Assessing Biblical Spirituality in the Culture of the Master of Divinity Program: Implications for the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Jon Michael Harris
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ABSTRACT

ASSESSING BIBLICAL SPIRITUALITY IN THE CULTURE OF THE MASTER OF DIVINITY PROGRAM: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

by

Jon Michael Harris

Adviser: David Sedlacek
Title: ASSESSING BIBLICAL SPIRITUALITY IN THE CULTURE OF THE MASTER OF DIVINITY PROGRAM: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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Date completed: October 2014

Problem

A significant number of students in the Master of Divinity program, covering a time span from the years 2002 – 2013, have reported that they perceive that their relationship with God has either remained the same or has decreased while enrolled in the MDiv program. This academic program is sponsored by a number of employing conferences of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. A study identifying what factors are contributing to this perception of stagnant or diminished spirituality among a significant number of MDiv students would provide a basis for determining what steps can be implemented to effectively address this concern.
Methodology

The websites of 15 non-Adventist ATS seminaries were reviewed to determine the role of spiritual formation in their MDiv curriculums. In addition, the curriculums of three Seventh-day Adventist seminaries were examined to determine the prominence of spiritual formation in their MDiv programs. The undergraduate theology/religion curriculums of four Seventh-day Adventist universities or colleges were also studied to ascertain how pronounced spiritual formation featured in their programs. An email questionnaire was sent to six seminaries with three questions related to how students are spiritually formed in their MDiv curriculums. The three seminaries who responded were contacted thereafter by phone or email for additional information and clarification. MDiv students participating in a focus group were given a questionnaire which requested basic demographic information. This questionnaire also asked students to respond in writing to seven quantitative questions and two qualitative questions designed to determine the impact of the MDiv program on their spirituality. The quantitative responses were tabulated and analyzed. The qualitative written responses provided an introduction to an in-depth focus group discussion of four questions related to the MDiv program’s impact on their spirituality. The qualitative responses from the focus groups were analyzed for common themes that would serve as a basis for recommendations addressing this topic.

Results

The review of the curriculums from the 15 non-Adventist ATS seminaries revealed that there is no uniform landscape regarding spiritual formation in their MDiv programs. Those seminaries that placed significant observable value on the spiritual
formation of their students often provide opportunities outside of the classroom for students to meet in small groups on a regular basis for spiritual reflection. These groups are guided by a seminary professor or other ministry professional. Providing mentors for students was also a prominent feature of such MDiv programs. Those Seventh-day Adventist universities which offered Master of Divinity programs typically require one course in spiritual formation. Of the surveyed Seventh-day Adventist universities or colleges offering B.A. degrees in theology/religion, there was one spiritual formation course stipulated by each institution to fulfill the degree requirements. The quantitative analysis of the questionnaire was based on a scale from one to ten with ten representing “very pleased” and one representing “not pleased.” For example, in response to the question dealing with how positively has the MDiv program influenced your relationship with God, the mean average of those who responded was 5.4 (Track One students) and 6.1 (Track Two students). Track One students are those students who have a bachelor’s degree in theology or religion. Track Two students are generally students who have bachelor degrees in some field other than theology or religion. Data analysis of the focus groups identified one predominant positive theme for Track One students and six growth themes. Track Two students identified four positive themes and five growth themes. The role of the professor, Seminary worship, and the course Foundations of Biblical Spirituality were some of the themes some students identified as positively impacting their spirituality. Prominent growth themes centered on the number of assignments such as the reading requirements that often amounted to what some termed “busy work.” A number of MDiv students would like there to be more of an emphasis on spiritual
transformation in the program, not just on information. There was also a strong feeling that the nature and the delivery of the practical courses need to be revisited.

Conclusion

There are a number of steps that the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary can implement to enhance spiritual growth among MDiv students. Doing so represents an opportunity for the Seminary to more effectively impact the spirituality of Master of Divinity students.
Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

ASSESSING BIBLICAL SPIRITUALITY IN THE CULTURE OF THE MASTER OF DIVINITY PROGRAM: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

A Project Document

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Ministry

by

Jon Michael Harris

October 2014
ASSESSING BIBLICAL SPIRITUALITY IN THE CULTURE OF THE MASTER OF DIVINITY PROGRAM: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

A project document presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Ministry

by

Jon Michael Harris

APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:

Adviser, David Sedlacek

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Allan Walshe

Date approved
To my late parents John R. Harris and Herdisene Theresa Robinson Harris. You set an example for me to emulate. I will always be privileged to stand on your shoulders. Thank you.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MDIV   Is used interchangeably for the Master of Divinity program.

SDATS  The Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, it is often referred to as SDATS or simply Seminary.

ATS    Refers to the Association of Theological Schools which is the recognized accrediting agency for seminaries in the United States and Canada which offer graduate programs.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of my Doctor of Ministry degree would not have happened without the support of a number of individuals and institutions. Firstly, I would like to thank my wife Enid for her encouragement during this journey, her editorial feedback and for her assistance conducting the focus groups. I acknowledge the financial support of my studies by the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary where I was initially employed and by ADRA International, my current employer. In addition, the Seminary Deans granted me access to the student data in their annual reports. Also, Seminary leadership with the cooperation of the MDiv office provided a venue and gave me the opportunity to meet the Master of Divinity students in order to conduct my research. I acknowledge the students who took time out of their busy schedules to participate in the focus groups. This document is stronger because of the insights they shared with me. I acknowledge my academic advisors Dr. David Sedlacek, Dr. Ricardo Norton, and Dr. Allan Walshe for their insights and counsel which contributed to making my project document a reality, particularly with the writing of my project document. I admire their scholarship and value their friendship. I acknowledge my sister Dr. Cheryl Harris Kisunzu who shared her wisdom, encouragement, served as my accountability partner and ever optimistic cheerleader. For this I will always be indebted. I acknowledge the able editorial assistance of Sara Austin and the DMin project editor Dionne Gittens. Finally, I acknowledge the blessings of my Heavenly Father who opened the necessary doors so that I might have this opportunity to further my education. May He be honored through this humble endeavor.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study seeks to assess the impact of biblical spirituality in the Master of Divinity program at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary (sometimes referred to as the Seminary or SDATS) located in Berrien Springs, Michigan, USA. Since its inception, the Seminary has had a long history of shaping men and women for professional ministry. Though the SDATS has been doing this for so long, this study grew out of a conviction that because forming students spiritually is such a vital dimension of pastoral education, it is necessary to periodically and systematically review how effective this is being done. The mission of the SDATS as expressed on its website is to “…serve the Seventh-day Adventist Church by preparing effective leaders to proclaim the everlasting gospel and make disciples of all people in anticipation of Christ’s soon return” (SDATS, 2014). Assessing biblical spirituality in the Master of Divinity program contributes to assisting the Seminary in achieving its mission.

Statement of the Problem

Recognizing the value and in keeping with the requirements of its accrediting agency the Association of Theological Schools (ATS), the Seminary routinely surveys its students regarding various issues related to their programs of study. In the annual seminary assessment questionnaire covering the years 2002 – 2013, there were some
years that Master of Divinity students reported that the quality of their relationship with God either remained the same or actually diminished while enrolled in the MDiv program. For example in the year 2002, 55% of MDiv students indicated that they felt that their relationship with God had improved while enrolled in the Master of Divinity program. Eighteen percent reported that they felt that the quality of their relationship with God had decreased while 27% felt that their relationship with God had remained the same (see Table 1). This would mean that nearly half (45%) of the MDiv students of this academic year did not feel that the quality of their relationship with God had improved as a result of being in the Master of Divinity program. The year 2003 was more encouraging with 65% of MDiv students reporting that they felt that the quality of their relationship with God had improved while enrolled in the Master of Divinity program. Thirty five percent of MDiv students either reported that their relationship with God remained the same or decreased. This was followed by the year 2004 where 59% of MDiv students reported that the quality of their relationship with God had improved while enrolled in the Master of Divinity program. This meant that 41% of MDiv students in the same year felt that their personal relationship with God had remained the same or had decreased. The years 2009 and 2010 were more encouraging in that 73% in 2009 and 73% of MDiv students in 2010 reported that the quality of their relationship with God improved while enrolled in the Master of Divinity program. However, this still leaves nearly one third of MDiv students reporting that their personal relationship with God remained the same or decreased in the years 2009 and 2010. In 2011, 70% of MDiv students indicated that they felt that the quality of their relationship with God had improved (see Table 2). In the year 2012, in response to the question, “How effective has your program been in giving
greater depth with you [sic] walk with God?,” 71% of MDiv students responded saying that they felt that the program’s impact was “Very Effective” or “Effective” in helping them have greater depth in their walk with God (see Table 3). However, in 2013, 54% of MDiv students reported that they perceived their walk with God to be impacted “Very Effective” or “Effective” by the program. The question naturally arises about the impact of the program on the 46% not represented by these categories in 2013. In contrast, that same year 91% of MA Pastoral Ministry students reported that their program had a “Very Effective” or “Effective” impact on their walk with God (see Table 3). By comparison in 2012, 86% of MA Youth and Young Adult Ministries (MAYYAM) students reported that their program was “Very Effective” or “Effective” in impacting their walk with God. In 2013, 67% of MA in Youth and Young Adult Ministries (MAYYAM) students indicated that their program had a “Very Effective” or “Effective” impact on their walk with God (see Table 3).

While there is cause for rejoicing for the years where there was improvement in this area in the MDiv program, there is still reason to give thought to what can be done to improve these percentages even more. The Seminary is in the business of doing what it can to help its students grow in their personal relationship with God. This is a never ending quest. It would be wonderful if a minimum average of 90% of MDiv students would regularly report that they felt that their walk with God was enhanced by their enrollment in the Master of Divinity program. Even then, as long as there is one student in the Master of Divinity program or in any other Seminary program who feels that he/she has not grown in his/her relationship with God while enrolled at the Seminary, then the Seminary still has work to do.
### Table 1

*Satisfaction With Personal Spiritual Growth While in the MDiv Program 2002 – 2010*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Remained the same</th>
<th>Improved</th>
<th>Decreased</th>
<th>Number of Survey Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Seminary Assessment Questionnaire Data, 2002 – 2010

### Table 2

*Satisfaction With Personal Spiritual Growth in the MDiv Program – Year 2011*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Remained the same</th>
<th>Improved</th>
<th>Decreased</th>
<th>Number of Survey Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Seminary Assessment Questionnaire Data, 2011
Table 3

*Satisfaction With Personal Spiritual Growth MDiv, MAPMin, and MAYYAM 2012 – 2013*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>MDiv</th>
<th>MAPMin</th>
<th>MAYYAM</th>
<th>MDiv</th>
<th>MAPMin</th>
<th>MAYYAM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Seminary Assessment Questionnaire Data, 2012 – 2013
Statement of the Task

After having given due consideration to the statement of the problem, the task of this study is to examine in greater depth the spiritual journey of students in the MDiv program in the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. Based on the findings of the study, recommendations will be made to the Seminary leadership that will contribute to enhancing the integration of biblical spirituality into the culture of the Master of Divinity program. Implementation of these recommendations will hopefully result in students feeling as if they have grown closer to God by being enrolled at the Seminary.

Justification for the Project Document

The justification for this study is based on the following: The Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary’s mission involves “preparing effective leaders to proclaim the everlasting gospel and make disciples of all people in anticipation of Christ’s soon return” (SDATS, 2014). It is incongruous that MDiv graduates who feel that they have not grown spiritually or have even declined spiritually while students at the Seminary can effectively contribute to this mission.

The Seventh-day Adventist church invests a considerable amount of time and financial resources in seminary education with the expectation that Seminary students will be growing spiritually as a result of this investment.

The Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary is a model for theological education throughout the sisterhood of Seventh-day Adventist institutions. As such, the influence of the Seminary impacts the world church’s educational system. In order for this impact to remain positive, it is crucial that the Seminary continue to develop the
ways and means to enhance the spiritual lives of its graduates, particularly those in the Master of Divinity program.

If the Seminary decides that it is content with the status quo, then it risks failing to maximize the number of spiritually mature graduates. As such, the contributions of these graduates toward fulfilling the mission of the Church will be lacking.

**Description of the Project Process**

The description of the project process is as follows. Data compiled by the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary’s Assessment officers tabulating student responses was analyzed. The project includes a theological reflection that examined the ministry of Jesus with His disciples and Paul’s counsel to Timothy as foundational for the teaching of biblical spirituality to Master of Divinity students. Relevant literature on the role of biblical spirituality in theological education was reviewed. Recognizing that there are principles that govern organizational change, literature that details such principles was considered. An overview of the role of spiritual formation in the MDiv curriculums of 15 non-Adventist ATS seminaries were reviewed. Spiritual formation in the MDiv curriculums of three Adventist universities were also considered. In addition, the undergraduate theology/religion curriculums of three Adventist universities and one college were examined to establish the role of spiritual formation in these programs. Also, relevant strategies for enhancing biblical spirituality in the MDiv program from three other non-Adventist ATS seminaries were considered in greater detail. Two focus groups of second and third year Master of Divinity students were conducted. The purpose of these focus groups was to secure student input regarding the impact of the Master of Divinity program on their spirituality. Students were also given an opportunity to provide
their recommendations regarding how this aspect of the program can be enhanced. Finally, recommendations and a conclusion were given to make biblical spirituality an integral part of the Master of Divinity program at the SDATS.

Limitations

The focus of this study is limited to the Master of Divinity program at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. Attempts were made to have representation from all of the demographics comprising students in the MDiv program. In reality, the focus groups participants were students who had an interest in the focus group topic and who were at least second year students. They were not a complete picture of the MDiv program’s demographics. However, their participation in the focus group discussions proved invaluable.

Another limitation was to secure feedback from a minimum of five other seminaries on how they inculcate biblical spirituality in their Master of Divinity programs. In reality, three seminaries responded to the invitation to share in this study. These responses resulted in part from email questionnaires which were sent to them. These questionnaires were followed by phone conversations with two respondents to secure additional clarity regarding their responses. The third respondent, due to his busy schedule, preferred to communicate by email to my follow up questions.

This study is also limited in that it does not include a practical ministry application component. This is due largely to the fact that I am no longer employed by the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. As such, this made the implementation of a practical ministry component difficult to include in this study. Nevertheless, recommendations will be made to the Seminary leadership which if implemented should
make the role of biblical spirituality more pronounced in the Master of Divinity program. This will also have implications for the rest of the Seminary in its quest for biblical spirituality to permeate its organizational culture.

**Definition of Terms**

Historically, the term “spiritual formation” has been used to describe the process that is used to aid a follower of Jesus Christ in maturing in his/her relationship with God. In recent times within certain sectors of Seventh-day Adventism, this term has fallen into ill repute. As such, as much as possible, the term “biblical spirituality” will be used in this study. The use of this term in place of the term “spiritual formation” is very challenging because within the literature, the term “spiritual formation” is used. As a result, you will find these the terms “biblical spirituality” and “spiritual formation” used interchangeably throughout this study.

**Expectations From This Project**

It is expected that this project will achieve the following: It will result in biblical spirituality’s presence in the Master of Divinity program being enhanced. More MDiv students will feel that the Master of Divinity program has enhanced their spiritual growth and the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary will increase the ministerial effectiveness of its Master of Divinity graduates.

The number of spiritually mature pastors/teachers will increase thereby positively impacting the spiritual life of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Furthermore, it will potentially contribute to the development of a spiritual education model for Seventh-day Adventist educational institutions.
In addition, my ongoing spiritual growth as a minister will be positively impacted. With the insights gained, I will be equipped to serve as a resource person to institutions who aspire to make biblical spirituality an essential component of their organizational culture.
CHAPTER 2

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR THE ROLE OF BIBLICAL SPIRITUAL FORMATION IN PASTORAL DEVELOPMENT

This chapter examines the Scriptures to determine what methods Jesus used in spiritually forming the Twelve Disciples. Thereafter, the counsel given by the Apostle Paul for Timothy’s spiritual development will be considered. Though the primary focus of this inquiry will be on the Scriptures, secondary sources will be cited where appropriate. The intent of this review is to identify principles which if implemented, will firmly enhance biblical spirituality in the culture of the Master of Divinity program at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. These principles will aid the SDATS in fulfilling its mandate to develop spiritually mature pastoral graduates.

Jesus and the Spiritual Development of the Twelve Disciples

In this section of this study, specific attention is given to examining how Jesus formed the spirituality of the Twelve Disciples. In order to do that, consideration must first be given to establishing who Christ was. This forms the backdrop against which the spiritual development of the Twelve Disciples is examined.

Jesus – The One who Would Come

Historically, questions have been known to capture the attention of people, even in biblical times. The question of who Christ was captivated the minds of the people of His day. In fact, this was such a paramount question that Jesus asked His disciples, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” (Matt 16: 13 – 16 NKJV; Mark 8: 27-30 NKJV;
Luke 9: 18-20 NKJV). The response was varied. Some said John the Baptist, others thought He was Elijah, and others concluded He was Jeremiah or one of the prophets. The fact that these prophets were mentioned “…points to the widespread view that the greatest figures of the OT would return in a preparatory role just before the end of this age” (Hagner, 1995, p. 467). But Jesus pressed the point more directly with His disciples. “…But who do you say that I am? Simon Peter answered and said, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God’” (Matt 16: 15, 16 NKJV). In a classroom comprised of this small group of 12 student disciples, was Jesus, the class teacher, satisfied with Peter’s answer? Matthew is the only one of the Synoptic gospel writers who recorded Jesus’ response: “Jesus answered and said, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven’” (Matt 16: 17 NKJV). From the perspective of this dialogue, an overview of what the Scriptures taught about Jesus is now considered.

During the time of Christ, the Jewish nation longed for the arrival of the Messiah. This longing was expressed in the inquiry of John the Baptist when he sent his disciples to Jesus with the query, “…Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?” (Matt 11: 3 NKJV). The prophets of old looked forward to the time when the Messiah would come. The book of Genesis expressed this expectation with these words: “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him shall be the obedience of the people” (49: 10 NKJV). Isaiah echoed this desire this way: “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Emmanuel” (7: 14 NKJV). Micah added: “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of
Judah, *Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting*” (Micah 5: 2).

Jesus saw Himself as fulfilling the Old Testament expectation of the Messiah. In response to the query of John’s disciples Jesus alluded to Isaiah 35: 5 and Isaiah 61 as evidence of His messiahship. Isaiah 35: 5 says that, “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.” In Luke 4: 18, 19 (NKJV), Jesus referenced Isaiah 61: 1-3 (NKJV) announcing in the synagogue that:

> The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. (Luke 4: 18, 19 NKJV)

The new age inaugurated by the Messiah was associated with the gospel being preached to the poor (Buttrick, 1951, p. 379). As such it is clear that Jesus identified His ministry with that expected of the anticipated coming One. Though His ministry defied the popular political expectation, in effect, He announced that He is that One. Thus, what is evident is that the witness of Scripture declared that Jesus was the longed for Messiah, the Hope of Israel. Not only was this the witness of the Old Testament Scriptures, but this is how Christ saw Himself. He was the One that would come. He was also the One Who would call others to join Him in His mission to the world.

**Jesus – The One who Would Call**

Not only was Jesus the One Who would come, He was also the One Who would call others to follow Him. As such, the mission of Jesus in this world was not a solitary endeavor. He chose to invite others to labor with Him in full-time ministry. The calling of
the first disciples is recorded in Matt 4: 18-22 (NKJV); Mark 1: 16-20 (NKJV); and Luke 5: 1-11 (NKJV).

And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” They immediately left their nets and followed Him. (Matt 4: 18-20 NKJV)

Bonhoeffer (1963) says that when Jesus calls a man, He calls him to come and die. That is to surrender all his desires to the One who calls. Furthermore, what we see in the calling of the first disciples is that the call of Jesus to follow Him was personal. He spoke to them directly. It is also clear that the call of Jesus met people where they were, in their **sitz em lebem**, their life’s situation. The disciples Simon and Andrew were engaged in the pursuit of their livelihood as fishermen when the call of Jesus confronted them. This call took preeminence over their life’s occupation. And this call was immediate. Their new task was to become “fishers of men” and secondarily “fishers of fish.”

Further in the same chapter we find Jesus calling two more disciples. Their names were James and John:

Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. He called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him. (Matt 4: 21, 22 NKJV)

The call of James and John has similar characteristics to the call of Peter and Andrew. The call was personal, aimed directly at them. It confronted them in the midst of their efforts to make a living. Jesus expected an immediate response to His call. This reveals that the call of Jesus is superior to all other earthly relationships. It would appear from Matthew’s account that James and John left their father alone to mend the nets when they decided to follow Christ. If that were this case, this should not be viewed as Jesus being
Insensitive to family relationships and obligations; rather as the giver of the institution of family, this was more a call to living life in gospel perspective than an abdication of family responsibilities. In other words, living from a “putting first things first” point of view. However, Mark is the only one of the Synoptic gospels which says that James and John left their father with the hired servants when they responded to the call of Christ (1: 20 NKJV). Such an observation completes the picture and suggests that James and John didn’t leave their father stranded with regard to making a living in their response to Christ’s call. Other than this omission, Matthew’s record (4: 18-22 NKJV) of the call of Peter, Andrew, James, and John is largely similar in its details to Mark’s account (1: 16-20 NKJV).

Luke recorded the call of Peter, Andrew, James and John in a different setting. In Luke 5: 1-11 (NKJV), Luke opened with Jesus teaching by the Sea of Gennesaret, sitting in Simon Peter’s boat. Thereafter, Jesus told Peter to push off from land and go fishing. In incredulity, Peter retorted that they had fished all night without success. But because Jesus said so, Peter obeyed. To his amazement, the nets were filled to the breaking point and the boats were riding low in the water due to the immense catch. James and John who were in another boat were called to assist Peter with the catch. The incident ended with Jesus saying to Peter “‘…Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men.’ So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him” (Luke 5: 10, 11 NKJV).

How does one reconcile the accounts of the call of Jesus’ first disciples in Matthew and Mark with what is recorded in Luke? One significant difference between Luke, and Matthew and Mark’s accounts was that Luke did not mention Andrew or the
father of James and John being present when this event occurred. Nolland (1989) suggests that Luke intentionally omitted Andrew being present so as to keep the focus on Peter (p. 223). It appears that Simon Peter and by inference James and John were already acquainted with Jesus. This is implied because Peter allowed Jesus to use his boat for teaching. Peter also referred to Jesus as “Master” which could suggest more than a casual acquaintance. Also in the previous chapter, Luke records that Jesus healed Peter’s mother in law from a fever (Luke 4: 38, 39 NKJV). Peter would not have been willing to obey the command of Jesus to go fishing again if he did not have some level of acquaintance with Him, particularly after having already fished all night without success. The incident ended with Luke saying that, “…they forsook all and followed Him” (Luke 5: 11 NKJV). Perhaps one way to reconcile these two accounts is to conclude that this was a second time that Jesus called Peter, James and John to be fishers of men. It is conceivable that this second occurrence be viewed as an affirmation of their earlier call. Though there are some similarities between both periscopes, there are enough dissimilarities so that these events do not appear to be identical. It seems likely that at this time these disciples fully accepted the call to follow Christ.

All three Synoptic Gospels record Jesus’ call of Matthew the tax collector. This event was recorded in Matt 9: 9-13 (NKJV); Mark 2: 13-17 (NKJV), and Luke 5: 27-32 (NKJV). There are no major differences in these three accounts. However, it is interesting to note that Matthew refers to the tax collector as Matthew. Mark referred to him as “Levi, the son of Alphaeus” (Mark 2: 14 NKJV). Luke referred to him as simply Levi (5: 27 NKJV). Jesus called Matthew while he was working in his occupation. When the call came, he responds immediately. In the absence of a statement that Jesus would make
Matthew, a fisher of men, the gospel writers record how Jesus was an apparent guest in Matthew’s house. The audience included tax collectors, “sinners,” the Pharisees, Jesus and His disciples. The Pharisees complained to the disciples that Jesus is eating with tax collectors and sinners. Note Jesus’ response:

> When Jesus heard that, He said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’ For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.” (Matt 9: 12-13 NKJV)

Though Jesus did not say that His mission was expressed in calling disciples to be “fishers of men,” His response in saying that He came to call sinners to repentance would be consistent with the mission He gave to His earlier disciples. Here the disciples received a clear lesson regarding the intent of Christ’s mission and by inference, the mission He had called them to.

