament assessment (See Appendix 2). Sensing (2011, 127) supports the use of testing instruments if the tools measure what needs to be evaluated. These assessments are directly related to the study, and they gave the participants valuable feedback about their personality and spiritual temperaments, which assisted them in applying the workshop modules in a more personal and meaningful way.

The opportunity for the group to function as a quasi-focus group was given through asynchronous online discussion boards where participants answered the discussion prompt and then responded to others' posts. According to research, "focus groups work best when the participants are strangers" (Sensing 2011, 120). Although the participants were acquainted with the researcher, they

were not acquainted with one another, and as a result, functioned well for a focus group in the sense that they were strangers to one another. The synergy of focus groups can provide richer data than individual interviews (Sensing 2011, 120), and the strategy here was to provide energy and to increase participatory collaboration—in addition to its use as a learning tool. The requirement for confidentiality and ground rules for discussions (Sensing 2011, 123) were presented at the beginning of the discussion board.

The discussion boards functioned as curriculum assignments, and participants were able to choose to post either written prayers or reflections on their prayer assignments (so that participants could be free to pray privately and unencumbered by the concern of someone reading their private conversations with God). Observation of these assignments provided insight into the participants' spiritual life. The participants' prayers, which were defined earlier as conversations with God, along with the interviews, provided a running narrative concerning the prayer lives of the participants.

Observations of the group interaction on the discussion boards and assignments were recorded as field notes, along with other data gathered, such as technical difficulties with viewing videos, uploading files, et cetera. Although the online, asynchronous nature of the workshop does not provide opportunities for face-to-face interaction, things like rapport, attitudes, openness, and so forth, were noted and tracked. Finally, an analysis of the curriculum, instruction, and the online platform was done to determine their effectiveness in delivering instruction on personalizing prayer for spiritual growth. Two approaches were used in

analyzing the data. Beginning with the narrative approach, I reviewed the data, looking for change and then for discerning transformation (Savage and Presnell 2008, 124). Their model presents five approaches to aid in interpreting the data: the functionalist approach compares the pre- and post-project, an ecological approach considers the social and physical aspects of the larger environment, the materialist approach focuses on changes in the surrounding environment, the structuralist approach looks for unconscious patterns, and the last is the semiotic approach, which looks at the images, codes, messages, and metaphors. Each of these approaches was used to evaluate the data (Savage and Presnell 2008, 128-129). However, the ecological approach was the least helpful in evaluating the data, while the semiotic and materialist approaches were the most helpful.

Interpreting the curriculum required additional analysis. Although McKernan (1996) was helpful with many aspects of curriculum research, he was less helpful for interpreting the data. However, Davidson-Shivers and Rasmussen (2006, 128-131) provided four categories to evaluate curriculum: effectiveness, efficiency, appeal, and usability. Using the data collected and drawing from the categories presented by Davidson-Shivers and Rasmussen, I looked at the effectiveness of the curriculum by asking whether or not mastery of goals and success were achieved and, if so, to what degree they were achieved, and by looking for weaknesses. I then addressed the issue of efficiency to evaluate how effective the curriculum was concerning the use of time and other resources. The third area of evaluation concerned whether or not the workshop gained and maintained the participants' attention. The last area in interpreting the curriculum

addressed its usability, specifically how easy the online workshop was to access and use and how intuitive it was.

The following table gives a breakdown of the data collected, type of data, and approaches used to code and interpret the data. Since the workshop was online, all data were texted based, so no transcription was necessary.

Table 2. Data collection, type, and approach for coding

Source	How collected	When collected	Type of data	Coding approach
Pre-questionnaire	Course assignment	Session 1 of the workshop	Participants' prayer life	Narrative
Jung Typology Test™	Course assignment	Session 1 of the workshop	Personality and Temperament	Not Applicable
Thomas' Spiritual Temperaments Assessment	Course assignment	Session 3 of the workshop	Personality and Temperament	Not Applicable
Forums	Course assignment	Sessions 1-8 of the workshop	Participants' prayer life Personality and Temperament	Narrative Curriculum
Course feedback	Course assignment	Sessions 2, 4, 6, 7, and 8	Curriculum and online platform	Narrative Curriculum
Post-questionnaire	Course assignment	Session 8	Participants' prayer life Personality and Temperament	Narrative
Final questionnaire	Course assignment	1 month after participants finished the workshop	Participants' prayer life Personality and Temperament	Narrative
Participant communications	Emails and Messenger	Throughout the course of the workshop	Curriculum, Online platform Narrative	Narrative Curriculum
Field notes	Personal notebook	Throughout the course of the workshop	Curriculum and Online platform Participants' prayer life Personality and Temperament	Narrative Curriculum

As indicated by the table above, there were two approaches used for coding the data. Since there were less data for curriculum action research than for the narrative approach, I started there. I pulled out all the data related to the curriculum, which came from eight forum discussions, five course feedback exercises, participant communications via email and Messenger, and my field notes. I read this data initially and coded the data deductively based on the reports of the participants and my observations. To organize the data, I followed Creswell's strategy of lean coding. He begins with a short list of five or six categories and then expands the categories as he continues to review and re-review the data (Creswell 2013, 184). This strategy helped to divide curriculum-related issues further into key groupings. This strategy led to four codes initially: curriculum, instruction, internet-related issues, and Moodle Cloud™, as mentioned above. Other codes emerged upon reviewing and re-reviewing the data, resulting in thirteen additional codes for a total of seventeen codes. I then grouped these codes into three categories: things done well, things to improve, and things to mitigate. See Appendix 4 for a list of the codes used for the curriculum action research.

A postmodern narrative approach was used to code the rest of the data that related to the participant's stories as they worked their way through the course and assignments. This approach was chosen because the data can be traced from sociological and psychological perspectives (Saldaña 2010, 109). Additionally, narrative coding is an appropriate way to explore the "intrapersonal and interpersonal participant experiences and actions to understand the human

condition through the story, which is justified . . . as a legitimate way of knowing" (Saldaña 2010, 109). The data coded from a narrative perspective, then, was viewed from the perspective of four stories: a story for each of the four women as they individually worked their way through the workshop and a fifth where their stories intersected in the forum discussions. With the narrative approach, I found coding to be less structured, which made sense, considering stories can be quite unstructured at times. To code the narratives, I used the coding strategy as described by Sensing (2011, 203). I started by getting a systematic overview of the data, and then I determined the main themes that emerged from the categories. With second and third readings, I further coded those themes into sub-themes. I then took the sub-themes and organized them into categories.

I started by reading all the data from each of the participants to get a systematic overview of the data to give me "a clear and comprehensive idea of its coverage and scope" (Sensing 2011, 201). The two assessments, the Jung Typology Test ™ and Thomas' Spiritual Temperaments assessment were first noted, based on the results of the assessments. After that, I again read through the data for each of the participants, one at a time, coding each deductively based on each participant's self-report. For each participant, I began with the pre-, post-, and final questionnaires to get an overall sense of progress through the workshop. Then I coded each of the eight forum exchanges in order, the five course feedbacks in order, and the communications to me via email and Messenger. My field notes were also coded deductively from my observations. I followed this same procedure as I traced and coded the story of the intersection of the

participants' stories. The codes for the four narratives of the individual participants followed the same codes with a few additions for each participant. The total number of codes for these four narratives was thirty-eight. I then grouped those codes into five categories. Each data set was coded individually. This approach seemed to me to offer more options for interpretation and analysis. Coding each data set individually allowed me to evaluate change over time for each individual participant while still being able to evaluate change over time for the group. Coding the data sets individually also seemed to me the best way to evaluate the curriculum more specifically. For example, I could evaluate what worked well and what did not but also evaluate whether or not an issue was problematic for most, some, or only a few participants. In another example, coding each data set individually, provided information to help me determine whether or not the Moodle™ platform was problematic for all participants or just one or two. I was able to determine that all the participants had difficulty at first but quickly adjusted, suggesting that the issue was more of the participants not being familiar with the platform.

The fifth narrative, which was comprised of the interactions of the participants with one another, required different codes. Three sources informed the group interactions: course feedback, my field notes, and primarily the forums. I followed the same procedure as with the other narratives and coded them deductively according to their written input. The total number of codes for the fifth, collective narrative led to seventeen, which I then grouped into four categories.

Once the narrative coding was completed, I analyzed the information gathered from both the curriculum and the narrative coding. Analyzing the coding from the narratives informed me as to the accomplishment of spiritual formation goals, while analyzing the coding from the curriculum development gave vital information as to its effectiveness to achieve the established goals. Using both approaches in conjunction with one another, then, provided a fuller picture to understand the overall impact of the workshop better while also providing insight for developing future workshops. The next section will describe the phases of this project and lay out a timeline used to gain a better understanding of the overall process.

Phases and Timetables

There were three main phases to this project: development, intervention, and the data analysis and report. In the development phase, two major goals needed to be accomplished; this was to gain approval for the action research project from the Research Ethics Board and to develop the project itself, the Personal Prayer Workshop. The major task for gaining approval from the Ethics Board required the writing of the proposal, which was submitted September 1, 2017. However, revisions were required and made, and the approval was granted on October 13, 2017.

The second major goal of the development phase was the development of the project itself, which required the development of the curriculum. Since it was to be an online workshop, the curriculum had to be uploaded to an online platform. Although Moodle™ Cloud presents some challenges because it does not

seem to be as intuitive as some of the other options, it was chosen for this project because it was readily accessible, and I was familiar enough with it to lessen the learning curve. Another aspect of this project was the creation of videos to present the teaching materials. The final major aspect of the curriculum development included the creation of resources for the participants to download. Once this was completed, the implementation phase could begin.

Implementation, as well, included two main goals: obtaining participants and monitoring their progress, giving assistance where necessary. Obtaining participants was more difficult than anticipated, and I ended up with fewer than I had hoped. However, they provided helpful data, and their feedback on the curriculum was invaluable. The participants had some difficulties in navigating the course, mostly learning curve issues, according to the participants' report. A few of the videos were of poor quality as an oversight on my part, but this was mediated by uploading the PowerPoint presentations for the participants to download. The presentations had the added benefit as a resource for them as some participants took notes throughout the course. As the participants got further into the course, there were fewer problems reported, so it seems that the learning curve was indeed the major issue there. The participants worked through the course at their own pace, with the first one beginning January 22, 2018, and the final questionnaires being completed by March 18, 2018. They were not involved in the design nor the interpretation of the data, so the final questionnaire ended their participation.

The final phase consists of the coding of data and completion of this report. The coding began February 1, 2018 and was completed March 26, 2018. Coding was done intermittently throughout the course as participants finished various sections. This report is the final task to be completed for this project. The following table breaks down the phases, details of actions taken, and timeframe for this project.

Table 3. Phases and timetable

Phase	Action	Time frame	Who	How
Development	Obtained permission from Zondervan to use Thomas' spiritual temperaments assessment material	Acquired July 7, 2017	Sally Bruce and Zondervan	Submitted form via email according to website directions.
	Copied Terms of Use (permission) from humanmetrics.com to use website for assessment	Acquired July 10, 2017	Sally Bruce	Downloaded from www.humanmetrics .com
	Obtained permission for music used in the curriculum, if necessary	January 16, 2018	Sally Bruce and various publishers	Contacted via published directions
	Submitted REB application	September 1, 2017	Sally Bruce	Written report
	Submitted action research proposal	September 1, 2017	Sally Bruce	Written report
	Website developed	Completed by January 20, 2018	Sally Bruce	Used Moodle Cloud
	Submitted revised REB application	September 25, 2017	Sally Bruce	Submitted form via email
	REB project approval	October 13, 2017	REB	Received via email
	Course content completed and uploaded	January 20, 2018	Sally Bruce	Uploading teaching videos to the course
Implementation of intervention	Obtained signed informed consent letters	January 22–26, 2018	Sally Bruce and participants	Via the website
	Implemented Online Workshop, Modules 1-8	January 22–February 21, 2018	Participants	Via the website
	Took field notes	January 22–February 21, 2018	Sally Bruce	Via the website
	Sent out four weekly emails to encourage	Weekly as participants finish the	Sally Bruce	Email

Phase	Action	Time frame	Who	How
	participants to apply what they learned	course: February 12–March 11, 2018		
	Distributed final questionnaire	March 11–18, 2018	Sally Bruce	Via the website
	Completed final questionnaire	March 11–18, 2018	Participants	Via the website
Data analysis and reporting	Coded data from all sources	February 1–March 26, 2018	Sally Bruce	Using Narrative and Curriculum approaches
	Reviewed coded data	March 28, 2018	Sally Bruce	Analysis of data
	Interpreted coded data	March 30, 2018	Sally Bruce	Reflective reading
	Final written report	April 15, 2018	Sally Bruce	Written Report

Ethics in Ministry Based Research

Ethical concerns flow naturally from a Christian perspective where believers are called to love one another and to support the weak (Acts 20:35; 1 Thess. 5:14). Paul sets the example in 1 Corinthians 1:24, "Not that we lord it over your faith, but are workers with you for your joy." In other words, Paul set the standard of working with and for those to whom he ministered. His relationship was collaborative and beneficial to those he served. The Tri-Council Policy Statement mirrors this same sentiment: "Human dignity requires that research involving humans be conducted in a manner that is sensitive to the inherent worth of all human beings and the respect and consideration that they are due" (Canadian Institutes of Health Research 2014, 6).

Great care was given to reduce any power differential in this project. With this study originating from a counseling ministry, there was a genuine concern for non-malfeasance, and steps were taken to avoid harming anyone. No current clients or those who had been clients within the last two years were considered to

participate in the study. Participants were drawn from my Facebook database of acquaintances, which included no past clients. While I tried to mirror the demographics of my counseling center's clientele, it was not a perfect match. However, from an ethical point of view, the participants were all mentally healthy, and there was no power differential other than what would be typical between a teacher and student. The second issue of a dual relationship was also addressed. I served in the capacity of a researcher but also a friend. However, the participants took an active part in the further development of the course by offering their feedback, and the participants had an opportunity to review and interpret the data if they wished, which would have raised their roles to participants and colleagues. However, none of the participants chose to participate in this manner.

