Spiritual Formation Within the Faith Community: the Beginning of a Life Journey

Esteban Ricardo Palacios

Andrews University

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ABSTRACT

SPIRITUAL FORMATION WITHIN THE FAITH COMMUNITY:
THE BEGINNING OF A LIFE JOURNEY

by

Esteban Ricardo Palacios

Adviser: S. Joseph Kidder
ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Project Report

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: SPIRITUAL FORMATION WITHIN THE FAITH COMMUNITY: THE BEGINNING OF A LIFE JOURNEY

Name of researcher: Esteban Ricardo Palacios
Name and degree of faculty advisor: S. Joseph Kidder, DMin, PhD
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Problem

Providing effective opportunities for church members to learn how to grow spiritually is becoming increasingly important, especially since the benefits of many programs do not seem to last over the long term. This project was designed to test whether a multi-dimensional program shows promise of being more effective than a more traditional program.

Method

A multidimensional pilot program was designed, implemented, and evaluated. It included the social dimension by creating a community emphasis, the emotional health and maturity dimension that culminated in discovering a God-ordained life calling, and
an integration of the spiritual disciplines of Bible study, worship, and transformational prayer throughout the sessions. The program, designed for a small group, consisted of 12 sessions of two hours each, with two sessions per week.

Sixteen of the 21 participants attended regularly. They completed four different surveys before the program started and again after it was completed. These revealed their perceptions of their personal spiritual health, emotional health, level of maturity, and readiness for change. A participant evaluation was conducted at the end of the program.

Results

The program experience and self-perceptions of participants, as well as the observations of the program’s designer-facilitator-presenter, showed that a multidimensional program for spiritual formation holds greater promise for more effective spiritual growth over time than traditional programs that focus primarily on a spiritual dimension without a relevant and meaningful integration of the primary spiritual disciplines, and without the intentional inclusion of the dimensions of community, emotional health and maturity, and the God-given purpose elements.

Conclusions

Every element integrated into the multidimensional program is relevant and necessary. Providing a community context, leading participants to understand and experience greater emotional health and maturity, and guiding them to discover their God-given calling met their felt needs. The spiritual disciplines of Bible study, worship and prayer integrated these elements into a meaningful relationship with God and each other through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.
SPIRITUAL FORMATION WITHIN THE FAITH COMMUNITY:
THE BEGINNING OF A LIFE JOURNEY

A Project Report
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
Esteban Ricardo Palacios
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APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:

__________________________________________
Adviser,
S. Joseph Kidder

__________________________________________
Director of DMin Program
Skip Bell

__________________________________________
Donna M. Worley
Dean, SDA Theological Seminary
Denis Fortin

__________________________________________
Kathleen Beagles
Date approved
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“Now to him who is able to do immeasurable more than all we ask or imagine, according to the power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen” Eph. 3:20-21.

This project would not have been possible without the loving help of people along the way. To my advisor, Joe Kidder, who continually inspired and motivated me. My deepest appreciation and admiration to Donna Worley, who listened, understood, and empowered me. To the Texas Conference, who embraced me and generously invested in me. To my friends, brothers, and sisters at the Richardson Spanish Church, a loving community where I was able to give and receive, teach and learn. To my parents and brother who continually encouraged me not to give up. To my dear children Gabriel and Daniel who challenged me to be authentic and live out what I was learning. Finally, to Alicia, who in addition to being a faithful, insightful, and inspiring companion, sustained me with her prayers throughout the whole process. To all of you, thank you.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Spiritual formation is a term used to refer to the Spirit-led process of becoming like Christ. This includes more than addressing the spiritual dimension of a person, however. Since people are multi-dimensional beings, the process must include a consideration of the whole person for maximum effectiveness. This entails organizing the thoughts, feelings, choices, body, social relations—the entire human being—effectively around God so He can restore and sustain his followers (Willard, 2002).

Understanding the complex process of helping people become spiritually transformed is clearly a topic of great interest among those actively involved in ministry today. As a result, the ongoing conversation is expanding our knowledge and challenging our practices. Fortunately, it is becoming more widely recognized that all elements of what make us human need to be an integral part of the ongoing process if God’s people are to grow spiritually. Unfortunately, however, the importance of integrating all human dimensions into a holistic program has not been acknowledged or practiced frequently enough by many church leaders.

The Problem

A genuine Christian becomes like Christ through the spiritual formation process, but, tragically, many sincere believers and church leaders have never learned what the
process entails or how to cooperate with God for transformation to take place. When I moved to Texas to pastor the Richardson Seventh-day Adventist Spanish Church in 2005, I found that most members of the Richardson Seventh-day Adventist Spanish Church had gone through some form of doctrinal education before baptism but only a few had been formally instructed in the specific ways of growing their relationship with Christ through the spiritual formation process.

Because the spiritual health and growth of members in a church community have a positive correlation to the spiritual health and growth of the church, the Richardson Spanish SDA Church needed to experience a more integrated process of spiritual formation. This need was recognized through pastoral observation, the expressed desire of leaders and members for spiritual renewal and growth, anecdotal evidence, and informal church surveys. To illustrate, an internal survey of 30 Richardson Church board members taken in August 2006 revealed that the majority lacked a knowledge and practice of most spiritual disciples and had only a rudimentary knowledge of and inadequate engagement in the disciplines of Bible study and prayer. In fact, disturbingly, 25 of the 30 board members reported spending fewer than 10 minutes per day in Bible study and prayer.

Another example of how the need was recognized came from the results of The Natural Church Development Survey (NCD) (Schwarz, 1996). This survey attempted to measure a congregation’s relative health in eight areas that have been demonstrated to have a clear correlation with healthy church growth, areas that are dependent on the spiritual health of its members. The eight areas it measures are empowering leadership, gift-based ministry, passionate spirituality, effective structures, inspiring worship service,
holistic small groups, need-oriented evangelism, and loving relationships. Each of these areas highlights the importance of member spirituality, a vibrant church community, and outreach for church growth. When the survey was conducted in November 2005, it revealed an average score of 44, with 50 being the average for Adventist churches in North America. This survey was re-administered in 2008 and it again received an average score of 44, although the area sub-scores were somewhat different. The third administration in August 2010 revealed an improved average score of 55, but this score was still in the average range.

The scores did not seem to reflect the many spiritual programs that had been offered. Two series of events to provide opportunities for spiritual growth had been held annually during each of the last four years. Such events included: a spiritual retreat for leaders, a week of emphasis on developing and improving the practice of spiritual disciplines, 40 days of meetings held in homes using Rick Warren’s (2002) *The Purpose Driven Life*, a week of meetings that emphasized the role of the Holy Spirit in the Christian life, 12 weeks of meetings that led attendees through the book *Experiencing God* (Blackaby & King, 1990), 40 days of early morning meetings with an emphasis on practicing the spiritual disciplines, and 50 days of fasting and prayer for people who wanted to come to Christ. The result of God’s work through these opportunities became evident in the transformation of lives, baptisms, and the birth of a new church.

Yet, as pastor of the Richardson Seventh-day Adventist Church, and one who realizes that spiritual formation is a life journey that does not happen overnight, I expected a higher average from the NCD results after all that had been implemented. As I struggled to understand why, I was introduced to material in the book *The Emotionally*
Healthy Church (Scazzero, 2003). This book helped me to recognize what I have come to believe was a major element missing in my approach to providing opportunities for spiritual formation. It also helped me understand that, in spite of all the efforts to develop spirituality among my parishioners, interpersonal issues among the members were slowing down the process of spiritual formation in the community.

As I started to connect the several concepts I was learning, I began to recognize that many of the interpersonal issues emerged from emotional immaturity as well as poor relational skills and a missing sense of belonging and accountability to God and to the community. I also began to understand that it would be impossible for Christians to become spiritually mature while they remained emotionally immature (Scazzero, 2003). To provide a more effective process for the spiritual formation of church members, I needed a more holistic and multifaceted approach, one that included emotional health and maturity concerns in a small community context, and a more meaningful integration of the divine resources of Bible study, worship, and prayer throughout the entire program.

Since the effectiveness of traditional programs for the spiritual growth and formation of church members appears to be limited by interpersonal issues and emotional immaturity, I have come to believe that such an integrated program implemented before the series of events mentioned above would have provided a more solid and balanced foundation for the people involved and thus would have made a far greater spiritual impact on them than they did.

The Purpose

A study of Scripture, contemporary research, and observation in the field reveals that some of the elements essential for spiritual formation are often missing in spiritual
programs offered by the church. Spiritual formation is not merely an individual matter. A community of believers, whether small or large, is a necessary context for spiritual growth when it provides a safe place to belong. The community should be a place in which to develop and practice relational skills and to be held accountable. Furthermore, effective spiritual formation requires addressing emotional health and maturity issues that limit or prevent spiritual growth along with recognizing past experience as a way to understand God’s purpose for one’s life calling. Adding to these considerations, effective spiritual formation must include a meaningful integration of the key spiritual disciplines that are essential in the spiritual formation process. The three primary disciplines of Scripture, prayer, and worship would provide an opportunity and a place for the divine and human to meet and interact so that God can transform those who respond.

Therefore, I determined to design and implement a pilot program to test whether such a multifaceted approach that included the missing elements would show promise of being more effective than traditional approaches. The program would take a small group of participants through the process of spiritual formation in the context of community that would incorporate the elements of emotional health, maturity, and purpose, while fully integrating the spiritual disciplines of Bible study, prayer, and worship.

I saw the program task as threefold: (a) to educate the group regarding the need for emotional health and maturity in the context of spiritual formation using the three spiritual disciplines; (b) to engage each individual in the experiential task of self-awareness and personal transformation within the context of the group community and the practice of these disciplines; and, (c) to evaluate the effectiveness of the program by analyzing participant responses and progress as well as the curriculum plan.
Project Design and Methodology

The project involved the development, implementation, and evaluation of a 12-session pilot program for a small group of members from the Richardson and Spring Valley Seventh-day Adventist Spanish Churches. Pre-program information meetings began the first week of February 2011 and the final session ended the first week of April 2011.

The program design was expressed in the curriculum plan that was to guide the development and implementation of the program. The plan is comprised of two major components: (1) a Curriculum Overview grid that includes four unit divisions and the session topics in each, the desired participant goals, and the spiritual disciplines focus for each session; and (2) a session plan for each of the 12 sessions. Each of the session plans has five sections: the topic, desired participant goal, teaching objective, desired participant outcomes (knowledge; skills and behaviors; and attitudes, values, and commitments), and a strategy plan that guides the delivery of each session (strategies, projected time allotments, and teaching notes that indicate the basic instruction, activities, and assessments for the session). Thayer (2009) provided a useful framework for the session plans. The Curriculum Overview is included in Chapter IV as Table 1, and the 12 session plans are in Appendix A.

Implementation followed the Curriculum Overview and session plans. The facilitator made notes during the sessions concerning the effectiveness of the plans and the observations of participant responses.

Evaluation of the program was comprised of the perceptions of both the participants and the facilitator. The trends in participant progress were gauged by the
results of pre-program and post-program participant surveys, evaluation activities throughout the program, facilitator observational notes from each session, and participant conclusions regarding the program’s effectiveness for them. See Appendix B for the English language version of the four surveys, and Appendix C for the Spanish language version. The evaluation also included a review of the curriculum elements to determine if such a program design holds promise for more effective spiritual formation that could in time impact the church community.

**Definition of Terms**

The following terms are defined in the way they are used in this project.

*Accountability* is the responsibility that a Christian has to God and to one another in the context of the faith community. Its strength depends on the person’s relationship with God and on how well the persons involved know, care, and trust each other.

*Belonging* refers to a person’s sense of being accepted as a member or part of the group. To belong is a basic human need and essential for emotional health and maturity.

*Change* is a complex process that moves a person from one state to a different state. The concepts and principles of change inform all the elements in the process of spiritual formation. Personal awareness, readiness, and choice are ultimately the responsibility of the participant if the desired changes are to take place, and to the degree they will.

*Community* refers to a social, religious, or other group of individuals who share common characteristics and/or interests, have a unifying purpose, and a sense of belonging to and in the group. A small community sees itself as distinct in some respects from the larger group in which it exists.
Curriculum is a word used to refer to a plan for learning, usually in the form of a written document, or the implementation of the plan or document. It describes the specific process designed to move the learners from a present reality to reach the desired ideal. A curriculum usually requires the consideration and expression of the design’s purpose by specifying the goal(s), objectives, outcomes, strategies, content, and an evaluation of its effectiveness in achieving its purpose after it has been implemented.

Emotional health is a personal state manifested by appropriate human responses that occur when a person expresses his/her emotions in a manner appropriate for that stage of maturity.

God-given purpose is a personal calling that a Christian understands by recognizing how God has prepared him/her through an understanding of past and present experiences, which guides the future goals and direction.

Maturity is a human state reached through a process in which a person becomes fully developed for their age or stage. For a Christian, maturity is reaching the potential that God provides at every stage by using talents and abilities effectively in the process.

Spiritual disciplines are the God-ordained resources and means for spiritual growth through the Holy Spirit. Common disciplines include prayer, Scripture, meditation, worship, solitude, fasting, service, all of which find their primary source of inspiration and practice in the study of Scripture. This project selected the three primary disciplines of Bible study, worship, and prayer.

Spiritual formation for the Christian refers to the Spirit-led process of spiritual growth that restores the human person to wholeness through his or her surrender and cooperation. It is a lifetime process that moves toward transformation of every
dimension of the person from self-centeredness to Christ-likeness. The term “spiritual transformation” is usually used to refer to this change.

The Life Model, as described in the book by the same name (Friesen, Wilder, Bierling, Koepcke, & Poole, 2000), is a model that gives practical steps on how to mature. It identifies specific ways to heal traumas and it challenges individuals to change, grow, and become the person that God designed them to be.