All the Synoptic Gospels record Jesus designating twelve disciples as apostles. This is recorded in Matt 10: 1-4 (NKJV), Mark 3: 13-19 (NKJV); and Luke 6: 12-16 (NKJV). Scholars generally agree that choosing “twelve” disciples is biblically significant. This is viewed as a direct connection with the twelve tribes of Israel (Bonhoeffer, 1963). Matthew and Luke referred to the disciples as apostles. The term apostle originally meant one who is sent. Hagner (1995) observes that such a person has the authority of the one sending (p. 265). Mark referred to the disciples as twelve. He also says that Jesus went up the mountain where He set aside the Twelve Apostles. In contrast, Luke was the only Synoptic writer to mention that Jesus spent all night in prayer on the mountain before choosing the Twelve Apostles. Matthew and Mark record that Jesus gave the apostles power to do miraculous signs whereas Luke does not include this in his gospel.
What is clearly repeated here was that it was Jesus who called the first disciples to leave all and follow Him. The call was immediate. It superseded obligations to maintain one’s livelihood or familial attachments. It was also a call to invite others to follow Jesus. The disciples, now apostles were energized with Christ’s power so that they might be fully equipped for a successful mission.

Jesus – The One who Would Teach

In examining the ministry of Jesus it is apparent that His ministry was not only characterized by preaching but also by teaching. Jesus taught the 5,000 before miraculously feeding them from five loaves and two fish (Mark 6: 33-44 NKJV). The disciples called Him Teacher (Mark 4: 38 NKJV). One method that characterizes Jesus’ teaching was His ability to teach with authority. After giving the Sermon on the Mount to the multitudes gathered there, Matthew records “…that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (7: 28-29 NKJV). The Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount form the basis for the spiritual formation of the disciples (Niles, 2010). This Sermon was characterized by Christ saying, “you have heard” or “it has been said, but I say to you” or a variation of these words (Matt 5: 21, 22, 27, 28, 31, 32, 33, 34, 38, 39, 43, 44 NKJV). This was an indication that He had the authority to explain and clarify the meaning of the Law of God. And yet this authority was not something that He lorded over people. He was approachable as a teacher. For example, mothers felt comfortable bringing their children to Jesus for a blessing, confident that He would welcome them (Mark 10: 13-16 NKJV). This attitude of Jesus was in sharp contrast to that of the disciples. They were challenged to learn that their walk with God would be characterized by putting the good of others first and by
servant leadership. These were elements of their spiritual formation that Jesus sought to teach them (Neufeld, 2009).

Jesus also taught by example. He not only taught the multitudes but He taught His disciples as well. A classic account is found in John 13: 12-15 (NKJV) where Jesus washed the feet of the disciples in the Upper Room at the institution of the Lord’s Supper:

So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments and sat down again, He said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.” (John 13: 12-15 NKJV)

Jesus taught by example through His authenticity. He was what He taught. There was no dichotomy between what He taught and what He lived. His exemplary authenticity was fueled by the close identification that He has with His father. For Jesus said that “I and My Father are one” (John 10: 30 NKJV). He also said that, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father…” (John 14: 9 NKJV). Jesus knew Who He was, where He had come from and where He was going (John 13: 3 NKJV). He said that “the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me” (John 14: 30 NKJV). In His humanity, Jesus sought to serve God and to withstand the Adversary. By His example, Jesus demonstrated the intimate relationship that He had with His Father through the amount of time He spent in communion with Him. Often He would rise early in the morning to spend time with Him in prayer (Mark 1: 35 NKJV). This undoubtedly gave Him the strength that He needed to live a life acceptable to His Father (Matt 3: 17 NKJV).

Jesus taught through the gift of speech. In today’s parlance, we might say that He lectured, much like a teacher does with his students. For example, He taught when He
delivered the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7 NKJV). In addition, He taught the disciples how to pray through the example of the Lord’s Prayer (Luke 11: 2-4 NKJV).

Oftentimes, Jesus taught by asking questions or by what some call “the question-answer method” (Haokip, 2004). Jesus asked questions to effect inner transformation (Bozung, 2000). For example, when Jesus asked His disciples, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” (Matt 16: 13 NKJV). Their response would give an indication of the degree to which they understood His mission and its implication for their lives. Mangum (2003) maintains that Jesus used questions even in the context of counseling to convey truth and to effect a change in deportment. Other examples of Jesus’ use of questions are when Jesus spoke of the ministry of John the Baptist as recorded in Matt 11: 7-15 (NKJV). “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?...” (Matt 11: 7 NKJV) Jesus taught the hearers through these questions that John the Baptist is the Elijah who was to come during the Messianic age. On another occasion recorded in Matt 12: 46-50 (NKJV), in response to being informed that His mother and brothers wanted to see Him, Jesus said:

"Who is My mother and who are My brothers? And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, “Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.” (Matt 12: 48-50 NKJV)

Through this method of asking questions, Jesus taught that those who follow Him as represented by His disciples comprise His real family spiritually speaking. They were characterized by a willingness to obey or to do the will of the Father.

Jesus commonly taught in parables or in symbolic language. Often His disciples did not understand the meaning of the parables, though it would seem that Jesus expected them to. When Jesus told the disciples to “beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the
Sadducees…” (Matt 16: 6 NKJV) the disciples thought that Jesus was referring to the
fact that they did not bring any bread with them. It was when Jesus explained to them the
parable that they realized that He was speaking of the teachings of the Pharisees and
Sadducees (Matt 16: 11, 12 NKJV). Jesus seemed to be saying that He taught in parables
to aid those who genuinely desired to understand the truths of God’s kingdom to do so. In
contrast, those who had no desire to learn God’s truths, Jesus taught in parables to
maintain them in their unbelief (Matt 13: 10-17 NKJV; cf. Mark 4: 10-12 NKJV; Luke 8:
9, 10 NKJV).

One might also say that Jesus taught His disciples using drama or acted out
teaching. On one occasion when a Canaanite woman came to Jesus asking Him to heal
her daughter, Jesus acts indifferent as if affirming the prejudices that the Jews had
towards such people (Matt 15: 21-28 NKJV; Mark 7: 24-30 NKJV). This however, was a
lesson in faith and mission for the disciples which resulted in the woman’s daughter
being healed.

Jesus often used examples from the daily life of His hearers (Nichols, 1983) to
convey His messages. For example, He used the realities of nature to illustrate His
teachings. Educationists, such as Morzinski, call this didactic principle “moving from the
known to the unknown” (n.d., p. 2). When Jesus said that “…Foxes have holes and the
birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head” (Luke 9: 58
NKJV) the listeners could readily relate to what He was saying. Or when He taught them
saying in Matt 16: 2-4 (NKJV):

“When it is evening you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red’; “and in the
morning, ‘It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.’
Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the
signs of the times. A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.” (Matt 16: 2-4 NKJV)

Again, Jesus used examples from daily life such as from the realities of nature that His hearers could readily identify with to teach the truths that govern His kingdom.

Jesus used problem solving to teach the disciples truths of the kingdom. For example, when the multitude of 5,000 had been with Him for some time and were hungry, the disciples presented Jesus with the problem. However Jesus challenged them to wrestle with the problem and to come up with a probable solution. This provided Jesus an opportunity to demonstrate His power in the face of human inadequacy to meet the needs of the people.

When the apostles returned from preaching the gospel of the kingdom, Jesus gave them an opportunity to debrief or to share what they had experienced. This debriefing was a teaching method used by Jesus. “Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught” (Mark 6: 30 NKJV). As they shared what they had experienced, the lessons Christ wanted them to learn would be sharpened and reinforced by the exchange of experiences the disciples shared with Him and with each other. And wisely knowing that ministry is not only about work, Jesus took them to a deserted place for some “down time” so that they could rest and rejuvenate (Mark 6: 31 NKJV). Even Jesus was not a workaholic.

What we have seen is that Jesus used a variety of teaching methods to educate the multitudes and His disciples regarding the truths concerning His kingdom. In so doing, His intent was to prepare them to take their place in His kingdom and to equip them to invite others to do the same.
Jesus was sent by the Father to this earth and empowered by the Holy Spirit to share the good news of the gospel. Before returning to His Father, Jesus gave His disciples what has been termed the Great Commission found in Matt 28: 18-20 (NKJV); (Mark 16: 14-18 NKJV; Luke 24: 36-49 NKJV; John 20: 19-23 NKJV).

And Jesus came and spoke to them saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen. (Matt 28: 18-20 NKJV)

During the time that the disciples were with Jesus, He sent them out to preach the gospel (Matt 10: 5-15 NKJV; Mark 6: 7-13 NKJV; Luke 9: 1-6 NKJV). One might describe this as first century field evangelism or theological field education. Previously, they had returned to Jesus to debrief and regroup in His presence. However, this time would be different. Jesus was returning to His Father. In His place, the Holy Spirit, another Comforter, would continue His ministry in their lives. They were to tarry in Jerusalem and wait for the Holy Spirit’s baptism (Acts 1: 4, 5 NKJV). They are graduating in a sense to assume the task for which the Teacher had been preparing them. They are to teach the nations what they had been taught. Though in future their detractors would regard them as “…uneducated and untrained…” (Acts 4: 13 NKJV) they would be forced to admit that they had been with and had been spiritually transformed by Jesus (Acts 4: 13).

One might say that this is what seminary education should be. Students are “disciples” of a teacher for a specific period of time. They are taught and mentored in the things of God so that they can be transformed and in turn go out and share what they have learned with others. They are sitting at the feet of authorities who are experts in the truths
of God. Such men and women employ the various teaching methodologies of the Master Teacher. They teach by words, by example, through nature, parables, drama, and real life situations. They even allow the students time to rest in order that they might be physically and spiritually refreshed and might have time to reflect on what they are learning. As Jesus was authentic, those who seek to shape the lives of students preparing for ministry need to be genuine as well. Students must not find disconnection between what the teacher teaches and what he/she lives.

Jesus also spent time with His student disciples in the context of a small group. They did things together such as fellowship and socialize within the community. Such occasions provided Jesus “teaching moments” or “mentoring moments” so that He could teach a lesson of the kingdom. Mary Magdalene’s breaking of the bottle of perfume and wiping the feet of Jesus with her hair was a fitting example of a teaching or mentoring moment (Matt 26: 6-13 NKJV; Mark 14: 3-9 NKJV; John 12: 1-8 NKJV).

Teaching is as much relational as it is didactical. Students sitting at the feet of a seminary professor believe that they have been called by God to go out and preach the gospel. This sense of call grows out of a conviction that Jesus has spoken to them and they must obediently follow. Such a reality should engender a fundamental level of mutual respect between the teacher and the student. Recognition that God has possibly called this person suggests that learning can be two-way and not one way. If God thinks enough of the student to call him/her into the gospel ministry, then the teacher tasked with spiritually forming this student should aspire to see him/her as God sees them. If God is working in the life of this student, then there is something that the teacher can learn about the working of God in the lives of His followers. Teaching moves away from
the “sage on the stage” approach to an approach where dialogue is mutually beneficial in the context of genuine respect. Jesus allowed the disciples to debrief with Him and sought to know their thoughts. In a sense, He was their mentor and they were His mentees. In so doing, they were prepared to preach the gospel of the kingdom. They were empowered by His Spirit for the fulfillment of His mission in the earth in preparation for His soon return.

Summary

Thus far, this study has considered an overview of Jesus and the spiritual development of the Twelve Disciples. It has demonstrated that just as Jesus was sent from God to share the gospel, He used a variety of teaching methods which were intended to spiritually develop the disciples. They then were equipped to spiritually develop others. In His absence the Twelve Disciples enabled by His Spirit were commissioned to share the gospel to all nations in obedience to His command.

The Apostle Paul and the Spiritual Development of Timothy

Paul – The one who was Called

Against the backdrop of Jesus and the spiritual development of the Twelve Disciples, attention is now given to the Apostle Paul and the spiritual development of Timothy. As is well known, Paul was not born Paul. Nor was he born an apostle of Jesus Christ. He was born Saul of Tarsus. His famous conversion story is well-documented in the Book of Acts. We first encounter Saul the day that Stephen, the Christian church’s first martyr, was stoned. Luke tells us that Saul was present and was consenting to
Stephen’s death (Acts 8: 1 NKJV). Later Saul, now Paul, would write to the young pastor Timothy about how he (Saul) had persecuted the church. He wrote that “I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief” (1Tim 1: 13 NKJV). Acts 9: 1 (NKJV) opens with a picture of Saul “still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord....” Saul sought priestly authorization so that he could exterminate those who were of “The Way.” En route to Damascus intent on carrying out his mission, Saul the persecutor of the fledgling church had an encounter with Jesus, the One Who he was persecuting (Acts 9: 4, 5 NKJV). Out of that experience, the man called Saul had a conversion experience. He now became a follower of the One he was persecuting. Eventually, now a preacher of Christ, Saul tried to join the disciples at Jerusalem. “but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple” (Acts 9: 26 NKJV).

With the passage of time Saul’s name became Paul. He distinguished himself as a defender of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This was not an easy road he was on. For at the time of his conversion, he was shown what he would suffer for the name of Christ (Acts 9: 16 NKJV).

Paul – The one who was Sent

Like Jesus and the disciples, Paul when called by Jesus Christ was also sent on a mission to share the gospel that had been entrusted to him. The ministry of the Apostle Paul is characterized by what was called three missionary journeys. These journeys represented his initiatives to share the gospel of Jesus Christ within the then known world. Paul is known as the apostle to the Gentiles. The record of his first missionary journey is recorded in Acts 13: 4-14: 28 (NKJV). Paul who was Saul at the time was
designated by the Holy Spirit to go with Barnabas to preach the gospel in such places as Seleucia, Cyprus, Salamis, Paphos, Antioch in Pisidia, Perga in Pamphylia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. They set out with John Mark in their company. However, it was in Perga in Pamphylia that John Mark decided to return to Jerusalem. It was in Antioch in Pisidia that Paul and Barnabas shook the dust off their feet in response to the rejection of the gospel by the Jews. Thankfully, there were some among the Jews and Gentiles who heard them gladly. It was in Lystra in reaction to the healing of a lame man by Paul and Barnabas that the people wanted to worship them. It was also in Lystra where Paul was stoned and left for dead. Yet he recovered and carried on with his preaching. Eventually Paul and Barnabas retrace their steps through Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch and beyond where they encouraged the believers to stand firm in the faith.

Paul’s second missionary journey is recorded in Acts 15: 36 - Acts 18: 22 (NKJV). Paul wanted to go back and visit the churches which they had previously established. Barnabas wanted to take Mark with them. However, Paul refused to do so because John Mark had deserted them on the previous missionary journey. The contention was so divisive that Barnabas took Mark and Paul chose Silas to accompany him as they parted ways. They travelled through Syria and Cilicia encouraging the believers. When Paul and Silas came to Lystra, they met a disciple named Timothy who was well spoken of by the believers. Paul wanted Timothy to accompany them and had Timothy circumcised to pacify the Jews. This was because Timothy’s father was Greek. It is on this journey that Paul had a vision of a Macedonian man calling him to help them. In response, Paul and Silas traveled there. It was in Macedonia where they met Lydia the seller of purple cloth who became a Christian. It was also here where Paul and Silas were
imprisoned and where the Philippian jailer became a believer. It was on this second
missionary journey that Paul, having preached to the Thessalonians, had to flee to Berea
due to the persecution of the Jews. The Bereans distinguish themselves as students of the
Scriptures by confirming the veracity of the teachings Paul and Silas shared with them
(Acts 17: 11, 12 NKJV). It was on this journey that Paul preached at Mars Hill in Athens.

It was in Corinth where Paul met a Jew named Aquila and his wife Pricilla. They were
tentmakers with whom he shared the gospel of Jesus Christ. Silas and Timothy joined
Paul in Corinth (Acts 18: 5 NKJV) having travelled from Macedonia. Eventually, Paul
went to Ephesus en route to Jerusalem. From Jerusalem he traveled to Antioch.

It was during this time that Aquila and Priscilla met a Jew named Apollos who was
mighty in his understanding of the Scriptures. They shared with him the gospel of Jesus
Christ, which he accepted. Apollos became a champion of the gospel of Jesus Christ and
preached it fearlessly. Paul journeyed to Ephesus where he discovered some disciples
who had only received John’s baptism. After explaining to them the gospel of Jesus
Christ, they were rebaptized. Sometime later, Paul sent Timothy and Erastus to
Macedonia while he remained behind. Paul caused a riot in Ephesus because the
Ephesians perceived the gospel of Jesus Christ as a threat to the worship of their goddess
Diana. While on this third missionary journey Paul visited Philippi in Macedonia.
Timothy is mentioned among those who went ahead of Paul and waited for him in Troas.
In Troas a young man named Eutychus fell asleep, falling to his death from the third floor
while Paul was preaching. God used Paul to resurrect the young man. Also on this trip
Paul visited the church at Ephesus. Here Paul preached a powerful sermon challenging
them to remain faithful as he prepared to go bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem. En route to Jerusalem Paul stopped in Tyre. There the disciples warned Paul not to go to Jerusalem. Eventually Paul and his companions reach Caesarea where they stayed with Philip the Evangelist. This man had four daughters who prophesied. It is here that a prophet named Agabus prophesied that Paul would suffer persecution in Jerusalem. Notwithstanding, Paul continues resolutely to Jerusalem where the believers warmly received him.

Timothy – The man Taught/Mentored by the Apostle Paul

What has been seen thus far is that the Scriptures clearly establish that Paul was called and sent by God to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. In this brief overview of Paul’s ministry, the young man Timothy appears. In Acts 16: 1 (NKJV), Timothy first appeared as a believer in Lystra who enlists with Paul and accompanies him in his ministry. In Acts 17:14, 15 (NKJV) Silas and Timothy are mentioned as remaining in Berea while Paul escaped to Athens. He waited in Athens for Silas and Timothy (Acts 17: 15, 16 NKJV). In Acts 19: 22 (NKJV), Paul sends Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia while he remained in Asia. Acts 20: 4, 5 (NKJV) mentions Timothy as being among a group of disciples who went ahead to wait for Paul in Troas. Romans 16: 21(NKJV) includes Timothy among those who sent greetings to the church at Rome. Paul wrote to the church at Corinth bemoaning the lapse in spirituality among them. He said that as a father, he is sending Timothy to nurture them (1 Cor 4: 17 NKJV). In 1 Cor 16: 10 (NKJV), Paul admonished the Corinthians to receive Timothy by affirming the ministry of Timothy and placed Timothy’s ministry on par with his own. There are two positive references to Timothy in the second letter to the Corinthians (1: 1 NKJV; 1: 19 NKJV; cf. Phil 1: 1
Finally, the writer to the Hebrews suggests that Timothy, likely Paul’s compatriot may have been imprisoned for his faith for he mentions him having being set free (13: 23 NKJV). What this shows is that Timothy was a key figure in the life of the early church. He enjoyed the esteem of the Apostle Paul and was entrusted with significant responsibility in the work of the church. It would appear that Paul poured all that he has of his ministerial prowess into his teaching and mentoring of Timothy into an effective minister of the gospel. Perhaps Timothy was to Paul what Mark was to Barnabas? Clearly, the record of the early church supports the value of properly trained ministry.

Paul’s Curriculum for Timothy’s Pastoral Development

Paul’s curriculum for Timothy’s pastoral development grew out of the close relationship that he had with Timothy his student. The letters in the New Testament that bear Timothy’s name provide valuable insights regarding the principles which govern the effective training of ministers. What follows is an examination of these two letters to identify these principles.

First and Second Timothy are part of the New Testament referred to as the Pastoral Epistles. The Pastoral Epistles are those letters in the New Testament directed to specific churches written from a pastoral perspective. These include the books of First and Second Timothy and Titus.

One of the striking impressions gained when reading First and Second Timothy is the strong sense of call that Paul espouses when writing to Timothy. In the opening
chapters of these two books, Paul connected his ministry to the call of God (1 Tim 1: 12 NKJV; 2 Tim 1: 1 NKJV). This was not a career path he chose by his own volition. He saw himself as responding to the direct call of God on his life. The implication is that anyone who seeks to teach pastors in ministry should have a strong sense of their own calling to ministry. The same should be said of those who are training for ministry. In order to endure the rigors of ministry, a strong sense of God’s call is imperative. Any academic program that has pastoral formation as its goal should develop a mechanism to help teachers and students ascertain and confirm that God has indeed called them to ministry.

One of the strong characteristics of Paul’s teaching and preaching is that it was Christ-centered (1 Tim 1: 1, 2, 12, 14-16 NKJV). This emphasis holds true as well even in Second Timothy (1: 1, 2, 8-10; 2:1, 8, 10, 11-13 NKJV). It stands to reason that all Christian theological training should aspire to be Christ-centered. If not, it has no value and should not be described as Christian.

Those who aspire to ministry either as teachers or students should have a high regard for biblical truth (1 Tim 4: 16 NKJV; 2 Tim 3: 14-17 NKJV). This is evident when Paul wrote to Timothy and admonished him to be wary of those who taught false doctrines (1 Tim 1: 3-7 NKJV; 2 Tim 4: 3-5 NKJV; cf. 2 Tim 2: 14, 16-19, 23 NKJV). In 2 Tim 2: 15 (NKJV) Paul challenged Timothy to be the kind of minister that handles God’s word correctly (cf. 2 Tim 1: 13, 14 NKJV). This implies that teachers and students should have the pursuit of sound doctrine as a goal in the learning environment as they study the Scriptures. Issler (2001) observes that “Scripture must be studied within the context of a dynamic and growing relationship with the God who is personal and who is
intimately and supernaturally involved in the everyday aspects of his children” (p. 155). Scriptural truth is the basis for spiritual formation (Smith, 1996).

Along with interpreting the Word of God correctly, Paul challenged Timothy to preach the Word. This included being willing to use it as a basis for providing direction in the lives of believers (2 Tim 4: 2 NKJV; cf. 1 Tim 4: 6 NKJV). God is still speaking today through His Word (Tozer, 1995). A theological curriculum must include an emphasis on proclaiming the Word with Christ-centered passion and accuracy. It should demonstrate how this Word is relevant for present-day living.

Paul placed great emphasis on godly living in his two letters to Timothy (1 Tim 4: 7, 8 NKJV). He used words associated with the terms “gymnasium” and “gymnastics” to illustrate the training Christians go through here on earth (Issler, 2001) in pursuit of godliness. This pursuit of godliness is linked to the community. For it is in the community where one receives support as he/she aspires to godliness (Hull in Andrews, 2010). Paul commended Timothy for following his “…manner of life…” (2 Tim 3: 10 NKJV). He counseled Timothy to “Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Tim 2: 22 NKJV). Pastoral development must include an elevated standard of right living if it is to have a positive impact. Pastors are called to a higher standard and are to be the role models for others to follow. They are to “…be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim 4: 12 NKJV; cf. 1 Tim 5: 22 NKJV). Hunter (1986) bemoans the fact that “…the greater and more astounding wonder is that sin grieves us so little” (p. 26). Herein lies a fundamental challenge for the spiritual development of pastors.
However, just telling students to live a pure life is not adequate. Commenting on the text “for the Son Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19: 10 NKJV), Cloud and Townsend (2001) observe that:

The word translated “save” in this statement is a word that actually means “healed” or “made whole.” Being “saved” from sin means being restored and healed at a much deeper level than we sometimes offer to people. People need more than just “Stop that!” They also need “and God and we will help you.” The biblical process of overcoming sin provides a deep healing. Anything else will fall short. (p. 301)

Clearly seminaries have a responsibility to direct students to the appropriate counseling resources that will help them deal with the emotional impact of sin in their lives. Failure to do this, risks the pastor foisting his/her dysfunction upon a congregation possibly resulting in irreparable harm to the body of believers.