Other potential concerns were minimized by the nature and construction of the workshop. Participants did not meet face-to-face, and any identifying features, such as name, location, et cetera, were not shared unless an individual chose to reveal them. Participants signed an informed consent statement, which also advised them on confidentiality issues. Pseudonyms were used to maintain the confidentiality of the participants. Appropriate measures were taken to protect data, such as securing hard copies under locks and encrypting digital files. Although no therapeutic interventions were performed, the same care and consideration were offered to the participants that are offered to mental health clients, following the ethics and other guidelines dictated by the Florida Board of

Clinical Social Work, Marriage & Family Therapy and Mental Health Counseling (http://floridasmentalhealthprofessions.gov/resources/).

A final risk that was considered was that of embarrassment as participants reflect and share, given the intimate nature of an individual's prayer life. Offering alternatives for some of the more personal assignments mitigated this risk. The structure of the online course itself also alleviated the risk, wherein participants had time to consider and compose their remarks. One participant even remarked that she found it easier to ask questions on the online workshop as opposed to being among a group. The confidentiality of the participants further lessened any potential embarrassment.

To ensure that the highest ethical standards were kept, Tyndale Seminary has set in place policies to protect the conduct of research involving living human participants. All policies were respected and followed.

Findings, Interpretation, and Outcomes

The research study collected data from an online Prayer Workshop designed to encourage a more intimate relationship with God through the application of personality traits and spiritual temperaments to the participants' prayer life. The data were collected with the overall goal of increased intimacy with God, which also necessitated an evaluation of the curriculum.

Findings

The findings were drawn from seven sources: (1) pre-, post-, and final questionnaires, (2) the Jung Typology Test™, (3) Thomas' Spiritual Temperaments assessment, (4) forum assignments for each of the eight sessions,

(5) course feedback from Sessions 2, 4, 6, 7, and 8, (6) participants' communications to me via email or Messenger, and (7) my field notes. Two approaches were taken to analyze the data: (1) a postmodern narrative approach that focused on the main goal of a deepening one's relationship with God through application of personality and spiritual temperaments to one's prayer life and (2) curriculum action research in which the participants actively engaged in the development of the curriculum through focused feedback. The participants were few, but they provided rich data.

Four participants began the course. One dropped out after the third session due to busyness and illness. The other three completed the course, but only two completed the final questionnaire. The Final Questionnaire was made available to participants one month after they completed the course and was designed to measure the sustainability of any prayer practices developed during the workshop. Completing Sessions 1 through 8 comprised the content of the workshop. See the breakdown of participant engagement in Table 4.

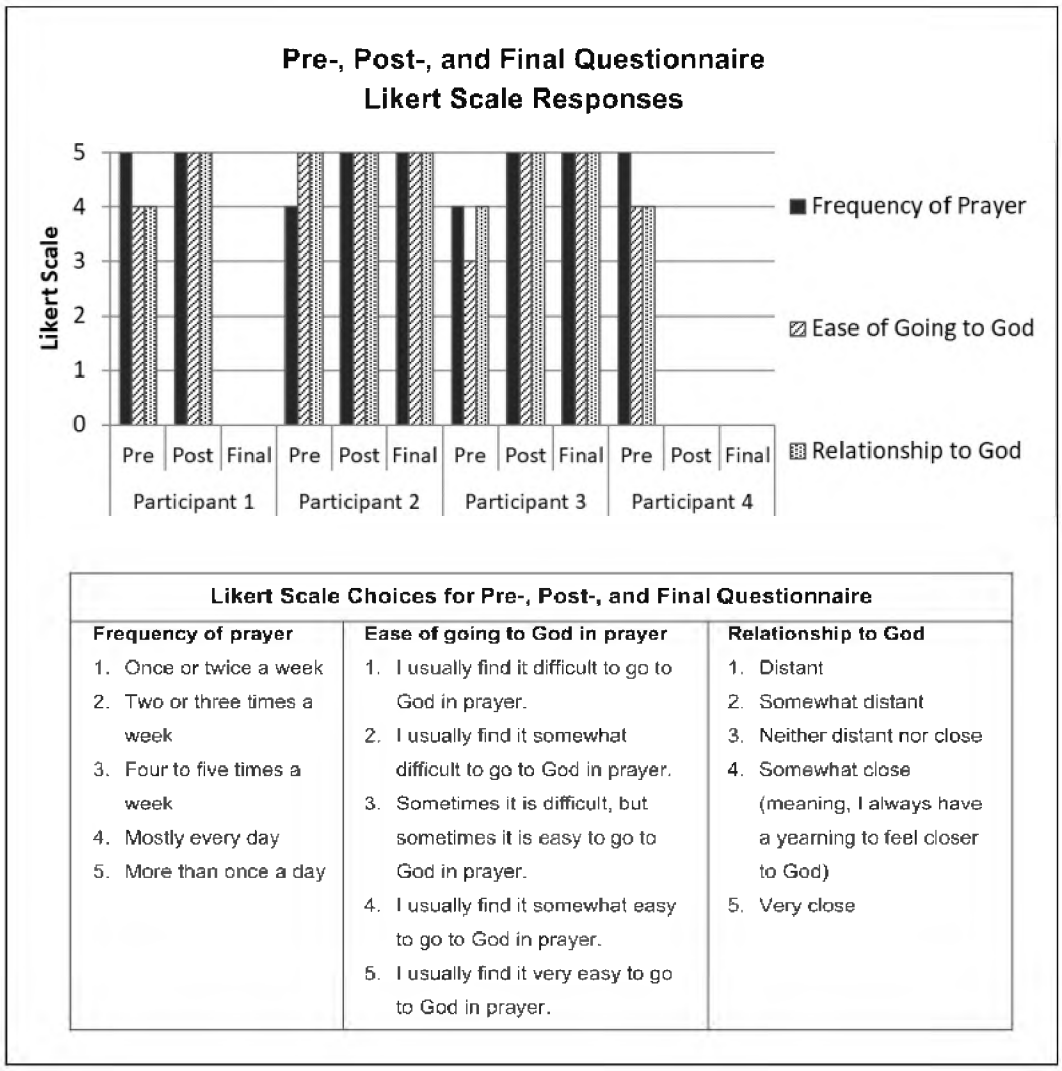
Table 4. Participant engagement by sessions

	Howlin Dogg	Foxey Lady	Chatterin Mongoose	Smokey Cat
Session 1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Session 2	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Session 3	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Session 4	Yes	Yes	Yes	…
Session 5	Yes	Yes	Yes	…
Session 6	Yes	Yes	Yes	…
Session 7	Yes	Yes	Yes	…
Session 8	Yes	Yes	Yes	…

	Howlin Dogg	Foxey Lady	Chatterin Mongoose	Smokey Cat
Final Questionnaire	…	Yes	Yes	…

Each participant completed a Pre-Questionnaire at the beginning of Session 1 to establish a baseline of the participants' prayer life and relationship with God at the beginning of the workshop. The pre-questionnaire asked about the participant's prayer life, relationship with God, and frequency of prayer. Those who finished the course also took a Post-Questionnaire at the end of Session 8. This questionnaire asked the same things as the pre-questionnaire but included opportunities to reflect on the changes they had seen and would like to see in their prayer life. Each of the participants who finished was then given the opportunity to complete a Final Questionnaire to see whether or not any changes were sustained. This questionnaire sought to discover whether or not the changes reported at the end of the workshop were sustained and whether or not any of the prayer practices from the workshop were still being used. The results showed that the participants began ranking themselves high in all areas, with fours and fives. Only one participant ranked herself lower, with a three, concerning her ease of going to God in prayer. However, the three participants who completed the course all ranked themselves as fives across the board, indicating that they perceived improvement in areas where they did not begin with a five. No one had a decrease in rank after the workshop. Two of the participants completed the Final Questionnaire, again ranking themselves with all fives based on their self-report. This seems to indicate that at least for the month, they had continued to sustain

the advances made in the workshop, according to their self-perception. Figure 9 details the participants' rankings by questionnaire, showing their improvement.

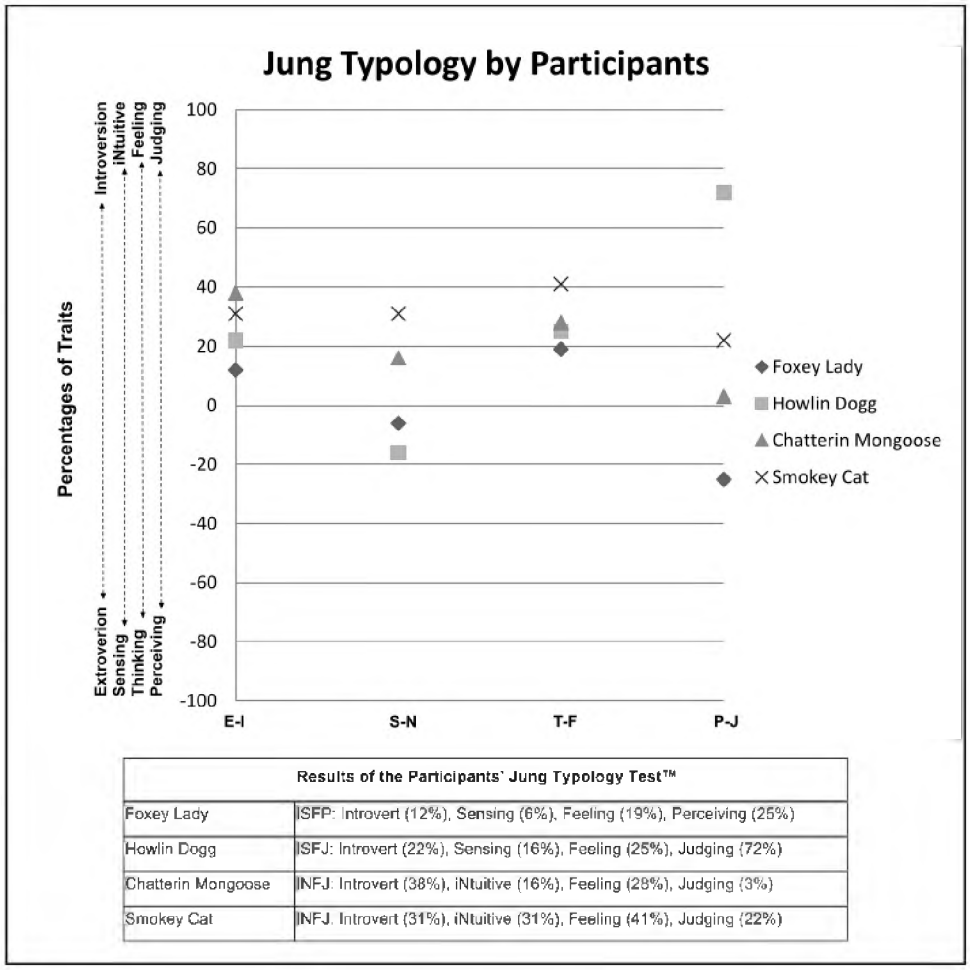


Likert Scale Choices for Pre-, Post-, and Final Questionnaire		
Frequency of prayer	**Ease of going to God in prayer**	**Relationship to God**
1. Once or twice a week	1. I usually find it difficult to go to God in prayer.	1. Distant
2. Two or three times a week	2. I usually find it somewhat difficult to go to God in prayer.	2. Somewhat distant
3. Four to five times a week	3. Sometimes it is difficult, but sometimes it is easy to go to God in prayer.	3. Neither distant nor close
4. Mostly every day	4. I usually find it somewhat easy to go to God in prayer.	4. Somewhat close (meaning, I always have a yearning to feel closer to God)
5. More than once a day	5. I usually find it very easy to go to God in prayer.	5. Very close

Figure 8. Results of the Pre-, Post-, and Final Questionnaires for participants, showing movement in a positive direction at the end of the workshop and continuing four weeks later

Another consideration is the homogeneity of the group. Although efforts were made to find participants that more closely matched the demographics of my clientele, the participants were quite similar, based on their personality traits and spiritual temperaments. For example, all the participants were found to be Introverts, meaning that their energy is drained when engaging others but restored

when alone. The second pair of bipolar traits indicates how a person perceives information. Sensing means that these people use their senses (sight, touch, taste, etc.) to understand their world and are oriented to the present, while iNtuitives seek to understand patterns of information and speculate on possibilities. Two participants were classified as Sensing, and two were iNtuitive. However, all of them fell into the low or moderately low ranges of this trait. All were classified as Feeling, revealing that all of them make decisions based on how something will impact themselves or other people as opposed to making decisions from a detached, objective manner. The last bipolar set of traits deals with how a person likes to deal with his or her outside world. Here only one participant fell within the Perceiving range, which means that she likes to be more spontaneous and make up her plan as she goes along. However, she scored within the low range, which means that she is okay with having some structure in her life. The opposite trait, Judging, likes to plan things out, have a schedule, and have closure. Two of the participants scored within the low range, while the third could be considered moderately high. To summarize the results, Figure 9 shows the homogeneity of the participants, while differentiating their results.



Results of the Participants' Jung Typology Test™	
Foxey Lady	ISFP: Introvert (12%), Sensing (6%), Feeling (19%), Perceiving (25%)
Howlin Dogg	ISFJ: Introvert (22%), Sensing (16%), Feeling (25%), Judging (72%)
Chatterin Mongoose	INFJ: Introvert (38%), iNtuitive (16%), Feeling (28%), Judging (3%)
Smokey Cat	INFJ: Introvert (31%), iNtuitive (31%), Feeling (41%), Judging (22%)

Figure 9. Comparative analysis of participants' Jung Typology Test results and breakdown of individual results

Thomas' Spiritual Temperaments assessment was also given to the participants to discover their preferences for worshipping. How individuals worship will impact both their prayer life and relationship with God. Gary Thomas (2009) explored various motifs and developed his list of nine temperaments as ways to worship God from an individual's perspective. This assessment was used by permission from Harper Collins (Used by permission; see "Thomas' Spiritual Temperament Assessment" in the supporting documents; Thomas 2009, 49, 66, 94, 112, 131, 148, 170-171, 190-191, 211). A quick summary of those temperaments are as follows:

- *Naturalists* enjoy seeking God through nature and natural settings.
- *Sensates* enjoy using their senses to connect with God.
- *Traditionalists* are drawn to rituals and symbolism to relate to God.
- *Ascetics* prefer meeting God in solitude and simplicity.
- *Activists* express their love for God by confronting the wrongs in this world.
- *Caregivers* show their love for God by loving others.
- *Enthusiasts* are drawn to the mystery of God and enjoy the celebration aspect of worship.
- *Contemplatives* give focused adoration to God.
- *Intellectuals* love God with their minds fully engaged.