Transformational prayer refers to a kind of prayer that allows God to reveal a person’s need by uncovering the lies a person has learned to believe about himself/herself. Through the prayer, a person would be able to identify with Christ’s suffering. If the person is then ready to open the heart to God, he/she is in a position to experience healing through the power that resurrected Jesus. This model was developed by Paul Coneff (2011) from Straight 2 the Heart Ministries. See Appendix D for Coneff’s three-step prayer.

Triads are groups of three people each that are formed to help develop accountability among the participants within the larger community context as they share various directed activities together.

Limitations and Delimitations

The project faced the unavoidable limitations that are characteristic of such programs. These included: (1) inconsistent session attendance by some participants due to avoidable or unavoidable clashes with other responsibilities such as work schedules, (2) limited comprehension and familiarity of some participants with the terms and processes used in the presentations of material on emotional health and maturity, (3) less than careful or honest reporting of participants in the self-assessment surveys and
activities, (4) possible resistance of the participants to the influence of the Holy Spirit, and (5) partial or non-engagement of the participants during and between sessions.

The scope of this project was delimited in the following ways: (1) the project was conducted for selected members from the Richardson Spanish SDA Church and its church plant, the Spring Valley SDA Church, (2) criteria for choosing participants was selective, (3) the duration of the project was delimited to 12 formal sessions, plus an initial and an interim informational meeting, (4) the group was designed to have a minimum of 12 and a maximum of 18 full-time participants, (5) the spiritual disciplines involved in the program were limited to three (Bible study, prayer, and worship), (6) the project evaluation was intended to reveal trends rather than be governed by statistics since it was exploratory and qualitative in nature and impossible to control for external variables, and (7) it was deemed unnecessary to include the physical dimension involving health practices since the church members had been instructed through specific programs in these over the years. Furthermore, the focus of this project is on the psychological and emotional aspects of change and adding the physical dimension would make the project unwieldy.

**Chapter Overview**

Chapter I introduces the project problem, purpose and significance, the project design and methodology, definition of terms, limitations and delimitations, and chapter overviews.

Chapter II establishes the theological foundation for understanding the biblical concept of spiritual formation as well as in identifying the principles, elements and processes involved in it.
Chapter III brings different voices from relevant literature into the conversation to establish a theoretical foundation of essential concepts from which to select the relevant principles, elements, and processes necessary for developing the curriculum of a program for spiritual formation.

Chapter IV discusses the design and implementation of the project, and evaluates the results of its implementation.

Chapter V includes a summary of the project followed by the conclusions and recommendations drawn from its design, implementation, and program evaluation.
CHAPTER II

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

Introduction

Spiritual formation is a term that refers to the essential and complex process of spiritual change. Different words such as sanctification, spirituality, spiritual growth, and discipleship have been used in reference to this change over the centuries, but they do not all connote the same meaning. Nor is the complex concept of spiritual formation necessarily understood at the lay level. Furthermore, it is necessary to establish for Adventist Christians the Bible as the source of the concept and practice of spiritual formation, particularly in a congregational context, because the Bible carries authority.

Scripture, however, has no specific definition, systematic presentation, or comprehensive discussion of what spiritual formation is or how it happens, even though the importance of spiritual growth is a well-recognized biblical theme. So the concept must be understood by examining the themes, passages, concepts, and stories in the Bible. This chapter begins by developing the biblical motif that explains the purpose and necessity of spiritual formation through the lens of creation-reversal-restoration, and then explores themes and passages that identify the elements and process of spiritual change.

Biblical Foundation for Spiritual Formation

One of the most all-encompassing motifs of Scripture begins in the first chapter of Genesis, and continues through the final chapter of Revelation.
Perfect Creation

Our world was created perfect by an all-powerful, all-loving God. “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth” (Ps 33:6). God’s amazing creative power was displayed as the Lord brought the heavens into existence out of nothing, *ex nihilo*, with the breath of his mouth as “he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm” (v. 9). He filled the heavens and earth and declared all creation to be “very good” (Gen 1:31). This is how creation took place for everything, except for Adam and Eve.

Adam and Eve were a special creation. “The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and the man became a living being” (Gen 2:7). God’s hands gave Adam shape and his breath gave him life. We might wonder why God bothered with this method, why he took the time to form, shape, and breathe life into Adam, and why Eve was shaped from one of Adam’s ribs and also given breath from God (vv. 21-22). Was it not enough simply to call them into existence?

The answer is no. Both the method used, and the results achieved were part of a greater plan God had in mind for their creation. “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness” (Gen 1:26). The different ways the triune God created the first couple was not casual or accidental but planned—it had a purpose, a reason. In Paul’s words, “We are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works” (Eph 2:10), and these “good works” were to take place in the context of the companionship Adam and Eve were to enjoy with God and with each other. It was through these vertical and horizontal

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1 All references are from the *New International Version* (NIV) unless otherwise noted.
relationships that they were to grow in the recently established environment God had
provided for them.

The perfect world provided Adam and Eve all the necessary elements for
abundant life and growth. God created the ideal garden home, the healthiest diet,
delightful creatures, six days to labor and do all their work—and a day to be with him to
remind them every weekly cycle that they were special creatures and he was their
Creator. These provisions were made so the pair could enjoy and grow into the kind of
relationship He had created them to have. Through nature and tender relationships, God
desired to reveal Himself to Adam and Eve and their offspring throughout eternity.

Unselfish love permeated their relationships with God, each other, and nature.
All creation was designed to find joy in ministering to others. White (1964) describes
how the leaves, trees, flowers, sun, ocean, and animals all received so that they could
give. In the same way, Adam and Eve received from their Creator so that they could give
to him, each other, and to the rest of creation.

Their relationship with God and each other was established on community and
communication. According to Genesis 3:8, it can be inferred that God communed with
them in the garden face to face on a daily basis. There was no need for prayer or Bible
study, as we must experience them today because Adam and Eve had the privilege of
talking to God in person daily and to hear words of life and wisdom from his own lips.
They loved the Lord with all their heart, all their soul, and all their strength (Deut 6:5). I
even imagine that in the same way the Spirit moved upon the “face of the waters” in
creation (Gen 1:20), the Spirit was present and moving in their midst. There was
wholeness and little need for enforced accountability or for being held responsible because their desires were naturally bent toward God and his perfect ways.

Nor was there any cause for emotional discomfort like fear or shame, for even though they “were both naked . . . they felt no shame” (Gen 2:25). As Adam saw his wife, in amazement and appreciation he exclaimed “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (v. 23). This was the kind of attachment and belonging God intended Adam to feel towards the woman that He had given him as his helpmeet.

God blessed Adam and Eve and told them to “be fruitful and increase in number” and “fill the earth and subdue it” (Gen 1:28). God intended that, as they grew in their relationship with him and with each other, his image would be increasingly reflected as the couple populated the newly created world.

Such a perfect creation must have resulted in a continuous outburst of worship to the Creator for who he was and for what he had done. The words of the twenty-four elders of Revelation could have easily been the words of Adam and Eve as they exalted their creator God day by day: “you are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power; for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being” (Rev 4:11). All creation joined in praise to their Creator as “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy” (Job 38:7, KJV).

Creation Reversed

Sin began the undoing of creation. How long perfect harmony lasted we do not know, but sadly, it was shattered. The perfect pair, who had been blessed with noble powers and a well-balanced mind, the couple who was whole and perfect in their being and in harmony with God, shifted their allegiance from God to his enemy, Satan (Gen 3).
Sin brought spiritual, emotional, and physical separation as it broke their relationship with God and between each other. The exercise of their free will brought more devastating consequences than they could ever have imagined, opening wide calamitous consequences in all the areas in which they resembled the image of God. They had apparently come to believe that their “small” disobedience could not bring the terrible consequences about which God had warned them. However, reality proved otherwise. As it separated them from God and opened the floodgates of a slow death that contaminated all the aspects of their being, it tragically engulfed all creation in deep suffering as well.

When wholeness was broken, the effects of Adam and Eve’s choices were not limited to their spiritual being, their deep yearning and seeking after God. It affected the other dimensions of their being as well—the cognitive, emotional, social, and physical. Whereas human minds, hearts, bodies, and relationships had before been united in harmony and thirsting after God, their powers were now perverted; and where loving service had reigned, selfishness took the throne. The first visible effect of sin was emotional as they became afraid, hid, and blamed one another. Human nature in its totality had been so weakened by the act of disobedience that it became impossible for those initially created in God’s image to resist evil in their own power.

Community and communion between God and his creatures were broken, and human nature would ultimately degenerate to the point where there would no longer be joy in holiness and communion with God. For the first time, as Adam and Eve heard the familiar sound of God approaching them in the garden, they hid (Gen 3:8). What elicited this action? Fear had crept into their hearts. “I heard you in the garden, and was afraid
because I was naked” (Gen 3:10). As soon as Adam ate the fruit of the tree his wife had
given him their eyes were opened, and they realized that they were naked (v. 7), whereas
before they had been naked and were not ashamed (2:25). Now, as their eyes were
opened, they felt the need to sow “fig leaves together and [make] coverings for
themselves” (3:7).

The bonds of love and oneness in community changed to bonds of insecurity and
guilt, and mutual support turned to blame. The value Adam had placed on Eve, and the
sense of belonging he had developed towards her from the moment he first saw her,
quickly faded to the point where under God’s question, “Have you eaten from the tree?”
(Gen 3:11), he did not hesitate to say, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me
some fruit from the tree and I ate it” (v. 12). Through these words, Adam revealed his
heart was becoming distant and less attached to her. Hearts that had once been full of
love and aligned with God became hearts chained by evil. Then came the separation
from God as the sad couple was sent from the garden and out of reach of the tree of life
that was now guarded by a cherubim with a flashing, flaming sword (Gen 3:24).

Emotions of fear, shame, and blame that had been unknown to them would now become
part of their life “on the other side of the tree.”

The Bible records the sad history of creation’s reversal. Cain was banished after
he killed Able and men began to take as many wives as they pleased. Finally God saw
“how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the
thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The Lord was grieved that he had made
man . . . [and] his heart was filled with pain” (Gen 6:5-6). God’s response? He decided
to “wipe mankind…from the face of the earth—men and animals, and creatures that
move along the ground, and birds of the air” for he was grieved that he had created them (v. 7). Only righteous Noah and his family were spared to begin repopulating the earth.

Unbelievably, however, evil soon arose again and continued after the flood. As the sense of unity that had prevailed in the garden vanished, another unifying force was in the making. Eden’s unity in praise and worship to the Creator again became a unity for rebellion against him. And God said: “If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them” (Gen 11:6). God’s method of breaking evil’s grip was twofold: “‘Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.’ So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth” (vv. 7-8). Now community and communication as it had existed was gone but God’s plan to fill the earth would still be accomplished even though his image would be marred by a people who no longer reflected their Creator.

Yet, in the midst of this reversal of a perfect creation, the Spirit of God continued to move on the chaos because he was the only hope for awakening a desire in the hearts of God’s earth family to choose to return their allegiance to God. God’s plan of restoration would continue, and the special promise the Lord had made before the pair were sent from Eden would be fulfilled: He would “put enmity between” the serpent and the woman, and between the serpent’s offspring and hers, for one of her offspring would crush the serpent’s head after he had struck the offspring’s heel (Gen 3:15).

The Plan for Restoration

After sin started the undoing of creation, the only hope was redemption from a source beyond human ability. God Himself had created a plan before Eden, which went into effect as soon as sin entered. The human family was given a reminder of the promise
to redeem and restore through the symbolic system of animal sacrifice. However, before the incarnation, the key event was still future until the Lamb of God came into the world. The Lord who “was foreordained before the foundation of the world (1 Pet 1:20), and who must “often have suffered since the foundation of the world” (Heb 9:26), would be “manifest in these last times” for us (1 Pet 1:20) when “he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (Heb 9:26). Jesus’ death and resurrection made redemption a reality for all who would believe on him and accept the gift of his death.

Nevertheless, that was to be only the beginning of the restoration process. God is not content merely to provide the promise of restoration for a future eternity, but wants the process to begin at once. In fact, the presence of the Holy Spirit at conversion makes not growing into Christ-likeness impossible as long as he remains in the heart and there are no barriers erected. Jesus also wants his image to be seen here on earth as a demonstration of his power to restore those who accept his sacrificial gift and remain loyal and faithful to him. John heard a loud voice in Heaven declare that Satan’s defeat is accomplished by Jesus’ followers who overcome him “by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony” (Rev 12:10-11). In addition, the lifting up of Christ in the lives of his followers will draw others to the Savior.

This new creation would be as encompassing and real as the first one. It would answer the desperate need of humanity. In describing the depth of his sinful condition Paul used intense words: “I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin…What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?” (Rom 7:14, 24). In seeing Jesus, John the Baptist exclaimed, “Behold the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29, KJV). Restoration in Jesus would go as deep as the devastating effects of sin.
would take it. This re-creation must touch every area that had been damaged and affected by sin, including desires, purposes and motives.

The process of being redeemed and restored into God’s image, of becoming like Christ, is called by many the process of spiritual formation. Although different biblical approaches have focused on different aspects of the restoration process, most now agree that spiritual formation is God’s way of bringing his children back into harmony with him in such a way that the process of becoming like Christ can take place. Spiritual formation at its core is becoming like Christ (2 Cor 3:18), a process that requires death to self (Matt 16:24). It is the natural result and unmistakable evidence of having received God’s gift of salvation, and is God’s demonstration of his grace, power, and undying love.

Yet, this process can be limited or prevented if the principles of God’s method of restoration are unknown or ignored.

**God’s Plan for Spiritual Formation**

Spiritual formation before the incarnation involved essentially the same process and elements as it has since. However, in Old Testament times, God’s plan for restoring his human family involved a forward-looking system that illustrated, communicated, and guided his people until Jesus would come and usher in the new realities. Today, how to grow spiritually has become much clearer with the fulfillment of the promised Messiah and the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Experiencing what Jesus accomplished for the world at the cross can be achieved in at least two ways. The first, as noted above, comes by believing that “if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Cor 5:17). But the second which begins with the new and continues throughout one’s lifetime is “walking in
newness of life” (Rom 6:4, KJV). The big challenge is the great number of those who have taken the first step but who are struggling to live out the second.