Further review of Paul’s interactions with Timothy reveals that he treated him with respect. Paul called him “…a true son in the faith…” or “…a beloved son…” (1 Tim 1: 2 NKJV; 2 Tim 1: 2 NKJV). He even referred to Timothy as a “…man of God…” (1 Tim 6: 11 NKJV). This is quite a statement coming from the veteran apostle to the Gentiles addressed to a young man in ministry. This suggests that those who would teach prospective pastors should view them with the type of respect one would show their own children. Paul also admonished Timothy not to let anyone despise him because of his age (1 Tim 4: 12 NKJV). This principle applies in the local church as well as in the seminary classroom.

Paul exhorted Timothy and the church to pray for all men, especially kings and others in authoritative positions. One of the motivating factors is that the church would enjoy peace (1 Tim 2: 1, 2 NKJV). This was in the day when there were no civil rights or constitutional guarantees. The church was dependent on prayer and subject to the whims
of those in public office. Though some may argue that this was merely self-serving, Paul’s counsel suggests that he expected Timothy to have some level of civic awareness. Perhaps we have the seeds of a religious liberty awareness embedded in Paul’s counsel? Clearly there was no religious liberty during the time of the early church. Yet then and now, believers cherish the freedom to worship God in keeping with the dictates of their consciences. This emphasis is no less relevant today. Pastors would benefit from instruction in this area.

Theological training that is relevant today should teach students to focus on that which is vital as it relates to the truths of salvation. Young pastors should be encouraged to avoid what Paul calls “…profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their message will spread like cancer….” (2 Tim 2: 16, 17 NKJV; cf. 1 Tim 6: 3-5, 20, 21 NKJV).

It is clear from Paul’s letters to Timothy that ministry is not for the faint of heart. One can experience disappointment when believers like Hymenaeus and Alexander depart from the faith (1 Tim 1: 19, 20 NKJV). It hurts when one is rejected for whatever reason by those who claim to be God’s people (2 Tim 1: 15 NKJV). But persecution or suffering also come with the territory (1 Tim 4: 10 NKJV; 2 Tim 1: 12; 3: 12 NKJV). Thank God for those church members who appreciate what pastors try to do and who are supportive of them like Onesiphorus who was not ashamed of Paul’s chain (2 Tim 1: 16-18 NKJV).

Aspiring pastors need to be taught the rudiments of church organization and administration. Paul provided Timothy with guidelines detailing the qualifications for serving in church office (1 Tim 3: 1-13 NKJV). He even provided principles for dealing
with the needs or issues of real people in the church such as widows (1 Tim 5: 3-16 NKJV), elders (1 Tim 5: 17-19 NKJV), and slaves (1 Tim 6: 1, 2 NKJV). How to respond to the needs of these members of his congregation were the ministry issues in Timothy’s day. Theological training must provide student pastors with the necessary knowledge required to address the modern day issues of congregational life in the trenches where believers live. Even when there were disagreements, members are to be corrected with patience and humility (2 Tim 2: 23-26 NKJV).

Paul reminded Timothy to maintain a proper attitude towards material blessings. He wrote that, “…godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Tim 6: 6 NKJV). The love of money, not money itself, is the root of all evil (1 Tim 6: 10 NKJV, emphasis added). Aspiring for riches exposed one to temptation (1 Tim 6: 9 NKJV). Paul challenged Timothy to be satisfied with food and clothing (1 Tim 6: 8 NKJV). Those who have been blessed with material wealth should use it to be a blessing to others. They should resist self-conceit because of their riches (1 Tim 6: 17-19 NKJV). For as Paul has mentioned earlier, we come into this world with nothing and we will certainly leave this world with nothing (1 Tim 6: 7 NKJV). Barnes (1996) says, “When Jesus scoffed at the wealthy, it was because they were betting on their money” (p. 75). He means they were more dependent on their wealth than they were on God. In a world of rampant materialism with mega churches spending excessive amounts on ecclesiastical structures and the prosperity gospel growing in increasing popularity, this counsel should guide the development of future pastoral leaders in the church. Though not mentioned here, emphasis needs to be placed on faithfulness with one’s tithes and offerings. There is a direct correlation between this Christian responsibility and wealth management in general. As pastors, we
are tempted like others to lay up our treasure on earth, rather than in heaven. Pastoral
development must always challenge students to look beyond the gift to the Giver. And as
an ancient Indian proverb says, “All that is not given is lost.”

Students aspiring to be effective pastors should take Paul’s counsel to heart
recognizing that the Christian way is often a struggle. It is a struggle inspired by total
commitment to God. Tozer (1995) says, “Let no one imagine that he will lose anything of
human dignity by this voluntary sellout of his all to his God” (p. 163). Furthermore, it
takes effort and determination to succeed on this journey. Paul’s counsel to Timothy was
to “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called
and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses” (1 Tim 6: 12
NKJV). In 2 Tim 2: 1-6 (NKJV), Paul used imagery from the military, athletics, and
agriculture to illustrate Christian endurance. Though salvation was a gift of God given
freely, it takes effort to retain it. We suffer because of our identification with Him. And
because of suffering, some believers choose not to follow Him any longer. However,
Hunter (1986) says, “The real question is, Can we pray to a God who died for people who
hurt?” (p. 92) Commenting on trials, White observes:

The trials of life are God’s workmen, to remove the impurities and roughness from
our character. Their hewing, squaring, and chiseling, their burnishing and polishing,
is a painful process; it is hard to be pressed down to the grinding wheel. But the stone
is brought forth prepared to fill its place in the heavenly temple. Upon no useless
material does the Master bestow such careful, thorough work. Only His precious
stones are polished after the similitude of a palace. (2008, p. 17)

Pastoral students need to be taught a clear picture of the realities of the Christian life.
This is not to discourage them. On the contrary, this should challenge them to avail
themselves of the spiritual resources God has made available that are intended to ensure
their success.
Paul the teacher has a vibrant friendship with his student Timothy. He prayed for him and longed to be with him (2 Tim 1: 3, 4 NKJV). He even knew the names of Timothy’s mother and grandmother (2 Tim 1: 5 NKJV). Timothy was more to Paul than just an I.D. number. Like Jesus with His disciples, Paul was mentor and Timothy was his mentee. Paul was a real, live human being whose friendship and companionship were mutually enjoyed by both of them. This is a timely reminder to those who engage in pastoral spiritual formation. They must be real with their students. They must bridge the gulf between professor and student. They should allow them to get close to them and see their flaws, warts and all. Getting to know students on a personal level is the ideal. This will likely mean spending time with them outside of the normal classroom hours. For learning is not limited to the classroom. As someone has said, “some things are caught, rather than taught.” The SDATS must find ways to encourage and affirm faculty who find time to mingle with students outside of classroom hours. An intentional plan must be devised that recognizes the educational value of such interaction. To assume that it will happen on its own ensures that it will not happen to the extent needed.

It would seem that Paul expected Timothy to teach the gospel as part of his ministry. After having spoken about the anticipated heresies of the end time, Paul admonished Timothy to give instruction in these things as “…a good minister of Jesus Christ...” (1 Tim 4: 6 NKJV). Later in this same chapter after speaking about the profitability of godliness and their trust in Jesus Christ, Paul told Timothy to teach these things (1 Tim 4: 11 NKJV). Paul even expected Timothy to teach Christian slaves how to relate to believing masters (1 Tim 6: 2 NKJV). Timothy was to share (presumably teach) the gospel with select men who would in turn teach others (2 Tim 2: 2 NKJV). Paul
described a “…servant of the Lord…” as one who is able to teach (2 Tim 2: 24 NKJV). Paul’s emphasis on teaching suggested that this is a vital skill for any minister of God to possess. An academic program designed to promote pastoral development should provide an opportunity for such students to get practical training in teaching the Word. This is a vital skill that will serve them well as they minister to the people of God.

Summary

It is clear that the call of the Twelve disciples by Jesus Christ in the context of a small mentoring group provided a platform for examining the teaching methods used by Christ in order to spiritually form the disciples for the effective proclamation of the gospel. The time that Christ spends with them provided an opportunity for Him to employ various teaching methodologies in order to convey the truths concerning His kingdom in a way which they could understand. As such, they were empowered through His example and the power of His Spirit to go forth and preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. By implementing His teaching methodologies, teachers of student pastors can maximize their effectiveness as ministers of the gospel.

The examination of the Apostle Paul’s letters to Timothy also reveals vital biblical content that Paul used to spiritually form young Timothy into an effective minister for Christ. Timothy was able to play a pivotal role in Paul’s ministry undoubtedly due to the mentoring relationship they had with each other. This relationship remains a model for the SDATS as it continues to be actively involved in the pastoral development of future ministers for the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
Chapter 3

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE DEALING WITH THE ROLE OF BIBLICAL SPIRITUAL FORMATION IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE THEORY

This chapter will present an overview of the literature that deals with spiritual formation in theological education. While recognizing that the term “spiritual formation” causes some concerns among certain Seventh-day Adventists, “spiritual formation” is the term commonly used in the literature. Since this is a literature review, the use of the term “spiritual formation” will often be utilized in this chapter. This chapter will also examine principles of organizational change theory. Such a discussion of organizational change literature is relevant because this is a study about how to change the culture of an academic program and secondarily the culture of an organization, in this case a seminary’s culture. This chapter will conclude with general observations based on the literature for enhancing biblical spirituality with particular focus on the Master of Divinity program of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. It is the focus of this study because the Master of Divinity program is the premier pastoral training program of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. However, it is envisioned that these observations applicable to the MDiv program could be adapted to fit all of the other SDATS’ degree programs. For the reality is, if a graduate program in a seminary does not result in students perceiving that they have grown spiritually, one then has to ask the question, what value is there in such a program?
The Problem in Context

The statement of the problem in this study centers around a perceived lack or lessening of spiritual growth as reported by some MDiv students while registered in the program at the SDATS. This problem must be seen in historical context. It is helpful to remember that the question of the relationship between theology and spirituality goes back to the time of such ancients as Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Ambrose, and Augustine (Clemmons, 2004). For some time seminaries have grappled with how to bridge the apparent divide between theology and spirituality. This need has become even more acute because the average student entering seminary today often does not have a clear understanding of what a call to ministry is (Mercer, 2003). This coupled with the fact that today’s young postmodern seminary student often enters into theological education essentially biblically illiterate (Mercer, 2003; Roberts 2004). In response to this reality, the SDATS has implemented the practice of administering a Biblical Knowledge Entrance Examination (BKEE) to incoming Master of Divinity students. The examination seeks to determine if students have the basic Bible knowledge expected of first year MDiv students. Students who fail this examination are required to take a one credit course entitled “The Bible and Biblical History.” According to Seminary policy, students who fail this course are not allowed to continue in the Master of Divinity program. Typically, a significant number of students who take this test do not pass it and must take the remedial Bible class. Some may argue that this may be a reflection of poor exam construction. Or on the other hand, it may be a reflection of the postmodern, biblically illiterate society these students have grown up in as opposed to a lack of natural ability or innate intelligence.
Marshall (2000) quoting Barbara G. Wheeler, president of Auburn Theological Seminary, made the following observation on the quality of students entering today’s seminaries: “In 1947, 7% of Phi Beta Kappa went into medicine and 7% went into ministry. In 1987, 15% went into medicine, and less than 1% went into ministry” (para. 6). These statistics would seem to support that for whatever reason, there does seem to be a trend downward in the academic, not necessarily intellectual caliber of students entering seminary.

It is in this context that the spiritual life of seminary students must be addressed. If students are not characteristically biblically literate when they enter seminary, what are the implications for how they are taught in general, and specifically how they are mentored to grow spiritually? What magnifies this challenge is that it is an open secret that some seminary professors do not see the spiritual life of their students as their immediate concern. Their job as they see it is to impart knowledge in their particular area of expertise. The student or someone in another department must take the responsibility for nurturing spirituality. However, Pausell (1998) argues that regardless of the discipline that one is teaching, the discipline provides an opportunity to shape the student spiritually. Scholarship need not be placed in opposition to that which is spiritually formative but can also be spiritually formative in its own right (Pausell, 1998). In order for there to be a culture of spiritual formation within the seminary, spiritual formation must be seen as the responsibility of all faculty (Mercer, 2003).

As indicated earlier, during the years 2002 to 2013 a significant number of MDiv students reported that they felt that their spiritual growth remained the same or declined while students at SDATS. Yet, the spiritual formation of its students is central to the
SDATS’s self-understanding and a part of its raison d’etre. The perception of a plateaued or diminished spirituality in the MDiv program resulting from the seminary educational experience has negative implications for the SDATS and for the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Hence, the justification for a study of this nature that seeks to identify a process for enhancing students’ spirituality while enrolled at the SDATS.

In the larger context, the Association of Theological Schools (ATS), the premier accrediting body of seminaries in North America (since 1996) espouses the value of spiritual formation in pastoral training. It fully expects that this course will be taught in the seminaries that it accredits. However, they have not recommended a uniform methodology with which to make this a reality (Reisz, 2003). Seminaries are left to be guided by their faith traditions with regard to how they will teach spiritual formation.

What we have seen thus far is that seminaries continue to wrestle with the notion of how to best andragogically impact the spiritual lives of aspiring pastoral students. Though there is no uniform landscape in regard to the role of spiritual formation in theological education, yet theologically and professionally, many seminaries still feel a responsibility to engage in pastoral transformation in spite of the challenges. What makes this challenge more acute is that at least in the case of the SDATS, the number of students in the Master of Divinity program who report that they feel that their spirituality has plateaued or diminished as a result of their seminary experience is disconcerting. This is a cause for pause and an opportunity to ask the question, “Is there a better way in order to turn this situation around?”
Spiritual Formation – An Overview

As part of an overview of spiritual formation, a review of the literature dealing with spiritual formation reveals a variety of definitions regarding what actually constitutes its definition. Simply doing a Google search for the question “What is spiritual formation?” yields 2,450,000 results. Narrowing the search further by googling the question “What is Christian spiritual formation?” yields 1,900,000 search results. The immensity of these results related to the topic clearly highlights the need to either use a different word or to clearly define what one means or does not mean when using the term spiritual formation.

Consider several Christian definitions of spiritual formation: “Christian spiritual formation is the process of being shaped by the Spirit into the likeness of Christ, filled with love for God and the world” (A Call to Spiritual Formation, 2009). The definition originates from the input of over 150 experts in the field of spiritual formation. This statement entitled “A Call to Spiritual Formation” forms part of an expanded document that was edited at a Renovare International Conference in San Antonio, Texas (2009). They hoped that this statement might reflect a unity of thought regarding this important topic.

Willard (cited by Tennant, 2005), a thought leader in the field of spiritual formation says “Spiritual formation is character formation....It is the process of establishing the character of Christ in the person” (para 7, 8).

The General Assembly Mission Council, Office of Spiritual Formation, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) states on its website:

Spiritual formation is the activity of the Holy Spirit which molds our lives into the likeness of Jesus Christ….We cooperate with the work of the Spirit through certain
practices that make us more open and responsive to the Spirit’s touch, disciplines such as Sabbath-keeping, works of compassion and justice, discernment, worship, hospitality, spiritual friendships, and contemplative silence. (para. 1)

Lastly, Averbeck (2008), professor of Old Testament and Semitic Languages at Trinity Evangelical and Divinity School makes the following observation regarding a biblical definition of spiritual formation:

From a biblical point of view, probably the best way to define spiritual formation (a synonym of spiritual growth) is to consider passages that put the Holy Spirit in the context of (trans- or con-) forming one’s life toward Christ likeness (Galatians 4:19b, “until Christ is formed in you”). Understood in this way, “spiritual formation” is first of all, above all, and throughout, the shaping (i.e., forming) work of the divine Holy Spirit, carried out according to the will of God the Father, for the purpose of conforming us to the image of his son Jesus Christ:…(p. 28)

Obviously, this is not an exhaustive list of definitions of Christian spiritual formation. I think it would be fair to say that all of these definitions can be summarized by defining spiritual formation as the believer cooperating with the work of God’s transforming power in his or her life. This cooperation is nurtured by the practice of spiritual disciplines (such as prayer, bible study, meditation, etc.) so that through such practices the believer is positioned to allow the work of God to be done in him or her.

S. Lowe and Lowe (2007) echo an earlier observation that there is no consensus among ATS member schools regarding the definition of spiritual formation (p. 5). ATS member schools are left to define spiritual formation based on their own theological and denominational traditions. Though recognizing that spiritual formation does focus on the spiritual needs of the individual, they prefer a definition of spiritual formation that is more reflective of the role the community plays in forming spirituality. Spiritual formation is not done in isolation (see also Marshall, 2000). They humbly wonder if
American individualism may be credited for the heavy emphasis on the individual in much of what is taught in some circles concerning spiritual formation (pp. 15-20).

Because the term “spiritual formation” is used by so many across the theological spectrum within Protestantism, Roman Catholicism, and even Eastern Mysticism, the Dean of the SDATS felt that it was necessary to issue an official statement regarding the position of the Seminary with regard to the teaching of spiritual formation. The need to issue such a statement was precipitated by the outcry in some church circles concerning a new DMin cohort in Discipleship and Spiritual Formation that began in 2010. Realistically, all that a “concerned brother or sister” has to do is google spiritual formation and be inundated with results spanning the theological and philosophical spectrum. It would not take long for such a person to discover that the Roman Catholics have a website touting a new online Catholic Spiritual Formation Program. Reading the course description, they would likely recoil in horror to discover that the course is taught by someone who has written a book entitled “How to Pray the Rosary as a Pathway to Contemplation.” Further googling would eventually bring them to a website called Revival Sermons. There is a January 2, 2010 post in the discussion forums by Hahn who cites an article she read in the Lighthouse Trails Research Project Newsletter. Her post is entitled “Spiritual Formation Taught at Andrews?” She writes that the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, led by such notables as Kenley D. Hall, are credited with the “Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary Integrating Contemplative/Emerging Spirituality Into Degree Program” (Hahn, 2010) which was the title of the article in the Lighthouse Trails Research Project Newsletter. This is the context which contributed to the dean of the SDATS issuing the following statement.
Here is an excerpt from the statement (Fortin, 2010) which was originally posted on the SDATS’ website:

There are some who accuse the Seminary of teaching contemplative and emergent types of spirituality because we have called our courses by the name of “Spiritual Formation.” We do not teach such approaches to spiritual development. In academic circles the expression spiritual formation is a synonym for spiritual growth toward godly maturity, or the process of Christian discipleship and sanctification. It is unfair and false to state that spiritual formation is evil because it is associated with the writings of Church Fathers, some strands or more recent Roman Catholic thoughts, and some devotional practices of other religions. The intent of spiritual formation is to teach students what Scripture says about living a genuine life of commitment to God, to be open to the convictions of the Holy Spirit, to be regenerated in Christ. (Fortin, 2010)

On September 8, 2011 Seminary faculty voted a more in-depth statement on this topic from a Seventh-day Adventist perspective. This was in light of the on-going debate within the Church. This document (Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 2011) defines:

Biblical spirituality, at its core, refers to a life of discipleship intentionally lived in personal relationship with God through Christ by the Spirit. The life lived with God is such that ‘we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days’ (Luke 1:74-75). Thus biblical spirituality includes conversion, justification, and sanctification (1 Cor 6:11). It is about everything that we are and do in life, because even the common things reflect our spiritual orientation. (p. 11)

For the purposes of this study, spiritual formation or biblical spirituality as defined in the preceding paragraph by the Seminary is what I am advocating should permeate the Master of Divinity program and secondarily the culture of the SDATS. Another definition of spiritual formation that complements the SDATS’s definition is that spiritual formation is being molded in Christ’s image (Staley, 1995).

Historically, Old (as cited in S. Lowe & Lowe, 2007) observes the term “spiritual formation” has its roots in the aftermath of Vatican II among Roman Catholics and
Protestants (p. 10). Hinson (as cited in S. Lowe & Lowe, 2007) also indicates that the term “spiritual formation” was increasingly used by Protestants after Vatican II (p. 10).

Cork writes a blog dealing with religious issues as someone who was raised Seventh-day Adventist, left his faith, became a Lutheran pastor, and then joined the Roman Catholic Church where he worked as a parish director of religious education, lay campus minister, and director of young adult and campus ministry. He has now returned to his Adventist faith and works as a pastor in North Houston, Texas. He also has a DMin in ecumenism and a MA in Church History. He writes on his blog that “formation” in Catholicism refers to the transformation of the whole person (2010, para. 3). He continues that “Spiritual formation” originates historically in Roman Catholicism’s seminaries and its communities and refers to “…the period of introduction to that community’s life, traditions, and ways of prayer” (2010, para. 4). He adds that it is a time of probation where the person and the community conclude whether this is the right place for the suppliant (2010, para. 4). Commenting on Pope John Paul II’s understanding of priestly formation, Cork writes that “…John Paul II noted when writing about priestly formation (Pastores Dabo Vobis, 45), the Catholic tradition understands that ‘spiritual formation…is applicable to all the faithful’” (2010, para. 5), which would also include non-Catholics. Perhaps this is why Protestants felt comfortable using the term in spite of its Roman Catholic origins.

Regardless of the origins and associations of the term “spiritual formation,” seminaries still have a role to play with regard to addressing the spiritual needs of their students (Evans, 2007, p. 15). Such students may not be interested in typical pastoral positions in mainline churches as was the case in the past. But they are interested in
growing spiritually. They will be coming to seminaries to find help in growing in this endeavor (Evans, 2007, p.15). In reviewing theological education in the Southern Asia-Pacific Division, Casimiro and Ng (2006) did not find a unified approach to the theological training of pastors. They found that the educational institutions training future pastors in this division had curricula which primarily emphasized “knowing” and “doing” with minimal clearly discernible emphasis on the “being” component of pastoral formation. And the being component of pastoral training is the specific concern of spiritual formation.

Other Seventh-day Adventists scholars have also written on this topic. A study was done to improve the level of spiritual formation on the campus of Solusi College, Zimbabwe with a particular focus on ministerial students (Mathema, 1991). It grew out of a concern that the level of spirituality among Adventist pastors in Zimbabwe needed improving. Mathema reviewed the topic of spiritual formation as outlined in Scripture and Christian literature. He concluded that spiritual formation is vital to the formation of pastors. He proposed a curriculum to be used at Solusi College in response to his conclusions. A similar study with similar conclusions was done by Vertallier who focused on the seminary students on the campus of the Adventist Seminary at Collonges–sous-Saleve, France, (1993). Tasker (2002) studied the impact of a 10 week course in spiritual formation on 120 MDiv students representing 40 nationalities. Over 2100 pages of data were gathered from students in the form of questionnaires, focus groups, etc. in a two year period. A significant number of students reported that they felt that they had grown spiritually as a result of participation in the course. Cho (2006) examined the relationship between experiences of MDiv students at the Seminary and their spirituality.
Hers was largely a quantitative study with a qualitative component. One hundred MDiv students who graduated in 2004 were surveyed using the Christian Spiritual Participation Profile (CSPP) and another instrument. She found that there was a high correlation between the amount of effort students expended within the formal curriculum and their level of involvement in the informal curriculum and their spirituality. The example of faculty also positively impacted student spirituality.

Because enhancing the spirituality of students in the Master of Divinity program is a never-ending pursuit, this study will seek to establish how a group of current students see the impact of the MDiv program on their spirituality. In addition, recommendations will be made to positively impact MDiv students’ spirituality. The anticipated result is the enhancement of biblical spirituality in the culture of the Master of Divinity program and by implication the SDATS as a whole.

Edgell (2007) using a qualitative research methodology conducted interviews with five students from Africa who were attending American colleges. She sought to determine “What is the role of spirituality in the development of African college students?” (p. 54). Among her findings was a common theme that these African students saw their spiritual lives as being part of who they were as individuals. They did not compartmentalize their spiritual lives from the rest of their identity as is often the case with a western approach to spirituality. Though not explicitly stated in this article, one could extrapolate that when it comes to the spiritual formation of pastors, advocating an approach that sees the spiritual life as fully integrated in one’s total being has merit as implied by the responses of these African students. For them God was real and very much
a part of their life’s experience. I would maintain that one should expect no less from pastors.