Once again, the group demonstrated itself to be homogeneous. Participants, after they worked through the assessment, were to take the top three temperaments wherein they scored the highest and consider those three to be their spiritual temperaments. All four participants had listed Caregiver as one of their choices: Three listed caregiving as a third choice, and one listed it as a second choice. The three participants that completed the course also chose Intellectual as one of their choices. Two recorded Naturalist, and two recorded Enthusiast. One participant included Ascetic, and one had a three-way tie for her third choice. Figure 10 presents a visual representation of the participants' ranking of their temperaments, showing the clusters of temperaments.

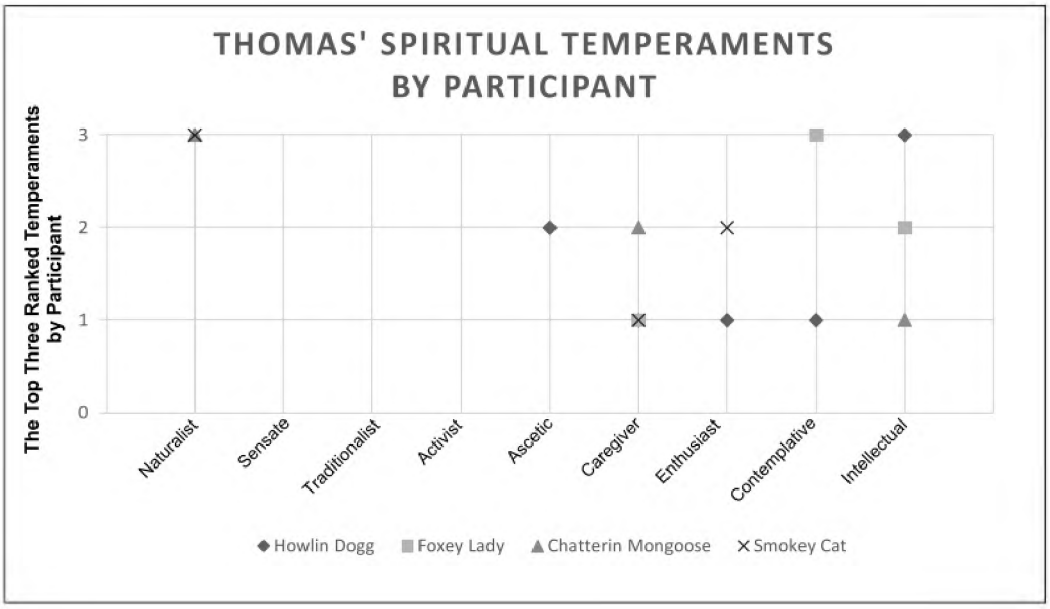


Figure 10. Participants' first, second, and third rankings from Thomas' Spiritual Temperament assessment

This background information should provide a framework for a more detailed look at the findings. Since the narratives focus more explicitly on the main goal of the project, tracking spiritual growth, those findings will be reported first with the findings from the curriculum action research following it.

Narratives

Savage and Presnell (2008, 110) described an aspect of the postmodern narrative approach that connected well with what felt like a natural approach for me to guide the examination of the participants' stories. In contrast to attempting to evaluate using an objective approach, Savage and Presnell assume that the researchers own story intersects with the research project. Thus, my own story impacted how I examined and interpreted the narratives of the participants. As they explained it, "as the researcher guides the examination of the research communities stories and studies them, their contextual reality 'bubbles up' to give

the researcher a fleeting snapshot of the multiple influences that surround the problem or concern/opportunity" (Savage and Presnell 2008, 110). I found this to be a natural approach for me as I examined the assignments and interactions on the forums. The forums gave me snapshots at each step of the journey through the workshop, allowing for the influences from each of the sessions and interaction with the other participants. This narrative approach worked extremely well with the curriculum action research because it allowed me to be a leader-researcher who facilitated the uncovering of the workshop's narrative (Savage and Presnell, 2008, 110). Such a position gave me space to discover the areas of concern and opportunity by joining the participants as we worked together to walk through the workshop and evaluate the curriculum (Savage and Presnell 2008, 110).

The concept of the snapshot mentioned above formed the structure for the following narratives. With the general framework of the eight sessions of the workshop, eight snapshots were taken for each of the participants as well as for the community narrative. The narratives derived from these snapshots follow.

Howlin Dogg

Howlin Dogg began the workshop by describing her prayer life as "intermittent conversation prompted by life situations, cares and concerns in all areas." Praise and thanksgiving were included, but she wanted to be able to intercede for others more passionately. She described her relationship with God as "tentative," describing her heart as "cold and hard" at times.

She is an ISFP, and after the lesson on the Jung typology traits, she shared that she appreciated "the freedom granted perceivers!" She also saw how her

Feeling trait was manifested in her music worship with singing and dancing spontaneous prayers. She also stated, "I am greatly relieved, even to a point touching on celebrating the way God chose to make me. I have probably circled in and out of peace with it, but this cuts through the static and gets right to the root of the issue." Howlin Dogg further iterated that she appreciated "the diversity and freedom that does not condemn my [her] inability to keep that prayer list going," yet she demonstrated balance by saying, "I structure where I can and give myself grace where I cannot." As she responded to the lesson on the spiritual temperaments, she let her imagination soar as she described her ideal prayer space. However, this was counterbalanced with seriousness and depth as she responded to the lesson on the Lord's Prayer from Matthew 6:9-13, showing her intellectual spiritual temperament and which was carried over to the next lesson on praying the scriptures. As she reflected on her experience of praying the scriptures, she understood that "there is so much power in it."

Lesson 6 focused on meditative prayer, and Howlin Dogg expressed an understanding of how both the Jung typology and spiritual temperaments can be applied as she prays this way. She shared that "meditation suits both my personality traits as well as my spiritual temperaments."

The lesson on intercessory prayer in Lesson 7 appeared to be an exceptionally meaningful exercise for Howlin Dogg, which led her on a real search of the scriptures to find just the right prayer to pray for her friend. Her insight from her process was that "prayer changes the person praying as well as what is being prayed for, someone has said." She added, "I am already inclined to

lose myself in the Word, and it is nice to have my hands in it for prayer as well since I am prone to simply tap into what I have already memorized."

In her closing reflection, she shared two gracious thoughts: She talked about scheduling her "devotional calendar with built-in flexibility." She continued, "The 'flexibility' is where I get to practice giving myself grace." Her closing thoughts express a positive experience of her spiritual growth and her relationship with the Lord. She stated, "This has been a delightful and surprising venture into who I am, who I might become and a beginning into a new and rewarding walk with the Lord that promises deeper, more consistent companionship both with God and others."

Foxey Lady

At the beginning of the workshop, Foxey Lady reported that she prays "faithfully each day." When asked what changes she would like to see in her prayer life, she reported that she realized that she gave "thanks to God in [her] heart, but [she does not] give enough thanks to Him in [her] prayers." She described her relationship with God as "wonderful."

In relating to her Jung typology, she understood that "Introversion has the biggest impact on [her] life" and that her "quiet time alone to reflect on [her] day is important." Feeling was another of her dominant traits, and she saw where that contradicted the order and predictability that Judging implies. She scored highest in the Judging trait and saw how that most describes her personality. Even so, she realized that she needed "to reflect more on [herself] to give more thanks to God for all that He has given [her] and for all that He has done for [her]."

For Session 4, participants were given the option of sharing a written prayer modeled after the Lord's Prayer or sharing a reflection of that process; Foxey Lady chose to share her prayer, which was beautifully expressed (See Appendix 5 to read her prayer, as well as that of Chatterin Mongoose). Like Howlin Dogg, intercessory prayer is an important part of her prayer life, specifically for those who have suffered abuse. In response to the lesson on praying the scriptures, she shared, "Praying with Scriptures suppressed some of my guilt for asking God why He would allow this abuse to go on for so long, but I know it's not for me to question God's timing." She continued, "Praying with the Scriptures keeps me focused on what a mighty God we have, and it reminds me of how worthy he is of our continual praise!" The lesson on meditative prayer helped Foxey Lady to realize that she needed "to give much more time than [she does] to meditation," and she reported committing to do that. She was the only participant to score as a contemplative for her spiritual temperament. Although this was her third ranked spiritual temperament, it may be that she previously had not realized a contemplative prayer life was important to her. She noted that her Introversion and Feeling have the most impact on her prayer life. She also used elements of meditative prayer in her intercessory prayer.

In summarizing her experience with the Prayer Workshop, Foxey Lady stated that meditation made the biggest impact on her, stating that "it brings new depth to my prayer time." As to her personality, she stated that she feels more assured that she is "praying in a way that will glorify God" and "less 'routine.'" However, she sees her Introversion as being detrimental to her prayer life and

other aspects of her life. She reported, "I need to focus and overcome areas of weakness." She still wants to feel secure and unintimidated to pray in front of others. At the close of the workshop, she reported that her prayer life is "more enriched" and that she feels even closer to God than before.

Foxey Lady completed the Final Questionnaire one month after the workshop. She reported that her confidence that her prayer life is pleasing to God continues, which is very important to her. She also stated that she is trying to include more scripture into her prayer time but still needs more work on it.

Chatterin Mongoose

At the onset of the workshop, Chatterin Mongoose described her prayer life as sporadic, attributing it to being overwhelmed by high-stress situations. She stated that she felt guilty because so much of her prayer life consisted of asking for wants and need for her and others, stating that she felt that prayers "should be more 'thanking' than 'asking.'" She expressed a desire to be more like Daniel, who "regularly took time to pray seriously to God." She admitted a lack of confidence in her prayer life and that the thought of prayer can be intimidating, especially when praying aloud in front of others. In describing her relationship with God, she stated that she looks "to God as a father figure." She draws comfort and reassurance from her relationship with God but feels that she lets "Him down a lot more often than [she] would like to."

It was encouraging to Chatterin Mongoose to discover that there are examples of all the personality traits in the Bible. She admitted that she has "been too judgmental with [herself]—always feeling inadequate because [she did not]

possess some of the traits of friends and acquaintances." She stated that her iNtuitive trait seems to have the biggest impact because this type functions on the "spur of the moment" and dislikes repetition. She sees the Feeling part of her as a burden, stating that "feeling the need to pray for so many, so often can sometimes be a daunting task that can, at times, seem overwhelming." The insight Chatterin Mongoose gained from the lesson on personality traits is that she has her own style and she is okay with it. She quickly expanded on this to say that in working towards following Jesus' examples, it requires "stretching ourselves." In her summary of the lesson on traits, she stated that she had gained greater awareness that others' traits are just as acceptable as hers. She reported that she is okay with praying sporadically and will not condemn herself for not having set times to pray. As to her spiritual temperament, she could see where her caregiving temperament played into her being "consumed with prayers for others." She also realized that she needs a private and quiet place for praying. As to her spiritual temperaments, she scored highest in intellectual, then caregiver and naturalist. However, she stated that she felt drawn to the aesthetic, yet she realized that this could be because of her feeling overwhelmed by her stressful situations currently going on in her life.

Although Chatterin Mongoose acknowledged having difficulty in praying in front of others, she opted to share her prayers she wrote from the lessons on Lord's Prayer, praying the scriptures, and intercessory prayer. As she reflected on the lesson on meditative prayer, she was thorough in applying many of the aspects of her personality traits and her spiritual temperament. For example, her natural

bent with her intellectual temperament is her "tendency to want to turn meditative prayer into a full-blown Bible study!" However, she goes on to say, "The neat thing about meditation that I noticed is that it actually seems to stick! Imagine that, the more you *ponder*, the more you *intentionally* pay *attention*, the more it STICKS!" Taking the application of God's Word in prayer a step further, she added that intercessory prayer helped her to better understand what she was to pray for, explaining it is through scripture that she will find meanings and principles to help discern God's will.

In summarizing her journey through the Prayer Workshop, Chatterin Mongoose stated that her prayer life was "a lot more comfortable and exciting!" She stated that she felt a revival in her heart that led her to question her priorities and gave her a desire to work on putting things into proper perspective. Concerning her relationship with God, she reported that she felt more at ease, comfortable, and less anxious. She has started using the scriptures at the beginning of her prayers, allowing God to speak first in their conversation. She reported that she had greater assurance that she is praying according to God's will, and she sees this as a sign of respect. She described her relationship with God as a father-daughter relationship, and she felt guilty for not staying in touch in the manner she ought. She went on to state that it was very rewarding to her to have a real conversation with her Heavenly Father.

Chatterin Mongoose reported back one month after the workshop via the Final Questionnaire. She reported that there were some hurdles to overcome, and

she reported that her anxiety was being replaced by a new confidence. Her own words beautifully summarize the impact the workshop had on her:

> Ongoing changes in my prayer life are a constant now as I work with the ideas presented in the workshop to discover what works best with my personality type and my spiritual temperament. I no longer see these traits and temperaments as flaws; "I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well." (Psalm 139:14) This course has been extremely instrumental in helping me to have a deeper understanding about the me that God created and how to have a deep and fulfilling relationship with Him.

Concerning her relationship with God, she wrote that she continues to add suggestions gathered from the workshop, and that where there was a reluctance to pray before because she did not know whether or not her prayers were being heard, stating that, "although none of us are worthy, God does love us and he hears our every prayer."

Smokey Cat

The youngest of the participants (in her thirties), Smokey Cat described her prayer life as having grown over the last year. Although she is not a morning person, her stated goal was "to have a more in-depth prayer life starting out [her] day." She described her relationship with God as growing, but she felt she had a "close relationship with God." She reported that she could see the impact of her Jung typology type regarding her preferences. She saw her type especially play out in her boredom with routine and realized her need for variety, but this may also be impacted by her spiritual temperament as an enthusiast. She reported her amazement about how "God uses our unique personality traits to draw us closer to Him through prayer." Like Howlin Dogg, she saw music as a catalyst to prayer.