It is difficult to understand and explain how this new creation that God provides can shape the new self so that walking in newness of life is possible and visible on a daily basis. However, the Bible reveals the principles and elements that help us understand how the process of spiritual formation takes place.

Spiritual Formation is a Growth Process

Scripture makes it clear that spiritual formation is a process, a process of growing into Christ-likeness, for “everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher” (Luke 6:40). In Philippians 1:9-11, Paul describes the process as growing “more and more in knowledge and depth of insight so that [we] may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ.”

The New Testament describes the growth process with several metaphors. The gospels ask us to “consider the lilies how they grow” (Luke 12:27), and illustrate spiritual growth as “first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear” (Mark 4:28). Peter describes the process by pointing to new babies who crave milk, reminding his hearers that they too should crave spiritual milk (1 Pet 2:2), but eventually need to become mature enough to “eat meat.” Paul shows how God’s people will “in all things grow up into Christ” (Eph 4:15) as they relate lovingly to each other in the context of a faith community. All these examples show that growth is the result of receiving what God has already provided rather than depending on self-effort. These examples and others suggest there is an orderly progression in the spiritual realm.
The process requires divine-human interaction. The Holy Spirit initiates and directs the process. He is the special agent in spiritual transformation (John 3:5-6; 14:26). It is the spirit of God who works in hearts so that people may seek the grace of Christ and the joy of holiness. In Ezekiel’s words, “I will put my Spirit within you and cause you walk in my statues, and you will keep my judgments and do them” (36:27). He initiates, comforts, searches all things (1 Cor 2:10), guides into all truth (John 16:13), helps in our weaknesses (Rom 8:26), and thus enables those who accept his role to grow throughout the process. In fact, genuine spiritual formation cannot take place without the Holy Spirit’s work.

However, his work cannot begin, continue, or be accomplished without the person’s awareness, faith response, cooperation, and continuing acceptance. “It is God who works in [a person] to will and to act according to his good purpose” (Phil 2:12), and then the person must “deny himself and take up his cross and follow” him (Matt 16:24). Both are indispensable. As the heart surrenders to the Spirit’s influence, the mind starts to discern the holiness of God. Conviction takes hold upon the mind and the heart and through this connection; the person continues the process of regeneration naturally. The human challenge is to abide in Jesus as he abides in us. “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can you, except you abide in Me” for “without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:4, 5).

The secret in living the new life is complete dependence on Christ. Apart from him, there is no power to consistently resist temptation and grow into his likeness. Christ’s words are fulfilled as he puts his laws into the heart and writes them on the mind (Heb 10:16). Where human nature is weak, he is strong, where ignorance has a grip, he is
wise, and where frailty exists, he is powerful. Those who depend on him day by day are being transformed into his image as they grow in love for him and live a life of transformation by growing the fruit of the Spirit: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Gal 5:22-23).

The process of growing spiritually must be intentional and orderly rather than accidental. The transformation into God’s image begins with the divine initiative and progresses as each dimension of a person is brought into his will. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul talks about the necessity of continuing to make progress in order to attain eternal life (3:8-15). There needs to be a personal knowledge of the risen Christ whose resurrection experience encourages the follower to believe that Jesus’ experience can also be his (v. 9). For Paul, attaining maturity means forgetting the past and progressing by straining toward the heavenly goal and the completion of God’s purpose for his life (vs. 12-15).

Jesus is the Perfect Example of Spiritual Formation

Jesus is the new Adam (1 Cor 15:22) who revealed what the life of the first Adam could have been. Whereas the first Adam hid from God, the second Adam enjoyed full communion with his father—he and his father “are one” (John 10:30). When Satan tempted Jesus to distrust his father, he overcame the enemy by refusing to doubt even for a moment his identity as the son (Matt 4:6). His heart, choices, mind, and emotions were all in harmony with his father’s will, and he could describe his greatest pleasure: “I delight to do your will, O my God, and your law is within my heart” (Ps 40:8; see also Matt 26:39 and John 6:38).
As soon as sin showed its effect on Adam and Eve, the Lord “made tunics of skin, and clothed them” (Gen 3:21) to cover the nakedness that sin had exposed. The skins represented his sacrifice as the Lamb of God who alone could heal the spiritual nature and make a person a new creation. Human efforts at healing are like covering nakedness with fig leaves, which symbolize the vain efforts of seeking healing and wholeness apart from God. Wearing Jesus’ robe of righteousness would ensure spiritual transformation.

Jesus appointed 12 disciples to share life with him as he taught and ministered (Mark 3:14). By beholding him, they could become transformed into his likeness and accomplish his purposes for them (2 Cor 3:18). As Jesus taught and lived with them, he showed them day after day how the individual life should manifest itself in the context of their community. His way of life was to be normative for them, “for I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you” (John 13:15). And their God-ordained purpose was to call others to become followers of Jesus and make them disciples by teaching them what they had been taught (Matt 28:19-20) and admonishing them to “Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly beloved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Eph 5:1-2).

Jesus was on a mission to bring restoration. A large part of his life was related to bringing healing, wholeness, and newness of life wherever he went. “Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of disease among the people” (John 4:24). Through Jesus we can again enjoy “peace with God” (Rom 5:1) because he has “reconciled all things unto himself” (Col 1:20; 2 Cor 5:18; 1 Cor 13:12). Not only can we be reconciled, but Jesus has also
given to us “the ministry of reconciliation,” committing to us “the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us” (2 Cor 5:18-20).

Spiritual Formation Transforms the Whole Person

When God created Adam, he formed him from the dust of the ground, breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul, a spiritual being. But, even though God created Adam to be more than the sum of his mental, emotional, physical, and social aspects, and even though the “spiritual” dimension is the “essence” that integrates all the other dimensions to create a person who is greater than their sum (Willard, 2002), a theology of redemption, restoration, and transformation must take into consideration all of the areas that sin has touched.

The reversal of creation started by destroying the loving relationships that had existed, relationships with God, with one other, and with oneself, and immediately affected all the other dimensions of a human being—the mind, body, heart, emotions, will, and choices. All need to be addressed in the process of recreation, the life-long process of learning to live the new life.

The human heart is really the center of the spiritual formation process. Adam and Eve were chained in their evil condition because sin had corrupted their hearts, and all unregenerate hearts since then have been as helpless. As Job noted, “Who can bring what is pure from the impure? No one!” (Job 14:4). God’s plan of restoration is designed to reach and transform the heart so that the rest of the dimensions of being can be brought into alignment with God’s heart and will. However, a study of biblical references to “heart” reveals that the word often includes mental and/or emotional functions, and
performs activities that we might assign to the “will” and human spirit. Since the Bible is not a systematic presentation of the categories people create in order to analyze and understand concepts, its principles must be organized in ways that allow analysis and discussion in our contemporary world.

The Heart

The heart is the inner world of a person, the center of operations for transformation. It is the place where God reestablishes his connection with us and where he resides, speaks, convicts, and empowers. Willard (2002) cites Scripture to show that the heart includes the will, which is responsible for making choices, while the other human dimensions “feed” the heart. No wonder a Christian should “above all else, guard [the] heart, for it is the wellspring of life” (Prov 4:23).

But the heart can also be the wellspring of death. It is no surprise that the heart is the place Satan also wishes to control, as the fates of Ananias and Judas illustrate (Acts 5:3; John 13:27). He understands that he can easily gain access to the heart through the thoughts, emotions, physical and social interactions that shape the heart. Therefore, it is through all these areas that he seeks to gain access and control. Jesus warned that “out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man ‘unclean’” (Mark 7:21-22). The process of spiritual formation must include the process of bringing all these dimensions under the Lordship of Jesus, so that the heart becomes God’s “throne” and Satan no longer has access and power to our hearts through them.
The Old Testament has much to say about the heart. Prophet after prophet delivered God’s messages of warning and appeal to his professed people. Jeremiah had to deal with a people who would not listen or pay attention but “followed the inclinations of their stubborn hearts” (Jer 7:23-24). Isaiah described it this way: their whole head was injured, their whole heart afflicted (Isa 1:5). As a result, humanity would experience more and more brokenness as they entered a seemingly unending cycle of fear, guilt, shame, hiding, and blaming others.

Centuries later, Matthew would add, “for out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies” because “these are the things that defile a man” (Matt 15:18-19, KJV). With a compromised and divided heart, people’s capacity to make good choices is impossible on their own because they are “dead in transgressions and sins” (Eph 2:1). Because the situation is hopeless, God knew a “new creation” was the only answer to the reversal of the original creation sin had brought about. Jesus said there was no hope of seeing the kingdom of God unless there was a divine rebirth, a new creation (John 3:3).

The new creation focuses especially on the heart, because only God can enter the heart through his Spirit and re-create it. He promises: “the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live” (Deut 30:6); “I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me with their whole heart (Jer 32:39).

In bringing about the new creation, The Holy Spirit is the transforming agent in moving individuals from desiring to moving toward God, accepting and believing that
they are new creatures, and walking in all areas of their lives in newness of life “being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18). “In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express” (Rom. 8:26).

Even though the Spirit is ready to do all of this, the choice is still in human hands. “Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve” (Josh 24:15). God promises that we will find him when we seek him with our whole heart” (Jer 29:13). It is here where perhaps the hardest battle is fought. We face the difficulty of surrendering our will completely to God. It is crucial to understand that “the governing power in the nature of man” is “the power of decision or of choice” (White, 1908, p. 47). Sinners cannot change their hearts, they cannot give their affections to God, but they can give their will to Him so that the whole nature will be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ. Christ will work in them “to will and to act according to his good purpose” (Phil 2:13).

Although it is clear that a new heart is something only God can create, each person must respond and ask for it. David understood this: “Create in me a pure heart, O God” (Ps 51:10); “teach me your way, O Lord . . . give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name” (Ps 86:11). As Willard’s (2002) detailed study of Scripture emphasizes, the heart is both the center of God’s activity and the human response. It is the place where a person wills, makes choices, and connects to the Holy Spirit.

The Mind

The dimension of the human mind can be described as “all of the ways in which we are conscious of things,” including ideas, memories, perceptions, beliefs, imaginings,
and guesses (Willard, 2002, p. 96). God knows our hearts (Luke 16:15) and as we direct our thoughts to him he is able to enlighten our minds as he continues to reveal himself and his ways. In addition, he has given us the ability and responsibility to continue to grow in our knowledge of him. The ultimate freedom we have is the power to select what we allow our minds to dwell on, and Scripture is full of guidance for this.

The effects of sin run very deep within our nature. Unfortunately, many let the habits of their life control them until they have little or no control over their thoughts, actions and emotions. Satan wants to keep their attention on themselves rather than on Christ because he knows that as long as their minds are on their problems, their faults, their imperfections, they can have no communion with Christ. Paul said that “those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires” rather than on what the Holy Spirit desires (Rom 8:5). He adds that the “the sinful mind is hostile to God” so cannot submit to God’s law (v. 7).

Once the heart is surrendered to God, it is through the mind that change can begin to take place. The Christian is advised to “not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” so that each “will be able to test and approve what God’s will is” (Rom 12:2). Through our thoughts we determine what we will do and what we will become (Willard, 2002). The first decision a person makes is to respond in surrender to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Then, the person must choose continually to bring the thoughts into captivity to the revealed will of God.

**The Emotions**

Emotions are clearly an essential part of life. Unfortunately, they have taken a place of preeminence in our culture, which helps to explain the kinds of addictions and
excesses we have come to see. People tend to live to satisfy their desires, and unless their desires are submitted to the will of God, they can lead to obesity, sensuality, and other such conditions. Therefore, the way we understand emotions is crucial for spiritual formation. If the process of spiritual formation is to be successful, the role of feelings and how they relate to thoughts and actions must be understood.

Feelings influence and/or trigger actions. They tend to control decisions rather than having the thoughts control feelings and consequent decisions. It is clear that thoughts have an important role in expressing and controlling feelings as they affect other dimensions of our being. Unless our thoughts control our feelings, our lives are like a ship without a rudder moving by emotional winds.

The Scriptures are filled with references to emotions, those experienced by God and/or by his human creatures. If we believe that emotions are related to thinking, then correct thinking will help to correct the problems with emotions. If the mind is a major key to the emotions, Scripture becomes very important, because it provides true knowledge. Scripture feeds the mind and provides insight, understanding, and conviction—all indispensible in guiding the emotions.

Scripture encourages some emotions and discourages others. Two prominent negative emotions are fear and anger. There are 400 references to fear in Scripture (KJV). Fear began in the garden. At least 19 times God directly commands individuals like Abraham, Hagar, Isaac, Jairus, Paul, John, and his people to “fear not.” Another dangerous emotion is anger, a word that appears 234 times (KJV). Paul exhorts both the Ephesians and the Colossians to get rid of anger (Eph 4:31; Col 3:8).
In the new creation, God brings a healing process to restore damaging emotions such as fear, shame and anger. Isaiah wrote that “the shame of their youth” will be forgotten (Isa 54:4). In his first letter John exhorts his readers to “abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming” (1 John. 2:28). In words that bring to mind when Adam and Eve in Eden were afraid when they heard the Lord coming, Jesus said to his disciples “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid” (Mark 6:50). As relationships are restored, fear fades because “perfect love drives out fear” (1 John 4:18). And as fear and shame dissipate, there is room again for growing into oneness. No wonder that in one of his last prayers Jesus asked the Father to “protect them . . . so that they may be one as we are one” (John 17:11).