Of course, the question remains, how shall spiritual formation be assessed? Assessment is the current buzz word among accrediting bodies. The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) is no exception. Spiritual formation, by nature, is rather subjective in its approach. Questions are often asked, “How can one judge the quality of another’s spirituality?” or “What is the objective criteria if any that forms the basis for this judgment to be made?” Marshall (2000), while recognizing the immensity of the challenge, suggests the following as a basis for assessing the impact of spiritual formation upon students. She suggests four criteria that she feels are helpful in this context. To the extent that seminaries can cultivate “an authentic humility” in students; “an abiding awareness of grace”; “an ecclesial faith, rooted in community and tradition”; and “a maturing moral vision,” seminaries can conclude that they have had some success in impacting the spiritual development of their students (Marshall, 2000). By “an authentic humility” she means that students must always remain humble recognizing their own limitations even as they go about the business of the kingdom. “An abiding awareness of grace” allows seminary students to recognize that any good that they accomplish in this world is a result of God’s grace. She understands that “an ecclesial faith, rooted in community and tradition” recognizes that we minister as recipients of the Christian legacy handed down from earlier generations of the faithful. And by “a maturing moral vision” she suggests that seminary graduates must learn “…to find common ground with those whose vision differs from our own. [This] is crucial to growth in faith and love” (Marshall, 2000). Though these four steps are not conclusive, they at least provide a point
of departure when attempting to assess the impact of spiritual formation on a student’s spirituality.

What has been established thus far is that there has been some ambiguity depending on one’s theological tradition or understanding regarding a precise definition of spiritual formation. Though this is true, there is growing consensus within some Protestant circles regarding what spiritual formation is, at least in broad terms. It also remains clear that many in theological education see themselves as playing a vital role in shaping their students spiritually. How best to do this remains an ongoing topic of study and discussion.

Organizational Change Theory

This study has made clear that spiritual formation is vital in shaping the spiritual lives of students. It follows that in order to adequately assess biblical spirituality in the MDiv program at the SDATS, attention must be given to strategies for implementing change. The Master of Divinity program does not exist as an island unto itself. It is part of a larger organizational entity. As such, that organization’s culture must be considered when contemplating making changes to the MDiv program. Changes which are intended to enhance student spirituality. It is well known that human beings by nature tend to resist change. Faculty in the SDATS are probably not an exception. However, Self (2007) argues that that need not necessarily be the case. It all depends on whether the change is perceived as being to one’s advantage or disadvantage (p. 11).

As indicated, before seeking to implement change, due consideration should be given to an organization’s culture (Schraede, Tears, & Jordan 2005). Glisson (2007)
defines culture as “…the norms, expectations, and way things are done in the organization” (p. 739). In contrast he defines “…psychological climate as the individual employees’ perceptions of the psychological impact of their work environment on their own well-being” (p. 739). Based on his research of 100 welfare agencies Glisson found a clear link between agencies whose climate allowed case workers to experience “high levels of personal accomplishment” and “low levels of depersonalization” were also associated with high levels of job satisfaction. The converse was true in that caseworkers whose organizational climate was characterized by high levels of stress reported a lower level of job satisfaction (2007). He also documented that there was a clear link between the welfare agency’s culture and the quality of service provided to its clients. Culture also played a role in determining whether case workers had a voice in agency management and to what extent change was embraced by the agency. It is not surprising that those agencies that focused on making the needs of the client paramount were clearly linked with a higher level of job satisfaction and commitment on the part of the case workers (Glisson, 2007).

The implication for theological education is that seminaries exist to meet the transformational needs of the students. This includes a focus on the students’ spiritual transformation. An environment needs to be created that is conducive to fostering high levels of student attainment in the context of being highly valued by the seminary workforce. Based on Glisson’s study, one cannot ignore the reality that excessive levels of stress diminish the perceived value of the experience. This is true whether in a work situation or in an academic setting. Simply saying that high stress levels are the norm for graduate education needs to be reconsidered if the Seminary takes seriously its
commitment to student spiritual transformation. There has to be a better way of maintaining a high academic standard while simultaneously creating an environment where students feel a high level of satisfaction with the experience.

Armenakis et al. (1999) (as cited in Self, 2007) lists the following five factors to consider when seeking to implement change: a) establishing that change is needed; b) is this change warranted or appropriate; c) instill hope in the employees that change is possible; d) is there support among the organization’s constituents; and e) establish the benefits that change brings to the employees in the organization. This approach need not be limited to a business organization. Its principles are universal and can be applied to various types of organizations including seminaries.

The use of training to effect change is recommended by Schraeder et al. (2005). They maintain that this training could include an opportunity for employees to role play as leaders in the company. This would provide an opportunity for them to gain deeper insights into the issues managers must grapple with when leading an organization.

Another critical method for effecting organizational change is through role modeling by leaders in the organization (Schraeder et al., 2005). Such leadership demonstrates to the employees the change that the organization envisions. Leaders must clearly demonstrate that they are in full support of the change initiative (O’Donovan as cited in Brown, 2006). O’Donovan argues that leaders must create a “burning platform” which means that the change is better than the status quo (O’ Donovan, as cited in Brown, 2006; see also Fernandez & Rainey, 2006). If the fact that historically, a significant number of Master of Divinity students report that their spiritual lives remain
the same or suffer as a result of the seminary experience doesn’t represent a “burning platform,” which needs to be taken seriously by the Church, then I don’t know what does.

Leaders are the ones who craft the vision and the plan for change (Fernandez & Rainey 2006; see also Cole, Harris, & Berneth, 2006). This vision must be perceived by the relevant stakeholders as appropriate and should be well-executed (Cole et al., 2006). Leaders must communicate to the members of the organization that the status quo is not permissible and must be ready to make leadership changes at the top of the organization if necessary as well as look for those within the organization who can be enlisted for the effort of effecting change (O’Donovan, as cited in Brown, 2006). In the case of the SDATS, these leaders would be the two deans and the Master of Divinity program director who would lead out in crafting the vision and the proposed plan for change. In order to be successful in selling the vision and plan, they would need the support of other stakeholders such as the Seminary Deans’ Council, and then eventually seminary faculty. To think that there would be ready acceptance by all parties would be naïve. Seminary leadership would need to be prepared for resistance in the ranks by some and would need to have a clear strategy in mind to counter such resistance. This reality is borne out by Fernandez and Rainey (2006) who quote Judson (1991) that strategies for encountering resistance range from “threats and compulsion,” “criticism,” “persuasion,” “inducement and reward,” “compromises and bargaining,” “guarantees against personal loss (e.g., offering job security or retraining to employees),” “psychological support,” “employee participation,” “ceremonies and other efforts to build loyalty,” “recognition of the appropriateness and legitimacy of past practices,” and “gradual and flexible implementation of change.” In fairness to Judson, Fernandez and Rainey acknowledge
that Judson recognizes that “threats,” “compulsion,” and “criticism” can backfire and work against the change process. They (Fernandez & Rainey, 2006) maintain that “a ‘dual approach’ that creates pride in the organization’s history and past success while arguing for a new way of doing things seems also to be effective at reducing resistance to change” (p. 170). They would include with this strategy an approach that involves wide employee participation that tends to minimize resistance to the proposed change. This approach allows for “psychological ownership” of the change by the employees, allows for information to flow readily between them and management, and provides opportunity for the proposed change to be refined based on employee input (Fernandez & Rainey 2006).

One of the real challenges for facing resistance successfully when seeking to implement change in an academic environment is that a leader finds himself dealing with colleagues who because of their education and expertise do not readily embrace any proposal or concept without first subjecting it to what appears to be the most intense critical analysis from all sides before embracing it. This is a situation that might be described as having all leaders with few followers. Or citing the Bible from the time of the judges “….everyone did what was right in their own eyes” (Judg 17:6 NKJV). I do not intend to be unduly harsh with my seminary colleagues. They are men and women who have devoted their lives to scholarship in their pursuit of truth. They are trained to be skeptical and to be cautious in embracing new ideas or concepts that have not been adequately subjected to the analysis of intellectual rigor. So when a leader comes with a proposal for change in this environment, he or she must have done his or her homework
thoroughly and must be prepared and not be threatened by the likely robust and prolonged discussion before the implantation of change can even begin to occur.

An example of the challenge to implement change in an academic environment comes from the experience of the SDATS when the Master of Divinity curriculum underwent revision. The process took place from April 2005 to November 2007. It was not that the process in and of itself required that amount of time. It was the reality that in order to keep the majority of the faculty on board with the change process, adequate time had to be allowed for faculty concerns to be aired. The reality is that the academic landscape is littered with countless examples of educational institutions that in good faith embarked on curriculum change. Some who did so had to give up on the process because of a lack of consensus among faculty stakeholders. Others may have opted to force change through in spite of the litany of voices in opposition, and ended up with a divided faculty with inadequate “buy-in” from those whose support was essential for the change process to be effected successfully. Fortunately the experience of the Master of Divinity curriculum revision did not end up with a completely divided faculty. However, the end product of the MDiv curriculum revision failed to achieve all of the objectives it had set for itself. For example, it was hoped that the number of credits in the MDiv curriculum would be significantly reduced from 96-112 to about 90. The reality was the curriculum was reduced by four to five credits to 92-107 depending on which academic track the student pursued. The MDiv curriculum revision committee had hoped to reduce the inordinate amount of two credit courses by eliminating some courses and combining some others. Though this was done to a lesser degree, the current MDiv curriculum still has a preponderance of two credit courses. Why was it so difficult to make
comprehensive, substantive change to the Master of Divinity curriculum in the most recent revision? I suspect, as one who participated in this process, that this was due to the fact that there was much turf protection from the various academic departments. One could argue that the current MDiv curriculum is as much a reflection of what the departments feel is important for their academic survival as much as it is a reflection of what is best for the student. The fact that the MDiv competency document, which is only two pages, went through ten drafts is in my mind an indication of the difficulty of trying to implement change when one is dealing with stakeholders who see themselves as “experts” and have strong views regarding what is essential for a Master of Divinity’s student education. The final competency document originally listed eight primary competencies and 49 secondary competencies. This again reflects the fact that all departments wanted an equal share of the pie when it comes to the formation of the MDiv student. Few believe that so many competencies can be adequately implemented and assessed. Undoubtedly in recognition of this fact, the MDiv competencies have since been reduced to seven program outcomes instead of competencies. This number is more in line with other academic programs in various universities. For example, the Indiana University School of Medicine curriculum has nine competencies (Cottingham et al., 2008). It would be interesting to determine what impact the reduction in MDiv competencies or program outcomes has had on the students’ spirituality.

O’Donovan offers the telling observation that in any organizational change initiative, one can expect that 10% (“champions”) will embrace change. At the other end of the spectrum, 10% of the organization will resist change (“resistors”). The remainder “laggards” are found in the middle and who are ambivalent regarding the proposed
change. These groups will need to be convinced of the value of the change through such means as “education,” “communication,” or “negotiation and agreement” (O’Donovan, as cited in Brown, 2006).

Pfeffer (2005) argues that organizations can change the “mental models” employees or members of an organization have concerning how the organization functions. He maintains that these mental models can be challenged through role playing exercises where employees are challenged to accept that how they view situations is a matter of personal choice and hence this gives them an element of control over these situations. He advocates helping employees think about the advantages and disadvantages of a given situation both cognitively and emotionally. Examining and changing one’s “mental models” of the organization holds the potential for effecting organizational change and productivity.

Robinson and Rosher (2006) cite a case study based on organizational change done in a particular nursing home. In addition to the training of all of the employees, staff that worked more closely with the clients was given more decision-making power. This proved challenging for both management and staff and would require continued education if this approach was to be successfully implemented.

Reeves (2006, 2007) argues that implementing the following steps can change a school’s culture: First, one must determine what will not change. Not everything of value will change or need to change. Second, actions are important. Leaders lead by what they do, not by what they say. Thirdly, use the appropriate tools necessitated by the change. These could include training, coercion, and role modeling. Fourthly, be willing to do the tasks no one else wants to do. Reeves calls this “scut work” (2006, 2007, p. 94). This
sends a message that the leader is prepared to do what is necessary to achieve the organization’s goals. Employees are more likely to follow this type of leader.

Pascale and Sternin (2005) advocate a different approach to implementing change in an organization. Whereas organizational change often occurs from the top down, they advocate that in a number of situations companies should look within their own boundaries to determine if there are employees who on their own are actually achieving the type of outcomes that the organization deems is in its best interest. These “positive deviants” as they call them can become the basis of discovery when employee teams are empowered to seek solutions to the organization’s problems. There is likely to be greater acceptance by employees when they are involved in the process of change implementation, than when the change is implemented with a heavy top-down approach.

Pascale and Sternin (2005) maintain that, “…the leader becomes the ‘CFO’ – chief facilitation officer—whose job is to guide the positive deviance process as it unfolds” (p. 9). They acknowledge that the role of the leader in this approach differs from what is often described as the role of the leader when seeking to implement change.

Effective communication is absolutely essential when seeking to implement change in an organization. Use every means available to get the word out to the organization’s members regarding the facts inherent within the anticipated change (O’Donnell, as cited in Brown, 2006; see also Kotter, 1999). Sending mixed messages by management impedes the change process. It results in a situation where employees may choose which part of the message to comply with (Luscher, Lewis, & Ingram, 2006). This can negatively impact the level of meaningful change achieved.
Branham (2005) lists a number of reasons why employees in an organization reach a state of “disengagement” where they seriously consider leaving the organization or actually do leave the company for which they have been working. He cites reasons such as “the workplace was not what was expected,” “feeling devalued and unrecognized” and “stress from overwork and work-life imbalance” to name a few. In thinking about the significant number of Master of Divinity SDATS students who report that their relationship with God remains the same or actually diminishes while at the Seminary, I wonder if a significant dynamic might be happening in the Seminary which parallels what often happens in the workplace? Could it be that new seminarians arrive on campus, fresh with a sense of God’s call only to discover that their expectations for the seminary experience fall short of what they feel they should actually experience? Is it possible that some new seminarians arrive on campus and too often feel that for whatever reason they are just another face in the classroom with little value and with minimal engagement with the professor? Could it be that due to the demands of so many classes and the need to work and juggle family responsibilities that these are circumstances that lead to an imbalance in life that may set the stage for a significant number of seminarians to disengage? The intent of this study is to come to grips with this seeming reality and to devise a series of recommendations that could be a response to this real area of concern.

Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in 1995 instituted an organizational culture change where they decided to create a “blame free” environment with regards to mistakes that would occur in their medical center. When mistakes happened, they would not immediately rush to judgment and blame the employee. They would first rather examine
the organization’s systems to determine if a failure in the system caused or contributed to
the mistake. As a result, mistakes became a teaching moment rather than a call to
pronounce judgment. This was not to excuse or remove responsibility from the employee
or from the organization. As mentioned earlier, rather than blame the employee first, they
would seek to take a more objective approach to analyzing why a mistake occurred.
Organizations which create a “blame free” culture based on mutual respect can expect
that in time they are likely to experience more vitality and have a clearer sense of their
vision (Connor et al., 2007). In an academic setting such as a seminary, where there are
highly educated professors, when for example students may have difficulty with the
course material, I have observed that there is a tendency for the blame to be placed on the
student’s lack of ability to comprehend the material. I have heard well-meaning
professors speak of having to “dumb down” the course material for students who are not
performing well academically. Based on this study, one could infer that there is a strong
likelihood that students would thrive in an environment where their academic abilities
were constantly affirmed by the professors. This environment would be characterized by
a willingness to examine the organization’s systems first for the possible source of the
problem before automatically defaulting to the position that these students shouldn’t be in
the Seminary because they don’t have what it takes to do graduate work. I would observe
that such a conclusion should only be considered after asking such system questions as
“Are we expecting too much work for a two credit class?” “Are there too many two credit
classes in the MDiv curriculum?” “Do students have enough time to study or are too
many having to work an inordinate amount of hours in order to remain financial viable in
the Seminary?” “If this is true, can the Seminary do more to provide financial assistance
to its students so that the need to work is reduced and students have more time to focus on their studies? Would students in a “blame-free” environment be more likely to thrive spiritually because the seminary curriculum is designed in such a way to allow them time to intentionally grow their relationships with God even while at the Seminary? I think so.

**General Observations**

As indicated earlier, what this study has clearly demonstrated is that spiritual formation or biblical spirituality is vital in shaping a student spiritually. It has also shown that the principles of organizational change theory should be considered when seeking to create a seminary environment where student spirituality has opportunity to flourish. The question now arises, are there any models out there, particularly from other seminaries which might be instructive? What does the literature suggest?

The response of seminaries to the challenge of inculcating spiritual formation into their respective cultures has varied. Some seminaries such as Perkins School of Theology and Princeton Theological Seminary have remodeled their chapels architecturally in such a way as to encourage the spiritual formation of their students (White, 2001). White makes the bold statement that “Indeed I am quite willing to say that during a student’s years in seminary the seminary chapel building will probably teach more about spirituality than any single faculty member” (p.103). He would argue that the architectural design of the seminary chapel makes a strong theological statement about what the seminary believes about God. This has an impact on the spiritual formation of students.

White also recognizes that denominations will naturally design their chapels with their theological heritage in mind (2001). Though he may have overstated his case to
make his point, it is clear that careful thought needs to be given to the theological statements being pronounced by the architectural design of seminaries across the land. If the impact of the seminary chapel on a student’s formation is as strong as White suggests, then it seems incumbent on any seminary committed to spiritual formation to take stock of the physical/theological standing of its chapel. Is it a place whose ambience is such that a student’s encounter with God is enhanced? Does the type of furniture, the arrangement of that furniture, and the use of art impact the student worshipper in a positive way (2001)? It would be interesting to research what role spiritual formation played when the seminary chapel was refurbished at the SDATS some years ago.

As previously indicated, not only does the seminary chapel’s architecture shape student’s spiritually (White, 2001), but the daily or weekly worship service where the seminary community assembles for worship does so as well (Mercer, 2003). Recognizing the supreme spiritual formation value of this opportunity, it is clear that worship opportunities should be well-planned and purposeful with the student’s enhanced spirituality in view. White remonstrated that students tend to replicate what they have seen with regard to the seminary’s architecture when they go to the field to pastor (2001). This reality likely applies to worship as well as the other components of the seminary experience.

Students at Wycliffe College are given an opportunity to participate in Bible study groups, guided retreats, and mission trips (Mercer, 2003). Faculty are also encouraged to be involved in as many of these activities as possible (Mercer, 2003).

There are other proactive steps seminaries can take to make spiritual formation an essential ingredient of their culture. One of the crucial steps that can be taken is to
designate a specified individual to be responsible for oversight of the spiritual formation life of the seminary (Mercer, 2003). The Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia, South Carolina, appointed what was known as a “pastor to the seminary community for spiritual formation” (Reisz, 2003). This person reported directly to the president of the institution. This individual was not employed as a faculty member though he/she might present a guest lecture on occasion. His/her primary responsibility was to make sure that spiritual formation was a part of the culture of the institution. In addition, student conversations with this pastor were viewed as confidential. To maintain objectivity, this pastor did not sit on committees where students were subject to review (Reisz, 2003).

One of the key strategies that a seminary can employ in spiritually shaping its students is that of pairing them with mentors. These mentors can be drawn from the seminary faculty but can also be recruited from qualified persons within the surrounding communities (Mercer, 2003). This one on one contact between student and mentor is vital in the context of spiritual formation. Until recently, if there was one missing ingredient in the spiritual formation being implemented at the SDATS, it was that students were not paired in a systematic and accountable way with a mentor. The result was that some students could pass through the Seminary without being challenged individually by a faculty member to look deeply into their lives and address the issues that need health and healing spiritually and emotionally. Such students left unchallenged in these areas, may then assume pastoral assignments and risk projecting their own issues or inadequacies upon the people they are called to serve.
Another result of having an established mentoring program in a seminary is that the number of referrals is likely to increase as students are encouraged to address issues which may impede their spiritual growth (Mercer, 2003). It would be a tremendous step forward if the SDATS would forge a relationship that would link its mentoring program with the on-campus counseling services. Students would then have an opportunity to experience the growth that all wounded healers need.

Lessons From Spurgeon College

As previously indicated, the challenge of finding the proper balance between theology and student spirituality has historically been around for a long time. There are some lessons to be learned from Spurgeon College’s response to this challenge. Renowned Baptist preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon started Spurgeon College in London, England in 1856, six years after his conversion at the age of 16. It was started as a place to train aspiring students for ministry.

Spurgeon in the early years of the college arranged for students to live with families in the community as opposed to living in on-campus housing. The reason for this was that he felt that by living with ordinary families students would be able to maintain an “earthly spirituality” and remain at the social level they would likely occupy when entering the ministry formally (Randall, 2007).

At Spurgeon College, Randall (2007) observes that the role of the teacher in forming the students’ spiritually was deemed essential (p. 12). There was to be no impenetrable gulf between student and teacher. Teachers were to teach as much by example as by precept as evidenced in their own commitment to ministry (p. 14). Spurgeon recognized that learning is as much “caught” as taught.
Theology students’ learning at Spurgeon College was not limited to the traditional classroom. Students were to be involved in the life of the community (Randall, 2007). It was in the community where students were brought into contact with “real life.” Spurgeon called this “ordinary theology.”

Spurgeon also viewed connection to the life of a church as vital to the spiritual formation of the life of a pastor in training (Randall, 2007). This setting provided an opportunity for students to get practical experience in the life of the church (p. 8).

Randall relates that though Spurgeon was characterized by an attitude of “do,” “do,” “do,” he also recognized the spiritual value of taking time to regularly participate in the Lord’s Supper (2007, p. 16). Daily worship in the college chapel and regular prayer were essential components of the college curriculum (p.18). Spurgeon even encouraged his students to spend time in nature and in retreats (p. 16). In later years, there was an emphasis at the college on contemplative theology reflecting the influence of notables like Richard Foster. These activities were intended to enhance the students’ spirituality.

Small group ministry was also integral to the spiritual formation of students in Spurgeon’s day. Several students would be placed in a group under the guidance of a tutor. They would meet regularly to talk about what was happening to them personally, academically, spiritually and for prayer. The agenda for these groups was largely student driven (Randall, 2007).

Spirituality at Spurgeon College has historically been Bible-based, evangelistic, scholarly, and vibrant (Randall, 2007). Yet, even in the early days of the college, there was recognition that a system of assessment of a student’s readiness for ministry was necessary. Students were reviewed, given assistance to formulate a plan of action to...
address concerns as needed, and based on the success of the action plan qualified to be recommended for ministry (Randall, 2007).

At one time, much of what characterized the spiritual formation of students at Spurgeon College was given serious consideration for inclusion in the MDiv program at the SDATS. Students would be paired with a faculty mentor who was to provide support to them through their journey at the Seminary. Because the MDiv curriculum is now competency or outcomes-based, it was envisioned that students would be required to maintain a portfolio which was intended to provide evidence that the student has achieved a certain level of proficiency in the required and student-selected competencies of the program. Unfortunately this attempt at having a faculty mentor and requiring a portfolio as an academic requirement though well-intentioned, did not succeed and was discontinued. Part of the reason for this lack of success is undoubtedly that faculty and students generally felt that there was too much work involved in these endeavors for a zero credit requirement. Nevertheless, the leadership of the Seminary has encouraged its faculty to take the initiative in forming mentoring relationships with MDiv students. It would be beneficial to determine the number of seminary faculty who are doing so and the number of Master of Divinity students who are participating. Inviting these faculty and students to share the impact of these mentoring relationships on their respective spiritual lives would be of significant value to the SDATS.

The SDATS has not fully exploited the benefits of small groups as Spurgeon College seems to have done. Students in the Master of Divinity program are required to take one semester of spiritual formation (now called biblical spirituality). It is in this class that students are divided into groups for spiritual dialogue and support. Once the class is
over, the small groups are not required to continue. Those who do continue, do so because of the apparent benefit they have gained by being together. It would be ideal if two to three courses in biblical spirituality were required of MDiv students. However, with a curriculum that is already overloaded, this would be extremely difficult to implement. It should be noted that in the most recent MDiv curriculum revision there was an attempt to make small group membership a part of the course requirements. The idea was similar to what was being done at Spurgeon College. Even though it was a laudable idea, it did not gain enough support to be implemented at that time.