Both participants scored as enthusiasts, and Thomas (2009) stated that enthusiasts are drawn to music in their worship.

Smokey Cat only completed the first three sessions before withdrawing from the workshop, stating she was very busy and had become ill. However, even with her brief presence, she contributed to this project with her contributions to the curriculum action research and the community narrative.

Common Themes Drawn from the Narratives

Some of the common themes drawn out of all the individuals' narratives include less negative thinking about themselves for not praying in a good enough way. A more invigorated prayer life, which they attributed to the incorporation of some of the new ways to pray that they had learned was a second major theme. The most impactful theme was their better understanding of God and their relationship with him. All participants shared that they now saw God as much more gracious and caring and that he wants them personally to have a closer relationship and better conversation with him.

Community Narrative

I found the community narrative to be the most surprising aspect of this project. Even though all the participants were introverts, they also had caregiving temperaments. Within the community story, I traced four themes running through the narrative. For the sake of brevity and because the community narrative is somewhat disjointed by its nature, it may be helpful to keep the idea of the snapshot mentioned earlier and to envision sitting with me as I flip through a photo album just picking out some of the main photos that are important to note

as they highlight themes that arose from the community narratives. Four themes surfaced from the snapshots: encouragement, inspiration, cooperative learning, and support.

Encouragement. A sense of community seemed to form almost immediately as Foxey Lady replied to Chatterin Mongoose's introduction, saying, "I thought I was the only one who dealt with that issue." In another snapshot, Foxey Lady shared her reflection on meditative prayer and her need to spend more time meditating; Chatterin Mongoose became her cheerleader, so to speak: "I admire your Sensing trait of having a set time to pray. It seems logical to end (or begin) the day with meditative prayer. And, I'm happy to see that you've made a commitment to give more time to meditation!" For that same assignment, Chatterin Mongoose again offered encouragement to Howlin Dogg after she shared her understanding of the importance of meditation for her. She said, "Very well said! It seems like you have a grasp on your needs in connection with your traits and your temperament. Knowing is half the battle!"

Inspiration. One snapshot is so poignant that I will describe it in more detail. For the lesson on intercessory prayer, Chatterin Mongoose shared her prayer for a friend in which she prayed, drawing her prayer from Psalm 30 and Romans 15:13. Her prayer follows:

> Dear Heavenly Father,
>
> I come to you in prayer for Scott who is once again battling cancer. I ask that you might grant him good health again and comfort him in his time of need. I ask that You might hear me, Lord; have pity and help him; turn his sorrow into joy so that he might sing glad praises to You. May You, Lord, the God of hope, fill Scott with the joy and peace in believing so that he will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

In Jesus' holy name I pray. AMEN

To this, Howlin Dogg responded that she thought she would borrow from Psalm 30 herself for future reference. Chatterin Mongoose replied in return, stating, "That means a great deal to me coming from someone like you who has the gift of writing so beautifully. I've enjoyed and have even looked forward to your next forum posts as you have been such an inspiration to me. How blessed you are!"

Cooperative learning. The participants learned from each other as they read the various forum posts, gleaning ideas and gaining a greater understanding of the concepts as they saw the concepts applied personally by the others. One glimpse of this was when Howlin Dogg shared about her ventures into nature as one way to get close to God; this served as a reminder for Foxey Lady "to spend more time enjoying those special times." Smokey Cat noted the effectiveness of applying personality traits to deepen one's relationship with God, stating, "It is amazing how God uses our unique personality traits to draw us closer to Him through prayer."

The connection of prayer to worship and the involvement of music in prayer and worship were brought up by Howlin Dogg, and both Participants 3 and 4 corroborated this. In another incident, Howlin Dogg had posted her system for how she searches out the meaning of a passage and how that impacts her prayer life. In response to this, Chatterin Mongoose saw the value in having a system, which encouraged Foxey Lady at the same time.

Support. Although support and encouragement could conceivably be combined, I have differentiated support from encouragement with encouragement being more like cheerleading while support joins in or empathizes and offers

something back to the one being supported. Foxey Lady included a joke in her introduction, while Howlin Dogg responded back to it, enjoying the humour. It is not that the participants were not taking the workshop seriously, but Howlin Dogg detailed her ideal prayer time, really taking that assignment to heart, and two of the other participants joined in on the fun, which added to the cohesiveness of the group.

On another note, Foxey Lady shared that her time of prayer was at night when everything was quiet, and Chatterin Mongoose not only empathized but could relate. Another example of support occurred when Foxey Lady was so impacted by Chatterin Mongoose's prayer modeled after the Lord's Prayer that she was led to pray for her: "I get the feeling these beautiful words of prayer came from a beautiful person. I was led to say a prayer for you and for your comfort. God bless you."

As a final snapshot, Howlin Dogg detailed her long, involved process of trying to find the right scripture passage to use to intercede for her friend, which involved taking her in surprising directions that did not fit for her friend and her situation. In response to this, Foxey Lady commended her on her "incessant effort to help this friend." Chatterin Mongoose also chimed in, "What a good friend you are! And how blessed this friend is to have you to care for her … I'm glad that you persisted in your quest to help your friend and were able to find what you were looking for. I will pray for both of you as well."

This sense of community was an important part of the workshop. Each of the themes expressed above (encouragement, inspiration, cooperative learning,

and support) are reminiscent of some of the themes discussed in Chapter III, Pillar Three, Public Praxis, with life within the church, mentorship, and ministry. It seems the discussion board activities allowed for the participants to express themselves as a healthy church community, based on their interactions with one another. Three of the four participants were caregivers, and all participants were introverts. Supporting one another seems to have been natural responses, according to their makeup, and allowing introverts time to process and then respond to the discussions potentially provided an environment that encouraged the participants to minister to others in a way that utilized their personality type and spiritual temperaments. Howlin Dogg suggested that an improvement for the course would be to have a bigger group, stating that "more interaction would be interesting." I concur but surmise that the interaction would have been even richer and even more helpful to the participants. The participants provided many helpful critiques for the workshop, which will now be explored using the curriculum action research approach.

Collaborative Curriculum Action Research

As stated earlier, this project requires a look at the curriculum to ensure it is accomplishing what was intended but also to see where improvements can be made and what was done right to aid in accomplishing the overall goal of the workshop. The participants provided an invaluable service by providing helpful feedback to improve the course. The sources used for these findings were the course feedback, field notes, forum discussions and participant communications. To present the findings in a logical and orderly manner, I will use the four lean

codes from the coding process as labels for the different aspects included under the title of curriculum: the curriculum itself, instruction, Internet-related issues, and the platform used, Moodle Cloud™. For each of these sections, then, the findings from the following categories will be reported, using the following three categories: things done well, things to improve, and things to mitigate. Not all these categories relate to every aspect. Before moving into a detailed report of the findings, they are broken down in Table 5.

Table 5. A brief breakdown of the findings for the participatory curriculum action research

	Things done well	Things to improve	Things to mitigate
Curriculum	Format	More interaction	Busyness
	PowerPoint Tutorials	Better quality of Videos	Time constraints
	Curriculum Integration	Smaller bites of material	
	Forums		
Instruction	Presentation	More review	...
	Prayer examples	More time for notetaking	
		Instructor errors	
		Multiple ways to contact the instructor	
Internet	...	...	Link for PDF reader
Moodle ™	...	Learning curve	Not intuitive
		Communication: message board, etc.	

Curriculum

Most of the feedback focused on the curriculum itself, which was expected. Chatterin Mongoose gave this summary of the course, "This course has been enlightening, encouraging and comforting as it cleared up a lot of my misconceptions about prayers and praying." A closer look, however, is necessary.

Things that were done well. The overall format of the curriculum is important for presenting the material and for students to stay engaged. The participants found the format "easy to follow," stating that the course had a "natural flow." The course was "well organized," "well composed (or structured). It was concise, yet thorough." One participant remarked, "I am extremely impressed with the format and how it all ties together."

The PowerPoint tutorials formed the crux of the instructional materials. Overall, the reviews of the presentations were good and identified as being helpful; however, there was a glitch in the making of some of the videos that made them blurry, which was mitigated by uploading the slides. These extra resources ended up as a positive point in that the three participants who completed the course had an intellectual temperament and some were note takers; one stated that it "helped immensely." Foxey Lady found the PowerPoint presentation that related the Jung typology traits to prayer "extremely enlightening." This leads to the content.

Concerning curriculum integration, participants reported that they liked having concepts from earlier modules incorporated into the current lesson to further ground and apply it to their prayer life. Additionally, the participants appreciated the modules on personality traits and spiritual temperaments. One participant stated that she saw how incorporating one's personality traits and temperaments served to accommodate individual needs, leading to a more successful prayer life. According to some of the participants, the modules on personality traits and spiritual temperaments also provided insight concerning

areas of weakness. Overall, based on the feedback to the curriculum, the participants reported a positive impact on the participants' learning experience. The course content provided clarity even in areas that were not new to some of the participants. One remarked in response to the lesson on intercessory prayer, "Some of the topics covered in this forum were not exactly foreign to me, but they were made much clearer with no fuzzy or gray areas."

The forums were positive experiences for all the participants. They helped to increase one another's understanding because the participants could see how others were applying the material. This benefit is summarized by one participant in her feedback, "I also enjoyed the forum; reading what others with various personalities and traits had to say gave me a broader view of what others' prayer lives might look like."

Overall, the course was seen in a positive light and is best summed up by Chatterin Mongoose, "This course has been enlightening, encouraging and comforting as it cleared up a lot of my misconceptions about prayers and praying. I enjoyed hearing responses from the participants and feel that an even larger group would bring more depth to the understanding of the other temperaments and personality traits." Even so, there is room for improvement.

Things to improve. According to the feedback, the most frequent comment regarding areas to improve was the desire for the forums to have more participants "to provide more interaction." The biggest limitation was that there were only three participants. Additionally, the course was designed to be asynchronous to accommodate busy schedules, but this meant that some might not

get immediate replies from others, while others might not get any feedback. Some consideration was done in the development of the workshop as to whether or not synchronous or asynchronous would be a better fit. Having a set time where everyone would come together has advantages. Synergy would likely improve, and each participant would likely receive and give more feedback. Additionally, with everyone being online at the same time, the group could have acted more like a focus group. Given the participants busy and varied schedules, an asynchronous format seems to be the better choice even with its drawbacks. Even so, having more participants could mitigate the need for more interaction to a degree. Breaking the material into smaller bites and setting a more definite schedule for module completion could help participants to stay on track, thus providing feedback in a timely manner. More exploration of some of the pedagogical literature may be helpful to address these issues, both for this course and any future courses that may be developed.

Another issue was the quality of the videos. Although the videos tested okay on my home computer, some of the instructional videos were blurry for the participants, making it difficult to follow the lesson. The problem was created because of my own learning curve with producing and rendering the videos. An easy fix would have been to have tested them on outside computers, preferably on both Apple and Windows operating systems. PowerPoint slides were uploaded as resources to supplement the videos, allowing students to download and use them for note taking. Doing this added the advantage of addressing those whose learning style is kinetic.

One participant reported that she did not find the worksheet for the Lord's Prayer as beneficial as the prayer examples. Another participant suggested the idea of condensing materials to address the issue of time, and another remarked that "each session could have been a stand-alone course." Condensing the material without sacrificing content and still being able to accomplish the course objectives would be almost impossible. The better choice would be to break up each of the modules into stand-alone courses. This leads into a discussion of what can be changed and what cannot.

Things to mitigate. The number one challenge for all the participants was the time factor, the busyness of their schedules and obligations. Time constraints to complete this workshop were very demanding on the participants' schedules. As expected, the course took about eight weeks to complete, with the final questionnaire being completed one month later. So, while the participants met expectations, it was demanding on them. Breaking the content into smaller portions would have eased their burden. This could be done by increasing the number of modules. This would have lengthened the time for the intervention, which would not have been practical in this instance. A second option would be to break up each module into a separate course of its own, a consideration for future courses. A third option would be to create more of a survey course where the topics are only briefly touched upon. This third option could have worked well for

the participants to still cover the material while lessening the burden of meeting time expectations.

Instruction

The participants offered a few comments regarding instruction. These were beneficial for the improvement of the workshop.

Things that were done well. From the instruction aspect, the consensus was that the presentation of the material was done well and adequately prepared the participants to apply it to the exercises. The participants found the prayer examples to be helpful.

Things to improve. One participant noted that more review would be helpful. More time between bullet points in the instructional videos would be helpful for note taking. Lastly, there were some instructor errors, such as giving out an incorrect password to a participant, which added to her frustration right at the beginning when everything was so new. More care in proofreading my communication or enlisting the help of another proofreader or editor could help catch such errors. Additionally, my email service was temporarily disrupted early in the workshop, causing some frustration. Adding a second way to contact me would be a good way to aid communication.

Internet-related issues

I noted that uploading files, such as the Consent Form, was difficult for some participants. Additionally, not all the participants had a PDF reader on their computers. Providing the option to email the consent forms as attachments could

have been added to those less technically savvy. Providing a link to download a PDF reader could have been an easy addition to the course.

Moodle Cloud™

Moodle™, according to all the participants, was not user-friendly. The platform is not intuitive. It had a distinct learning curve and presented the greatest challenge in the course. Howlin Dogg suggested an improvement to add a message board within the course where participants could communicate directly to me privately. This makes sense. Adding a short video to the Welcome page that introduced the basics for maneuvering around in Moodle™ could have been helpful and at least partially alleviated some of the awkwardness of an unfamiliar platform. Up to this point, my experience with Moodle™ had been as a student. I suspect that more exploration of the various options that are available and utilization of some of them might mitigate some of these issues.

Interpretations

The findings of this research project showed that the participants of the online Personal Prayer Workshop perceived an increase in their frequency and ease of going to God in prayer and a deeper relationship with God. These results were evidenced by their self-evaluations through pre-, post-, and final questionnaires, along with running narratives provided in their assignments. In keeping with the instructional model of spiritual formation, the Personal Prayer Workshop aided in helping the participants to understand and apply aspects of their personality and spiritual temperaments to their prayer life with the resultant deepening of their relationship with God. Initially, there was some concern that

the participants might focus too much on their feelings, removing the centrality of Christ. The design of the curriculum somewhat mitigated this concern. The awareness of feelings and self was addressed in the context of how to deepen one's relationship with God through prayer, which was defined as conversation with God. This reinforced God as the central concern, helping to keep a God-centered focus. Data from the participants confirmed that the message of God was the central focus. For example, one participant especially understood the importance of the centrality of God when she stated that the examples that were given showed her that she needed "to stretch [herself] by incorporating various aspects of other [personality] traits in order to develop a deeper relationship with God." Another participant echoed the confirmation of God as the central focus when she stated, "Integrating scripture is beneficial in helping us pray according to God's will and keeps us God oriented more so than people oriented."