God wants his children to experience positive emotions such as joy and contentment (peacefulness). Joy is mentioned 165 times in the KJV, and “rejoice” appears 192 times. Positive emotions such as love, joy and peace bring stability and strength as the spiritual formation process continues. The classic, biblical example of joy is found in Paul’s letter to the Philippians. Few have ever experienced the difficulties that Paul did (2 Cor 11:23-33), yet he could say, "I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances" (Phil 4:11). Writing from jail, he rejoiced (an emotion) in his being in prison because the Gospel was being advanced "throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else" (1:14). Why? “Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly” (v. 14). Paul’s attitude that God was Sovereign and good was immovably fixed. Neither his acute or chronic circumstances could over-ride this attitude.
Emotions are significant as an outward expression of our true inner beliefs. Contentment is a fairly accurate gauge of the extent to which each Christian actually believes in God's goodness and sovereignty. Both are necessary. I may believe God is sovereign, but not good or I may believe that He is good, but not sovereign. The former position seems by far the most common. Most Christians do not seem aware that their speech and behavior confirms this belief even though they think that they believe otherwise. If I were as convinced as Paul about God's control and purpose, then I would not worry, get upset or be afraid of any life experience. The extent to which I fail to believe this truth is the extent to which I will have difficulty with my emotions.

This principle raises two questions. First, do feelings automatically change when the heart comes to new life in God? No, because the old habits are still operational and may produce actions contrary to the new heart. They will try to continue to drive the body and its members into unwanted action (Rom 6:13; 7:5, 12-14) because the flesh is weak even though the spirit may be willing (Matt 26:41). Nevertheless, if the Christian chooses to accept God’s righteousness as his own, he is said to be walking in the Spirit rather than according to the flesh. The freedom that comes from walking in the Spirit enables the Christian to grow spiritually and thus increasingly live out the teaching and example of Jesus (Rom 8:4).

Second, can a person grow emotionally healthy without Christ? Scatzerro (2003) notes that he has known non-Christians who demonstrate a more loving, balanced and apparently healthy emotional life than many church members do. The opposite is also true: a Christian can practice the essential spiritual disciplines while being emotionally immature and even socially maladjusted. However, an important indicator of genuine
growth in emotional health and spirituality is the presence of a transforming emotional health and a growing connection with and dependence on God through the application of spiritual disciplines in an individual and/or church community.

Scazzero (2011) further explains that “the pathway out of this disconnect is radical. That is, it very likely cuts to the root of your entire approach to following Jesus” (p. 3). A mere trimming of “a few branches by, for example, attending a prayer retreat or adding a couple of new spiritual disciplines to an already crowded life will not be enough” (p. 3). The challenge is not a simple one, and “the enormity of the problem is such that only a revolution in our following of Jesus will bring about the lasting, profound change we long for in our lives” (p. 3).

Several of Scazzero’s (2011) top ten symptoms indicating an emotionally unhealthy spirituality that poses a threat to individual believers and the church include: a selective use of Scripture; spiritualizing conflict; covering up one’s brokenness, weakness, and failure; judging the spirituality of others; ignoring the negative emotions of anger and fear and sadness; and doing for God rather than being with him.

The Body

The importance of the body dimension for spiritual formation is underestimated. Nevertheless, Paul states that it also needs to come under the control of a submitted heart and renewed mind (Rom 12:1-2). When life is lived away from God, destructive habits develop. The body that is not under God serves to satisfy the dictates of uncontrolled thoughts and feelings, and the longer a person is away from God, the harder it is to change the habits that have been formed. As the heart submits and the
mind brings about changes through its control, the body will then be brought into submission in order to develop the necessary roots for the spiritual formation process.

The Faith Community is Important for Growing Spiritually

Humans were created to be social. The need to belong and to give and receive originated in the image of a triune God. The process of spiritual formation requires the context of community, “for none of us lives to himself alone” (Rom 14:7). People grow and become whole as they live with and are sharpened by others.

The first community God provides is the home where we learn how to relate and how to develop loving relationships. The real challenge is that our homes are made up of people who are broken. As the individual reconnects with his Creator, he will be able to become whole and develop healthy relationships. Large parts of Jesus’ teaching describe the way Christians should relate to each other in a kingdom community. Their relationships must be rooted in and flow out of a heart of love (1 John 3:14).

God’s family is his special community in which to practice his principles so that the knowledge and practice of his ways can extend to all of humanity. Unfortunately, most of humanity wants to live apart from God. “Let us make man in our image” (Gen 1:26) became “let’s make bricks . . . [and] build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to heaven, so that we may make a name for ourselves” (11:3, 4). But for those in God’s family, community is the context in which its members become fully human, the place where they share his image and likeness. They worship God as they sing to the Lord, come into his presence with thanksgiving, come boldly to the throne of grace, pray before him, and encourage one another. The community is where God’s people learn to give
and to receive, to teach and to learn, to correct and to be corrected, to grow and to help others grow.

Paul admonishes believers to “encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing” (1 Thess 5:11). To the Ephesians he spoke of communication in community: “therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth, each one of you, with his neighbor, for we are members of one another” (4:25). To the Colossians he challenged them to “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God” (Col 3:16). James challenges us to “confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed” (Jas 5:16).

As people in God’s community practice living his way, they learn to be accountable to each other. The wisest man saw wisdom in accountability, admonishing all to “obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account” (Heb 13:17). Too often “the way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice” (Prov 12:15). But “iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another” (27:17). God’s family will be held accountable to God for how they treat one another; “why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God’s judgment seat” (Rom 14:11, 12).

Truthful and wise communication is a serious responsibility, for “Whoever says to the guilty, ‘You are innocent’—peoples will curse him and nations denounce him. But it will go well with those who convict the guilty, and rich blessing will come upon them” (24:24-25). Through Ezekiel God warned his people they are responsible for sharing with others despite the decisions the others might make. “When I say to the wicked, ‘O
wicked man, you shall surely die,' and you do not speak out to dissuade him from his ways, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. But if you do warn the wicked man to turn from his ways and he does not do so, he will die for his sin, but you will have saved yourself” (Ezek 33:8-9).

The Purpose of Spiritual Formation

The dual purpose of the spiritual formation process is to grow Christians into maturity and equip them for a life journey of living out their God-given callings. Peter’s second letter to the early believers living in Asia Minor who were beginning to experience persecution emphasizes that spiritual formation will bring maturity. God has called us, has provided everything we need for life and godliness, has made us participants of his divine nature, and has given us an escape from corruption in the world caused by evil desires through our knowledge of him (1:3, 4). Because of Christ’s gracious provision, believers must first make every effort to begin with faith, then continue into goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, and brotherly kindness followed by love, then must commit to increasing the extent of these qualities. As believers continue to grow, they will not be ineffective and unproductive in the knowledge of Christ. Peter sums up his exhortation with “Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (vv. 10-11).

We are God’s masterpieces, created to do his bidding. God created us for his glory (Isa 43:6-7) and that glory can light the world. To accomplish his purposes, God has given believers “different gifts, according to the grace given” (Rom 12:4-8). He has
commanded his people to spread the gospel “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing the in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt 28:19-20).

As Paul came to the end of this life, he said, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim 4:6-7). He knew his service was accepted, for he ended with. “Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing” (v. 8). He challenged, “Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us” (Heb 12:1).

Spiritual Disciplines Facilitate Transformation

The spiritual disciplines are God’s ordained means through which the divine and the human connect and interact. Many disciplines mentioned in Scripture facilitate the spiritual formation process, but God’s communication through Scripture and prayer, as well as the human response of worship are primary and indispensable.

Scripture Reveals God’s Plan to Equip His People

The Scriptures provide the most reliable source for a revelation of God. When the Lord no longer talked with his creation face to face, he used several other methods to maintain communication. The most enduring and powerful method he provided is the Holy Scriptures, God’s word to us. Without keeping his people informed about who he is, what his plans are, and the way to salvation and restoration, there could be no eternal kingdom.
Paul mentions two reasons in 2 Timothy 3 why the knowledge of Scripture is so important. The first purpose is that we might come to know Jesus Christ and receive his salvation (v. 15). Jesus himself “expounded unto them in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself” (Luke. 24:27), and advised his followers to “Search the scriptures [because] they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39, KJV).

Paul’s second reason why Bible study is so important is that its principles help our spiritual growth so that all his followers might be equipped for whatever God wants to do through them (v. 17). The Bible is like an instruction manual. It admonished Israel to follow what was written in the book of the law. They were not to turn “to the right or to the left” (Josh 23:6) if they wanted to find prosperity and success (1:8). In the words of the Psalmist, “I have laid up thy word in my heart that I might not sin against thee” (Ps 119:11). All Scripture was inspired “and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16, 17). “Through the patience and comfort of the scriptures . . . [we] might have hope” (Rom 15:4).

Prayer Connects the Human Realm with the Divine

Prayer is one way that communication takes place between the Creator and creature. One biblical theme views prayer as the act of opening the heart to God as to a friend. People talked to God, prayed to God, and called upon the Lord. But prayer is also intended to be a dialogue rather than only a monologue because God wants to communicate with his friends. David is one of the best examples of this two-way communication.
Jesus’ communion with his father in prayer serves as an example for us. God gave him an understanding of spiritual things, discernment of human desires and motivations, recognition of temptation and tricks from the enemy, and strength to endure false accusations, betrayal, and martyrdom. Without prayer, we have no Savior.

The act of prayer is not only a way to strengthen and grow in our relationship with God, to talk to and hear from him—it can also change present conditions. The Bible is full of stories about God’s answers to fervent prayer. In OT times, Abraham prayed and God healed Abimelech (Gen 20:17); Hannah prayed and God gave her a son (1 Sam 1:27); Elisha prayed and the eyes of his servant were opened to see horses and chariots who were protecting them (2 Kgs 6:17); and when Jonah prayed from the belly of the fish, God saved him (Jonah 4:2). In answer to prayer, Pentecost inaugurated God’s new community and empowered them to go into the whole world to share the gospel (Acts 4:31). God’s response to earnest prayer brought healings, resurrections, deliverances, as well as forgiveness, faith to believe, power to face persecution, and courage to die.

But prayer also allows God to teach and guide his followers. In Psalm 25:4-5, David describes this kind of prayer: “Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.” With such an opportunity to connect to the heart of God, we should “not be anxious for anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present [our] request to God” (Phil 4:6).

Worship Gives God Glory

Worship is frequently mentioned in Scripture as another opportunity for people to praise God for who he is and what he does. The word worship appears in Scriptures 108
times. It is the response of God’s creatures to who he is. “Ascribe to the Lord the glory due unto his name; worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness” (Ps 29:2). God wants total and undivided worship: “Do not worship any other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God” (Exod 34:14); one day “all the earth shall worship” him (Ps 66:4; Rev 13:8).

God wants “true worshippers” who worship him “in spirit and truth” because he is spirit (John 4:23-24). But there is a point in people’s lives when they might think they are worshipping God but they are really worshipping in ignorance a god they have created. Jesus referred to many Jewish leaders when he said, “In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt 15:9). In Athens, Paul found an altar “to the unknown God” (Acts 17:23). The final issue at the end of time will be decided on whom each person decides to worship (Rev 14:7, 9, 11; 15:4; 22:9).

**Summary**

For the Christian, spiritual formation is the necessary and natural process of becoming like Christ through the presence of the Holy Spirit. Although Scripture does not present the concept in any systematic way, there is abundant information found in its themes, passages, concepts, and stories. The biblical foundation for spiritual formation is established through the motif of creation-reversal-restoration.

God’s plan for spiritual formation is a process that lasts a lifetime as every dimension of the whole person gradually becomes transformed—the mind, body, emotions, social aspects, and heart (will, choices). It involves belonging to a faith community and is facilitated by the divine-human interaction made possible by the Holy Spirit through the resource of the spiritual disciplines, especially those of Bible study.
prayer, and worship. Spiritual formation has the two-fold purpose of growing Christians into maturity and equipping them for a life journey of living out their God-given callings.
CHAPTER III

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The topic of spiritual formation has a growing literature base as interest, research, and study in both the Christian and general scientific fields increase. Yet, as the emptiness that comes from what the world has to offer increases, spiritual hunger also increases. Unfortunately, the world presents many opportunities to fill that hunger that are devoid of God’s divine intervention and empowerment that is so critical for Christian spiritual growth to take place.

However, great progress in understanding the nature and process of spiritual growth has been made in the Christian field in recent years, in spite of the controversies that have surrounded much of this progress. As controversies swirl, a clear understanding of the nature of Christian spiritual formation and the means God has ordained for its growth is lost in the confusion. Many Christians do not understand how to have an authentic and growing relationship with Christ. They may attend church faithfully, get involved in various ministries, read their Bibles and pray, yet feel stuck. They may be unable to experience a genuine and dynamic relationship with Christ and thus grow spiritually. This confusion is not from the God who created humans in his image and commanded his followers to become like him by abiding in the Vine. Yet, because spiritual formation rightly understood is not optional for Christians (Ortberg,
2004, p. 9), it is “something we human beings can and must undertake—as individuals and in fellowship with other apprentices of Jesus” (Willard, 2005, p. 25).

With so much at stake, Jesus’ followers must not fail to enter the process, and God’s leaders must be faithful guides in their journeys. While caution must be used, we must seek to study the efforts sincere Christians are making to lead people into deeper spirituality. Rather than rejecting their attempts, we must separate the genuine from the rest by comparing them with the principles revealed in Scripture. We must continue to search for a greater understanding of God’s plan to fill that spiritual hunger, to bring the freedom that comes with spiritual growth, and to cooperate with him as he restores human nature to his Edenic ideal by transforming his followers to be like the Son, Jesus.

This chapter explores relevant contemporary literature to better understand what spiritual formation is, what it involves, and how it happens in order to design a church-based pilot program that reflects biblical principles. Consequently, most of the literature reviewed for this chapter is from the Christian perspective. The chapter is organized into three major sections: (1) literature relating to the concept of spiritual formation, including its nature and relevant definitions, (2) literature relating to the elements needed for a multi-dimensional program designed to provide the necessary cognitive and experiential elements for spiritual formation to take place, and (3) literature concerning the type of process that such a program should follow.