Like Spurgeon College, the SDATS believes that a strong component of pastoral formation is for ministerial students to have a supervised field experience. As such, the Seminary has appointed a full-time field placement director, Dr. Kenley Hall to oversee this initiative. Remaining engaged in ministry impacts students’ spiritual formation. As they share with others spiritually, they are enriched in their spiritual experience as well.

Worship is a key spiritual formational experience at the SDATS. Unlike Spurgeon College, worships are held once a week, typically for 50 minutes instead of daily. Faculty and students are required to attend and student attendance is taken. Though there is a prayer room, I think that there is merit in having the Seminary Chapel open for longer periods. Students can be encouraged to come for prayer and meditation throughout the day. I recognize that this is a bit out of the norm for our traditional Adventist ethos. However, doing so sends a message that worship though having a punctiliar dimension, also speaks to one’s needs as he/she daily lives life.

Like Spurgeon College, one cannot underestimate the power of Christian example in the life of a seminary professor upon students. To the credit of the SDATS seminary
faculty, I believe the majority of them see interacting with students as a privilege and part of their roles as seminary professors. What sometimes keeps this from happening to a larger degree is that seminary faculty typically carry tremendous teaching and research responsibilities. It is not unusual for there to be 50 plus students in some classes. In addition, many faculty must guide doctoral students in the completion of dissertations as well as conduct their own research. And lastly, the Seventh-day Adventist Church relies heavily on the services of seminary faculty to meet the theological and ministry needs of the world field. So this tremendous resource is stretched to great lengths. As such, the Seminary would benefit by finding the financial means to make some additional teaching budgets available to the SDATS. This would allow for teaching loads to be reduced and should contribute to fostering an environment where more intentional faculty involvement with students would be expected, required, and affirmed. Though some faculty have taken the initiative on their own to find time for meaningful interactions with students, presently, this is not likely to happen on a large scale. And yet if the Seminary as an institution values biblical spirituality as a key component of its culture, then ways and means will have to be found to make it happen. If it is true that a significant number of MDiv students feel that their spiritual experience suffers or levels off as a result of being at the Seminary, then maintaining the status quo is not an option. And the larger question remains, should not biblical spirituality be the concern of all SDATS academic programs? Should the Seminary not be concerned about doing all that it can to ensure that all graduates of its programs grow spiritually as a result of their presence at the Seminary? These questions must be addressed as the Seminary continues to grapple with
the question of what is the most efficient process to follow in establishing biblical spirituality as part of its culture.

Lessons From Indiana University School of Medicine (IUSM)

This study has shown that there are lessons to be learned from other seminaries such as Spurgeon College regarding how best to implement biblical spirituality in a seminary’s curriculum. There are also lessons to be learned from some secular institutions of higher learning regarding how to change an organization’s culture so that students have an environment that is conducive to attaining the educational objectives the institution has for the students. For example, consider Indiana University School of Medicine. Indiana University School of Medicine is the second largest allopathic medical school in the United States. It is spread over nine campuses with its main campus located in Indianapolis, Indiana. For some time there was a growing awareness among some at the university that there was an increasing disconnect between the formal and informal curriculum. The “moral,” “ethical,” “professional,” and “humane” values espoused in the formal curriculum were not readily reflected in the informal curriculum to the extent they felt they should be (Cottingham et al., 2008). Student respondents to a questionnaire indicated that a significant number of them were not experiencing the type of positive caring relationships espoused by the institution. Based on a three-year grant from the Fetzer Institute, the university launched an initiative called the Relationship Centered Care Initiative (RCCI). The goal was to develop a strategy that would enhance the quality of the relationships in the informal curriculum and throughout the institution generally. The implementation team embraced three guiding principles: a) Emergent Design which
simply meant that they would let the overall strategy for change emerge as they delved deeper into the task of organizational change; b) Appreciative Inquiry which is a strategy in organizational change where one seeks to discover what are the causes of success. When success stories were discovered, the sources of success were identified and the stories were widely shared within the university community; and c) Complex Responsive Processes of Relating which recognizes that “small” actions can have an impact much larger than readily perceived (Cottingham et al., 2008). “The work of culture change is to call individuals’ attention to the relational patterns being enacted in the moment, how they themselves are contributing, and how they might participate differently to give rise to different, more desirable patterns” (Cottingham et al., p.716).

The initial step was to devise what was called a Discovery Team. This team was comprised of faculty and student representation. They conducted a meeting where members of the IUSM community could come and share stories of how the values of the institution were actually experienced in the life of the community. These stories were collected and analyzed. An independent observer was hired whose job it was to observe, interview, and write a report of his findings and recommendations regarding improving the quality of the relationships within the medical school. Discovery Team sessions were regularly held where feedback was given by the participants with examples that might indicate that the culture was changing on the campus (Cottingham et al., 2008).

A group of students enthused by the RCCI initiative decided to visit all nine campuses spreading the news of this new endeavor. They recorded stories which had happened on campus which reflected the values that they wanted to see increase in the university. These stories were written down and published in book form. New students
were then given these books that gave them an introduction to the type of community the medical school aspired to become (Cottingham et al., 2008).

The flame of the Relationship-Centered Care Initiative (RCCI) spread to the university’s admissions office. They revamped their whole admissions process to be more relationship friendly. When interviewing prospective students, the interviews were conducted in such a way as to recruit those students who gave evidence of being relationally aware (Cottingham et al., 2008). Even the deans of the medical school received professional coaching in how to be more relationship sensitive in the way that they conducted the business of the university. Other key players in the medical school such as department chairs, committee chairs, committee members, and a number of other relevant entities within the university received coaching from external consultants on how to hone their relationship skills in line with the values of the institution. As momentum for the RCCI grew, more training opportunities were made available to those who wanted to grow more in this area. There was also a strong emphasis on developing a positive relationship with one’s self which impacts how one relates with others (Cottingham et al, 2008).

Evidences that RCCI is having an impact on the university are many. They range from the report of the independent observer who said that he has noticed that the positive nature of on-campus relationships is improving. Other evidence is the number of participants attending the RCCI meetings has risen from six in 2003 to over 900 in 2005. Additional evidence is seen in the institutional practices such as faculty evaluations, the way meetings are conducted, and the way the general business of the university is run are becoming more noticeably relationship sensitive. Added evidence is seen in the
admissions office which has noticed an increase in applications which is above the national average. They attribute this rise in applications in part to the implementation of RCCI. Perhaps the most telling bit of evidence is the increase of students reporting satisfaction (near 90%) with their educational experience at IU from 2004 – 2007, which is above the national average (Cottingham et al., 2008).

What is particularly striking about this case study is that the behaviors that Indiana University School of Medicine sought to inculcate as part of its culture are behaviors that are readily acceptable from a Christian perspective. They use words like “knowledgeable,” “Relationship-Centered Care,” “ethical,” “compassionate,” “responsive,” and “humane” with regard to the values they would like to see characterize their institutional culture. They despair that too often their students reported “…feelings of alienation, disrespect, and a lack of attention to their concerns by the administration” (Cottingham et al, 2008, p. 716). To my Christian ears, these sound like Christian objectives for culture change; albeit, an organizational culture change without Christ. Some may argue as to whether Christianity has the sole claim to these values. It may not. But the fact remains that these are values embraced by Christianity. These values fueled by the power of a biblically grounded relationship with Jesus Christ should result in Christian institutions being the leaders in showcasing these values. If a secular institution without a faith-based mission can embrace such values as normative for their institution, what are the implications for a Christian institution, which espouses such values? More specifically, can a Christian institution be satisfied when a significant portion of its student populace report that they have experienced spiritual stagnation or decline which in this case they attribute to their seminary experience? Indiana University School of
Medicine would likely say to the SDATS that here is a challenge that must indeed be taken seriously.

One of the key distinctions of this culture change at IUSM was that it was not a “top down” approach (Cottingham et al., 2008). A small group of concerned individuals got the ball rolling. It was not an initiative that came initially from top administration. The implementing committee did secure the assistance of outside consultants who it appears were retained for the long term. What is clear is that the implementing committee made efforts to garner as much feedback as possible from the university community about what they were trying to do. This ensured “buy-in” at the grassroots level and is likely a contributing factor for the success of the organizational culture change.

While the Seminary’s finances are undoubtedly limited, it seems that there are some elements of IUSM’s strategy that could be implemented immediately at the SDATS. The Seminary’s core values could become a source of discussion in faculty meetings, the Seminary Student Forum, the Seminary Deans’ Council, and in all of its program committees. The question would be, “What is the impact of our core values on how we do Seminary? Are these just nice sounding phrases? Or these core values still relevant? “In what way are they core?” What difference do they make?” For starters, the core values should occupy a prominent place on the Seminary’s website. Presently, one has to really look for them in order to find them. Based on this Seminary-wide discussion, the core values would be affirmed, enlarged, reduced, or modified. Then as at IUSM, stories could be collected which reflect how these core values are expressed in Seminary life. These stories could be recorded and distributed to all new members of the
Seminary community. Faculty meetings could be a place where there is discussion about how these core values impact the type of teaching done and one’s interaction with students. Student meetings would provide the same opportunity from a student perspective. Another essential component of this discussion would be focused on determining in what ways do our processes express our core values? For example, do our admissions or our disciplinary processes reflect our core beliefs? To be sure, in many cases they do. When decisions have to be made which impact faculty or student life, does the Seminary consciously make these decisions in light of its core values? Another observation is for each course outline to include a statement showing how that course is related to the Seminary’s core values. Worship periods could include opportunities for students and faculty to share fresh stories of how the Seminary’s core values were experienced just that week. The possibilities are endless. I humbly suggest that if the above observations were implemented, the percentages would likely increase of those students who view their Seminary experience as a positive one. It would be positive because such an organizational culture change would result in an environment where students would be nurtured in such a way that the overwhelming majority of students would experience spiritual growth. It would just happen. Enrollment would remain stable or likely increase. There would be a long line of imminently qualified teaching professionals just waiting for an opportunity to be involved in the teaching ministry of the SDATS. The quality of the pastors/teachers/scholars which the Seminary sends out each year would be known not only for their knowledge of their respective fields but also for their contagious spirituality. Churches and schools would be enriched by such spiritual leaders. The gospel as uniquely understood by Seventh-day Adventists would be more
effectively shared. And finally, the Church’s part in God’s plan for this world might just be realized.

**Summary**

What this chapter has demonstrated is that spiritual formation (i.e. biblical spirituality) is as vital to the transformation of the pastoral servants of God today as it ever has been. Just because the term is misused in the marketplace of ideas is no reason for the Seventh-day Adventist Church or the SDATS to reject this concept out of hand. Biblical spirituality should characterize the culture of the Seminary, especially the Master of Divinity program. For this to happen it will take intentionality combined with an awareness of organizational change theory and a willingness based on conviction to move forward. Accepting the status quo of a significant number of MDiv students feeling that they had not grown spiritually or were spiritually worse off than they were when they came to the Seminary is unacceptable. Spurgeon College and Indiana University School of Medicine would say there is a better way.

Charles Spurgeon in 1889 related that his departing students often remarked “I feared that in coming to College I might lose my simplicity of faith and spirituality of mind; but there has been no danger in this place…I feel I have been greatly helped in the heavenly life” (Randall, 2007, p. 20). May this be the experience of students who graduate from the SDATS, especially graduates of the Master of Divinity program.
CHAPTER 4

DEVELOPMENT OF METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study has arisen out of an awareness that a significant number of Master of Divinity students have over the years reported that they perceived that their spirituality has remained the same or has lessened while enrolled at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. Yet the spiritual development of its students is central to the Seminary’s self-understanding. The perception of a non-growing or diminished spirituality resulting from the Seminary educational experience has negative implications for the Seminary and for the mission of the Church. If this is indeed the case, then the Seminary must pause and investigate more closely the validity of these findings and determine what can be done to positively address them. Failure to do so and to continue to do “Seminary” as usual will likely perpetuate the perception in the minds of a significant number of students that the MDiv program has an inconsequential or diminished impact on their spirituality. These issues will undoubtedly negatively influence the tenor and quality of the ministry that these graduates will carry out in the areas where they serve. Conversely, addressing these issues now holds the potential for improving the Master of Divinity seminary experience for more of its graduates. This should result in a greater positive impact on their spiritual lives firstly and then on the spiritual lives of the people that they will eventually minister to.
Profile of the Ministry Context

With regard to the ministry context of this study, the main focal points are two focus groups of current Master of Divinity students enrolled at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. The intent of these focus groups was to investigate more thoroughly the thoughts of these students regarding the impact of the Master of Divinity program on their spirituality. In addition, it would also be instructive to compare how the MDiv requirements of selected seminaries with regard to the intentional spiritual development of their students compares with the curriculum requirements of the Master of Divinity program at the SDATS. This curriculum review is included here as part of the ministry context or methodology. The reason being is that student responses cannot be considered in isolation from the Master of Divinity curriculum. Nor can the Master of Divinity curriculum be reviewed in isolation from what other comparable seminaries are requiring of their MDiv students or even other professional master’s degree programs at the SDATS. It is anticipated that a review of what selected seminaries do with regard to intentionally shaping the spirituality of their MDiv graduates will strengthen the context of this inquiry as far as the Master of Divinity students at the SDATS are concerned. In the future, possibly sharing these findings with seminary faculty and soliciting their feedback should help highlight the challenge and suggest strategies for a positive response to this situation.
Overview of Selected ATS Seminaries
Offering a Master of Divinity Degree

What follows is an overview of selected ATS Seminaries that offer a Master of Divinity degree (see Table 4). A review of their official websites sought to determine the number of credits required in biblical spirituality or spiritual formation in order to meet the degree requirements for graduation. The convenience method was used in this part of the methodology. The convenience method is an accepted methodology in research circles. This means that the seminaries whose MDiv programs were chosen for review was done with no specific criteria in mind. The fundamental commonality between them is that they offer an MDiv program, they are all Protestant, and that they belong to The Association of Theological Schools (ATS), the recognized accrediting body of seminaries in the United States and Canada. In addition, three seminaries were included in this study because they were used as benchmark seminaries in the last SDATS self-study (2009) done in preparation for the most recent ATS accreditation visit (2010). These seminaries are Calvin Theological Seminary (Grand Rapids, MI), Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (Elkhart, IN), and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (Deerfield, IL). A casual look at the website of ATS quickly reveals that there are a number of seminaries in North American and Canada which enjoy this accreditation. In addition, because of the uniqueness of the Seventh-day Adventist theological educational system, four undergraduate colleges that produce a significant number of theological graduates for the Seventh-day Adventist church were also included in this review. Though these are undergraduate theological programs, the rationale for including them is that these institutions produce a significant number of graduates who are eventually employed as pastors in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. A number of them will continue their
theological education in the Master of Divinity program at the Seminary. It will be interesting to determine how much of their undergraduate theological education in terms of clearly discernible course requirements is intentionally devoted to biblical spirituality. In addition, there are two other Seventh-day Adventist institutions of higher learning that also offer Master of Divinity degrees included in this overview.
### Table 4

*Comparison of Selected ATS Seminaries Offering Master of Divinity Programs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seminary</th>
<th>Total Credits Required</th>
<th>Spiritual Formation</th>
<th>Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ashland Theological Seminary</td>
<td>144 Quarter Credits</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Optional concentration in Spiritual Formation for 28 quarter credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assemblies of God Theological Seminary</td>
<td>78 Semester Credits</td>
<td>3 Credits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary</td>
<td>90 Semester Credits</td>
<td>3 Credits</td>
<td>A spiritual growth plan is part of the admissions requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calvin Theological Seminary</td>
<td>99 to 105 Semester Credits depending on whether student needs Greek</td>
<td>6 Semester Credits</td>
<td>One credit for Spiritual Formation of each semester program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claremont School of Theology</td>
<td>81 Units</td>
<td>3 Units</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dallas Theological Seminary</td>
<td>120 Semester Hours MDiv upgraded to M. Theology</td>
<td></td>
<td>Spiritual Formation course required for 4 semesters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver Seminary</td>
<td>97 Semester Credits</td>
<td>6 Semester Credits</td>
<td>Plus 5 additional required credits of Mentored Ministries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuller Theological Seminary</td>
<td>144 Quarter Credits</td>
<td>8 Quarter Credits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Fox University</td>
<td>84 Semester Credits</td>
<td>6 Semester Credits</td>
<td>Optional 12 hours Spiritual Formation &amp; Discipleship Concentration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multnomah Biblical Seminary</td>
<td>94 Semester Credits</td>
<td>5 Semester Credits</td>
<td>8 Credits required of Mentored Ministries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perkins School of Theology</td>
<td>85 Term Hours</td>
<td>1 Term Hour</td>
<td>Stretches over 2 terms, 0 credit 1st term, 1 credit 2nd term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinity Evangelical Divinity School</td>
<td>94 Semester Hours</td>
<td>0 Hours</td>
<td>Requires students to take 2 semesters of Formation Group for 0 credit hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Presbyterian Seminary</td>
<td>32 Credits</td>
<td></td>
<td>Not readily discernible if a Spiritual Formation course is required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia Theological Seminary (Episcopal)</td>
<td>79 Credit Hours</td>
<td></td>
<td>Not readily discernible if Spiritual Formation is required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wesley Theological Seminary</td>
<td>90 Semester Hours</td>
<td>3 Credits</td>
<td>Plus participate in a Covenant Disciple group in the first year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
General Observations

This sampling of the North American seminary landscape indicates that generally speaking, though courses in biblical spirituality are required in most Master of Divinity programs, their presence represents a small fraction of the overall degree requirements. However, Calvin Theological Seminary is noteworthy in that it requires its MDiv students to register for one credit of spiritual formation each semester of the MDiv program. Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, as mentioned earlier, is one of the seminaries that the SDATS benchmarked themselves with in its most recent accreditation self-study. Interestingly enough Calvin Theological Seminary also has a Mentored Ministries Office. This office is responsible for mentoring groups, vocational mentors, and internships. This practical ministry focus sounds as if it parallels to some degree what is done through the Christian Ministry and Discipleship and Religious Education departments in the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. These mentoring groups meet on a weekly basis and are led by a faculty member or local ministry practitioner. The groups are comprised of six to eight students. Students meet in these groups for the duration of the Master of Divinity program. It is in these groups where spiritual formation occurs. Topics dealing with spiritual formation combined with theological reflection are covered in these groups in an atmosphere of trust (cf. Multnomah Biblical Seminary).

Dallas Theological Seminary is noteworthy in that it requires spiritual formation to be taken four semesters in its ramped up MDiv/Master of Theology program. All master’s degree students are required to take a course in spiritual formation for the first four semesters of their enrollment. As previously mentioned, their Master of Divinity
program has, with additional credits, been elevated to a Master of Theology program. They also say that they expect that students will meet in small groups for prayer, fellowship, career assessment, etc.

Denver Seminary requires six semester credits of spiritual formation. However in addition, it requires five credits of a course entitled Mentored Ministries. Whereas spiritual formation would focus on the character development of the student, mentored ministries focuses on ministry skill development. Each MDiv student is enrolled in some type of course(s) each semester requiring a mentoring relationship. All of these courses take place with a requirement to be in a small group and to meet with a mentor on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. Denver Seminary depends heavily on ministers in the local area to support its mentoring emphasis.

Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (TEDS) is another of the seminaries benchmarked by the SDATS in its 2009 self-study for ATS accreditation. TEDS places a strong emphasis on using groups as a basis for the spiritual formation of its MDiv students. As indicated in Table 4, Master of Divinity students are required to take two semesters of what is called Formation Group. These groups are led by faculty and meet on a weekly basis. They describe the objectives for these groups as places where students can “…Grow Together in Biblical Wisdom” “…Grow Together in the Grace of God,” and “…Grow Together in Relationships and Relational Skills.” These groups are part of the candidacy procedure in the Trinity Evangelical Divinity School’s Master of Divinity program.

The Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, another benchmarked seminary by the SDATS offers several courses totaling three credits dealing with the spiritual
development of the student. It also has some additional courses dealing with ministry skill development that it includes in this portion of its curriculum under Ministry Formation and Assessment. What distinguishes them in this context is that Master of Divinity students are required to submit a spiritual growth plan as part of the admissions process. Applicants must also participate in the Formation in Ministry seminar before being admitted into the Master of Divinity program.

Multnomah Biblical Seminary requires five semester credits of spiritual formation. In addition, it requires eight credits of mentored ministries. Some other seminaries such as George Fox University have an optional MDiv concentration in spiritual formation.

The previous table reflects the terminology used in the academic catalogs with regard to the course titles, number of hours, credits, or units in the respective Master of Divinity programs.

There are naturally questions that arise that could be asked of these seminaries which place high value on the spiritual formation of their Master of Divinity students. Such questions could be:

1) How are faculty teaching loads and other responsibilities adjusted to allow them to have time to lead a weekly small group and/or be a mentor to a select group of students?

2) What are the general student attitudes toward participation in these small group/mentoring exercises, particularly in those situations where the spiritual formation course is zero or has minimal credits?

3) What percentage of faculty mentors come from the ministry practitioners within the local community? What is the time commitment required of them and are they remunerated for their services?

4) What types of accountability structures are in place to ensure that the expectations for this course are met, particularly with outside instructors who typically are already very busy?
5) What are the means of assessment used to determine how well students perform in the spiritual formation classes?

6) Generally speaking, how well is the spiritual formation component working in the Master of Divinity program? What are some other examples of their best practices? What needs improvement?

7) Which MDiv programs from other seminaries do they model or gain inspiration from? Why?

An additional component of this methodology was to contact selected seminaries to delve more deeply into how they treat the question of spiritually forming their MDiv students. This was done through the sending of emails to six seminaries. They were chosen somewhat arbitrarily. However, consideration was given to those seminaries who appeared to value the role of spiritual formation or biblical spirituality within their curriculums. Three of these six seminaries responded to the three questions that they were asked. These questions and their responses are included in the findings in Chapter 5 of this study.

**Seventh-day Adventist Seminaries**

The review of the role of spiritual formation in the MDiv curriculums of selected non-Adventist ATS seminaries provides the backdrop for the examination of Master of Divinity programs of Seventh-day Adventist seminaries (see Table 5). There are three Seventh-day Adventist seminaries that offer the Master of Divinity degree. They are the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary on the campus of Andrews University, La Sierra University, and the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (AIIAS) in the Philippines.
Table 5

*Comparison of Seventh-day Adventist Seminaries Offering Spiritual Formation in Their MDiv Programs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seminary</th>
<th>Total Credits</th>
<th>Spiritual Formation</th>
<th>Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary</td>
<td>92 – 107 Semester Credits</td>
<td>3 Semester Credits</td>
<td>Same Requirements for Track 1 and Track 2 Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Sierra University</td>
<td>136 Quarter Credits</td>
<td>4 Quarter Credits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (AIIAS)</td>
<td>MDIV 1, 2, online MDiv, and MDiv based on already having a Master of Ministry degree</td>
<td>3 Credits</td>
<td>4 MDiv options, MDiv options 1, 2, and online require Spiritual Formation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**General Observations**

The review of Seventh-day Adventist seminaries that offer the Master of Divinity degree revealed that they typically require one course of about three credits that deals with the student’s spirituality. AIIAS has an MDiv degree for students who already have a master’s degree in ministry. These students are not required to take a course in spiritual formation or biblical spirituality.

La Sierra University acknowledges on their website that spiritual formation is not limited to the classroom. As such, it lists a number of spiritual activities that occur outside of the classroom such as worship in the dormitories, campus chapel periods, and weekly worship opportunities as examples of other opportunities where students can grow spiritually. The SDATS also has opportunities outside of a formal class for students to grow spiritually. Yet the question remains, with all of these spiritual growth possibilities available to MDiv students, why do so many of them report that they feel
that they have not grown or are diminished spiritually as a result of the Seminary experience?

Undergraduate Theology/Religion Degree Programs

A number of Master of Divinity students at the SDATS are designated as Track One students. This means that they have a bachelor’s degree in theology or religion. It would be helpful to survey some of the premier Seventh-day Adventist undergraduate colleges to determine how many credits of spiritual formation, biblical spirituality, or courses of a similar nature are required by their academic programs. This should clarify the theological landscape in terms of the formal training accorded many theology/religion students who are likely to enroll at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary for the Master of Divinity program. Table 6 compares the bachelor’s degrees in theology from Oakwood University, Pacific Union College, Southern Adventist University, and Walla Walla University.