The findings of the impact of the personality traits on the participants' prayer life are consistent with the work of Gill Hall in his 2012 work on applying psychological-type theory to faith, including prayer. He concludes that "different people may emphasize those aspects of spirituality which reflect characteristics associated with their preferred psychological type. They may also look for forms of prayer and worship which meet their spiritual needs" (Hall 2012, 861). Hall, however, asserted that while people may not deny the presence of other forms for prayer and worship, and that according to personality type, people may not find them as helpful in their faith journey (Hall 2012, 861). This contrasts with the findings in this research project as the participants expressed a desire to be

"stretched" by incorporating as many different aspects related to prayer and their personality type and temperaments. However, Hall (2012, 861) did add that "as the journey progresses there may be a willingness to explore less preferred aspects of spirituality, prayer and worship, which then become areas for spiritual growth and areas which can bring a greater understanding of other Christians." It could well be, then, that the participants of this workshop have progressed in their spiritual growth to the point where they were willing to explore the less preferred aspects of their personalities. According to their self-assessments on their Pre-Questionnaire, all the scores were either four or five, on a five-point scale, with only one exception, which would indicate that a perceived high level of spirituality was already present. All three participants that completed the course stated that learning about their personalities and spiritual temperaments resulted in not feeling so inadequate in their own prayer life and having more compassion for others and their needs concerning their prayer style. One participant added that she found comfort in knowing how her personality traits correlate with her prayer life.

The findings related to spiritual temperaments are consistent with the premise of Thomas' *Spiritual Pathways,* "God wants to know the real you, not a caricature of what somebody else wants you to be. He created you with a certain personality and a certain spiritual temperament. God wants your worship, according to the way he made you" (Thomas 2009, 16).

The participants' desire to embrace all the various aspects of prayer introduced in the Workshop seemed to be stronger than just a "willingness to

explore less preferred aspects of spirituality" (Hall 2012, 861). Three factors potentially explain their desire: the working of the Holy Spirit in the participants' lives through the Workshop; their perceived high level of spiritual maturity, as evidenced in their pre- and post-questionnaires; and a greater understanding of who God is, what prayer is, and who they themselves are. Although none of the participants specifically mentioned the work of the Holy Spirit, the Bible gives abundant evidence of the Spirit's working in the lives of believers to bring them to maturity. In the pre- and post- questionnaires, all participants rated their relationship with God as close or somewhat close. Their frequency of prayer was reported as daily or almost daily, and three of the four rated their ease of praying as very easy or somewhat easy. One participant reported that she felt she had been given a "toolbox for connecting powerfully with God that [she had] always longed for." Another participant reported that she "felt close to God before the workshop, but now [she feels] even closer." All the participants that finished the workshop expressed that it was helpful to understand their personality type. One participant put it this way: "The results [of the Jung Typology Test™], having shown how my personality traits correlate with my prayer life, cleared the doubt in my mind as to whether or not I should be praying in a different way." The Workshop gave them opportunities to explore various ways to pray, allowing them freedom, time, and space to explore prayer that effectively revitalized and expanded their prayer life. The forums within the Prayer Workshop allowed the participants to view the different facets brought forth by the others as they shared

their prayers, insights, and reflections. In that sense, the workshop became a means to be used for spiritual growth.

With ten years of experience teaching online courses, I know the value of forums to be used both to supplement learning and to build community. Still, by far, the most surprising thing about this project was the response of the introverted participants towards the forums. While this is also consistent with literature on online learning, this group seemed to embrace the discussion boards for what they had to offer, even remarking that they would have liked more participants to increase the value. They saw their value to learn from one another as well as giving to and receiving encouragement from one another, facilitating additional growth in the participants' prayer life and relationship with God. The importance of community and its impact on learning and spiritually growing has been propagated by many, and this has been addressed in my model of spiritual formation as an integral part of the instruction process for building faith, spiritual growth, and worship. The responses of the participants seem to indicate that the forums were an effective tool in developing a learning community, but there are other things related specifically to the curriculum that should be explored as well.

Overall, the curriculum seems to have been an effective catalyst to help the participants develop their prayer life and relationship with God. The responses of the participants indicate that they were engaged in the learning process, even taking notes on the instructional videos, and were able to apply various aspects of the lessons as evidenced in their assignments posted on the forums. The critique of the curriculum further reflected the importance of community as the

participants expressed a desire for more interaction on the forums. Another aspect of community that was not expressed above came from the examples of prayer modeled in the curriculum. Some of the prayers were used as example prayers designed to demonstrate various elements within the lessons, such as praying the Lord's Prayer in my own words, while other prayers were prayers offered to the Lord on behalf of the students, such as my closing prayer for the course. The community, therefore, was not just a community of students, but the instructor was included.

One major evidence of struggle in the participants within the Workshop was the struggle to find time in their schedules, both to participate in the workshop and to pray in general. They described having struggles in their prayer life as they described it coming into the Workshop. One participant described her relationship with God as "tentative" and her heart as "cold and hard" at times. Another described her prayer life as sporadic. Even so, no specific questions were asked concerning personal or spiritual matters. The focus of evaluations was more on growth and positive movement within their lives. Another factor could be they chose to focus on the positive movement, thinking that was the expectation. The curriculum and content were focused on expansion and positive movement; thus, making it easy for participants to focus on positive changes. Adding a question to the questionnaires to invite the participants to reflect on any areas that call for repentance might have improved their experience.

As with most courses, there are things to improve, such as, in this case, better quality in the videos. Other recommendations, such as smaller bites of

material and providing more review, suggest that the pace may have been a bit too fast. By far, the biggest issue was the online platform, Moodle™. It was not as intuitive as some of the other platforms that could have been used, and it took the participants time to acclimate to its unique style. The frustration on the part of some of the participants was strong enough that it could have potentially caused some to drop out had they not been mature enough to persevere.

Unrelated to the curriculum, instruction, or the platform, was the busyness of the participants. All the participants had full schedules and were heavily involved with their families and other commitments. Any online workshop must be flexible enough to accommodate busy schedules. Flexibility was accomplished to a degree by designing the workshop as an asynchronous course that participants could complete according to their schedules. However, as suggested, breaking the course up into smaller bites and providing more review would help to mitigate the busy schedules by allowing participants to engage in the course during shorter breaks in their schedules. More review would help students who might have had to take some time off due to their other commitments. Making these adjustments could help to develop a workable course that would be doable for a much broader scope of people.

Outcomes

The outcomes for this research project were twofold: The participants' prayer life was enhanced, and they reported having a deeper relationship with God as a result of the Personal Prayer Workshop. These outcomes were expected. I did not, however, expect how seriously the participants took the workshop by

taking notes on the lectures and sharing their assignments, including personal prayers, on the forums. In this respect, the workshop went beyond my expectations. This workshop was originally conceived with the intention of using it with my counseling clients as an aid in helping them develop a better prayer life and relationship with God. However, the workshop would require more concentrated effort and time than what would typically be appropriate or feasible for my clients. Even so, I see where a series of mini-lessons on prayer, using a friendlier platform, could potentially be used to meet the original target audience. The idea of mini-lessons might also be more attractive to others with busy schedules who cannot easily invest in a full course on prayer.

I had not expected the forums to have had such a positive effect on the participants, and developing this aspect of the course could make it even more beneficial. I also had not expected Moodle™ to be as difficult for users as it was. More investigation into more of the options available in Moodle™ could make it a more user-friendly platform making it easier for a broader audience. Even so, this project has opened the door to improving the Personal Prayer Workshop for future use and has given rise to more ideas for other workshops and mini lessons, using online instruction, as a means to facilitate spiritual growth.

Although there were only limited references to struggle in spiritual development by the participants, there was some evidence of its presence even if not shared in detail. The focus of the workshop was to introduce the participants to additional aspects of prayer that were new to them. The participants were all highly motivated, intelligent women who seemed to enjoy what they were

learning and took it to heart as they applied what they were learning. However, because they readily admitted that they had had some struggles, it seems like a worthwhile venture to incorporate a module to address obstacles to a healthy prayer life. Even better, I could see the value in designing a full online course on addressing the obstacles to a healthy prayer life. The anonymity of an online course could help participants to share from their hearts as they work through their struggles.

Conclusion and Implications

The goal of the online Personal Prayer Workshop was to explore whether or not a greater understanding of one's personality, based on Jungian typology, and spiritual temperament as applied to prayer is a catalyst for participants to develop a deeper, more intimate relationship with God. The project used an asynchronous online learning platform to deliver the Prayer Workshop, consisting of eight modules and a final interview one month later. The primary methodological approaches used were postmodern narrative and collaborative curriculum design to interpret the data, incorporating ideas from participatory action research. The findings indicated that the goal of this project was accomplished with some revision required.

This project was designed following principles from my instructional model of spiritual formation and rooted in the Bible's mandate to pray always, without ceasing (Luke 18:1; 1 Thess. 5:17). Prayer was defined as conversation with God, and God initiated the conversation through his Word, the Bible. Thus, the scriptures were an integral part of the curriculum. The curriculum consisted of

eight sessions. The first two focused on the impact of Jungian personality type and its impact on prayer. The third addressed Thomas' spiritual temperaments and their implications for prayer. The Lord's Prayer as a model for prayer, praying the scriptures, meditative prayer, and intercessory prayer rounded out the remaining sessions, with a closing session for review and an invitation for participants to make plans to continue the progress made in their prayer life and relationship with God.

The idea for the project was initially conceived to meet the needs of marginalized people who sometimes struggle with participating in church programs. Not to put at-risk people in a position where harm could be done, this project was designed to be tested on a typical Evangelical, church-going population. From the results of this research project, then, adjustments could be made to make the workshop amenable to a more vulnerable population. As originally conceived, the plan was to mirror the demographics of my clientele as closely as possible; however, finding those participants was more difficult than anticipated. Instead of the anticipated six to twelve participants, only four agreed to participate, but one withdrew at the end of session three because of illness and the busyness of her schedule. Even though the participants did not match the demographics as closely as I would have liked, they provided invaluable insight to develop the workshop further.

This project resulted in the overall outcome of spiritual growth for the participants; however, major alterations will need to be made to adjust for less committed or more vulnerable populations. With modifications to adjust the

curriculum to a broader audience and to offer it via a more user-friendly platform, this workshop could easily be adopted as a resource for my counseling ministry. Potentially, it could be a ready resource for churches and parachurch ministries or by anyone in the English-speaking online community who are seeking a richer prayer life. Online workshops could cover any number of topics, so this course has the potential to expand my ministry and to increase its impact far greater than I could do it in person.

Busyness was something I knew to be an issue, but I was not aware of how big of an impact it would have on the participants as they engaged in the workshop. The idea of a series of mini-lessons, with each lesson being a stand-alone unit, has merit. I could envision using this as a resource for my clients for several topics besides just prayer, such as forgiveness, grace, the fatherhood of God, et cetera. If I saw them struggling in some area in their Christian walk, I could lead them to a specific lesson without getting too involved in a course that would take several hours to complete.

The findings of this research suggest that this workshop—and others like it—could help to meet a need in the greater Christian community. However, it does raise the issue of how community is defined or how it will be defined in the future. Different types of community could exist online, especially in the forum format. As Foxey Lady stated, she found "it easier to ask questions as opposed to being among a group," which implies two things. Forums offer a degree of separation that can provide safety for less confident individuals. Thus, it implies a difference in the online community versus face-to-face. The question then is

raised as to the impact online communities might have on face-to-face communities, might these online communities be a viable supplement to smaller face-to-face communities (e.g., small churches with limited resources) to bring opportunities for growth that otherwise would not be readily available? A recent study done by Adrienne Torda and Boaz Shulruf (2021, 5) found that the mode of learning, online versus face-to-face, did not have an impact on students' learning outcomes and processes. Additionally, Torda and Shulruf (2021, 5) found that the social processes were affected by the mode of delivery. This suggests that online courses might be viable options for Christians to learn and grow from a cognitive perspective, but they also need their face-to-face communities for social engagement to grow from the relational or affective aspect. For example, a recent study done concerning online and in-church services due to the COVID-19 lockdown showed that those leading online services found the online services to be less rewarding than in-church services, and this pattern was repeated by those who accessed the online services (Village and Francis 2022, 293). In other words, the online community should not be a substitute for a face-to-face community but should be used to supplement it. Take, for example, in the United States, "in 2012, the average *congregation* had only 70 regular participants, counting both adults and children, and an annual budget of $85,000" (Chaves and Eagle, 2012, 5; author's emphasis). Compared to larger churches with bigger budgets, it seems reasonable to assume that there may be fewer resources available to these churches, both from a financial and personnel perspective, to meet the needs of growing believers within the small congregation. Potentially, an online

community could help with instruction and training, especially in some of the more remote communities; however, the bulk of the relational aspects of spiritual growth should be sought from the local church communities. Although additional thought and research need to be done in this area, the questions raised are good ones to consider as I develop more online courses.

Finally, on a personal note, this project has been a boost to my spiritual growth. The collaborative nature of me as the researcher together with the participants in this project was encouraging, uplifting, and inspiring. The participants' feedback concerning the course design and their openness to engage in the assignments helped me to appreciate more fully the importance of community regardless of the medium utilized. I was truly honoured and blessed by the responses of these women but also in their perseverance to complete the course despite their busy and, at times, hectic schedules. The feedback they offered not only gave me ideas to improve the Prayer Workshop, and their suggestions generated even more ideas for more ministry options. Seeing the seriousness with which they tackled the lessons and seeing them grow from the experience lifted me to a very sacred and holy place. This collaborative venture resulted in something bigger and better than I could have done on my own, and it has made me more committed than ever to prayer in my own life and has brought me closer to the Lord. Collaborative action research will become a staple as I design future courses.