**The Concept of Spiritual Formation**

Spirituality means different things to different people, cultures, and religions. To understand Christian spiritual formation one must be able to contrast the non-biblical terms and concepts with biblical spirituality, and how spiritual change takes place.
Definitions

Spiritual change is a process that includes formation—the process of growth that shapes the spirituality of a person, and transformation—a word often used to refer to that change, although it may include the connotation of more intense or immediate God-given experiences during the spiritual growth process. Nevertheless, the two words are often used interchangeably in spite of their subtle differences.

Spirituality

There are many different ways of understanding Spirituality today. It has become a popular word to describe a personal feeling related to the mind, heart, human spirit, and emotion—a characteristic that can be applied to every human being regardless of worldview or religious belief. According to the online Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2011), a typical definition for non-Christian spirituality includes that which relates to, consists of, or affects the spirit; or that which relates to sacred matters or religious values, or to supernatural beings or phenomena.

For a while, science was not willing to enter the study of spirituality because of its esoteric nature and connection with religion, but Katz, Hufford, and Johnson (2011) addressed this fact: “Science and religion tend to be viewed as opposite ends of the spectrum, with a great deal of emotional overlay. As a result, scholars have often avoided studying ‘spirituality’ and ‘transforming experiences’ the way they study other phenomena” (p. 5). He notes that “researchers are now applying contemporary scientific methodologies [for] understanding beliefs and behaviors” (p. 5).

Most contemporary researchers agree that spirituality should be studied from many different angles because humans are multidimensional beings. As they join efforts
to study spirituality from various dimensions, they are developing working definitions. However, caution must be exercised because Christian spiritual transformation includes the divine, which cannot be explained by science.

Therefore, the contrasts between non-biblical and Christian spirituality should not be missed or ignored because false forms of spirituality have infiltrated Christianity. To illustrate, the Center for Spiritual Living (2011) in Dallas, TX “is a dynamic, visionary, spiritual community dedicated to healing through prayer, personal transformation, and making the world a better place.” However, its spiritual transformation is without God even though it is cloaked in Christian terminology and practices. In addition, their concept of spiritual formation is primarily cognitive, and their core teachings are summed up in the title of a book by Ernest Holmes: *The Science of Mind*.

Discerning the differences between biblical and non-biblical spiritual formation may be even more subtle. Newberg and Waldman (2007) concluded that God benefits a person’s mental, physical, and spiritual health. Their research team concluded that active and positive spiritual belief changes the human brain for the better, but believe that actual “faith” is not always necessary because atheists who meditate on positive imagery can obtain similar neurological benefits. This is in direct contrast with a biblically based concept of Christian spirituality, which is “not designed to enhance our egos” but focuses on God and is “grounded in Jesus Christ” (Ackerman, 2001, p. 19).

**Spiritual Transformation**

Spirituality is usually considered the result of a process or event connected to the idea of experience which results in personal change and transformation. Katz et al (2011) quoted Sir John Templeton:
Throughout history and in our own time, humans have had profound experiences within a spiritual dimension of reality. In all traditions, individuals testify that their lives are no longer the same in the aftermath of these experiences—that they have been transformed. Independent observers often attest to these changes as well. Can the study of the nature of such changes offer another possibility for developing new insights into, improved understandings of, and greater appreciation for spiritually transforming experiences? (p. 40)

The research program at the Metanexus Institute defines spiritual transformation as “dramatic changes in world and self-views, purposes, religious belief, attitudes, and behavior,” and states, “these changes are often linked to discrete experiences that can occur gradually or over relatively short periods of time” (Katz et al., 2011, p. 5). The researchers believe the more desperate a person feels about their situation the more open, willing, or eager that person would be to embracing the steps to transformation.

Katz et al (2011) reported on the efforts of the Spirituality and Research Center to draw up a list of questions to guide the investigation of spiritual transformation. The questions listed are representative of many of the questions asked by a Christian approach to spiritual formation:

What is spiritual transformation? Is there more than one kind of spiritual transformation? Is spiritual transformation process-driven? Are the processes the same as those, for example, in political transformation, but simply involving different content? Are there universal elements in the processes of spiritual transformation? What individual and group characteristics facilitate or inhibit spiritual transformation? What is the role of significant personal experiences and life events in the processes of spiritual transformation? Are there spiritually transforming events and processes that are distinctly religious? What roles do ritual and religious practices such as prayer and meditation, worship, pilgrimage, reading of Scripture and/or other sacred texts and stories, “telling one’s story,” artistic endeavor, relationship toward nature, acts of service, and various others play in the process of spiritual transformation? What are the outcomes for individuals who undergo a spiritual transformation experience and for the groups with whom these individuals interact? What factors underlie experiences of spiritual transformation? What are the benefits and costs of spiritual transformation experiences for the individual and groups? (p. 4)
Biblical Spiritual Formation

Spiritual formation according to Scripture differs from the general, scientific, or other non-biblical types in its source, direction, and the extent of change. It could be described as the Holy Spirit’s work in restoring willing human beings into the image of God. Nearly all contemporary definitions of spiritual formation also include Scripture, the faith community, and an outreach purpose as important elements (“A Call to Spiritual Formation,” 2009; George Fox Seminary, 2010; Greenman & Goertz, 2005; Mulholland, 1993, p. 12; Willard, 2006; Presbyterian Church of the United States, 2011). One example is Averbeck (2008) who describes spiritual formation as

the ministry through which we seek to stimulate and support the ongoing spiritually transforming work of the Holy Spirit in and through the personal lives, relationships, and ministries of genuine believers so that we all progressively become more conformed to the image of Christ according to the will of God the Father. (p. 27)

The definition of spiritual formation has expanded over time. Burer (2011a) discovered that definitions varied according to, among other things, the author’s presuppositions, and different approaches to understanding the process of growth and change, as well as the level of biblical support. He also observed common threads among them, such as (1) inner change, (2) intentionality, and (3) conformity to Christ. He found most authors agreed that the overall purpose of the process was to enable people to be conformed to the character of God. After this first examination of the literature, he offered his definition: spiritual formation is “the intentional transformation of the inner person to the character of Christ” (p. 4).

In Burer’s (2011b) second article, he presents a more expanded definition of spiritual formation: “an act of worship in response to God’s mercy and grace which involves the intentional transformation of the character to be like Christ and the
intentional transformation of the actions to conform to God’s will” (p. 15).

Virtually all definitions assume and/or include the idea of process. Spiritual formation is not an event, although events can affect it, but a process, or, as others have called it, “a journey” (Ackerman, 2001; Hagberg & Guelich, 2005). “But unlike the stages of physical maturation, the stages of spiritual or psychological maturity don’t always happen naturally” (Ackerman, p. 30).

In *The Great Omission*, Willard (2006) reviews a number of different ideas people have as to what spiritual formation is. Some see it as “a rather general term referring to all attempts, means, instructions, and disciplines intended towards deepening of faith and furtherance of spiritual growth. It includes educational endeavors as well as the more intimate and in-depth process of spiritual direction” (pp. 69-71). He notes that other authors see it “identifying certain activities as spiritual work or exercise . . . as training in these special spiritual activities” (p. 70). It can also be thought of as “the shaping of the inner life, the spirit, or the spiritual side of the human being.” Here, the emphasis is the formation of the heart or will of the individual, along with his emotions and intellect. The practices are not the primary concern. Instead, the area of primary concern is “explicitly the spiritual dimension of the self.”

Ackerman (2001) and Willard (2006) both stress that the process of spiritual formation in Christ includes obedience to God’s will. Because formation “is oriented toward explicit obedience to Christ….it is focused entirely on Jesus” (Willard, 2006, p. 73). It must be an obedience or conformity to Christ arising from an inner transformation “accomplished through purposive interaction with the grace of God in Christ. Obedience is an essential outcome of Christian spiritual formation” (Willard, 2002, pp. 22-23).
Willard’s (2002) inclusion of a multidimensional model as well as the way he uses Scripture to develop the concepts and processes of spiritual formation provide a helpful model. He describes spiritual formation as the Spirit-driven process of becoming like Christ through a person’s intentional response to the Holy Spirit, one that must be visualized and embraced intentionally through the means God has provided to transform every dimension of the human being in the here and now.

Willard’s (2002) summary definition is: “We can say, that spiritual formation for the Christian basically refers to the Spirit-driven process of forming the inner world of the human self in such a way that it becomes like the inner being of Christ himself” (p. 22). It happens in the context of community so that the world may know.

The Council for Christian Colleges and Universities based its definition on the foundational work of Willard and Ackerman. Noting that spiritual formation is “integral to Christian higher education,” they defined it as “the biblically guided process in which people are being transformed into the likeness of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit within the faith community in order to love and serve God and others” (Neill, 2011).

Ortberg, Pederson, and Poling (2000) sum up the concept of spiritual formation by listing what they call its ten “core values”:

It is God’s work, but requires my participation. It involves those practices, experiences, and relationships that help me live intimately with Christ and walk as if he were in my place. It is not a compartmentalized pursuit. God is not interested in my spiritual life; he is interested in my life—all of it. Can happen in every moment. It is not restricted to certain times or practices. It is not individualistic, but takes place in community and finds expression in serving others. It is not impeded by a person’s background, temperament, life situation, or season of life. It is available right now to all who desire it. The means of pursuing it will vary from one individual to another. Fully devoted followers are handcrafted, not mass-produced. It is ultimately gauged by an increased capacity to love God and people. Superficial or external checklists cannot measure it. (p. 9)
My comprehensive definition of spiritual formation is the biblically based, spirit-led, personally experienced process of Christ being formed within through God-ordained means, happening in the context of community for living out God’s design for one’s life.

Elements in Spiritual Formation

The above discussion of the concept and nature of spiritual formation reveals several elements that are a part of the process of becoming spiritually mature. First, it is a divine-human interaction through the Holy Spirit and divine resources such as Scripture, worship, and prayer. Also, change happens most with relationships, especially when the individual is involved in a community of faith. In addition, transformation is multidimensional, involving the whole person over time—including the emotions as well as the heart and will—and leads a person to greater service to God and others. These elements will be described in greater detail.

The Context: A Community of Faith

The importance of Christian community is not a new concept or idea. People who have entered the process of spiritual formation experience life in the context of community. According to Ackerman (2001), the reality of community existed even before time began—with God. “The Trinity says something about God and something about us. God is community, yet with individual persons. The Father is not the Son, and The Son is not the Spirit. But all are one. There is unity and diversity” (p. 25).

Humans have been called to emulate this kind of community, to give and receive, to love and to be loved. The problem came as soon as sin entered our world because it shattered all relationships. Although we long to live in community, life in community is
as much hated as desired, as much painful as rewarding. Ackerman (2001) says, “We know how to be individuals, and we know how to be in community, but we don’t know how to be communities of individuals. Individuality easily becomes loneliness, and community easily becomes a fusion of people” (p. 25).

For Bonhoeffer (1978), the key for Christian communities is to have Christ as central; “Christianity means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ . . . .[not] more or less . . . whether it be a brief single encounter or the daily fellowship of years . . . . We belong to one another only through and in Jesus Christ” (p. 21). He continues to explain what he means: “It means, first, that a Christian needs others because of Jesus Christ. It means, second, that a Christian comes to others only through Jesus Christ. It means, third, that in Jesus Christ we have been chosen from eternity, accepted in time, and united for eternity” (p. 21).

Nevertheless, living in community today, even a Christian community, has its own set of challenges. Since, “in order to flourish, people need trust, grace, humility, submission, and affirmation in their environment” (Hull, 2006, p. 155). Bonhoeffer (1978) reminds us that a Christian cannot choose to live only among other Christians. Jesus lived in the midst of enemies and even his disciples deserted him. “On the Cross, he was utterly alone, surrounded by evildoers and mockers [although] . . . he had come, to bring peace to the enemies of God. So the Christian, too, belongs not in the seclusion of a cloistered life but in the thick of foes” (p. 17).

Why then, should a Christian live in community? There are at least three reasons from the literature as discussed in the following section.
We Need Community for Belonging

One of the benefits of living in community is that it “provides a sense of belonging and an orientation of life to a common goal and common witness” (Vanier, 1989, p. 10). This “belonging happens when you identify with another entity—a person or organization, or perhaps a species, culture, or ethnic group” (Myers, 2003, 25). “All belonging is significant,” says Myers, as he adds “Healthy community—the goal humankind has sought since the beginning—is achieved when we hold harmonious connections within all four spaces. Harmony means more public belongings than social. More social than personal. And very few intimate” (2003, p. 51).

It is hard for a person to experience the “long-for-belonging” when wounded. In addition, many people today have been wounded deeply in their families. Long (1997) says that this pain in family life creates an aloneness that is different from loneliness. Loneliness is a state of emptiness; whereas aloneness can occur amid a plethora of activities, even dance music. Aloneness causes and is caused by a distrust of people that stems from a fear of being hurt one more time…Essentially, aloneness is a state of the soul. We can be surrounded by people but still be alone. Aloneness can only be healed by being part of a community—ultimately the community of God. (p. 49)

Vanier (1989) summarizes the challenge: “Life in community is painful but it is also a marvelous adventure and a source of life” (p. 12).