Table 6

Comparison of the Spiritual Formation Requirements of Undergraduate Theology/Religion Degree Programs at Selected Seventh-day Adventist Universities/Colleges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Total Credits</th>
<th>Spiritual Formation</th>
<th>Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oakwood University</td>
<td>128 Semester Hours</td>
<td>2 Semester Credits</td>
<td>The same is true of the B.A. Religion degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Union College</td>
<td>192 Quarter Hours</td>
<td>3 Quarter Hours</td>
<td>The same is true of the B.A. Religion degree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6 ---Continued.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Semester Hours</th>
<th>Quarter Hours</th>
<th>Requirement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Southern Adventist</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>The same is true of the B.A. Religion degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walla Walla University</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4 Quarter hours in a different spirituality course for B.A. religion students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

General Observations

The review of selected undergraduate Seventh-day Adventist institutions reveals that essentially they all follow the same curriculum regarding the spiritual formation requirement. That is, each of these institutions has one course in spiritual formation for students enrolled in their B.A. Theology or Religion programs. It would be insightful to further dialogue with the theology department chairs to determine how they arrived at one spiritual formation course. Additional dialogue to determine what other activities supported by the theology department are required of their students for the purpose of enhancing their spiritual growth would be advisable. Having this larger view should provide a more complete context for the analysis of what has been done and what can be done to enhance the spirituality of Master of Divinity students, at least for those who have a theology/religion undergraduate degree.

Development of the Intervention

The next most important step was to set up two focus groups of Master of Divinity students. Before this could happen permission to use current Master of Divinity students was secured from the Andrews University Institutional Review Board (IRB).
With the approval of the Seminary Deans and the cooperation of the Master of Divinity office an email was sent to MDiv students inviting second and third year students to participate in a focus group to get their feedback regarding the impact of the Master of Divinity program on their spirituality (See Appendix B). Track One students were invited to participate in the focus group on Thursday, October 31, 2013. Track Two students were invited to participate in a focus group on Friday, November 1, 2013. Nine Track One students and nine Track Two students completed the focus group survey that requested their demographic information (See Appendix D).

One of the guiding methodologies informing the selection of the members of the focus group was again the convenience model. As observed earlier, the convenience research model is well established in academic circles. As the name implies, those students who found it “convenient” to participate in the focus group were considered. However, first year students were not included. This is because they are still relatively new to the Master of Divinity program. As such their impressions of the program are likely evolving. An attempt was made to ensure that the composition of the focus group is reflective of the composition of the current enrolment in the in-residence Master of Divinity program. Such factors as gender, ethnicity, international versus North American origin, whether the student has a previous theology degree (Track One) or is coming from a non-theological academic background (Track Two), as well as being sponsored or unsponsored were considered. As indicated earlier, this information was captured in a brief questionnaire administered at the time of the focus group. Students did not need to sign their names on the questionnaire. They were encouraged to come to the focus group by the offer of pizza and the promise that the focus group will not last more than one
hour. The questionnaire included seven quantitative questions and two qualitative questions dealing with the impact of the MDiv program on their spirituality. Students were then given an opportunity to discuss as a group four questions related to this topic.

The findings from this study could be shared with seminary professors for their reactions, most likely in a faculty meeting. The goal would be for the seminary professors to firstly be made aware of the problem. This report would include the factors that students have reported as contributing to their diminished spirituality. The top five recommendations from the students with regard to solving the problem would also be shared with seminary professors. In response to these findings seminary professors could be asked to respond to the following questions:

1) Are you surprised by what the Master of Divinity students are reporting as negatively impacting their spirituality at the Seminary?

2) What steps have you taken or are you prepared to take in the classes that you teach to address this perception?

3) Do you feel that Seminary professors should be involved in mentoring students outside of the classroom? If so, what would need to change so that this form of mentoring could be part of the culture at the SDATS?

It is hoped that this exercise might be a catalyst for some serious dialogue among seminary faculty regarding what can be done to bring greater intentionality to bear upon the spirituality of MDiv students. It is further hoped that the findings from the study of the Master of Divinity program may have implications for the other academic programs being offered by the Seminary. One would anticipate that all academic programs offered in a seminary would have the enhancement of the spirituality of its students as an ongoing concern. Just because some degree programs are described as “academic” while others are described as “professional” does not diminish the need for an ongoing
intentional attempt at utilizing best practices to develop the spirituality of seminary students.

One of the other tasks which is part of this methodology and which would help strengthen this study is to compare student responses in other Seminary masters programs with the MDiv students’ responses. For accreditation purposes, students in all degree programs are asked to complete a questionnaire regarding their seminary experience annually. Unfortunately, the number of student respondents over the years in the other master’s degree programs was such that statistically, the data would not be very reliable. Nevertheless as indicated in Chapter 1 of this study, in the year 2013, 54% of MDiv students reported that they perceived their walk with God to be impacted “Very Effective” or “Effective” by the program. In contrast, that same year 91% of MA Pastoral Ministry students reported that their program had a “Very Effective” or “Effective” impact on their walk with God. Though these two programs are not identical and are delivered through different modalities, such a disparate response suggests the need for further inquiry. Just by asking this question keeps in the forefront the Seminary’s responsibility to be intentional about shaping the spiritual lives of its students as a never-ending pursuit. Students growing spiritually while at the Seminary may happen on its own. However, it is more likely to happen if the Seminary is in its culture always looking to determine where its students are spiritually and what can be done to facilitate greater spiritual growth.

**Description of the Intervention**

By Description of the Intervention, I understand this to mean, what did the data yield, what were the recommendations based on the data, and what were the results when
the recommendations were implemented? Appropriate interventions are recommended in this study. Ideally, once these interventions have been implemented, their level of success would need to be recorded and reported on in some forum. As stated earlier, because I am no longer employed by the SDATS this made it difficult to implement any interventions and to report the findings resulting from their implementation. I have been granted permission by the Doctor of Ministry office not to have to include the results of the implementations in this study. Nevertheless, I will use what influence I have to encourage the Seminary to capitalize on this opportunity of doing more to intentionally shape its students spiritually. It has been talked about in the past. However, to my knowledge, the curriculum still only requires one three-credit spiritual formation course for Master of Divinity students. What needs to be determined is how strong the spiritual formation component is of the other field-based practicum courses required of MDiv students? For example, how much one on one time do these practicum courses provide between the professor and the students? Another basic question to ask is, how does the overall MDiv curriculum shape its students spiritually? Attempting to answer these and related questions will give a good indication of what still needs to be done to transform the spirituality of MDiv students at the SDATS.

Future Plans for Implementation

With the support of the Seminary Deans, I would do the following with regards to the implementation of this project. Firstly, during the first seminary faculty meeting of the fall semester, I would ask the following questions of my seminary colleagues in the form of a written questionnaire. On a scale from one to ten with one being “not at all” and ten being “very much so”, please respond to the following question:
1) Do you feel that it is your responsibility to teach with the spiritual transformation of your students in view?

This question would be administered as a pre-test. During the fall semester, an expert in teaching students for spiritual transformation would be invited to share 3 presentations with seminary faculty on the value of this approach and how it can be done effectively. Faculty would be given tips at each presentation that they can use immediately regarding how this can be done. At the end of the semester, seminary faculty would again be asked in a post-test, to respond to this question. The pre-test and post-test responses of the faculty will be compared and analyzed to determine the level of acceptance of this concept.

Another future plan for implementation would be to invite at least two seminary faculty members to lead a spiritual growth group of MDiv students for one semester. Ideally, these groups would be comprised of six – eight students. The groups would meet on a weekly basis for one hour. Faculty would be given orientation regarding how to lead a spiritual growth group. The faculty member leading the spiritual growth group would be asked to respond to the following question: On a scale from one to ten with one being “not convinced at all” and ten being “I am fully convinced”, please indicate how certain you are that a spiritual growth group can significantly impact MDiv student spirituality? MDiv students participating in the spiritual growth group would be asked the following question: On a scale from one to ten with one being “not certain at all” and ten being “very certain”, please indicate how confident are you that a spiritual growth group will positively impact your spirituality? At the end of the 15 week spiritual growth group
meetings, faculty and group participants will be asked these questions again to determine the impact of the spiritual growth.

Finally, one other future plan for implementation would involve selected faculty who would be willing to mentor three students for one semester. Faculty would be given a basic orientation concerning effective mentoring. Ideally, a minimum of three seminary faculty would make this commitment for one semester. Each faculty mentor would have two students. Faculty mentors and student mentees would commit to spending one hour together for 15 weeks. Each mentor would be asked the following question at the beginning and at the end of the mentoring period: On a scale from one to ten with one representing “not convinced at all” and ten representing “totally convinced”, please indicate how certain you are that having a mentoring relationship as a faculty member with an MDiv student can impact his/her spiritually in a positive way? The student mentee would be asked a similar question: On a scale from one to ten with one being “not convinced at all” and ten being “totally convinced”, how certain are you that having a mentoring relationship with a seminary faculty member can positively impact your spiritual growth? At the end of the 15 weeks, the mentors and the mentees will be asked these questions again. The responses would be tabulated and analyzed. This should give an indication regarding the impact of the interventions that were employed and the receptivity of seminary faculty and MDiv students toward this type of emphasis.

Summary

What this chapter has shown is that there is no uniform theological landscape with regard to the teaching of spiritual formation or biblical spirituality at representative seminaries, primarily in North America. What is clear is that those seminaries that place
high value on spiritual formation involve their faculty and selected clergypersons within their communities to interact with their students. The small group teaching methodology seems to be one of the preferred andragogical methods. It appears that one cannot think of spiritual formation without thinking of small groups coupled with a strong mentoring component. Though the Seventh-day Adventist denomination has a strong theological educational system, the initial impression is that spiritual formation, though present, is not a strong component of the established curriculum, either at the undergraduate or graduate level. One Seventh-day Adventist institution of higher learning has stressed the fact that spiritual formation is not limited to the classroom. As such, it takes place in regular worship opportunities such as worship in the dormitories, campus chapels, and weekly worship opportunities. One would think that such opportunities occur at other seminaries as well. And yet some seminaries still require more spiritual formation courses or credits as part of their degree requirements. This is an indication of the value they place upon this topic.

It may be that as a denomination more thought needs to be given to the role of spiritual formation in the theological training of its ministers. Not every graduate of the denomination’s bachelor degree programs attends the SDATS. Is the spiritual formation they receive on the undergraduate level an adequate foundation for forming them in their spiritual growth? In light of the fact that a significant number of MDiv students, from theological and non-theological backgrounds report that they feel that their Seminary experience has not impacted their spiritual growth or has done so in a negative way, clearly suggests that there is more work that needs to be done by the SDATS to address this concern. Future plans for implementation have been suggested to address this
genuine need. It is only as the Seminary places greater value on spiritual formation as more than a class but indicative of its culture and self-understanding, is this perception on the part of a significant number of its students likely to change. To think of the positive impact this would have on the Master of Divinity graduates and the people that they are called to serve is a source of tremendous appeal. If this study can play a part in making this a reality, this will be extremely gratifying for me as someone who values the spiritual growth of the pastoral servants of God.
Chapter 5

AN ASSESSMENT OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

The title of this project document is: “Assessing Biblical Spirituality in the Culture of the Master of Divinity Program: Implications for the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary.” As mentioned previously, the terms “biblical spirituality” and “spiritual formation” are used interchangeably throughout this study. This is because the term “spiritual formation” is the more common term in this field.

In Chapter 4 the methodology was outlined which was used in this study. Part of that methodology included a review of selected ATS seminaries to determine the role of spiritual formation in their Master of Divinity curriculum as stated on their institution’s website and eventually in direct contact with some of them. The methodology also included conducting two focus groups with current second and third year MDiv students at the Seminary. As stated earlier in this study, this methodology did not include a ministry intervention because an exemption was granted to me by the DMin office because I am no longer employed by the Seminary. This reality would make it difficult to implement such an intervention. Nevertheless, future plans for implementation have been suggested.
Chapter 5 reports the findings of this study as derived from actual conversations with three selected seminaries either via email or by phone. This chapter also contains the findings of two focus groups conducted with current Master of Divinity students at the SDATS. Based on the study’s findings, the chapter will conclude by outlining recommendations that are intended to enhance the spiritual growth of MDiv students at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary.

**Direct Responses From Other Seminaries**

Rather than depend on the information published on seminary websites, emails were sent to six seminaries requesting that they respond to three questions related to the teaching of spiritual formation in their Master of Divinity programs. Three of these six seminaries were seminaries that the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary used as benchmarks in its most recent self-study. As mentioned earlier, these seminaries are Calvin Theological Seminary, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, and Trinity Evangelical and Divinity School. Eventually three seminaries responded to this email inquiry. They had been asked to respond to these questions:

1) “How does your curriculum contribute to the spiritual formation of your Master of Divinity students?”

2) “Aside from their teaching responsibilities, what is the role expectation of seminary faculty in the spiritual formation of your MDiv students?”

3) “Are there ways apart from curriculum requirements that your seminary encourages Master of Divinity students to take responsibility for their own spiritual growth?” (See Appendix B). What follows is a summary of the direct responses from
three seminaries to these questions. This summary confirms and expands what was presented on the seminaries’ website.

Calvin Theological Seminary

Calvin Theological Seminary is in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Their Master of Divinity curriculum is designed with the formation of the student in mind. The curriculum stands on four pillars – message, person, context, and goal. These components have the formation of the whole student in view. Upon arrival new MDiv students are assigned to a mentoring group and given instruction regarding the Reformed approach to understanding Scripture. They are also enrolled in the course Theological Education as Formation for Ministry. This course introduces students to the practice of spiritual disciplines. They are also introduced to the concept of how theology shapes us as Christians. Students are required to write a Rhythm of Life document, which seeks to help students understand that what we do shapes who we are. Toward the end of the Master of Divinity program, students are enrolled in a capstone course designed to help the students develop a theological vision for ministry. This is done by assisting students to integrate what they have learned in the classroom into this theological vision.

One of the expectations of seminary faculty is that they must lead a mentoring group. Seminary faculty must also be available to counsel and assist students in their formation in class and outside of class.

The Rhythm of Life document can serve as a basis for students taking responsibility for their own spiritual development. This is a document that they develop in the first semester and update it throughout the program. Students are also required to be involved in the ministry of a local church. The Seminary hopes that this involvement
would aid in the students’ spiritual growth. Having a vocational mentor is a requirement of students in the MDiv program. This mentor’s responsibility is to aid the student in vocational mentoring and in spiritual growth. However successful involvement in the local church and with a mentor is largely student driven.

Assessing spiritual growth is always a challenge. Much of this assessment is based on student reporting. Recently, Calvin Theological Seminary has hired the services of a consultant to determine how spiritual formation can be more effectively assessed.

Denver Seminary

In addition to Calvin Theological Seminary, Denver Seminary in Littleton, Colorado also places a strong emphasis on spiritual formation. Their Master of Divinity program consists of a total of 96 semester credits. All MDiv students must enroll in 11 semester credits of their Training/Mentoring program. This program focuses on the development of the whole person. The goal of this program is to create “Graduates further developed in their character and competence, equipped to pursue self-directed, life-long learning to address their needs and the needs of the world” (Denver Seminary representative, personal communication, December 7, 2013). These 11 credits consist of one unit of an introduction to formation class. Five credits of the Training/Mentoring program are devoted to mentoring and character formation. The remaining five credits of the Training/Mentoring program focus on ministry skill development or field education. Students are required to develop learning plans that address areas of perceived need or growth.

The Training/Mentoring program is directed by six Mentoring Directors. Their primary responsibilities are to facilitate this program. All MDiv students are assigned to a
mentoring director. Mentoring directors assist students in the formulation of their learning plans. In addition, students are required to have two mentors. These mentors can be pastors in area churches. Students must find their own mentors. These mentors meet with the students and the mentoring director at least once a semester to review learning plans and to formulate new ones. Students are also required to be members of a formation growth group. Though faculty are not required to lead these groups, these groups are led by faculty members and meet once a week for a total of 15 hours per semester. Students must participate in these groups for three semesters. Many seminary faculty serve as mentors to their students. Faculty also play a role in integrating their course content toward student formation.

With regard to assessment, there is still an element of subjectivity when trying to assess spiritual growth. Input from the student, the two mentors, and the mentoring director all play a part in accessing a student’s spiritual growth. One fundamental question that is key in this assessment is whether the student did what he/she committed to doing in the learning plan.

Ashland Theological Seminary

Ashland Theological Seminary represents the final seminary under consideration for this portion of this study. Ashland Theological Seminary in Ashland, Ohio is in the process of revising the curriculum for their Master of Divinity program. Pending ATS approval, Ashland Theological Seminary plans to start this new MDiv program Fall Semester 2014. The revised curriculum will consist of a total of 80 semester credits. It will have a spiritual formation component of four semester credits. The details are still being formulated but the original vision was that spiritual formation would last through
the duration of the Master of Divinity program. Previously, spiritual formation was not required of MDiv students.

MDiv students are also required to participate in a small group or “spiritual formation groups.” These groups will meet for fifteen hours each semester. Not all faculty will lead these groups. The level of faculty involvement is still to be determined. In addition, students are assigned to a faculty mentor. All faculty members are expected to be mentors. This mentoring responsibility will be factored into the overall teaching load. These mentors give spiritual guidance based upon the four C’s of their curriculum: “Core Identity in Christ, Character, Calling, and Competency.” Previously, students were required to meet with their faculty mentors once a quarter. It is still to be determined how often students will meet with their faculty mentors in the new curriculum. In addition to faculty mentors, Ashland Theological Seminary hires a chaplain who assists students with spiritual guidance but who also has some teaching responsibilities.

Ashland Theological Seminary is still developing the mechanisms for assessing the spiritual growth of their MDiv students. It is likely that they will use some type of instrument to provide an initial assessment of the students’ spiritual growth. Toward the end of their studies, the same instrument will be given in a post-test sense to determine the level of spiritual growth while in the Master of Divinity program.

Summary

What becomes clear from the responses of these seminaries is that student transformation is not limited to one class taken in one semester. Nor is the responsibility of student transformation limited to one academic department. There is an expectation that seminary faculty will be involved in the spiritual transformation of their students.
This may be in the form of leading spiritual growth groups, serving as mentors for students, or at the very least teaching with the spiritual transformation of students in view. Against such a template, the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary is faced with the question of how well it measures up against the standard set by our colleagues in some other seminaries with regard to the spiritual transformation of its students, especially those enrolled in the Master of Divinity program?

**An Analysis of MDiv Focus Groups’ Written Responses**

**Background**

This portion of the study deals with the analysis of the MDiv focus group written responses. As stated previously, with the approval of the Seminary Deans and the cooperation of the Master of Divinity office an email was sent to MDiv students inviting second and third year students to participate in a focus group to secure their feedback regarding the impact of the Master of Divinity program on their spirituality (See Appendix C). Track One students were invited to participate in the focus group on Thursday, October 31, 2013. Track Two students were invited to participate in a focus group on Friday, November 1, 2013. Nine Track One students and nine Track Two students completed the focus group survey that requested their demographic information (See Appendix D).

The student demographic profile (see Table 7) was as follows for Track One participants:
Table 7

*Demographic Profile of Track One Focus Group Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3rd Year</th>
<th>2nd Year</th>
<th>Sponsored</th>
<th>Un-sponsored</th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>Caucasian</th>
<th>Other Ethnicity</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the six respondents who indicated that they were married, three of them reported having children. There were three single participants in the Track One focus group. Among all of these participants, there was only one on a student visa.

There were nine participants in the Track Two focus group who completed the student survey. Their demographic profile is seen in Table 8:

Table 8

*Demographic Profile of Track Two Focus Group Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3rd Year</th>
<th>2nd Year</th>
<th>Sponsored</th>
<th>Un-sponsored</th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>Caucasian</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Other Ethnicity</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, there were five students who indicated they were single. Among them were two single parents with children. Among the four students who indicated that they were married, there were three students with children. There were also three students who were on student visas.

Students in both focus groups were asked to respond to the following statements. On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being “very pleased” and 1 being “not pleased at all,” please respond to the following questions (See Appendix D).

1. How satisfied are you with your overall experience in the Master of Divinity program?
Mean average for Track One 6.9
Mean average for Track Two 6.8

2. How happy are you with your level of spiritual growth while enrolled in the MDiv program?
   Mean average for Track One 5.9
   Mean average for Track Two 6.0

3. How pleased are you that the Master of Divinity program has positively influenced your relationship with God?
   Mean average for Track One 5.4
   Mean average for Track Two 6.1

4. How pleased are you with the amount of time remaining to devote to your personal spirituality after fulfilling your MDiv class requirements and other obligations?
   Mean average for Track One 4.7
   Mean average for Track Two 4.8

5. In general, how satisfied are you with the level of spirituality that you observe in your teachers?
   Mean average for Track One 7.4
   Mean average for Track Two 7.3

6. In general, how satisfied are you with the level of spirituality that you observe in your MDiv classmates?
   Mean average for Track One 5.5
   Mean average for Track Two 5.7
7. In general, how satisfied are you with the level of spirituality that you have observed in the Seminary as a whole?

Mean average for Track One  6.4
Mean average for Track Two  6.4

What is noteworthy is how nearly identical the median average responses of Track One and Track Two students are. This is true in every case except in the responses to question three. Even then, the disparity between the two responses does not appear to be significant. Of particular cause for gratification is that it would appear that MDiv students perceive their professors to be spiritual men and women.

Areas that suggest ongoing need for further study would be exploring ways by which the Master of Divinity program can enhance the students’ relationship with God in very practical ways. This might entail revisiting the MDiv program requirements because at least according to the majority of these students, they feel that the curriculum along with their other obligations do not allow enough time for them to focus on their relationship with God. It would also appear that MDiv students have a rather dim view of the level of spirituality manifested in the lives of their fellow Master of Divinity colleagues. To discover why this is would form the basis for an intriguing further study. This study would form the basis for possible interventions to improve this perception.

Students participating in the two focus groups were also given an opportunity to complete in writing two questions on the student survey. Question One was: “How pleased are you that the MDiv program has positively influenced your relationship with
God? Please provide several examples to support your response.” Below are the responses of the students in their own words:

Responses to Question One – Track One

“I am very pleased with certain professors who significantly enhanced my relationship with God (i.e. names of professors given) by helping me both in classes I took and in one-on-one conversations. The example and teaching of these certain professors has been the highlight of both my spiritual and academic experience here."

“I like the knowledge I have gained but practical is something I will have to figure out when pastoring.”


“Information about God”

Responses to Question One – Track Two

“Alternative devotional habits. Great practical experience in field school. Good mentorship in TFE.”

“The MDiv program has positively influenced my relationship with God by providing with tools essential for growth. Tools ? classes taken.”

“It has opened my eyes to Bible passages I have been struggling with. I feel like I know God a lot better. I can study the Bible in a better way. Pentateuch taught me how the Bible works. I talk with friends who are biblically literate helps me develop my own by sharing ideas and thoughts with others.”

“I am well pleased with the way the MDiv program has caused me to refocus on my own spirituality in order to hear God’s voice and to respond. I heard God’s voice in every professor (especially those I encountered in a course). I experience God’s grace in the way the professor interacted with me. I heard God speaking to me when I listened to the testimonies of fellow students. When a colleague laughed I learnt to laugh and give God praise. When a colleague struggled and cried, I learnt to thank God also even in those difficult situations. I understand the context of family better than I previously did.”

“I am pleased that this program is diverse, affordable, and biblically structured.”

“I think the major way my spirituality has grown is my increased need to depend on God to get me through this program.”
“The most positive elements of the MDiv Program for me have been outside of the classroom. The privilege of being surrounded by others who love the Lord dearly & being able to discuss issues we have learned in class & their impact for our lives & ministry has been a tremendous blessing for me. Also to be able to interact with (some) professors outside of the classroom & to see how much they care about us (their students) has been refreshing because it has shown that they don’t just talk about Christ; they actually live Christ. I remember when a family member of mine passed aware & one of my professors emailed me to tell me they were praying for me while others did not even respond when I told them about my loss.”