CHAPTER V:

CONCLUSION

> But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. (2 Pet. 3:18; italics in original)

Christians are to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3:18). Spiritual growth is a command, not an option, yet one for the believers' benefit and God's glory. Spiritual formation in this portfolio is defined as the ongoing development of a closer, deeper, and more committed relationship with God wherein a person is increasingly conformed to the image of Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit in that believer, who then lives it out in the world. In that sense, spiritual formation is growing in Christ, or becoming more spiritually mature. This is the overall sweeping theme of this portfolio.

This portfolio approaches spiritual growth from three different studies: my own spiritual autobiography, my philosophy of spiritual formation, and a field research study. Reviewing my life story from a spiritual perspective provided insight that was applied to both the philosophy and research project. Choosing to focus on the philosophy behind spiritual growth as opposed to writing a manual gave me the opportunity to develop principles that can be readily incorporated into future manuals or workshops. The research project gave me the opportunity

to incorporate what I learned from my spiritual autobiography and my philosophy and to share that with others.

My spiritual autobiography traced the impact that my family, friends, and others, as well as the environment had on my spiritual life. The major concept drawn from my spiritual autobiography is that God is more committed and active in the lives of his children than imagined. God wastes nothing and uses everything to draw people to himself and to grow his children into the image of his dear Son. A second is that God has made each individual unique; he does not use a cookie cutter approach when dealing with his children. He has made individuals with unique qualities, gifts, and talents, and he will use these as ways to connect individuals to himself and others and to grow people into maturity and more into the image of Christ. My life, in many ways, mirrors Romans 5:1–5. Having been born into a family where only a cursory knowledge of God was known, God was so gracious and patient in wooing me and leading me to himself through the faith he granted me through the Lord Jesus Christ. Living in and by that faith, God continued to grow me to maturity. My life that was fraught with afflictions produced endurance, giving me greater inner strength to withstand even more hardship. This inner strength produced proven character, which was demonstrated by a pattern of dependability, and this produced hope. Until I wrote my spiritual autobiography and reflected on it, the tremendous amount of hope I had left me bewildered. That sure and steadfast hope has given me greater confidence to live life fully and has been an anchor to my soul (Heb. 6:19).

The trajectory of my spiritual life has been a series of difficulties that led to greater knowledge of God, as his love had been poured out in my heart. With this came greater conviction that I needed to live my life more genuinely before God, using all my uniqueness of personality, gifts, and talents. With each growth spurt came greater transparency in my relationships with God and others. Understanding this cycle has increased my desire to live as authentically as possible in service to God and others. This leads up to the two principles I took away from my spiritual autobiography that became foundational to my philosophy of spiritual formation were the ideas of knowing God and individuality of the person.

The second study of spiritual formation from a philosophical approach yields an instructional model. Instruction and school have been a part of my life for as long as I can remember. I find no greater joy than to discover a previously hidden gem in God's Word. Colossians 1:9–10 encourages believers to be "filled with the knowledge of His [God's] will" and to be "increasing in the knowledge of God." Instruction can happen formally and informally, through formal classes to self-study to personal and life experiences. God uses a variety of means to increase one's knowledge of him and "his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding" (Col. 1:9). The foundation is the ongoing work of God himself: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Without this foundation, no spiritual life or growth would be possible. Instruction is laid solidly on top of the foundation, almost as a secondary foundation as it permeates all other aspects of spiritual activity and growth. Jesus' final command to the disciples in the Great

Commission was to teach all nations to observe all that Jesus commanded them (Matt. 28:19–20).

Because of the importance God places on learning of him, various aspects of learning were discussed, including some learning theory from a relational perspective. Of special importance is the idea of developing a Christian worldview and understanding the communication process. The importance of intentionality and attentiveness was emphasized. Since instruction is relational, it is important to understand the learner. Each one is unique by God's design and further shaped by his or her environment. Awareness of the learner's personality traits and spiritual temperaments should impact instruction. Various tools were discussed to help evaluate personality, such as the MBTI and Thomas' (2009) spiritual temperaments. Knowing how an individual interacts with his or her world can help the instructor meet the person on familiar terms. Additionally, as individual believers come to know his or her preferred ways of interaction with the world and others, including God, he or she can apply that to the way they worship and develop relationships with others. The last aspect to be discussed from an instructional perspective was faith: how it is appropriated and how it might be expressed. Using Westerhoff's (2012) model, there are four appropriations that are applied as one grows in the faith: The life of faith begins with experiential faith. As a believer grows, he or she experiences a life of faith within the Body of Christ: affiliative faith. A third appropriation is searching faith as the believer questions and tests what he or she believes. Finally, there is owned faith where the believers can put their faith into action and stand up for what they

believe. Although faith was not directly addressed or taught, evidence of this growth process was shown in the participants' narratives and feedback.

With a solid foundation and continuing instruction, a Christian is then called to live out his or her life in Christ. There are three main domains where life in Christ is lived: in corporate worship, in one's personal life with God, and in life with others. These three areas incorporate the relational aspect of spirituality, meaning spirituality is understood not as a system of works or any specific discipline but by how one lives out his or her life in relationship to God and others.

Worship is about individual members of the Body of Christ coming together to worship the Lord, giving due honour and respect to him and praise for what He has done. Every aspect of a typical Fundamental Evangelical service was studied from this worship perspective. My conclusion, based on my experience, was that, sadly, some Fundamental Evangelical worship services seemed rushed and perfunctory in nature and worshippers often have little knowledge of why various activities are included in the worship service or how to use them in meaningful worship. Further exploration within these churches may be beneficial to determine whether or not instruction from the pastoral staff concerning the various aspects of the worship service could potentially be helpful in improving corporate worship. While an individual believer may be limited in changing the climate of corporate worship in any specific church, one's private relationship with God can shine.

In one's personal life with God, a believer can utilize many different spiritual practices: prayer, Bible reading, retreats, and celebration of a Christian sabbath that focuses on the work of Christ. Because the focus is on growing one's personal spiritual life and relationship with God, the practice of mentoring relationships is included in this section. Simply put, people learn from one another. The structure for these relationships could be formal or informal, depending on various circumstances. If no mentor is available, another option would be historical mentoring where the protégé gleans wisdom, insight, and guidance from spiritual autobiographies of other Christians. Writing and reflecting on one's own spiritual autobiography or journaling are also good options as well. Believers should always be ready to share their testimony with others, sharing how God is at work in their lives, which leads to the final pillar, life with others.

Christians are not called to live in a vacuum. They are called to love others, especially fellow believers. One's local church is a major arena to love and to be loved. In the New Testament, the family household is the chief metaphor used to describe the church. Within the church-family household, life is lived together, readily providing opportunities to mature and to love and be loved. It is a place to prepare for ministry and to minister to other believers. Additionally, the church-family household should provide opportunities for mission to the world, to those outside of the Body of Christ. With the average church family consisting of less than ninety adults per average weekend (Barna Group 2003), instruction from more mature Christians can be difficult. However, with the Internet, there may be

options to supplement what a local church may be lacking, if needed. Further exploration concerning ways for online material to supplement what the local churches offer might be helpful.

The third study of spiritual formation took the form of a research study that drew principles from my philosophy of spiritual formation and my personal experience with online instruction. Following established protocols for online learning based on principles drawn from four books on the topic (Clark and Mayer 2011; Conrad and Donaldson 2011; Davidson-Shivers and Rasmussen 2006, Horton 2012), an online workshop on personal prayer was designed, consisting of eight modules with the participants completing one module per week. Pre- and post-questionnaires, along with a follow up questionnaire one month later were completed to track the participants' sustainability. As part of the curriculum, the participants took the Jung Typology Test™ and the Thomas' Spiritual Temperaments assessment to help them become acquainted with their personality and temperament, and instruction was given concerning how they might impact one's prayer life. Discussion boards where the participants could interact with one another concerning their assignments provided social interaction and additional data to analyze. Of the four participants that started the workshop, three completed it.

Two approaches were used to analyze the data. A postmodern narrative approach was used to gauge changes in spiritual growth as participants completed the exercises in ways that were congruent to their personality and spiritual temperament, and curriculum action research was used to evaluate the curriculum.

Although the group of participants were more homogenous than desired, they still provided valuable data that warrants additional research into the value of using online curriculum to supplement instruction from local churches. Likewise, this research shows that understanding one's personality type and spiritual temperament and exploring ways to express oneself accordingly in prayer has positive benefits. Participants reported that they viewed their relationship with God and prayer more positively than before the workshop. All participants wanted more interaction with one another, supporting the need for more social interaction. One major struggle that was reported was that of time to complete the various modules. Although not the focus of the workshop, the curriculum did not address hindrances to prayer. This could have skewed the results to show more positive movement in prayer. Even so, the results are still valid, measuring what they were supposed to measure, the spiritual growth and positive movement toward God in the participants' lives. To that end, each participant reported that her prayer life was enhanced by the workshop, and each reported having a closer or deeper relationship with God.

Given the often-limited resources in smaller local churches, online courses could help supplement their instructional programs. However, as this and other studies (Torda and Shulruf 2021, 5; Village and Francis 2022, 293) show, online courses are weaker in the relational aspects of learning and instruction, highlighting that the local church must fill the relational needs of their people. It is within the local churches that believers are most fully in service to God, the Church, and others in the world. Regardless the setting, as a believer lives out his

or her life with all one's distinctiveness in concert with the working of the Holy Spirit, the richer and fuller one's life and worship will be, and the more God will be glorified: "until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature [person], to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).

APPENDICES

Appendix 1
Pre-Intervention Documents and Forms

Announcement

This announcement is to be sent via Facebook Messenger to individuals in my Facebook database to announce the research project and seek out interested persons who might be potential participants. If enough participants are not found from my list of friends, I will also send this to selected people in my church.

Announcement: Research Project on Prayer

Dear Friend,

As part of my Doctor of Ministry program, I will be conducting a research project that seeks to help deepen people's relationship with God by exploring different ways of praying based on their personality and temperament. This is an online workshop that can be completed in multiple sittings over a three-week period but can be finished in as little as a week or less. The potential outcome is to develop a more meaningful prayer life, which should also deepen your relationship with God.

I am looking for 6-12 participants for this online project. If you are interested in learning more about this workshop and potentially participating in it, please message me back or contact me at sallybruce@tampabay.rr.com or 813-546-4534.

God's blessings to you,

Sally Bruce

Information Letter

Research Study Information Letter for Research into Prayer

Dear Friend,

I would like to invite you to participate in a research project that I will be conducting as an online course on prayer as part of my studies as a Doctor of Ministry student at Tyndale Seminary. My role in this project is that of researcher and course designer. All who participate in this project will have the opportunity to help shape the project and interpret the results. This study has been reviewed and received ethics approval through the Research Ethics Board at Tyndale Seminary.

This research project, entitled *Applying Personality Type and Spiritual Temperament to Personal Prayer for Spiritual Growth,* will include six to twelve participants selected from a database of my acquaintances across the United States and will take place in the fall of 2017. The project contains two elements: the online course itself, which includes a brief questionnaire at the beginning and end of the course and a brief questionnaire one month after the completion of the course. The online course, designed as a workshop, consists of eight modules and is tentatively scheduled for October 2017 with a final questionnaire to be completed a month later. It is designed so that each student can go at his or her own pace. The workshop itself should take no longer than three weeks, and many will finish sooner. In December, you will have the opportunity to review and offer feedback to the data generated from the research. When completed, you will have the opportunity to review the report before it is finalized.

Prayer can mean many things to different people. Prayer, as used in this project, is defined as conversation with God, is so much more. What I have found

is that people often pray as they have heard others pray, and they end up praying in a way that is unnatural for them. What if people prayed in a way that was more natural to them? The purpose of this project is to research whether knowing and relating to God according to personality type and temperament will deepen that individual's prayer life and relationship to God.

To study this issue, participants will engage in an online course that will help them determine their personality type and spiritual temperament, using the Jung Typology Test™ and Thomas' Spiritual Temperament Inventory. Then using the results from these assessments, participants will have opportunities to discover how to apply this to various environments and types of prayer. The course includes eight sections that can be completed anytime within the designated run of the course at the convenience of each individual. The course could be completed over a weekend with the exception of some discussion boards, or extended over three weeks, according to what works best for you. One month after completing the course, there will be a short survey to complete the research.

There is a potential for some to experience some embarrassment, although minimal, given the intimate nature of one's prayer life and relationship with God. However, participants will be asked to agree to confidentiality, which should help to alleviate public embarrassment. Pseudonyms will be assigned to participants to provide a level of public anonymity. Since I am a Licensed Mental Health Counselor, licensed by the state of Florida, I am a mandated reporter, which means that, if I suspect child or elder abuse, or that you will harm yourself or

others, then I must report it. However, I do not anticipate that to be an issue in this project.

Anticipated benefits for participants include a more meaningful prayer life and a growing relationship with the Lord.

I will maintain confidentiality of all information shared with the same care and attention used in my private counseling practice. All data will be stored in a locked file cabinet or password protected on my computer. As stipulated in the consent form, all participants will agree to keep all sharing related to this study confidential. While elements of your personal experiences may be included in the final written report, no names or other identifying information will be included, and no information will be included in the final report with which you are uncomfortable. This final report will be placed in the Tyndale library as part of my project portfolio, and copies of the final report also will be given to all of the research participants who desire one.

Participation in this research study is completely voluntary, and you are free to discontinue your participation in the study at any time without consequence. You are also free to withdraw any of your personal information from the study. You waive no legal rights by participating in the study.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me, Sally Bruce, either by phone (813-546-4534) or email (sallybruce@tampabay.rr.com). You may also contact my pastor, Dr. Kirk Johnston, Senior Pastor at Community Church Tampa (813-879-2077 or office@tampaccc.org). For questions or concerns about the ethical nature of this study, you may contact the Chair of the Research Ethics

Board at Tyndale Seminary at reb@tyndale.ca. You may also contact my research supervisor, Dr. Mark Chapman, Associate Professor of Research Methods, Tyndale Seminary, via email (mchapman@tyndale.ca) or office phone (416-226-6620, Ext. 2208).

Thank you for your consideration of participating in this research project. May God's richest blessings be upon you.