Today’s generation is searching for belonging in community, and “community is the springboard from which relationships with others and with God can develop. The stable community can be a place for hearing God’s subtle call” (Long, 1997, p. 51). God may use this generation to “turn the tide from individualism to community, something no generation has been able to do in the last four hundred years.” Could this generation’s legacy to our culture be “a return to community”? (p. 50).
As Christians, we are called to create communities where people feel they belong and where people who “are alienated from God and from each other” are able to become part of “a community that deeply cares for each other and allows God to care for each one” (Long, 1997, p. 92). The question posed to Jesus two thousand years ago seems to be repeated by many today as they ask, “Who is my neighbor?” The answer we give is crucial, since “defining ‘neighborhood’ has been one of the primary tasks for the church throughout its history” (Myers, 2003, p. 30). One of the church’s callings is guiding people toward healthy community and belonging because the search for community is a fundamental life search. “We need to belong. We search with some increasing desperation as terms such as ‘neighbor,’ ‘family,’ and ‘congregation’ are being redefined. People are searching to belong in new places and through new experiences” (Myers, 2003, p. 30).

We Are Challenged and Held Accountable in Community

In the context of community, we are challenged to see who we are as individuals, and who the people around us are. “Accountability sounds harsh only outside loving relationships” (Hull, 2006, p. 246). We humans learn what and who we are as we relate to family, friends, coworkers, and others. As relationships in the microcosm of our communities go from bliss to gloom, we start learning a lot about ourselves as our behavior reveals what is inside.

We come to our communities with presuppositions of the way they should be and how they should work. We have high expectations of what they can offer, especially if they are Christian communities. Bonhoeffer (1978) observes that The serious Christian, set down for the first time in a Christian community, is likely...
to bring with him a very definite idea of what Christian life together should be and to try to realize it. But God's grace speedily shatters such dreams. Just as surely as God desires to lead us to a knowledge of genuine Christian fellowship, so surely must we be overwhelmed by a great disillusionment with others, with Christians in general, and, if we are fortunate, with ourselves. (pp. 26-27)

Communities are made of people, and as such, they bring the good and the bad.

In no other place are people going to be challenged more than in community, especially a Christian community.

Communities not only challenge us, but they are also called to keep us accountable. This might be one reason why people today are afraid of life in community. Cole (1999) says, “It is difficult to be held accountable to a multitude of people who do not know you well. A group of two or three has a greater degree of strength in accountability” (p. 50). In order to benefit from the blessings of accountability in the context of community, it might be necessary to create a smaller community within the larger one, for it is not healthy to avoid closeness. Cole continues, “Few things would ever get done in life without some degree of accountability. In the pursuit of godliness we need accountability to one another” (p. 50). He adds that “there are at least 28 ‘one another’ admonitions in the New Testament, and many more if you count those that are repeated. We need each other.”

Cloud and Townsend (2001) agree with Cole regarding the necessity of accountability while cautioning that “accountability is not a cure for lack of self-control” (p. 126). They see accountability valuable for exposing a problem but acknowledge that awareness does not have the power to fix it. They see the accountability partners “not as the agents of change” (p. 127) but those who make sure the partners look for and go to the agents of change. I agree with Cloud and Townsend that, that although accountability
Community Fosters Growth, Change, and Maturity

We experience change as the community challenges us, as we make ourselves accountable, and as we open ourselves up to the possibility of experiencing belonging. “Lives change in the context of community,” but change “does not occur in vacuum; it happens in relationship with others. From the beginning, God has said, ‘It is not good for man to be alone.’ God designed us with a need for community,” and Cole believes “that the best context for life change is a community of two or three . . . .a consistent theme throughout God’s Word” (Cole, 1999, p. 49).

We cannot argue against the fact that change takes place in community, but how to bring about the desired kind of change needs to be addressed. We need change from sickness to health, from brokenness to wholeness, from immaturity to maturity. Long (1997) offers options as he frames the need in the context of a Christian community: “The Christian community plays a role in the healing process through its worship, fellowship, teaching and prayers. People can cope with their pain and suffering if they are being loved and cared for” (p. 72). As Hull (2006) thinks about Paul’s definition of maturity as reaching unity and attaining the whole measure of Christ’s fullness (Ephesians 4:13), he is struck by two thoughts: “First, such an attainment in this life seems impossible. Second, Paul wrote these words to a community of fellow disciples rather than an individual” (p. 164).

In the context of love and care, healing and growing into maturity can take place. We can reach “a higher level of maturity receiving healing from life’s inevitable traumas, and having [one’s] life governed by the joy of the Lord,” says Friesen, et al (2000), for it
is a process that “does not happen in isolation. It takes a family and it takes community” (p. 3). Growing into maturity “requires bonds between people—they are the foundation upon which maturity is built” (p. 31).

Healthy communities in which change, growth, and maturity can take place are hard to find. One of the reasons, perhaps, is that people today “have not had healthy models in their families to show them how to develop a loving community,” (Long, 1997, pp. 96-97). This poses a great problem while at the same time opens up great opportunities for churches and ministries “to model healthy relationships. We need to have patience with one another as we work to create an environment where sharing pain can take place and trust can develop”. Not only is it essential “for such openness to develop” but it means “the leaders of the community need to model openness and vulnerability by sharing their pain with the group” (pp. 96-97).

People long for this kind of community, and the desire is so strong that even “religious needs cannot be considered apart from the need for community. People can and do move in and out of religious traditions in search of meaningful community” (Myers, 2003, p. 25). As a result, we need to keep in mind that “as people search for community, they are listening with their eyes, ears, and emotions. They are keenly aware of how we tell them they belong or don’t belong” (p. 26).

In conclusion, I agree with Cloud and Townsend (2001) that “biblical growth is designed to include other people as instruments. To be truly biblical as well as truly effective, the growth process must include the Body of Christ. Without the Body, the process is neither totally biblical nor orthodox” (p. 122).
The Scope: All Human Dimensions

There is abundant evidence that spiritual formation for multidimensional beings requires bringing all dimensions under the lordship of Jesus Christ. However, the complexity of the interrelationships among the various dimensions makes understanding and planning the process difficult. For this and other reasons, it is easy to understand why the concept has not been adequately integrated into developing programs designed to help members grow. This is especially true for the social dimension of relationship and community as well as for emotional health and maturity.

For example, there seems to be an assumption that once a person is born again the emotional wounds collected throughout life are washed away in the baptismal tank. There is no need or attempt to deal with them. Perhaps this is why, “despite all the emphasis today on spiritual formation, church leaders rarely address what spiritual maturity looks like as it relates to emotional health, especially as it relates to how we love other people” (Scazzero, 2003, p. 18).

Instruction to help people is usually given in certain essential areas such as prayer, Bible study, worship, discovery of their spiritual gifts, and/or learning how to explain the gospel to someone else. But Scazzero (2003) and other pastors are discovering more and more that “Jesus’ followers also need training and skills in the area of emotional health and maturity” if they are going to grow spiritually (p. 18). Believers need to learn “how to look beneath the surface of the iceberg of their personal lives, to break the power of how their past influences the present, to live in brokenness and vulnerability, [and] to know their limits” (p. 18). They also need to learn “to embrace their loss and grief and to make incarnation their model for living well” (p. 18).
Why be concerned about it? Scazzero (2006) points out that “very, very few people emerge out of their families of origin emotionally whole or mature” (p. 12). After ministering to people on this topic on audio tapes, Seamands (2004) says that after 15 years of his tapes being circulated worldwide, he has received letters and testimonies that confirm his belief “that there is a realm of problems that requires a special kind of prayer and a deeper level of healing by the Spirit. Somewhere between our sins, on the one hand, and our sickness, on the other, lies an area the Scriptures calls ‘infirmities’” (p. 11).

Scazzero (2003) joins the conversation with his own voice, “Something is desperately wrong with most churches today. We have many people who are passionate for God and his work, yet who are unconnected to their own emotions or to those around them” (p. 37). He asks the question: “Where did we get the idea that spiritual maturity can be achieved apart from an integration of the emotional aspects of who we are?” (p. 51).

For a long time in our churches there was little said about our emotions. I applaud the initiative of those deciding the themes for the Sabbath School lessons. The Bible Guide for the first quarter of 2011 was the first in a very long time that dealt with this subject. Why? One must ask.

Scazzero (2003) asks a more pointed question: “Where did the subtle bias that places the spiritual over the physical, emotional, social, and intellectual components of who we are come from?” (p. 51). He continues by noting that the “answer is complex but can be summarized simply as the influence of a Greek philosopher named Plato, who lived several centuries before Christ” (p. 51) but who has been able to live on through his influence. As Seventh-day Adventists who have a holistic view of humans in mind, we should be forerunners in addressing emotional health and maturity as integral in the
spiritual formation process.

Because the church has not really addressed the issue, Scazzero (2003) states that we are faced with “The sad truth” that “too little difference exists, in terms of emotional and relational maturity, between God’s people inside the church and those outside who claim no relationship to Jesus Christ” (p. 17). From my observation, the gospel’s power has not been fully seen in the lives of our people because we have left this area virtually untouched; we seldom deal with it.

Although we as pastors see the emotional challenges at the church week after week, Seamands (2004) wonders why we often give people the wrong idea that “the new birth and being ‘filled with the Spirit’ are going to automatically take care of these emotional hang-ups” even though this proves to be false again and again (p. 12). Scazzero (2003) adds, “Even more alarming, when you go beyond the praise and worship of our large meetings and conventions and into the homes and small-group meetings of God’s people, you often find a valley littered by broken and failed relationships” (p. 17).

This is the reality: having a great conversion experience with Jesus Christ, although “important and eternally valuable as this is, is not a shortcut to emotional health. It is not a quickie cure for personality problems” (Seamands, 2004, p. 12). People living in our faith communities today are marked by the “scars of ancient, painful hurts…. [and] such scars have been buried in pain for so long that they are causing hurt and rage that are inexplicable” (p. 11). As a pastor, I have often wondered why very sincere people who are desperately looking for a radical change in their lives and who are working on what is well recognized as the spiritual part of it find that “these scars are not touched by conversion and by sanctifying grace or by the ordinary benefits of prayer” (p. 11).
Some may see Seamands’ (2004) words as heretical. However, given enough time, people can even learn how to present themselves as spiritually mature while giving evidence that “something is terribly imbalanced about their spirituality. Sadly, too many people in our churches are fixated at a stage of spiritual immaturity that current models of discipleship have not addressed” (Scazzero, 2003, pp. 17-18). Most people can attest to these truths.

The process of spiritual formation would be much more effective if the area of emotional health and maturity were given careful attention, and if it would be included as an integral part of the spiritual growth process. As Scazzero (2003) states that the “link between emotional health and spiritual maturity is a large, unexplored area of discipleship. We desperately need, I believe, to reexamine the whole Scripture—and the life of Jesus in particular—in order to grasp the dynamics of this link” (p. 18). We would begin to understand that people “are not fakes, phonies, or hypocrites, that they are people, like you and me, with hurts and scars and wrong programming that interferes with their present behavior” (p. 12). Then our communities of faith would become havens of healing and compassion, and oases of love.

As Christians, and especially as Seventh-day Adventists, “understanding that salvation does not give instant emotional health offers us an important insight into the doctrine of sanctification” (Seamands, 2004, p. 12). It is crucial to understand that the healing process does not happen overnight but is a lifelong process. As Friesen et al. (2000) point out, “It has been said that God is not the great magician—He is the great physician” (p. 15).

Seamands (2004) says accepting the fact that taking emotional health and
maturity seriously as an integral part of the spiritual formation process helps us realize that “certain areas of our lives need special healing by the Holy Spirit” (p. 13). He emphasizes that, unless we take this seriously and deal with the damaged emotions in a special way, we will find that “they are not subject to ordinary prayer, discipline, and willpower, they need a special kind of understanding, an unlearning of past wrong programming, and a relearning and reprogramming transformation by the renewal of our minds” (p. 13).

Addressing the issue also helps us face the fact that “many are supposedly ‘spiritually mature’ but remain infants, children, or teenagers emotionally” (Sczazero, 2003, p. 18). How is it recognized? Those immature “demonstrate little ability to process anger, sadness, or hurt. They whine, complain, distance themselves, blame and use sarcasm—like little children when they don’t get their way” (p. 18).

As understanding grows concerning the need for taking emotional health and maturity seriously within Christianity, and as we begin to see that it is an integral part of the spiritual formation process, we avoid on the one hand the fact that “some Christians see anything that wiggles as the devil” and on the other hand “an overly simplistic pat-answer syndrome, which says, ‘Read your Bible. Pray. Have more faith. If you were spiritually ok, you would not have this hang-up. You would never get depressed. You would never have any sexual compulsions or problems” (Seamands, 2004, p. 13).

Also, by embracing this truth, a greater understanding of God, Scriptures, and the church is gained. Sczazero (2003) notes that people “can no longer deny the truth that emotional and spiritual maturity are inseparable” and that “it is not possible for a Christian to be spiritually mature while remaining emotionally immature” (p. 19, 50).
Even absentee or dropout rates would be impacted when churches become more relevant for “Men and women who made a genuine commitment to Christ but came to realize, slowly and painfully, that the spirituality available in church had not really delivered any deep, Christ transforming life change—either in themselves or others” (p. 10).

The healing process includes both creating an awareness of what emotional health and maturity entails as well as providing the understanding of how God’s healing takes place. Baker (1998) emphasizes that those who lead the process play an important role: “Part of the human nature is to refuse change until our pain exceeds our fear—fear of change, that is. We simply deny the pain until it gets so bad that we are crushed and finally realize we need some help” (p. 13). When Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome, he told them that the Holy Spirit “helps our infirmities” (Rom 8:26). One meaning for “help” has the medical connotation that means the way a nurse helps in the healing process. “So it is not simply ‘to take hold of on the other side,’ which is the literal meaning of the verb, but that the Holy Spirit becomes our partner helper, who works along with us in a mutual participating, for our healing” (Seamands, 2004, p. 19).

Addressing emotional health and maturity does not in any way mean that we come to think that God is uninvolved in our healing. Seamands (2004) says, on the contrary, no area of our lives needs help more desperately than this. The Holy Spirit comes alongside us and becomes “the divine counselor, the divine psychiatrist, who gets a hold of our problem on the other end” (p. 20). As he works, people are called to “face problems squarely, accept responsibility in the matter, ask if [they] want to be healed, forgive everyone who is involved in [their] problem, [and] forgive [themselves],” Finally, they must ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to them just what their real problem is and
how they should pray about it (pp. 20-22).