(The following paragraphs are the response of one student.)

“I am not very satisfied with how the MDiv program has impacted my relationship with God. I do feel that I have grown spiritually in the MDiv program, but that has been more a result of my involvement in ministry and in a church outside of seminary classes. Being forced to do things that were out of my comfort zone for classes and in ministry has helped me grow spiritually. I have become more sure of my calling and more grounded as I have progressed in?

Spiritual formation was very helpful for me. I grew spiritually during that course and it helped guide me through a very turbulent period of my life.

A positive experience that I had was when one of my teachers noticed that I was not doing well, asked me about it, prayed for me in their office, and offered to give me a little extra time on some of my academic requirements. This made me feel like I was cared for as a person and not like I was “‘just another student.’”

The second question that focus group participants were asked to briefly respond to was:

“How concerned are you that the MDiv program has negatively impacted your relationship with God? Please provide several concrete examples to support your response.” What follows are their responses in their own words.

**Responses to Question Two – Track One**

“I am concerned by the arrogance, legalism, laziness and objectively false information that has been shared in certain classes I have taken. It has affected my spiritual life by causing me to question my desire to work within the denomination and has caused other seminarians to live judgmental and hypocritical lifestyles that I know have been significantly spiritually damaging to some of my colleagues. I am also significantly concerned with the implications of the weekly required “worship” program (chapel). Requiring ‘worship’ of students has not promoted spiritual growth for me and others I have talked with.”
“I don’t think that I have been impacted negatively, but I don’t say I have been impacted positively either. I would call a draw. I do have more knowledge that I will use later but can’t use now in the Seminary.”

“Forced to do spiritual things (like chapel, worship, etc.)”

“Too much busy work. Focus on academics to the detriment of spirituality. No focus on transformation biblically. Class from (professor’s name deleted) needs to focus on the Bible as the source and not just practices.”

“Division – simply from admin to students. We need to be the example, not the tail.”

Responses to Question Two – Track Two

“The program has not negatively impacted my relationship w/God.”

“I am frustrated by the time restraints re: spending time w/God. Juggling class assignments & family & house (home care & personal care), there is little time to do anything well, particularly as I am a single parent here w/2 teen-aged kids. Something goes lacking, either my relationship w/God or my class requirements. Trouble is, I am penalized for lacking on my class requirements which could jeopardize my completion of the program which is counterproductive. But in the larger picture, my relationship w/God is most important. Being torn in this way is very frustrating.”

“My honest answer would have to be – “It hasn’t”. In weakness, God makes us strong; If ever I felt a bit weak, it was God giving me the chance to prove Him. If ever I felt that I wasn’t spending enough personal time with God, it was His Holy Spirit giving me a signal to tap in on the rich resources of heaven.”

“I don’t have time to be with family as much. That makes me feel further from God because I am priest of the home and they depend on me for guidance and direction in their spiritual walks. I also feel weaker in my walk from time restraints. Need better housing. Affordability needs to increase for housing and tuition. Need a 24/7 gym to exercise.”

“In some ways the assignments.”

“The MDiv program has negatively impacted my relationship with God by not providing me with no guidance. No spiritual guidance, no counseling, no role model, no one to look up to. Sink or swim feeling.”

“I used to enjoy reading spiritual books at my leisure and for my devotions. Now that they are assigned as homework and now that we are being graded and tested on all of it, it’s taken something I thoroughly enjoyed and made it a burden. The imbalanced undertaking of all of these enforced tasks, has made me at times, look for a non-spiritual release during my downtime. While I have striven to keep things in my
downtime spiritual, they have gotten secular and unfortunately sinful as well. Ex. I had given up violent video games, but sometimes would indulge in them for hours (or days). (While not sinful, I was going vegan before seminary, and now I’ve returned to eating meat, sometimes excessively. I used to exercise 30 min each day, every day, now I drive almost everywhere.)”

The following is the in-depth written response of one student in her own words.

“I must confess that I am not very pleased about the way that the MDiv Program has influenced my walk with God. Coming directly from a purely academic public university after receiving the call to ministry, I expected that my time at the seminary would be one in which my relationship with God would be nurtured & that the program would be more focused on relating the material in the classes to my personal relationship with God. I believed that the professors would be more interested in our spiritual growth than they would be in my passing exams or completing assignments. I have found that I have had to reorient my stance from “excelling” academically to excelling spiritually & that has led to me having a GPA that is not impressive at all to most, but I feel that I have done my best to ensure that my relationship with God has not suffered & the low GPA is a direct result of that. Also, I have been disconcerted by the blasé attitude of some of the professors as they have conducted their classes. It has seemed that they have been so focused on imparting knowledge that they haven’t recognized that the most crucial is the correlation between what they teach & how it is relevant for our daily walks and growth with Christ.”

The following is another in-depth student written response.

“I am definitely frustrated that there are so many class requirements and so much school work that it makes it very difficult to live a balanced life with time for exercise, God and devotions, social and family life etc. I feel like the further along I got in the program the faster it went. Because the reading and classes often feel like drinking from a fire hose. One way students learn to cope is to skim and get through reading and requirements quickly. That is not a skill that can be turned off easily. I have often found that I have started skimming my Bible out of habit when I am trying to do my devotions. What I am trying to say is that the program made me live a life of constant rushing without the time for quietness and reflection that I feel is needed to grow spiritually. It focuses so much on theory and practical things are largely left out. It feels like I have lost the ability to connect on a relational level in some ways (with God and others) because there is such a heavy emphasis on cognitive/intellectual learning. I feel that the pace of the MDiv program and the amount of academic requirements are unreasonable and that there is overlap between some classes (and they should be combined). I am currently in Christian Theology I. It is repeating concepts that I learned about in Issues and Origins, Contemporary Adventist Theological Issues and Christian Theology II.”

“I recently listened to Dr. (name deleted) talk about health in chapel and I honestly felt angry because that week I had two midterms and a paper due the next week. I
don’t know how that helps me to be balanced and stay healthy. It was hard to hear be healthy when I feel like the teachers should lighten the student’s academic load or stop talking about being “healthy!” In one of Dr. (name deleted) classes he talked about self-care at the end of the semester and I also started to get mad, but then he told us we didn’t have to take a quiz that would normally have been required so I felt like he was trying to help us/give us a chance to practice good self-care.”

“As time goes on in the MDiv program, at about 1.5 years students start to burnout. I don’t really feel that there is much support available for students at that point; they just have to struggle through as best they can. I don’t think this program needs to be as long as it is!!”

“I have been frustrated a lot with the MDiv program because most of my classes have nothing to do with chaplaincy and while I am happy to learn about pastoral/parish ministry it is hard to be passionate about the content of some of my classes when I feel like they have no relevance for the field that I will be working in when I get out (chaplaincy). I think it would be helpful to have some element of practical spirituality throughout the MDiv program rather than just at the beginning. I also think that it is a weakness of the program (particularly for Track II) that there is no opportunity to individualize the requirements at all for each student. There must be a way to make that happen. The program needs to be customized for individual students, not one size fits all.”

“Field School was very exhausting and I burned out. I couldn’t see its relevance for chaplaincy.”

“We need less volume of material and information so that what we learn we learn well and are able to retain the information. It would be more effective to go over less material and learn the material better.”

“Offer an option to take fewer classes and not have to pay for a full semester’s tuition. The package tuition encourages students to take too many credits/an academic load that is too heavy.”

“There needs to be more support for students (moral and emotional).”

Summary

What emerges from an assessment of the feedback regarding the impact of the Master of Divinity program on student spirituality is that students do feel that the program impacts their spirituality either positively or negatively. On the positive side, students generally believe that they are getting lots of valuable information. Professors
are delivering the content of their courses. Students also appreciate when professors take
a personal interest in them as individuals. On the negative side, students often find it
difficult to live a balanced life while attempting to fulfill all of the course requirements.
In some cases they do not see how the course content connects with their growth as a
Christian. Finally, students often find it challenging to balance the course requirements
with the obligations of their lives outside of the classroom. Finding that “sweet spot” or
balance remains an ongoing challenge for many students currently enrolled in the Master
of Divinity program.

Analysis of Focus Group Discussion Responses

This part of the study deals with the analysis of the focus group responses
emanating from the group discussions. These focus group participants were given four
questions to discuss together. These questions dealt with the impact of the MDiv program
on their spirituality (see Appendix E). The responses of these two groups were recorded
and eventually transcribed. These documents were reviewed and the themes were
identified. Comments or observations made a minimum of two times qualified as a
theme. In addition, in order to establish a level of internal control to mitigate against any
tendency to skew the data toward my particular bias, I reviewed the notes of the scribe
who wrote summaries of the focus group conversations. These notes were also analyzed
for themes to determine the level of correlation between the written notes and my
analysis of the focus group transcripts. These written notes played a supplemental or
complimentary role in the theme analysis. Ultimately, the final decision regarding the
determination of the themes rested with me the lead researcher and was largely based on
my analysis of the larger body of material reflected in the focus group transcripts.
Track One - Positive Themes

There was one positive theme for Track One students related to the impact of the Master of Divinity program on their spirituality. What is clear from the student responses is that the impact of the professors plays a key role in MDiv students feeling positive about their spiritual growth while at the Seminary. Students appreciate those professors who habitually provide a devotional or motivational thought at the beginning of each lecture. Professors who are approachable and who take the time to get to know their students and to take an interest in their spiritual growth make a positive impression. Of particular note is the practice of one professor to stand at the door of the classroom and greet each student as they arrive for class. It was also stated that this teacher makes an intentional effort to know the names of each of his students, which makes a lasting positive impact upon them.

Another aspect of this theme related to the influence of professors is that students value those professors who make practical applications of the course content to the Christian life. Students also appreciate the professors’ scholarly expertise and those who are able to communicate it effectively. Students felt and cited examples where the academic rigor of a course could be maintained and yet still make a positive spiritual impact upon their lives (cf. Smith, 1996). It is important to students that the courses which they study should reach their hearts and then prepare them to reach the hearts of others (cf. Chapman, 2006). The Field Evangelism course and study tour to Cuba were cited as educational experiences that some felt gave them the opportunity to apply the course content to the lives of others thereby enriching their own spiritual lives. For this group, there seemed to be consensus that the definition of a spiritually successful class is
one that brings them closer to Jesus and equips them to be more effective ministers in sharing Him with others. This is particularly true since the MDiv program is a professional program and is in fact tasked to train ministry practitioners.

Track One - Growth Themes

There are a number of growth themes that held significance for Track One MDiv students. One growth theme was the lack of transformational teaching that students felt had a negative spiritual impact on them. It was observed that more emphasis needs to be placed on teaching students how to practically live the gospel. Such terms as “victory over sin” and “righteousness by faith” were used to describe this concern. It was expressed that there should more of an emphasis on practical Christian living and how to help others get victory over sin. Another way of saying this is that professors should teach with the spiritual transformation of their students in view. Too often students feel that the program is more informational than transformational. A number of students observed that they are given lots of head knowledge but little knowledge dealing with how to be a Christian. Or expressed another way, the MDiv program is more an intellectual program than a spiritual program. Fundamental to the spiritual nature of the program is the concern that it needs to be more biblical and that our message as a church needs to be more clearly pronounced in the courses comprising the MDiv curriculum.

A second growth theme that students identified was frustration regarding the amount of what they termed “busy work given by a number of professors who teach in the MDiv program. This busy work in their view is reflected in the number and quality of the assignments given. This takes away from the quality of the course. This busy work was linked to the feeling that there was too much repetition found in various MDiv
courses resulting in the program being unnecessarily long (92 credits). They ended up being “bogged down with work” leaving little time to focus on personal spirituality. A sponsored student observed that he would like to go on the study tours but expressed that the academic requirements are so much that if he went on a tour he would not be able to complete the MDiv program on time. Students felt that some courses could be taught over several weekends as seminars and be more effective. Stretching courses out for 15 weeks when the content doesn’t mandate this much time results in such courses losing their impact.

Closely akin to the busy work concern was a third growth theme having to do with the amount of reading required in the Master of Divinity program. It was expressed that the amount of reading was too much with little application (presumably) to one’s spiritual life. There was often no relationship between the reading assignments and what was taught in class. One focus group participant who is a capable student academically observed that there were a number of good books assigned as required reading. He remarked that he would skim them now, complete the minimum requirements and then read them later when he gets back into ministry.

A fourth growth theme felt by the Track One focus group was that the third or final year of the MDiv program should be devoted to the practical courses. This compares to the clinical or practical component of a medical degree that a student completes after medical school. This would provide an opportunity for students to apply what they have been learning in the classroom in the context of ministry. This would also provide a more cohesive coordination among the practical courses that currently are perceived to be offered in a “helter skelter” manner.
A fifth growth theme was that students also expressed a strong desire that the mentoring component of the Theological Field Education (TFE) requirement be strengthened (cf. Jackson, 2004). It was observed that there is a negative spiritual impact when one is not properly mentored. Students crave to be mentored and would welcome the opportunity for a seasoned minister to walk with them while they are in the Master of Divinity program. TFE has the potential for “real mentoring” but it is not there yet. In fact, these students felt that the requirements for TFE need to be revisited. For example, they felt that students who have pastoral experience should either be exempt from this course or be given assignments that are designed for students who have pastored before. Otherwise, this one size fits all approach that doesn’t take into account one’s ministry experience isn’t beneficial to students who are seasoned ministers.

Finally, a sixth growth theme was that just as professors can have a positive impact on student spirituality, they can have a negative impact as well. It was observed that there appear to be some seminary professors whose hearts do not seem to be in teaching. Also observed was the recurring comments by some seminary faculty theologians who tended to disparage the evangelists. Students found this division discouraging and by implication this did nothing to enhance their spirituality. It was observed that any time there is harshness it distracts from the Spirit of God. Perhaps akin to this, students wondered why professors are not required to pastor while teaching at the Seminary. Students also queried how someone who has never pastored could train pastors? This seemed a conundrum to some of them.

It was expressed that in light of the fact that the MDiv program is a spiritual program, all aspects of the program have the potential to impact the student’s spirituality.
either positively or negatively. In fact, this observation not only applies to the Master of Divinity program but to the Seminary as a whole. Seminary is a spiritual enterprise. What happens there can directly or indirectly impact a student’s spirituality.

Track Two - Positive Themes

There were several themes that held positive significance for Track Two students regarding the MDiv program’s impact on their spirituality. One example is the class Spiritual Formation or Biblical Spirituality. This included appreciation for the spiritual retreat required for the class. This class was viewed as being spiritually beneficial. Students expressed appreciation for the opportunity to discover different ways of connecting with God and benefitted from watching their peers do the same. There was a feeling that this class should not be simply for one semester but should extend throughout the MDiv program.

The second positive theme had to do with Seminary worship. There was a feeling the Seminary worship promoted a sense of family. It was really moving to hear so many pastors singing with one voice.

The third positive theme had to do with the value of having a mentor while in the MDiv program. A mentor is someone who would help students grow. One student expressed that he might not have hit rock bottom spiritually while in the MDiv program if he had had a mentor to guide him through the dark spiritual valley he was going through.

The fourth and perhaps the most significant positive theme expressed in various ways by Track Two students had to do with the spiritual impact of some of their professors upon them as students. Track Two students expressed appreciation for teachers who are accessible, who are willing to pay attention to them and to personally interact
with them. This conveys the message that the teacher cares about them and is concerned about them as a person. Teachers who start the class lecture by first asking for prayer requests from the students and then praying for those requests made a positive impression upon these students. Students also value professors who apply the course content to their (the professor’s) own personal spiritual journey (cf. Morris, 2012; Tasker, 2002). Teachers who clearly taught with the objective of impacting the students’ lives were also appreciated.

It is clear that there are several strong components of the Master of Divinity program which students value and feel that they are beneficial to their spiritual growth. With this in mind, it is important to consider what areas they have identified in the MDiv program which they feel have hindered their spiritual growth. This is in keeping with the objective of this study that is assessing biblical spirituality in the culture of the Master of Divinity program at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary.

Track Two - Growth Themes

There were a number of growth themes expressed by Track Two students. One significant concern had to do with the number of books they are required to read for their classes. They reported that they are not here to speed read but to learn how what they read impacts their spirituality. Besides the amount of reading, having to sign a statement “before God” attesting that they have done the reading seems in their minds to be below the standard for graduate studies. It was expressed that professors should find other ways to assess whether students had done the reading or not. Also the “excessive” reading requirements leave little time for learning and which take time away from God.
A second growth theme had to do with what students considered too much “busy work” which increased the volume of work. Busy work included a multiplicity of quizzes that require unnecessary time and can crowd out time with God leaving little time for family or for mastery of the course material. In addition, having to take quizzes seemed inappropriate to a number of them for a graduate level course. They would prefer more effective assessment tools than those that are often utilized in the MDiv program. It appears that they would prefer fewer assignments, but that the assignments that are given should have more depth and rigor. Having extensive exams (not the fill in the blank kind) at specified times was also preferred. Again, busy work as evidenced by the multiplicity of assignments and quizzes they felt was associated more with undergraduate studies than with graduate studies.

Redundancy in course content linked with the feeling that the MDiv program is too long represented a third growth theme. For example, courses like Adventist Heritage, Issues in E.G. White Studies, and Development of SDA Theology overlap in terms of course content and as such they suggest could be combined. As currently offered, such courses contribute to lengthening the MDiv program to a minimum of 107 credits which the majority of Track Two students felt was too long. They would recommend that such courses be consolidated and that some be offered as seminars. Shortening the program and leaving the summers free for languages, field schools, study tours, and internships would be welcome. Some students reported that they arrived at the Seminary zealous to work for God but by the time the program is near completion, they are tired and just want to be done. They are spiritually drained and have little to offer the people when they go out to serve.
A fourth growth theme had to do with how Theological Field Education (TFE) is currently configured. There is a feeling that the requirements for this course are excessive and require too much busywork. There is also a belief that there is a gap between the course expectations and what is actually happening at the sites. This would suggest that there is a need for formal internship sites that are assessed periodically.

A fifth growth theme dealt with the course Field Evangelism. Currently, all MDiv students are required to take Field Evangelism, even if you have chosen a different ministry career path such as chaplaincy. This was a concern to some students. One student reported that he/she felt that he/she had grown more vocationally than spiritually when they participated in Field Evangelism. It was observed that Field Evangelism is demanding already. Having to do assignments and exams as part of Field Evangelism is burdensome and should be removed. In addition, if Field Evangelism is done in the fall, then when students return fatigued back to school half-way through the semester, they have to take half-session classes making it difficult to get back into the rhythm of the Seminary.

Summary

The analysis of the MDiv focus group discussions clearly reveals that the role of the professor is pivotal with regards to influencing students’ spirituality positively or negatively. For some students study tours, the courses Field Evangelism, Spiritual Formation or Biblical Spirituality and the weekly Seminary worship also positively impacted their spirituality in varying degrees. Nevertheless, from the students’ perspective, there still remains more work to be done in this area. Some examples cited by the students are the amount of reading, the number of assignments which they term
busy work, the redundancy in course content contributing to the length of the MDiv program, the current academic assessment tools and the manner in which the practical courses are delivered as having a negative impact on their spirituality. Whether one accepts these student responses as valid or not, it is incumbent upon the Seminary to weigh them for their value in its ongoing pursuit of doing all that it can to enhance student spirituality. This is especially true for those students enrolled in the Master of Divinity program.

Recommendations and Implications for the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

The following recommendations and their implications for the SDATS grew out of a recognition that undoubtedly God has blessed the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary to positively impact the lives of the majority of its graduates over the years. It is not uncommon to meet graduates of the Seminary serving in various capacities in ministry throughout the world. Yet, seminary education is not static but dynamic. There are always new educational vistas to attain. There are higher levels of effectiveness to be achieved. Ever seeking more effective strategies for cultivating the spiritual lives of its students, especially those in the Master of Divinity program is an ongoing privilege and sacred responsibility of the Seminary. It is against this backdrop and in light of what has been revealed in this study, that the following short-term and longer-term recommendations are made. Short-term recommendations typically don’t require much in the way of resources. It is more a change of mind-set or approach that is needed. Longer-term recommendations usually require more discussion among relevant stake-holders, committee review and recommendations, and more financial resources may be needed.
Please keep in mind that these recommendations seek to build upon the firm educational foundation already laid undergirding the current Master of Divinity program.

Short-term Recommendations

The following short-term recommendations are made with the objective of strengthening the positive impact of the Master of Divinity program on the spiritual lives of its students. Remembering that the MDiv program is a professional degree, it is recommended that:

1. Just as each course outline indicates how student learning will be assessed with regard to course content, this assessment statement should also include how the spiritual lives of the students will be impacted by the course; how this course will enhance their practice of ministry; and what means of assessment will be utilized to determine how well these objectives have been met. Morris, though basing his comments on the results derived from having studied undergraduate online programs at three Christian colleges, still has a valid point. That is if spiritual formation objectives are not assessed in a course, this component of the course can easily be overlooked (2012).

2. The teaching rationale for course requirements should be stated in the course outlines. In other words, professors need to make the case as to why these course requirements are important and what they are intended to achieve. In fact, at the end of the course, students should be given an opportunity to state either as part of the final exam or in the course evaluation, how they feel the course requirements were fulfilled in their experience. Part of this response should include comments regarding how they feel their spiritual lives were impacted by
participation in this course. Students should be able to provide this feedback with the assurance that they can be totally honest without fear of recrimination. It is possible through well thought out assignments to achieve the academic objectives while assisting the students to apply what they have learned to their lives (Kanarek & Lehman, 2013). A love for God nourished by spiritual formation should lead to a love for learning (Jones and Jennings, 2000).

3. The question of the required reading requirement needs to be reviewed. Students often report that the amount of reading is too much and that at best they skim the material they are required to read. One wonders how much learning is really occurring using this methodology? Seminary faculty would benefit by engaging in a healthy debate regarding the andragogical value of the required reading requirement as it is currently practiced by many at the Seminary with a view to how this requirement can be improved.

4. Seminary faculty would benefit from having an in-depth conversation regarding the role of spiritual formation in theological education (Royael, 2005). Part of this conversation should include how “teaching”, “learning”, and “spiritual growth” are related (James, 2001). I agree with those who maintain that spiritual formation must be planned to occupy a vital role in the seminary’s culture. It should have equal value (Matz, 1982) to all other aspects of the curriculum or better yet be at the heart of the program (Hornbacker, 2003; cf. Saint James, 2002). Being fully interspersed within the curriculum is likely to have a positive impact on student spirituality (Babcock, 2002). Seminary faculty meetings should have regular presentations by colleagues or guests who provide training to
seminary faculty with regard to teaching with the spiritual transformation of students in view. This should include the unique challenges and suggested methodologies for teaching adult learners (cf. Royael, 2005).

5. In the Seminary Deans’ Dialogue with students and in other forums, there should be regular opportunities for reminding students of the importance of taking care of their spiritual lives with pointers given as to how this can best be done from none other than their faculty ministry colleagues. This should be do as I do counsel and not do as I say advice.

6. Creative ways should be found to encourage MDiv students and others to take advantage of the on-campus counseling services. Recognizing that for some students admitting that they have gone to see a counselor has a stigma attached to it, why not have a worship service dedicated to the pastor’s responsibility to take care of his/her mental health? Perhaps a 30 minute counseling session might be demonstrated before the students as part of the worship program intended to show the benefits of seeking counseling and that there is nothing to fear? Because we are living in a broken world, many MDiv students bring emotional baggage from their past to the Seminary. In fact, it seems that broken people are attracted to seminaries. They sense a need to “get fixed” so that they can in turn “fix” others. Why not encourage each Master of Divinity student to have at least one counseling session with a trained counselor while at the Seminary for a mental health check-up (cf. Smith, 1996)? This would provide an opportunity for a student to identify what their issues are and to explore a plan of action for dealing with them in a safe environment like a university campus. God forbid that broken
people who come to the Seminary fail to get the help that they need only to be foisted among the churches where their unresolved brokenness is on full display. They risk inflicting untold damage to themselves, on the people in the pews and to the ministry itself.