Sally Bruce

Informed Consent Statement

Research Study Consent Form

Applying Personality Type and Spiritual Temperament to Personal Prayer to Increase Intimacy with God

Please complete and sign the form below if you desire to participate in this research study. Once the form is signed, I will give you instructions as to log on and begin your online course.

Name: _____

1. I have read and understood the attached "Information Letter for Research into Prayer."
2. I understand that I will be engaging in a research study on prayer in an online course. I will be asked to complete two assessments, one on personality, based on Jung's typology, and a spiritual temperaments inventory. I will also be asked to complete assignments related to prayer and my experience with the online course. I understand there will be some communication exchanges with other participants in the online discussion boards.
3. I understand and agree that respect for all participants should be shown in the discussion boards and interactions with other participants should be courteous and considerate.

4. I give permission for my data to be used in a written report, but I understand that information will be excluded if I am not comfortable with it.
5. I understand that every effort will be made to safeguard confidentiality of my data and personal information.
6. I understand the risks and benefits of the proposed study.
7. I understand that my participation in this research project is voluntary, that I am not waiving any legal rights, and that I may withdraw at any time without consequence.
8. I understand that I may direct any questions to Sally Bruce, either by phone (813-546-4534) or email (sallybruce@tampabay.rr.com). I may also contact Dr. Kirk Johnston, Senior Pastor at Community Church Tampa (813-879-2077 or office@tampaccc.org). For questions or concerns about the ethical nature of this study, I may contact the Chair of the Research Ethics Board at Tyndale Seminary at reb@tyndale.ca. I may also contact the research supervisor, Dr. Mark Chapman, Associate Professor of Research Methods, Tyndale Seminary, via email (mchapman@tyndale.ca) or office phone (416-226-6620, Ext. 2208).

I have read the above statements and freely consent to participate in this study by participating in the online course. ☐Yes ☐ No

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 2
Intervention Documents and Instruments

Questionnaires

Data will be collected in several ways through activities and discussion boards built into the curriculum, which are a common and established means of course participation. Some of these pertain to the course curriculum, and other ones are designed as questionnaires, which will function as pre- and post-intervention inventories. Others will assess the action project's content and online medium. A final questionnaire will be completed one month after the participants finish the course to determine whether any practices and effects of the workshop continued. Some of the forums were designed to function as focus groups. Development of questions in the questionnaires followed the guidelines established by Sensing (2011, 86-90).

Pre-intervention questionnaire: Module 1

- How would you describe your prayer life?
- If you could change your prayer life, what would it look like?
- How would you describe your relationship with God?
- On a scale of 1-5, how often do you pray on a regular basis?

  ☐ 1—once or twice a week

  ☐ 2—two or three times a week

  ☐ 3—four to five times a week

  ☐ 4—mostly every day

  ☐ 5—more than once a day

- How easy is it for you to go to God in prayer?

  ☐ 1—I usually find it difficult to go to God in prayer.

  ☐ 2—I usually find it somewhat difficult to go to God in prayer.

  ☐ 3—I usually find it is neither difficult nor easy to go to God in prayer.

  ☐ 4—I usually find it somewhat easy to go to God in prayer.

  ☐ 5—I usually find it very easy to go to God in prayer.

- On a scale of 1-5, how would you describe your relationship to God?

  ☐ 1—distant

  ☐ 2—somewhat distant

  ☐ 3—neither distant nor close

  ☐ 4—somewhat close

  ☐ 5—very close

Focus group (Curriculum and platform): Module 8

- What was your experience as you interacted with the content of this course? Consider the following questions: What was helpful or difficult? Where did you connect well with the material, or where you did not connect? What needed more attention or emphasis? What areas, if any, did not seem to belong? Feel free to share any other thoughts about this course.
- What was your experience with the online aspect of this course? If you found the course difficult to follow and know what to do, please describe what made it difficult. If the course was easy to navigate, what was

helpful? What, if anything, would have helped you go through the course more easily?

- Consider both the course content and the online experience. What suggestions do you have to make this workshop better?

Post-intervention questionnaire:

- As you come to the end of this workshop, how would you describe your prayer life?
- Have you seen your prayer life change over the course of this workshop? If so, how? If not, what do you think could have helped to bring about change?
- What other changes would you like to see in your prayer life?
- How would you describe your relationship with God since beginning the workshop?
- Reflect on your time during this workshop. On a scale of 1-5, how often do you pray on a regular basis?

  ☐ 1—once or twice a week

  ☐ 2—two or three times a week

  ☐ 3—four to five times a week

  ☐ 4—mostly every day

  ☐ 5—more than once a day

- Reflect on your time during this workshop. How easy is it for you to go to God in prayer?

  ☐ 1—I usually find it difficult to go to God in prayer.

☐ 2—I usually find it somewhat difficult to go to God in prayer.

☐ 3—I usually find it is neither difficult nor easy to go to God in prayer.

☐ 4—I usually find it somewhat easy to go to God in prayer.

☐ 5—I usually find it very easy to go to God in prayer.

- Reflect on your time during this workshop. On a scale of 1-5, how would you describe your relationship to God?

  ☐ 1—distant

  ☐ 2—somewhat distant

  ☐ 3—neither distant nor close

  ☐ 4—somewhat close

  ☐ 5—very close

Final Questionnaire

- Have there been ongoing changes in your prayer life because of the Prayer Workshop? If so, please explain. If not, what do you think could have helped to bring about ongoing change?
- Have you incorporated anything from the Prayer Workshop that you are still using? If so, please explain. If not, please share your thoughts on this.
- On a scale of 1-5, how often do you pray on a regular basis?

  ☐ 1—once or twice a week

  ☐ 2—two or three times a week

  ☐ 3—four to five times a week

☐ 4—mostly every day

☐ 5—more than once a day

- How easy is it for you to go to God in prayer?

  ☐ 1—I usually find it difficult to go to God in prayer.

  ☐ 2—I usually find it somewhat difficult to go to God in prayer.

  ☐ 3— I usually find it is neither difficult nor easy to go to God in prayer.

  ☐ 4—I usually find it somewhat easy to go to God in prayer.

  ☐ 5—I usually find it very easy to go to God in prayer.

- On a scale of 1-5, how would you describe your relationship to God?

  ☐ 1—distant

  ☐ 2—somewhat distant

  ☐ 3—neither distant nor close

  ☐ 4—somewhat close

  ☐ 5—very close

Instruments

Jung Typology Test™

The Jung Typology Test™ was used to determine personality type. Similar to the MBTI, it uses Jung's typology. This test is available online by Humanmetrics Inc. (http://www.humanmetrics.com/cgi-win/jtypes2.asp) Permission is granted for educational purposes under the website's "Terms of Use."

The Jung Typology Test™ and the Political Performance Indicator™, including their questionnaires and results, are provided free of charge only for personal non-commercial use or educational purposes. Any other use of The Jung Typology Test™ and the Political Performance Indicator™, including any indirect commercial use such as, without limitation, instructing prospective job candidates to take the Jung Typology Test™ and provide results to the hiring organization or a recruitment agency as part of their recruitment process, is strictly prohibited unless agreed to in writing by Humanmetrics. (Humanmetrics Inc).

*Humanmetrics Jung Typology Test™ instrument uses methodology, questionnaire, scoring and software that are proprietary to Humanmetrics, and shall not be confused with the MBTI®, Myers-Briggs® and/or Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® instrument offered by CPP, Inc. Humanmetrics is not affiliated with CPP, Inc.

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Thomas' Spiritual Temperament Assessment

The second instrument that was used was pulled from Thomas' (2009) *Sacred Pathways: Discover Your Soul's Path to God*. Permission has been granted to use the material as seen below:

From: HCCPpermissions
To: Sally Bruce
Subject: RE: Requesting permission to use excepts from Thomas"s Sacred Pathways
Date: Friday, July 07, 2017 12:59:26 PM
Attachments: image001.png

Dear Sally,

Thank you for your request. I am pleased to grant you a one-time, non-exclusive, non-transferable permission to use the **1798 word** excerpt from ***Sacred Pathways*** by Gary Thomas in your dissertation. Please note that this permission covers **non-commercial** use only and is contingent upon proper copyright acknowledgment. Please use the proper academic citation style required by your program.

Please let me know if you have any questions

Thank you,

Alison

Alison McEmber
Domestic Rights Manager
Licensing & Subsidiary Rights
P.O. Box 141000
Nashville, Tennessee 37214
fax: 615.902.1840
www.harpercollinschristian.com

From: Sally Bruce [mailto:sallybruce@tampabay.rr.com]
Sent: Saturday, June 24, 2017 7:40 PM
To: HCCPpermissions <HCCPpermissions@HARPERCOLLINS.com>
Subject: Requesting permission to use excepts from Thomas's Sacred Pathways

Please find attached the Permissions Form to request permission to use excerpts of Gary Thomas's *Sacred Pathways* for academic purposes.

Thank you,

Sally Bruce
12808 Dunhill Drive
Tampa, FL 33624

813.546.4534

The assessment was scattered throughout Thomas' (2009) book: Naturalist (49), Sensates (66), Traditionalists (94), Ascetics (111), Activists (130), Caregivers (148), Enthusiasts (171), Contemplatives (191), and Intellectuals (211). He presented a description of a spiritual temperament and then provided

the assessment for that temperament. Participants would then need to go through the various spiritual temperaments and select the three where they scored the highest.

Appendix 3
Course Content

Pre-Workshop

- Upload Consent Forms and receive password to access the Personal Prayer Workshop
- Getting Started: For First Time Users
    - Introductory instructions to navigate through Moodle™ and the course
    - Welcome Announcement

Session 1: Questionnaire, Jung Typology Test, and Introductions

- Learning Objectives: At the end of this session, you will be able to
    - Find your way around this course comfortably.
    - Recognize some of your personality traits.
    - Discuss how your personality can affect your relationship with God.
- Activity: Pre-Questionnaire
- Jung Typology Test™
- Instructional video Uniquely You (Presentation of Psalm 139:14–18)
- Forum
    - Review of confidentiality issues
    - Introduction to group/personality type/What you would like to gain from the workshop
- Assignment: Enter your MBTI results. Include type and percentages
- Resource: Copy of the Uniquely You slide presentation

Session 2: Jung Typology and Prayer

- Learning Objectives: At the end of this session, you will be able to
    - Describe the differences in personality based on Jung's typology.
    - Relate your personality to particular Prayer styles.
- Instructional video: Personality Traits
- Resource: Copy of the Personality Traits PowerPoint Slides
- Forum: Personality Types and Their Impact on Prayer
    - Which personality trait discussed in the video, if any, seems to have the biggest impact on your prayer life?
    - Which, if any, seemed to hinder or distract you from prayer?
    - What did you learn about yourself through these personality traits and their impact on your prayer life?
- Course Feedback
    - What things, if any, were most helpful in this course so far?
    - What improvements can you suggest?

Session 3: Spiritual Temperaments

- Learning Objectives: At the end of this session, you will be able to
    - Identify your spiritual temperament according to Thomas' Spiritual Temperament Assessment.
    - Understand the impact spiritual temperament can have on one's prayer life.
    - Develop an ideal scenario for your personal prayer.
- Activity: Thomas' Spiritual Temperaments Assessment

- Instructional video: Spiritual Temperaments and Prayer
- Resource: Spiritual Temperaments PowerPoint Slide Presentation
- Forum: Considering personality and spiritual temperaments, describe an ideal prayer time, including types of prayer and environment

Session 4: The Lord's Prayer

- Learning Objectives: At the end of this session, you will be able to
    - Use the Lord's Prayer as a prayer guide.
    - Personalize it so it reflects personality, circumstances, and current relationship with God.
- Instructional video: The Lord's Prayer as a model for personal prayer
- Resource:
    - The Lord's Prayer PowerPoint Slides
    - The Model Prayer Worksheet
- Forum: A Personalized Lord's Prayer
    - Submit the prayer or offer your reflection on your process
- Course Feedback
    - What things, if any, were most helpful or meaningful in this course so far?
    - What, if anything, are you struggling with the most as you go through this workshop?
    - What, if anything, could be improved?

Session 5: Praying the Scriptures

- Learning Objective: At the end of this session, you will be able to

    - Use the Scriptures as the basis of your prayers.
- Instructional video: Praying the Scriptures
- Resources:
    - Praying the Psalms, a Sampling
    - Intercessory Prayers of Paul
    - Other Prayers from the Bible
- Forum: Praying the Scriptures
    - Upon reflecting on the video,
        - Choose a meaningful portion of Scripture and personalize it as a prayer for yourself or someone else (don't use their real name), and post it here, or
        - Share your experience of what it was like for you to pray using the Scriptures.

Session 6: Meditative and Listening Prayer

- Learning Objectives: At the end of this session, you will be able to:
    - Explain what meditative prayer is.
    - Pray meditatively.
- Instructional video: Meditative and Listening Prayer
- Resource: Christian Meditative and Listening Prayer PowerPoint Slides
- Activity: Meditative A Meditative Prayer Exercise: Psalm 131 Video
- Forum: After watching the video above and taking some time to reflect on it, considering your personality type and spiritual temperament. Describe your experience with meditative prayer and silence.

- Course Feedback:
    - How easy or difficult has this course been easy to navigate?
    - What, if anything, has presented challenges for you?
    - What suggestions, if any, do you have to improve the format?

Session 7: Intercessory Prayer

- Learning Objectives: At the end of this session, you will be able to:
    - Discuss different types of intercession.
    - Applying elements of meditative prayer to intercessory prayers.
    - Apply praying the Scriptures to intercessory prayers.
- Instructional video: Intercessory Prayer
- Resources:
    - Intercessory Prayer PowerPoint Slides
    - Intercessory Prayers of Paul
    - Intercessory Prayer List
- Forum: Intercessory Prayer and Reflection
    - After watching the video above and taking some time to reflect on it, post a prayer of intercession for another group member, a leader, or someone else God has lain upon your heart. Remember to wait on the Lord for discernment about what to pray, and then consider praying a portion of Scripture on behalf of the other.
    - Or, you could simply post your reflection on your prayer experience from above.
- Course Feedback: Kinds of Prayer

- What, if anything, has been helpful or meaningful to you concerning one or more kinds of prayer?
- What, if anything, did you find not helpful or needing improvement?