Achieving emotional healing is a part of the sanctification process—a partnership between God and his people. God initiates, people respond. In Life’s Healing Choices, Baker (2007) makes a strong point by emphasizing that “the goal is to teach them . . . [how] to make the healing choices that will help [them] become Christlike in character” (p. x). When God reveals areas that need to be healed, people are called to choose whether they will join him in the healing process.

Seamands (2004) affirms that God’s goodness is wonderfully seen as he “takes our infirmities, our damaged emotions, and the garbage of our lives and turns them from curses that cripple into means for growth and instruments to be used in His service” (p. 131). As in everything else where God is involved, the one who receives eventually becomes the one who gives.

There is an erroneous perception that a person needs to be strong, victorious, and impressive in order to minister. In Galatians 6:14, Paul says that there are only two things a person can glory in. “The first is the cross of Christ, perhaps the ultimate place of weakness in all human history, that last word in injustice, which God turned into the salvation of the whole world.” The other thing people can glory in is their infirmities or weaknesses (2 Cor 12:9-10) because God’s strength is made perfect in weakness. “As Christians we are called to be healed helpers, moving not on strength, but out of weakness” (Seamands, 2004, p. 140).

I concur with Seamands, Scazzero, Baker, Friesen et al, and others who are joining their voices with those who recognize the need for including the emotional health and maturity dimension in spiritual formation by showing its importance. Although Hull
(2006) shows how the merging of the three streams of classic discipleship, spiritual formation, and environmental discipleship has the “potential to transform the church in the next twenty-five years” (p. 20), perhaps the inclusion of emotional health and maturity which are rooted in relationship and community will become an integral part of the merging that Hull envisions.

The Life Model (Friesen et al, 2000) offers an effective approach in implementing the emotional health and maturity dimension in a church context. First, it is not just a discussion about growing, but provides practical steps on how to mature. Second, it does not just promote recovery but actually identifies specific ways to heal traumas. And lastly, it does not just offer casual reading, but challenges people to change and grow to be what God designed them to be.

The Life Model provides important definitions that guide understanding. Two of the most important include maturity and recovery, both within the context of the community and God:

(1) Maturity is about reaching one’s God-given potential. It means maximizing our skills and talents, and using them effectively, while growing into the full capacity of our individual designs (p. 29). (2) Recovery is about exceeding one’s current potential, and reaching one’s God-intended destiny (p. 59). It is facing and embracing all the pain in our lives, so that we will gain maximum growth; learning lessons, gaining power, and looking for ways to help others do the same. Those are the goals of recovery, a destiny that is beyond what any person could achieve alone. (3) It takes other people’s loving involvement in order to develop maturity, and it takes God’s redemption to bring something good out of our pain. He is working in everything for our good—so that we have something extraordinary to give to others. (Friesen et al, 2000, p. 60)

For the Life Model, the context of community—whether family, friends, or church—can be both painful and damaging to one or more in that community. Yet, as others already established, healing must take place in the context of community. Friesen,
et al (2000) found that

synergy is what happens when two agents are combined, and they increase each other’s effectiveness. People are energized to new levels in the church when the weak and the strong are combined. The church needs the wounded, and wounded hearts need the church….The life model is about receiving and giving life, reaching a higher level of maturity, receiving healing from life’s inevitable traumas, and having your life governed by the joy of the Lord. But this process does not happen in isolation. It takes a family and it takes community. (pp. 2-3)

Friesen et al, (2000) state that “growth, repair, maturity, and faith development are all intimately tied to relationships. People do need people to achieve wholeness in a fractured world” (p. 13). We all recognize that “life brings each of us inescapable traumas that block maturity. God’s redemptive activity comes to us in two ways: He brings healing to our traumas, and adopts us into His family,“ and both ways “boost us through our blocks to maturity, along the way of wholeness” (p. 27). People will be able “to live from the hearts he gave [them, their] true identities will emerge, and [their] relationships with family and community will be characterized by joy. . . . When something is going wrong, assess maturity, trauma recovery, dividedness, family and community support, and spiritual vitality—and pray that the Lord will provide redemption wherever a deficit is found” (p. 27).

How does one start? Friesen et al. (2000) suggest the following process: After looking at where you are, ask yourself the following questions: “Are you reaching your potential? (Maturity). Are you facing the pain in your life and growing? (Recovery). Are your relationships driven more by joy or fear? (Belonging). Are you winning the ongoing battle with your sark? (your heart)” (p. 126).

From then on, emotional health and maturity are achieved one step at a time.
The Process: Models for Change

Identifying principles from relevant process models for change provides information for designing a program to educate and engage participants in the process of spiritual formation. Both individual and congregational change emphasize an orderly, sequential, and simultaneous process that involves all the dimensions of a person in the context of community. As individuals within a community become transformed, the group becomes transformed.

Kotter (1996) describes an eight-step process for successful change that is designed to create the power and motivation essential for overcoming the many sources of inertia that work against a change process. He believes that skipping any step creates “only the illusion of speed and never produces satisfactory results” (p. 23).

Four of Kotter’s stages are important for the spiritual formation process: establishing a sense of urgency, developing and communicating a vision and strategy, generating short-term wins, and consolidating gains to produce more change.

Herrington, Bonem, and Furr (2000) applied Kotter’s principles to a congregation only after providing the necessary resources for generating spiritual and relational vitality by taking participants through spiritual disciplines, honest self-assessment, accountability, and problem identification. I agree with them, that unless members encounter God’s holiness, experience his grace, and embrace unity by engaging in community, many of the hurdles encountered in the long journey to transformation are probably insurmountable.

Kotter and Cohen (2002) realized that although a following a sequence was critical to the success of the program the greatest challenge in the change process was
changing people’s behavior. They discuss how “successful transformation, is less about formal data gathering, analysis, report writing, and presentations, than focusing on seeing and feeling” (p. 8). The pattern found throughout all eight stages is finding ways to reduce emotions that undermine change (anger, false pride, pessimism, arrogance, cynicism, panic, exhaustion, insecurity, and anxiety) while finding ways to enhance emotions that facilitate change, such as faith, trust, optimism, urgency, reality-based pride, passion, excitement, hope and enthusiasm (see p. 180). They call this the “see-feel-change” method that helps people identify the problem or its solution in ways that engage the emotions and senses to make needed change as compelling as possible.

I agree with Kotter and Cohen (2002) that when positive feelings are a part of the process, “people are able to move through the . . . stages of large-scale change despite often huge difficulties” (p. 182). This supports addressing emotional barriers very early in the spiritual formation process.

Whitesel (2003) found that each of the six stages of his model is accompanied by triggering events that propel congregations to move to the next stage. By changing two of these triggering events, group exit is prevented and change is implemented successfully. It seems that emotionally healthy people can face even the negative aspects of change in a more positive way.

Herrington, Creech, and Taylor (2003) discuss spiritual formation in the challenging contexts of relationships, emotional maturity, and conflict management. They emphasize three key concepts in the process of personal transformation: changing from the inside out, being a part of a loving community, and practicing a reflective lifestyle, all of which must be kept in dynamic tension. These authors bring together
important elements that are recognized by other authors as valuable in bringing about transformation.

Herrington et al (2003) contribute to the dialogue in showing that people not only need to know who they are apart from others in order to follow Jesus’ life and teachings rather than the anxieties and emotions of others, but also need to take responsibility for their own emotions and feelings in the midst of pressures from others. They must also understand and balance their individuality with togetherness while at the same time recognizing that their sinful reactions and interactions engrained in their fallen human nature are ultimately changed through the Holy Spirit’s presence in the spiritual disciplines, a process that requires information, practice, and reflection.

Hagberg and Guelich (2005) describe the faith journey as a series of six stages that have an orderly sequence. These stages are fluid, providing flexibility to move back and forth and experience more than one stage at the same time. They make the important observation that the higher stages are not to be viewed as superior in relationship with others.

The six phases of the spiritual journey are: (1) the recognition of God, (2) the life of discipleship, (3) the productive life, (4) the journey inward—including hitting “the wall” where the Christian is challenged to move beyond, (5) the journey outward, and (6) the life of love. The first three refer to a faith or spirituality that takes its expression most often from prescribed external standards, while the last three represent a difficult personal transformation and reemergence that require a rediscovery on a different level of what faith and spirituality are all about.

McNeal (2000) focuses on the biblical principle that heart shaping involves both
divine and human activity. The process does not progress linearly but occurs simultaneously and interactively in six different arenas: culture (times and environment), calling (God-given), community (people who shape and sustain), communion (personal relationship with God), conflict (engagement of destructive life and ministry forces), and the commonplace (the daily choices of living). His work, although from a different angle, illustrates the centrality of the heart and the multidimensional nature needed in the process of spiritual formation, as described by Willard (2002).

Willard (2002) is one of the most recognized contributors to understanding the biblical concept of spiritual formation and transformation. According to Willard’s model, spiritual formation is the multi-dimensional, sequential, “spirit-driven process of forming the inner world of the human self in such a way that it becomes like the inner being of Christ himself” (p. 42). Willard successfully describes the task and the importance of an effective approach for accomplishing it. He seeks to integrate and organize the essential dimensions of a person around God so that a person can love God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength and the neighbor as oneself.

Willard (2002) draws his dimensions from Scripture. They include (1) thoughts—images, concepts, judgments, inferences; (2) feelings—sensation and emotion which inclines us toward or away from things; (3) choice—decision, character, will, spirit, heart; (4) body—action; (5) social context—relations to others; and (6) soul—the integrating factor, the whole being, the person.

The restoration process is initiated by God, but requires a response of cooperation by the person. According to Willard (2002), human effort follows a general plan he calls VIM (vision, intent, and means) which includes both cognitive and practical experience,
moving from the inside-out, in the context of community, with success dependent on the
degree the pattern is understood and intentionally conformed to.

To summarize the principles and processes of the change models, we can say
that the selection of strategies for the change process is critical; that effective and stable
change happens from the inside out; that emotions either hinder or facilitate the process
of change; that awareness and response are necessary for change to take place; that the
level of urgency correlates to the level of success; that spiritual change involves a
continuous and ongoing relationship with God and others; that spiritual formation
happens only when the Holy Spirit is present and person responds; that change happens
best in community, and operates on both the individual and group levels, often
simultaneously; and that the role of programs, plans and processes is to facilitate both
personal and group change.

The Purpose: Serving God and Others

The process of spiritual formation fulfills its divine purpose when God’s children
learn to love and serve their Maker as individuals who are freed from that which hinders
them and they are empowered to live out God’s calling for their lives. Several different
approaches have been designed to facilitate this process. This section highlights the
principles of several models that can be applied to the spiritual formation process.

Experiencing God

Blackaby and King (1990) approach the spiritual formation process by focusing
on the ultimate purpose of spiritual formation. Through their 12-week (now 13-week)
interactive course on how to “experience God,” participants learn how to know and do
God’s will. In this curriculum, the authors share a radically God-centered way of life that results in challenging participants to step out and join Him in His work—with miraculous results.

The content of the material is organized around seven principles that make up the process that enables a person to experience God in a relationship with him.

First, God is always at work around you. Second, God pursues a continuing love relationship with you that is real and personal. Third, God invites you to become involved with Him in His work. Fourth, God speaks by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church to reveal Himself, His purposes, and His ways. Fifth, God’s invitation for you to work with Him always leads you to a crisis of belief that requires faith and action. Sixth, you must make major adjustments in your life to join God in what He is doing. Seventh, you come to know God by experiencing as you obey Him and He accomplishes His work through you. (Blackaby & King, 1990, p. 225)

Blackaby and King (1990) organize their material around the spiritual disciplines of Scripture and prayer, and they include the possibility of experiencing within a community in a rudimentary way. However, the program is limited since it is not multi-dimensional. Emotional health and maturity are not addressed directly. Even though the Bible stories and prayer points allow the participant(s) to make connections on their own, there is no instruction, experience, or opportunity to deal with the barriers to spiritual growth that might prevent a genuine heart change. The program could be more effective if these barriers were addressed first.

S.H.A.P.E.

Rees’ (2006) program called S.H.A.P.E. is based on the purpose of ministry outlined in The Purpose Driven Life by Rick Warren (2002). His book helps people discover God’s unique purpose for their lives based on the ways God has shaped them. He guides participants to unlock their God-given potential, uncover their specific
kingdom purposes, and unfold God’s plan for their lives. He helps them discover their personal blend through their spiritual gifts, passions, talents, personalities, and life experiences. Rees’ program includes aspects of the emotional health and community dimensions necessary for discovering one’s ministry purpose for life.

The program designed by Rees’ (2006) is practical and useful, especially when it is coupled with Baker’s (2007) *Life’s Healing Choices*, which specifically helps people find freedom from hurts, hang-ups, and destructive habits. His program, from its beginning, views the goal of the purpose-driven life as a goal to be reached rather than as a natural result of a multidimensional spiritual formation process.

*Como Crecer in Jesús [How to Grow in Jesus]*

Godeau (2007) deals with the sad reality that if new converts do not continue developing their physical, mental, social, and spiritual faculties after conversion they are doomed to become lukewarm and may even abandon the faith. He suggests a two-fold process for developing true disciples: elements to be taught and a procedure that facilitates changing habits to be implemented.

The teaching includes topics on learning how to study and apply the Word of God, developing a prayer life, becoming a steward of all of God’s resources, and having a life of friendship with God’s people and with those who are not part of God’s family yet. The procedure he outlines for a person to change habits has seven steps: (1) want it, (2) make a decision, (3) write down a commitment, (4) be determined to not deviate from the plan until new habits are developed, (5) practice the plan, (6) share it, and (7) continue to be dependent on God.