7. MDiv students should be encouraged to find an accountability partner who they trust and who will have their permission to hold them accountable for nurturing their relationship with God. The Seminary can provide during a worship period or at some other time guidance on how to do this. In fact, seminary faculty can also be encouraged to have such a relationship with someone who plays this role for them. The Seminary should celebrate such relationships and the benefits reported on from time to time to MDiv students and others.

8. Professors should be encouraged to spend more time just mingling with students in areas like the Seminary Commons as they go back and forth to their offices. A few minutes of doing so here and there go a long way toward impacting MDiv students in a positive way (cf. Lui, 2000; Hook, 2005).

9. Seminary faculty should be encouraged to learn the names of their students as well as a bit of information about them. Students resonate with such attention and it contributes toward “humanizing” or even “spiritualizing” the seminary experience.

10. When the Seminary has “Big Sabbath” or other occasions when the seminary family convenes such as graduation weekend, seminary faculty should plan to be present. They should be encouraged to resist the temptation to be doing something else that is “important” when such gatherings occur. Students get the
wrong message when they are expected to be at such events but certain faculty seem to be habitually absent with apparent impunity. We teach the value of a ministry of presence that applies out there among the churches. Such a ministry has value even at the Seminary.

11. Seminary faculty should remind students of their regular office hours. In addition to being available for consultation regarding academic matters, students should also be encouraged to come to visit faculty in their offices just to talk about whatever is on their minds. If students hesitate to come to them, faculty can use a portion of this time to walk the halls and mingle with the students. Doing so recognizes the validity of the anonymous proverb that says that, “there are some things which are caught and not taught.”

12. It would be insightful to determine how many seminary faculty are engaged in mentoring relationships with Master of Divinity students. It would also be beneficial to determine how many MDiv students are involved in these mentoring relationships with seminary faculty. Assuming the feedback is positive, strategies can be explored to involve more seminary faculty and MDiv students in such mentoring relationships. The value of these relationships can be heralded and celebrated during Seminary worship, Deans’ Dialogue, and other appropriate occasions.

13. A spiritual growth plan needs to be explored as part of the Master of Divinity admissions process. Once admission is granted, there needs to be some sort of mechanism in place to encourage students to follow, adjust, and improve the plan they have committed to. As with anything else, what gets measured or
accounted for gets done. Effective strategies would have to be identified which would encourage students to follow the plan they have committed to. Conferring with the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, IN who have such a requirement would be a logical first step.

As can be seen from these short-term recommendations, most of them don’t require a fiat declaration from the Seminary Deans’ office to be implemented. Nor is a significant financial investment required. Most of these recommendations mainly require a change in thinking and a heightened awareness that comes from having the spiritual transformation of students in view.

Longer-term Recommendations

In addition to the short-term recommendations, longer-term recommendations as previously observed require more time and possibly more in terms of human and financial resources. These recommendations address the macro level of seminary life. As such, more stake-holders are involved. There is likely more bureaucracy to deal with in order to effect change. These recommendations may require more in terms of committee involvement, feasibility studies, and even the input of outside consultants. These strategies get at the heart of organizational culture change and that in and of itself can be threatening to some. But the potential benefits for enhancing the spiritual growth of MDiv students far outweigh any possible risks involved. These recommendations presuppose that the Seminary recognizes the spiritual transformation of its students as its number one priority.

1) Master of Divinity students should be required to participate in a spiritual
growth group that meets weekly during the school year for the duration or for a major
portion of the time that they are enrolled as students in the MDiv program.

2) Recognizing the impact of modeling upon students, seminary faculty should
be encouraged and rewarded for leading a spiritual growth group. One incentive could be
having this responsibility factored into one’s overall teaching responsibilities.
Realistically, unless faculty receive teaching credit for involvement in this endeavor, it
will likely not succeed. It is not surprising that faculty will gravitate towards those
activities that they get credit and recognition for.

3) Seminary faculty not involved in leading a spiritual growth group, should be
expected to mentor a minimum number of students. Instruction should be given faculty
by an expert regarding what it takes to be an effective mentor.

4) A committee should be established that will review the courses being taught in
the MDiv program. The intent would be to establish where there is content duplication
and which courses can be combined. Ideally, this should result in reducing the number of
credits in the overall MDiv program. This would then allow students to have more
freedom to take summers off or to enroll for a more manageable course load per semester
and still complete the program within a reasonable amount of time. This committee could
also serve as a spirituality committee for the Master of Divinity program. Its task would
be to intentionally monitor how effective the MDiv program is in positively impacting
student spirituality on an ongoing basis. This committee would also serve as a think-tank
in pursuit of better strategies to enhance MDiv student spirituality and the overall MDiv
student experience (cf. DeBerry, 2007).

5) The Seminary should engage with the chairs of undergraduate
theology/religion departments regarding the courses that they are teaching which may be a duplication of courses being taught at the Seminary to Master of Divinity students. Reducing the number of credits required for the Master of Divinity program by eliminating some of the courses which are also taught at the undergraduate level should also allow for more program flexibility and student choice, at least for Track One students.

6) It should be determined how feasible it would be to have various professional tracks in the MDiv program that are career focused such as a chaplaincy track for military or hospital chaplains be exempted from the course Field Evangelism. Doing this should not be viewed as watering down the evangelistic fervor of MDiv training. This approach grows out of a recognition that the program needs more flexibility and gets away from a “one size fits all” approach for students who sense God’s call toward another form of ministry. There are only so many credits that the MDiv program can require. What is lost by allowing a student to get added exposure in the form of ministry they intend to pursue as their vocation?

7) The services of area pastors and other qualified individuals should be enlisted as mentors for Master of Divinity students. This is in recognition of the fact that the number of MDiv students needing mentors can’t be met by Seminary faculty alone (Jones & Jennings, 2000). These individuals should receive ongoing training on how to be an effective mentor recognizing that not all people can do this work effectively.

8) The services of a full-time seminary chaplain who has extensive experience in counseling and who has a strong pastoral background should be secured (cf. Reisz, 2003; Gregory & Jennings, 2000). This individual would be available to counsel/mentor MDiv
students and should not be burdened down with other significant teaching
responsibilities. This would allow such an individual to be “freed up” to not only minister
to the Seminary community but to their families as well.

9) When potential seminary faculty are being considered for hire or when current
seminary faculty are being considered for promotion, they themselves should have a
strong spirituality (Smith, 1996) and should be able to demonstrate that they have a
strong commitment and desire to mentor students for spiritual transformation.

10) The required worship/chapel attendance requirement has been debated for a
long time at the Seminary. For a number of students, the required worship attendance for
Master of Divinity students is an oxymoron. They feel this is so because they understand
that worship is something that a believer does freely of his/her own volition in their
relationship with God. It would seem that the Seminary needs to do a better job of
marketing the reasons why the weekly worship service is required of MDiv students. The
other option may be for the Seminary to “go bold” by experimenting with dispensing
with the worship requirement. The emphasis would be put on making the weekly worship
services so appealing that MDiv students find that they cannot stay away.

11) There should be a spiritual retreat that involves a wide representation of
seminary faculty and Master of Divinity students at least once a year. This would allow
students and faculty to get better acquainted and build those bonds that are crucial in
effecting the spiritual transformation of students.

12) There should be a Biblical Spirituality exit class in the final year of the MDiv
program as a capstone course. This would allow the Seminary to have a final opportunity
to intentionally shape the spirituality of its graduating Master of Divinity students. This
would also make a statement regarding the value that the SDATS places on the spiritual
growth of those who aspire to serve in ministry.

13) Recognizing that the organizational change envisioned in these
recommendations will cause a certain amount of angst in some circles, it might be
necessary to hire the services of a consultant skilled in effective organizational change.
Such a person may already be in the employ of the university and may be willing to
donate his/her services or to offer them at a reduced cost. Without the professional
services of such an individual, the initiatives envisioned by these longer-term
recommendations are likely to fail.
Conclusion

It is clear that God has blessed the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary with a long history of teaching excellence. As previously mentioned, graduates of the Seminary, especially the Master of Divinity program are found serving God in various corners of the globe. The Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary’s ongoing mission remains “…to serve the Seventh-day Adventist Church by preparing effective leaders to proclaim the everlasting gospel and to make disciples of all peoples in anticipation of Christ’s soon return” (SDATS, 2014). Graduates of the Seminary’s Master of Divinity program play a crucial role in the fulfillment of this mission. As has been seen from the experience of selected seminaries that prioritize the spiritual formation of their MDiv students, aiding their students’ spiritual growth is a priority concern. Yes, ultimately students are responsible for their own spiritual growth. Yet these seminaries also recognize that they have a vital role to play in making this a reality. Creating an organizational culture where the academic standards are high, where MDiv students are aided in integrating the course content with their personal spirituality and with application to the ministry context and where Master of Divinity students experience significant growth in their relationship with God remains an ongoing challenge and opportunity for the SDATS. But this is an objective worthy of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary’s best efforts. The result will be to positively enhance the Seminary’s impact on the Church and on the society at large in a greater way. Doing this well, also has the potential of making a lasting impact on the spirituality of MDiv students. These students will then be equipped to positively impact the spiritual lives of
those who they are called to serve. I agree wholeheartedly with those MDiv students who say that this is what the Seminary should be all about.
APPENDIX A

LETTER FROM THE IRB
September 18, 2013

Jon Michael Harris
Tel: 240-393-7056
Email: Mike.Harris@adra.org

RE: APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS
IRB Protocol #: 13-128 Application Type: Original Dept.: Doctor of Ministry
Review Category: Expedited Action Taken: Approved Advisor: David Penno
Title: Assessing Biblical Spirituality in the Culture of the Master of Divinity Program: Implications for the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

This letter is to advise you that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed and approved your IRB application of research involving human subjects entitled: “Assessing Biblical Spirituality in the Culture of the Master of Divinity Program: Implications for the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary” IRB protocol number 13-128 under Expedited category. This approval is valid until September 18, 2014. If your research is not completed by the end of this period you must apply for an extension at least four weeks prior to the expiration date. We ask that you inform IRB whenever you complete your research. Please reference the protocol number in future correspondence regarding this study.

Any future changes made to the study design and/or consent form require prior approval from the IRB before such changes can be implemented. Please use the attached report form to request for modifications, extension and completion of your study.

While there appears to be no more than minimum risk with your study, should an incidence occur that results in a research-related adverse reaction and/or physical injury, this must be reported immediately in writing to the IRB. Any project-related physical injury must also be reported immediately to the University physician, Dr. Reichert, by calling (269) 473-2222. Please feel free to contact our office if you have questions.

Best wishes in your research.

Sincerely

[Signature]
Mordekai Ongo
Research Integrity & Compliance Officer

Institutional Review Board - 4150 Administration Dr Room 322 - Berrien Springs, MI 49104-0355
Tel: (269) 471-6361 Fax: (269) 471-6543 E-mail: irb@andrews.edu
APPENDIX B

EMAIL TO SELECTED SEMINARIES
B. EMAIL TO SELECTED SEMINARIES

Dear

I am a Doctor of Ministry student in the Discipleship and Biblical Spirituality degree program offered by the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan. My dissertation project is entitled “Assessing Biblical Spirituality in the Culture of the Master of Divinity Program: Implications for the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary.” Previously, I had the privilege of serving as the Master of Divinity director for 6 ½ years at this seminary. I am researching how we can more effectively shape the spiritual formation of our Master of Divinity students. I would like to learn more about how your seminary intentionally forms the spirituality of your MDiv students. Below are 3 questions that I have formulated that I would kindly like you to respond to. There may be a possibility to schedule a follow up phone call to speak with you for approximately 15 – 20 minutes if needed. The questions are:

1) How does your curriculum contribute to the spiritual formation of your Master of Divinity students?

2) Aside from their teaching responsibilities, what is the role/expectation of seminary faculty in the spiritual formation of your MDiv students?

3) Are there ways apart from curriculum requirements that your seminary encourages Master of Divinity students to take responsibility for their own spiritual growth?

Your responses will be associated with the name of your educational institution and not to you personally and will be handled with the appropriate care expected of research of this nature.

If there is someone at your seminary who is in a better position to respond to my questions, kindly forward my email to that individual. Thanks in advance for your kind consideration of my request.

Sincerely,

Mike Harris
APPENDIX C

EMAIL INVITATION TO MDIV STUDENTS

TO PARTICIPATE IN A FOCUS GROUP
C. EMAIL INVITATION TO MDIV STUDENTS

TO PARTICIPATE IN A FOCUS GROUP

Dear Master of Divinity Student,

You are here at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary because you have sensed God’s call to prepare to serve Him in full-time ministry. Some of you have sensed this call early in life and have already begun your preparation by completing an undergraduate degree in theology or religion. Others of you have sensed God’s call later in life and hence your presence here represents a significant career change. Some of you are sponsored by an employing organization and are confident that you have a place to serve in ministry after your stay at the Seminary ends. Others of you are here by faith and may not be certain if you will be here next semester if you don’t find the financial means. Some of you as international students are far away from home. You may have left a wife and children behind and you are still seeking to support them with what you earn from your on-campus income. This description is the context that many of you find yourselves in as you seek to complete the Master of Divinity program. All this coupled with the fact that you are in a demanding graduate program with the necessary requirements that must be fulfilled in order to attain your degree. Another reality is that in this context, you are challenged to maintain your spiritual lives. Some manage to do so but there are a number of others who have reported that they have not succeeded in doing so as well as they might like. This feedback provides the context for this invitation.

You are invited to participate in a focus group that will solicit feedback from you regarding your spiritual growth while enrolled in the Master of Divinity program. This invitation is extended to 2nd and 3rd year students only. Actually there will be 2 focus groups. One group will be comprised of Track 1 students. The other group will consist of Track 2 students. These groups will meet at different times. **Track 1 students will meet Thursday, October 31 at 10:30 a.m. in room N211. Track 2 participants will meet Friday, November 1 at 10 a.m. in room N110.** The sessions will be comprised of 7 to 9 participants and should last a maximum of 90 minutes. We aim to have groups which reflect the demographic makeup of the current enrolment in the MDiv program. **Focus group participants will not be remunerated in any way but pizza and drinks will be provided.** The findings from this research will be part of a DMin dissertation project. Recommendations will be shared with Seminary leadership to assist in their never-ending quest to make the MDiv program a spiritually revitalizing experience accompanied by the necessary academic rigor. Participation is limited so you are encouraged to respond as quickly as possible via email. Kindly note the attached consent
form which gives greater detail about how the focus group will be conducted and your rights as a participant.

Thank you for considering this invitation. May the Lord’s rich blessings remain yours.

Cordially,

Mike Harris, DMin candidate
Lead Researcher
D. STUDENT SURVEY

1. How long have you been enrolled in the Master of Divinity program?
   a. ___2 years
   b. ___3 years

2. Are you a sponsored or non-sponsored student? (Sponsored typically means receiving financial support from a church affiliated conference with the expectation of employment after the MDiv degree program is completed.) Please check one.
   a. ___sponsored
   b. ___unsponsored

3. What is your gender?
   a. ___male
   b. ___female

4. What is your ethnicity?
   a. ___Caucasian
   b. ___African American
   c. ___Hispanic
   d. ___Asian
   e. ___Other

5. Are you married or unmarried?
   a. ___Married
   b. ___Single
6. If married, do you have children?
   a. ___Yes
   b. ___No

7. Are you here on a student visa?
   a. ___Yes
   b. ___No

Questions concerning the MDiv program

On a scale from 1 – 10 with 10 being “very pleased” and 1 being “not pleased at all”, please respond to the following questions:

1. ___How satisfied are you with your overall experience in the Master of Divinity program?
2. ___How happy are you with your level of spiritual growth while enrolled in the MDiv program?
3. ___How pleased are you that the Master of Divinity program has positively influenced your relationship with God?
4. ___How pleased are you with the amount of time remaining to devote to your personal spirituality after fulfilling your MDiv class requirements and other obligations?
5. ___In general, how satisfied are you with the level of spirituality that you observe in your teachers?
6. ___In general, how satisfied are you with the level of spirituality that you observe in your MDiv classmates?
7. ___In general, how satisfied are you with the level of spirituality that you have observed in the Seminary as a whole?

Please elaborate on the following questions:

1. How pleased are you that the MDiv program has positively influenced your relationship with God? Please provide several examples to support your response.

2. How concerned are you that the MDiv program has negatively impacted your relationship with God? Please provide several concrete examples to support your response.
APPENDIX E

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
E. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the features about the MDiv program that positively enrich your relationship with God?

2. What are some of the characteristics associated with the MDiv program that negatively impact your relationship with God?

3. If you were Seminary Dean for a day, what significant changes would you make to the MDiv curriculum that you believe would positively impact your spirituality and that of other students?

4. Are there any other observations you would like to make on anything that we discussed today related to our topic?

Thank you for your participation in this focus group.
APPENDIX F

DATA CODING MATRIX – TRACK ONE
F. DATA CODING MATRIX - TRACK ONE

This appendix presents the data-coding matrix for the Track One student participants in the MDiv focus group held October 30, 2013. It represents the analysis of the transcripts for the recording of the Track One focus group and notes made of the focus group session as it occurred. A thought or observation had to be repeated a minimum of two times during the focus group discussion to qualify as a theme. The observations seek to reflect a summary of the comments associated with each theme.

Data Coding for Track One Students

Table | Track One List of Codes with student comments

Factors enhancing spirituality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professors</td>
<td>can enhance spirituality. New Testament course and others course cited as an example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>students appreciate practical application of the course to the Christian life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>students appreciate professors’ expertise and those</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>professors communicate it effectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>who take time to show interest in student’s spiritual growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>appreciate professors who take the time to know them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>students appreciate approachable professors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>students value professors who provide a devotional or motivational thought at the beginning of each lecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>one professor stands at the door and greets each student as they enter class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the same professor is noted for making an effort to know his students’ names</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>some professors who maintain academic rigor and still include a strong spiritual component in their courses thereby reaching the students’ hearts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- the Field Evangelism course and study tour to Cuba were cited as opportunities to apply what was learned at the Seminary to the lives of others in a ministry setting which was spiritually beneficial to them as students

Factors diminishing spirituality

**Professors**

- some professors have a critical attitude toward evangelists which is discouraging to the students and by implication doesn’t enhance their spirituality
- anytime there is harshness it distracts from the Spirit of God
- some professors’ hearts do not seem to be in teaching
- how can professors who are not required to pastor or who have never pastored train pastors

**Theological Field Education (TFE)**

- requirements should be changed or dropped for those who have already have ministry experience
- “one-size fits all” approach doesn’t work
- faulty mentoring component of Theological Field Education needs strengthening or it will result in a negative spiritual impact upon students if mentored improperly
- TFE holds the potential for real mentorship
- MDiv students want “real mentoring” which is lacking and needed
- a student craved spiritual leadership/mentoring when he arrived

**Busy Work**

- too much repetition in MDiv courses
- courses often accompanied by “busy work” which takes away from the quality of the course
- MDiv program (92 credits) too long
- “bogged down with work” leaving no time to focus on their spiritual lives
• academic requirements too much so that even sponsored students who would like to go on study tours cannot if they hope to complete the program on time
• quality as opposed to quantity regarding course
• some courses could be taught in several weekend seminars instead of 15 weeks Stretching them out unnecessarily causes them to lose their impact

Practical Courses

• practical courses currently lack cohesiveness
• the final year of the MDiv program should be the year for a practicum where what has been learned in class can now be applied practically
• similar to the medical school internship model
• Field School was a joke

Lack of Transformational Teaching

• professors need to teach how to practically live the gospel as well as teach how to help others get victory over sin
• should emphasize practical Christian living or
• students are given lots of head knowledge but little to do with how to be a Christian
• the problem with the Seminary is that it is an intellectual program and not a spiritual program
• courses should be more biblical
• our message is not clear in the classes

Reading

• no relationship between reading and what is taught in class, i.e. busy work
• often good books required but will be read later
• reading is too much with not enough application
APPENDIX G

DATA CODING MATRIX – TRACK TWO
G. DATA CODING MATRIX – TRACK TWO

This appendix presents the data coding matrix for the Track Two student participants in the MDiv focus group held November 1, 2013. It represents the analysis of the transcripts for the recording of the Track Two focus group and notes made of the focus group session as it occurred. A thought or observation had to be repeated a minimum of two times during the focus group discussion to qualify as a theme. The observations seek to reflect a summary of the comments associated with each theme.

Table  Track Two list of codes with student comments

Factors enhancing spirituality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Worship</strong></td>
<td>• promotes sense of community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• powerful hearing so many pastors singing with one voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spiritual Formation (Biblical Spirituality)</strong></td>
<td>• was good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• would be helpful to have it throughout the MDiv program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• gives you an opportunity to engage at different levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• appreciated the retreat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professors</strong></td>
<td>• interaction with teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• accessibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• teachers’ care and concern for me as a person</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• professors who relate what they are teaching to their own spiritual lives
• teachers who teach to help change my life
• positive impact of professors when they pay attention to you
• teachers who ask for prayer requests and pray with you in class

**Mentor**

• helps me grow
• someone to guide you

Factors which diminish spirituality

**Reading**

• too much reading
• lots of reading leaving no time to learn
• not here to speed read but to be impacted spiritually by what we read
• should find other ways which promote learning to assess if the students have read the required reading rather than having to sign a statement swearing before God saying that they have done so
• too much reading takes away from your time with God

**Busy Work/Volume of Work**

• too much “busy work”
• feels more like undergraduate than graduate school
• should have better assessment tools like extensive exams on specific dates instead of a multiplicity of quizzes

• volume of work leaves little time for family

• less volume of information allows one to have time to master the material

**Redundancy/Program too long**

• program (107 credits) too long

• some courses could be combined to eliminate redundancy in courses which contribute to the length of the program

• length of the program has a negative impact on one’s spirituality

• shorten the program and leave the summers free for tours, internships, and field schools

• consolidate some courses and have more seminars

**Field Evangelism**

• I grew more vocationally than spiritually

• students should not have to do “book work” when at Field School

• it is difficult to make the transition to ½ session classes when coming back from Field School Fall Semester

• Field School should not be forced on you if you are taking a different ministry track

**Theological Field Education (TFE)**

• TFE’s requirements “busy work”

• there is a need for “formal” internship sites
• there is a gap between TFE’s expectations and what actually happens at the site
REFERENCE LIST


Morris, R. E. (2012). Teaching to make disciples in a higher education online learning environment: A comparison of the literature of online learning, the objectives and practices of three Christian colleges, and the letters of Paul (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. (UMI No. 3528128)


VITA

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Education

2014
Doctor of Ministry in Discipleship and Biblical Spirituality
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary
Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI

1998
Master of Arts in Organizational Design and Effectiveness
The Fielding Institute, Santa Barbara, CA

1983
Master of Divinity
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary
Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI

1978
Master of Arts in Religion
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary
Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI

1976
Bachelor of Arts in Theology
Minor - Greek
Southern Missionary College
Collegedale, TN

Employment History

January 2014 - Present
Senior Advisor for Staff Care
ADRA International, Silver Spring, MD

May 2011 – January 2014 (The roles below held at direct times during this period)
Senior Director for HR
Director for Recruitment
Director for Staff Care
ADRA International, Silver Spring, MD

Sept 2004 – April 2011
Director, Master of Divinity program
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary
Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI

Feb 2001 – Sept 2004
International Student Advisor
Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI

1995 – 2000
Director, Griggs University/Bethel College Center, Butterworth, South Africa

1992 – 1994
Director, Griggs University/Bethel College Center,
Lecturer, Biblical Studies, Secondary Teacher Diploma (STD)
Bethel College, Butterworth, South Africa

1991
Lecturer, Biblical Studies and Religious Education
Bethel College, Butterworth, South Africa

1990 – 1991
Academic Dean
Bethel College, Butterworth, South Africa

1987 – 1990
Lecturer in a proposed B.A. degree in Theology program
Bethel College Butterworth, South Africa

1982 – 1987
Pastor, Central California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Clovis, CA

Served as associate pastor of the East Palo Alto SDA Church for 18 months. District pastor for the Merced Bethel/Modesto Westside, CA congregations from January 1984 to September 1987.

Sept. 1986
Ordained to the Gospel Ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church