Session 8: Closing Thoughts and Review

- Learning Objectives: At the end of this session, you will be able to:
  - Identify some prayer types and styles that fit your personality.
  - Personalize your prayer time to fit you.
- Instructional video: Bringing It All Together
- Forum: Improving Your Prayer Time

After watching the video above and taking some time to reflect on it, answer the following questions:

- What, if anything, from this workshop would you like to incorporate into your prayer time on a regular basis?
- What things could you do to improve your prayer time? Think about your personality, environment, prayer styles, and resources.
- What things, if any, might hinder you from improving your prayer time?

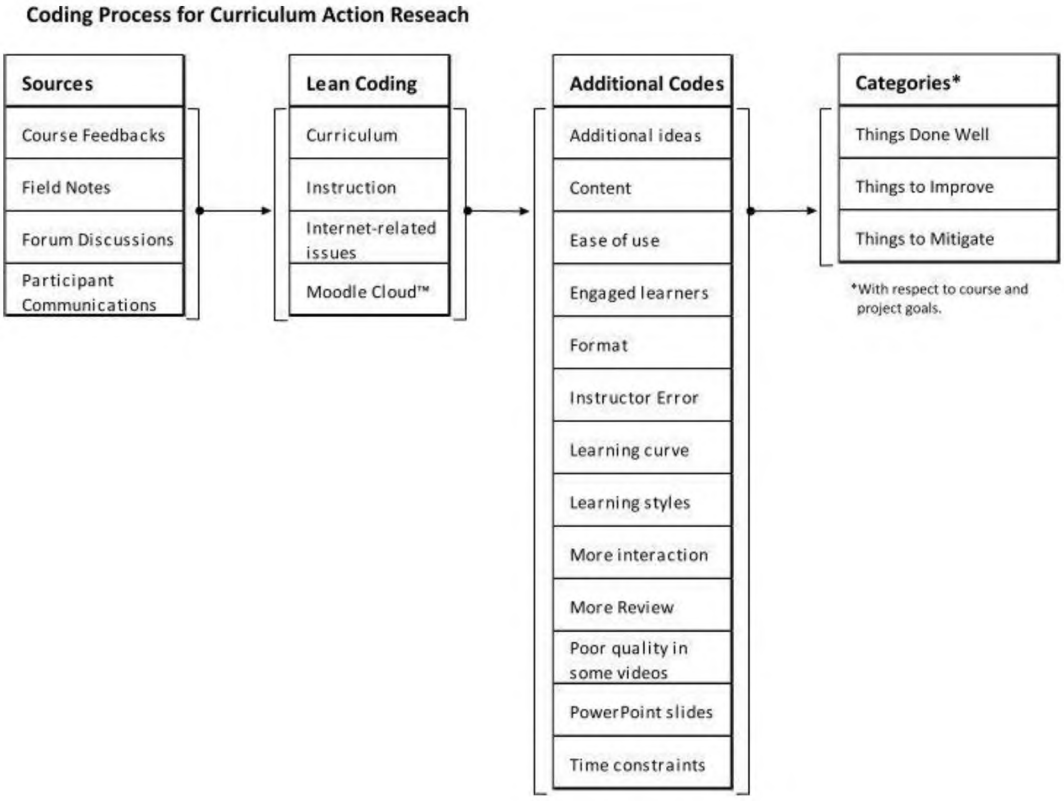
- Activity: Post Workshop Questionnaire
- Course Feedback: Curriculum
  - What changes would you recommend to the course?
  - What do you think was done well in this course?

Final Questionnaire

Four weekly emails were sent out to the participants after they completed the workshop, encouraging them to continue in prayer. At the end of the fourth week, a final questionnaire was to be completed to determine what things from the workshop, if any, continued on. See Appendix 2 for the questionnaire.

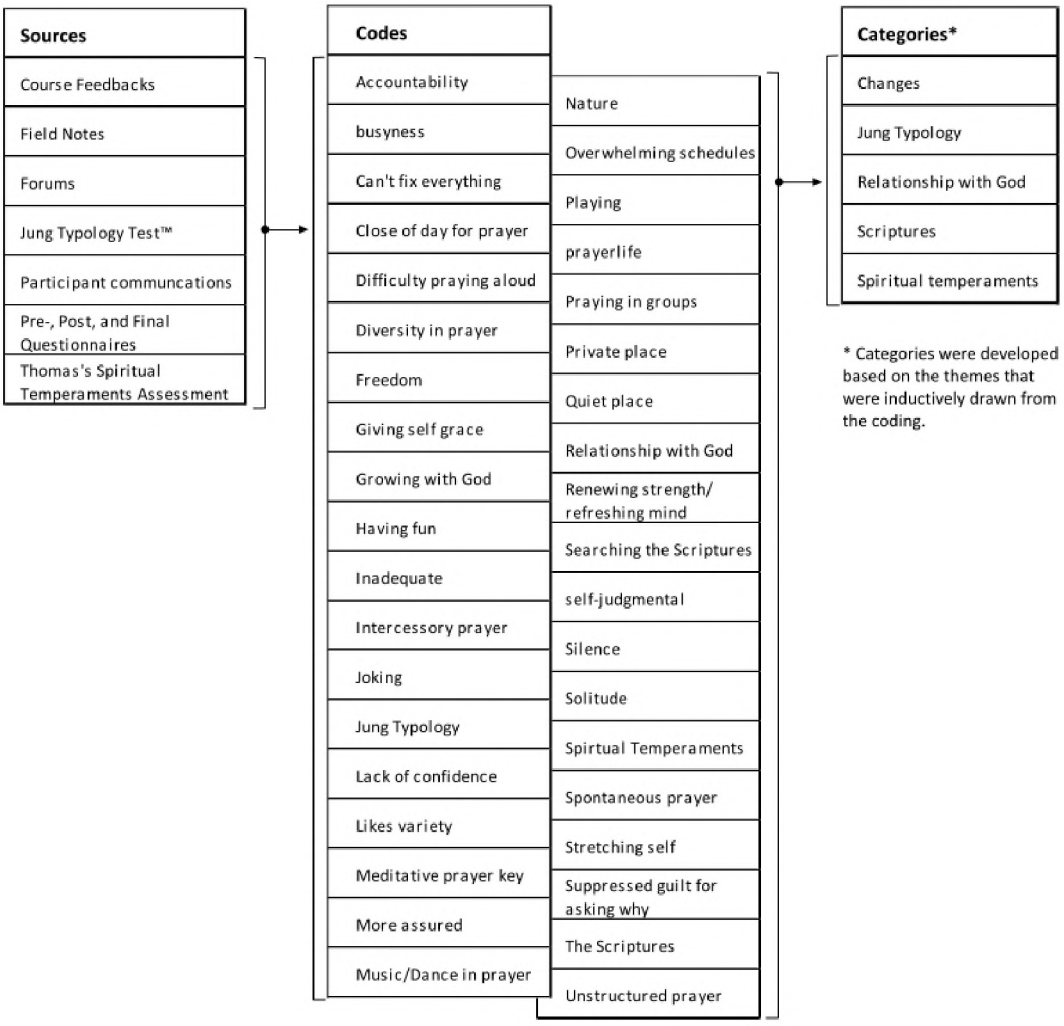
Appendix 4
Summary of the Codes Used

Three sets of coding were used to code the research data. The curriculum was coded first, using a participatory action research approach.



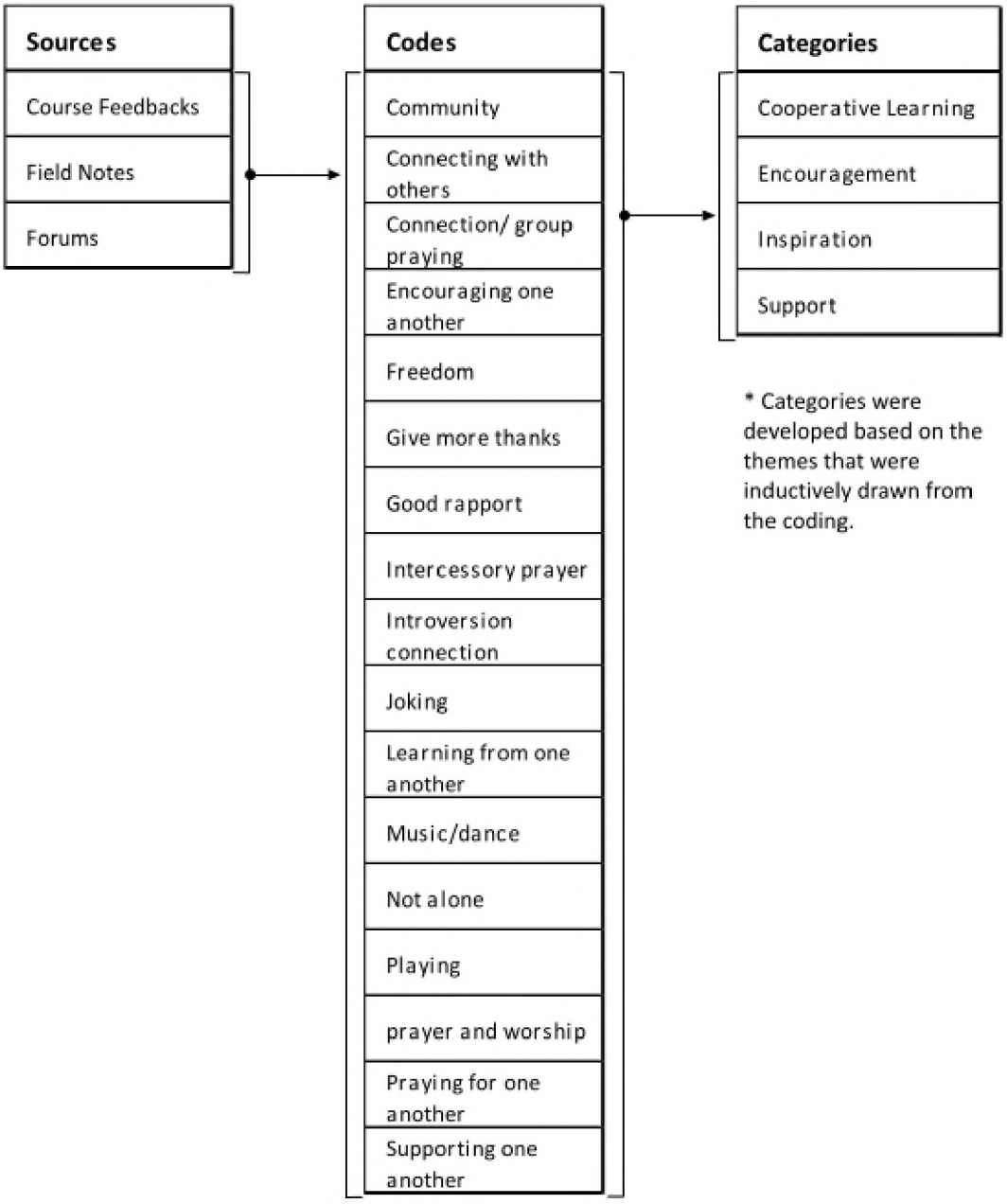
A postmodern narrative approach was used to code the participants' individual narratives.

Coding Process for Individual Narratives



The community narrative consisting of the participants' interaction with one another was then coded, resulting in the following codes.

Coding Process for Community Narrative



Appendix 5
Prayers Developed from the Lord's Prayer as a Model

The Prayer of Foxey Lady

In order to show some of the work done by the participants this prayer is copied verbatim as it was shared on the forum, which was accessible to the other participants. It uses the Lord's Prayer as a model for prayer. It is presented as Foxey Lady submitted it.

The Lord's Prayer

"Our Father who is in heaven,"

Heavenly Father, I praise Your holy name.

"Hallowed be Your name."

You are my protector, my healer, and my strength and foundation.

There is so much sin in the world today. When I have sinned, grant me redemption, and let me rejoice in the coming of Your kingdom.

"Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven."

I have been neglectful in the testifying of Your will. Help me to be Your servant and to be more faithful in the testifying of Your word to others.

"Give us this day our daily bread."

Give me strength, knowledge, and courage in my weakness so that I may fulfill Your will.

"And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."

I ask forgiveness of my sins and pray that I will acknowledge all of my sins. Heal my heart so that I may be forgiving of one's sins that cause me to struggle with hurt.

"And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

Guide me from temptations of sin, and deliver me from evil.

For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen'"

I praise You for Your creation of the heavens and earth and for giving me life. Lead me in a way that I may live my life to glorify You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The Prayer of Chatterin Mongoose

The personal prayer of Chatterin Mongoose, modeled after the Lord's Prayer is copied verbatim below:

> Heavenly Father, You are the One who protects us and cares for us and I praise Your holy name.
>
> With a heavy heart I come to you. The world is under siege from the one who tries to destroy us. We're in such a state of violence and confusion that we've lost all sense of direction. Christians continue to suffer persecution. It grieves me to see so many lost souls! I cling to Your word and your promises as I pray for Your kingdom to come to restore what is good and pure.
>
> I pray that You continue to provide for my needs today. I also ask that You continue to be my source of strength and my refuge as I struggle with seeing so much injustice. Please continue to be a source of comfort as I fight feelings of being overwhelmed and depressed. If it's Your will, I ask that you lift these burdens so that I might become a better witness for You as I strive to lead others to my loving God.
>
> Lord, please forgive me of any wrongdoing or sin. I pray for wisdom and knowledge to have a greater understanding of Your will so that I might not sin against You. I pray also for a loving and forgiving heart toward the ones who have hurt not only myself, but my family as well. I know this can only be accomplished with Your help and by me making an effort to actively seek Your will and by turning these troubling situations completely over to You.
>
> Father, I know that You are a loving God and that temptation comes from the evil one. In Proverbs You tell us to trust in You with all our heart and to lean not on our own understanding; in all ways we are to acknowledge You and You will direct our paths. Lord, I trust in You wholly and completely. I ask again for Your protection today as I submit

to Your will knowing that my struggles, tests and trials will be for Your glory.

It's my desire to be a testimony of Your love and grace and to emulate my Lord and savior, Jesus Christ so that You may receive the glory throughout eternity. I pray this in Jesus' name. AMEN.

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