Godeau (2007) recognizes that spiritual growth among new converts and
followers of Christ is critical to retaining them, and this growth must include more than surface interface with the spiritual disciplines, such as Bible study. His program emphasizes the need for both elements and process, and his approach to habit change is fundamental and useful as a skill to be developed both personally and within the community. However, he does not address the elements of emotional health and maturity, or include a means of developing a safe and trusted community as the ideal place to learn the concepts and skills necessary for authentic growth. The spiritual disciplines of Bible study and prayer are an important part of Godeau’s program, although his emphasis on prayer is traditional.

**The Purpose-driven Church**

Warren uses a life-development process for those who are a part of his Saddleback Church. He uses the simple illustration of a baseball diamond to capture the idea that spiritual progress is a journey that takes place in the context of community. The curriculum uses the four bases of the baseball diamond to symbolize the four levels of becoming an active missionary for the church. The four bases and the pitcher’s mound correspond to the five purposes of the church, as Warren conceives of them: to connect, to grow, to serve, to share, and to worship. To make those five purposes even easier to remember in the context of the program, they are framed in terms of the five M’s: membership, maturity, ministry, mission, and magnification (Mair, 2005, p. 164).

Warren’s approach (1992) is an effective and powerful presentation of how followers of Christ can develop as members in a church organization and community. The purpose of Warren’s program is developing people and integrating them into a church organization. He takes people through a logical sequence where each stage in his
comprehensive process accomplishes a progressive involvement and commitment. In
time, the “life’s healing choices” program was added to provide a much-needed resource
for dealing with emotional issues. The difference between Warren’s excellent and
comprehensive program and what is often needed today is the contrast between a
sequential stage-driven process and a single integrated program approach.

**Focusing Leaders**

The Church Resource Ministries organization provides helpful materials for
leaders at all levels. Their program, *Focusing Leaders* (Walling & Mayes, 2001), guides
a person through a process that aligns him or her with God’s unique shaping and calling
for life. It has four core commitments: (1) personal growth through God’s Word, (2)
spiritual power through intercessory prayer, (3) integrity through accountability
relationships, and (4) strategic mission through God’s unique call (p. 7). Because of the
fear that tools and processes are often more driven by and focused on man’s plans rather
than those of God, the focusing of leaders can only occur when men and women choose a
life-style of absolute surrender to the king and to the building of his kingdom.

The program has five essentials: God is already at work and has been at work all
along; there has never been a time when he has not been at work, and he invites us to join
him, and we must be absolutely surrendered (Church Resource Ministries, 2003, p. 13).

This process has three steps. (1) Assessing the past, which involves creating a
timeline process that directs participants to answer three short but profound questions:
Where have you been? (a time line); Where are you going? (a personal calling statement);
and who could help you? (mentoring). (2) Discovering the future which helps
participants capture God’s vision for their future. Participants are able to see that events
and lessons of the past have not only been God’s tools to shape their life, but have become the guideposts that inform their future. (3) Implementing their calling by living intentionally as individuals and within the family and community as well.

In seeing how God shapes and calls a person, I recognized a valuable process in the design and implementation of the Focusing Leaders resource. It could make an essential and effective contribution to spiritual formation programs by enabling participants to be guided to see their past through God’s eyes when they synthesize the information, skills, and experiences in the process.

The Resources: Spiritual Disciplines

In general terms, discipline means "any training intended to develop moral character, or produce a pattern of behavior" (Wikipedia, 2011). The online Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines it as "training that corrects, molds, or perfects the mental faculties or moral character” (2011). However, when the word ‘spiritual’ is added to this term, many different and sometimes conflicting ideas, feelings, and thoughts arise.

The Challenge

Much of what is being said today in Christian circles on the topics of spiritual formation and spiritual disciplines is related to the writings of Richard Foster and Dallas Willard. They are the ones believed to have brought the term ‘spiritual disciplines’ to the evangelical conversation.

Foster (1988) says the spiritual disciplines “are things that we do . . . actions, not merely states of mind” (p. 105). He believes that “God intends the Disciplines of the spiritual life to be for ordinary human beings…in fact, the Disciplines are best exercised
in the midst of our relationships with our husband or wife, our brothers and sisters, our friends and neighbors” (p. 1). He defines the purpose of spiritual formation as “spiritual growth” (p. 8). Foster says that the disciplines are “a means of receiving [God’s] grace” allowing us “to place ourselves before God so that he can transform” and bless us. Although “by themselves the spiritual disciplines can do nothing...they can get us to the place where something can be done” (p. 7).

Foster (1988) specifically refers to six purposes that come out of the disciplines as a whole. He says that the disciplines lead to experiential Christianity because they are central to it (p. 1, footnote). He believes the disciplines are capable of accomplishing the seemingly impossible task of “transforming the inner spirit” because they “allow us to place ourselves before God so that He can transform us” (pp. 6-7), providing spiritual growth and freedom (p. 110). Foster seems to suggest that our part is placing ourselves where God can transform us and where we can receive his grace.

For Willard (1998),

The aim of disciplines in the spiritual life—and, specifically, in the following of Christ—is the transformation of the total state of the soul [being]. It is the renewal of the whole person from the inside, bringing a difference in the thoughts, feelings, and character that may never be manifest in outward behavior at all” (109).

Willard’s (1991) “central claim is that we can become like Christ by doing one thing—by following him in the overall style of life he chose for himself” (p. ix). He emphasizes faith: “If we have faith in Christ, we must believe that he knew how to live,” and then describes how we can “through faith and grace, become like Christ by practicing the types of activities he engaged in, by arranging our whole lives around the activities he himself practiced in order to remain constantly at home in the fellowship of his Father” (p. ix). He goes on to identify the activities Jesus practiced, such as “solitude and silence,
prayer, a simple and sacrificial living, intense study and meditation upon God’s Word and God’s ways, and service to others” (p. ix). He sums it up by saying that “to live as Christ lived is to live as he did all his life” (p. x).

Boa (2001) sees spiritual disciplines as enhancing and giving us “options we could never have had otherwise” (p. 77), while Ortega (2004), cautions that “spiritual disciplines are not a barometer of spirituality. The ultimate indicator of [our] spiritual health is [our] capacity to fully love God and love people” (p. 16). Ackerman (2001) describes spiritual disciplines as “means to that grace and also to those gifts. Spiritual disciplines, ‘exercises unto godliness,’ are only activities undertaken to make us capable of receiving more of his life and power without harm to ourselves or others” (p. 156).

Spiritual disciplines for Whitney (1997) are “the God-ordained means by which we bring ourselves before God, experience Him, and are changed into Christlikeness” (p. 92-93. He describes the disciplines further as “the God-given means we are to use in the Spirit-filled pursuit of Godliness” (p. 17). According to Scripture, “All who consider themselves Christians are exhorted in Hebrews 12:14 to ‘pursue holiness, without which no one will see the Lord;’” but “Pursuing holiness is not what qualifies us to ‘see the Lord’; it is the Lord Himself who qualifies us for this by grace through faith in the life and death of Jesus Christ” (p. 94). He further advises that “the ongoing pursuit of holiness (in other words, sanctification, godliness, Christlikeness) is characteristic of everyone who is on the way to ‘see the Lord’ in Heaven” (p. 94).

Caligure (2007) expands the understanding of spiritual formation to include the concept that a spiritual practice or discipline can be thought of as anything a person does intentionally to become and remain open to the ongoing work of God in his or her life.
Others describe spiritual disciplines as simply behaviors that facilitate spiritual growth, or “a habit or regular pattern in your life that repeatedly brings you back to God and opens you up to what God is saying to you,” (Longman, 2011, p. 2:1).

However, the spiritual disciplines can be compromised by non-biblical approaches. As Hull (2006) points out, a weakness of the spiritual formation movement is “its associations with theological liberalism” which makes it “susceptible to infiltration from secular worldviews, other religions, and Easter philosophy” (p. 19). Cork (2010), rightly or wrongly, even implies that “Foster’s writings combine Quaker spiritualism (an emphasis on the divine ‘inner light’) with historic Christian (Catholic and evangelical) practices.” His concern emphasizes the necessity of practicing biblical disciplines.

Hull’s (2006) concern is echoed by Wilson (2010) when he cautions to “Stay away from non-biblical spiritual disciplines or methods of spiritual formation that are rooted in mysticism such as contemplative prayer, centering prayer, and the emerging church movement in which they are promoted” (p. 8).

Whitney (1997) makes an important distinction when he says “Keep in mind that the spiritual disciplines are biblical, that is, God-given and found in His written Word,” but warns that “whatever else might be said about them, those practices originating from ourselves, derived from our culture, or discovered in other religions may not properly be considered Christian spiritual disciplines” (p. 93). He also warns that they “are not by themselves the marks of Christlikeness as much as they are the means to it. Without understanding the distinction, it is possible for someone to practice the disciplines and be far from Christ” (pp. 94-95).

It is with this understanding and these cautions that I chose for the spiritual
formation program the unquestionably biblical spiritual disciples of Bible study, prayer, and worship. I believe that Willard’s understanding and use of the spiritual disciplines in the spiritual formation process is biblical and most suitable for this project.

Bible Study

The theological foundation in Chapter II provided the basis for using God’s Word in the spiritual formation process. Foster (1988) says that “Jesus made it unmistakably clear that the knowledge of the truth will set us free (John 8:32). Biblical truth not only establishes the goal to be achieved but also the means by which it can be accomplished. Feelings are good and necessary but unable to free us. “Without knowledge of the truth, we will not be free” (p. 63).

Foster (1988) also notes that the central purpose of Scripture in the spiritual formation process “is not doctrinal purity (though that is no doubt involved) but inner transformation. We come to the Scripture to be changed, not to amass information” (p. 69), even though information is crucial in order to reach the desired transformation. In the words of the Psalmist “I have laid up thy word in my heart, that I might not sin against thee’ (Ps 119:11),” and in Paul’s words, “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16, 17).

Warren (2006), in his book on Bible study methods, finds two purposes for the knowledge of Scripture according to Paul in 2 Timothy 3: “The first purpose is that we might come to know Jesus Christ and receive his salvation (v. 15),” and “the second is to help us spiritually that we might be equipped for whatever God wants us to do (v. 17).” He understands that “teaching shows us the path on which we are to walk; rebuking
shows us where we got off the path; correcting tells us how to get back on the path; and training in righteousness teaches us how to stay on the path.” For Warren, the Bible is “a comprehensive guidebook for living the Christian life” (p. 11).

But Warren (2006) also acknowledges that information alone does not change because “the Bible was given to us to show us how we can have a relationship with Almighty God and how we are to live our lives his way in this world. It was given to change our lives to become more like that of Jesus Christ” (p. 34). We are changed by the information, and more importantly, by the relationship with God we develop.

Of the 12 methods of Bible study Warren describes in his book, it is the devotional one that “involves taking a passage of the Bible, large or small, and prayerfully meditating on it until the Holy Spirit shows you the way to apply its truth to your own life in a way that is personal, practical, possible, and provable” (pp. 33-34). He notes that the goal for every reader is to take God’s Word and do what it says (Jas 1:22).

The Bible “is concerned with practical godly living” and provides the ultimate test by which we study and apply Scripture: the person and life of Jesus Christ (Warren, 2006, p. 43). We need continually to ask whether the application helps us become more like Jesus or not. He adds that the “application of God’s Word is vitally necessary to our spiritual health and our growth in Christian maturity.” To develop a Christ-like character is a major goal of Christian living. But we face daily the challenge of achieving this goal. Scripture helps us recognize what a Christ-like quality in our lives is so that we “may then work on setting aside negative character qualities and building positive ones in your life” (p. 61). The study of Scripture helps us recognize what needs to be changed and how a relationship with Jesus empowers his followers to reach his goals for us.
Worship

For many Christians, worship is at the heart of our relationship with God, both as individuals and as a community.

Joseph Kidder (2009) describes worship as “an encounter with God—a life changing experience” that takes place “when the individual believer seeks the Lord with all his or her heart, mind, soul, passion, and energy” (p. 10). It “focuses on God,” and “always begins with a recognition of divine holiness” (p. 11). He notes that in Scripture, worship refers to “the response of God’s people to the wonder of who He is . . . our attributing worth to God” (p. 12). But worship also brings blessings to humans; “True worship also helps us to understand ourselves and our shortcomings and to seek God’s forgiveness” and will “always result in service” (p. 13). We come to worship so that our lives will be different” (p. 13).

Foster (1988) emphasizes that the focus of a Christian’s worship must be God: “You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve” (Matt 4:10). The “one true God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the God whom Jesus Christ revealed” (p. 158). Our part in worship is to “worship God the Father in spirit and in truth, for such the Father seeks to worship him” (John 4:23). It is God who seeks, draws, and persuades, but “worship is the human response to the divine initiative” (p. 158). The result of the worship experience is obedience, so “if worship does not propel us into greater obedience, is has not been worship. To stand before the Holy One of eternity is to change” (p. 173).

There are two aspects of God that explain why we are moved to worship him: who God is and what he has done. In the Bible, we find a God who acts, whose
goodness, faithfulness, justice, mercy, can be seen in his dealings with his people. As Foster notes, “We praise God for who he is, and thank him for what he has done” (p. 160). Furthermore, God desires our “worship first, and our service second. Our lives are to be punctuated with praise, thanksgiving, and adoration. Service flows out of worship. Service as a substitute for worship is idolatry” (p. 161).

Ackerman (2001) quotes Eugene Peterson who reminds his readers that worship is not only an individual endeavor but a communal one as well. Referring to John the Revelator, Peterson says John is “responsible for a circuit of churches on the mainland whose primary task is worship. Worship shapes the human community in response to the living God. If worship is neglected or perverted, our communities fall into chaos or under tyranny” (p. 24).

**Prayer**

For many, prayer has little or no bearing on their lives. Yancey (2006), a spokesperson for thousands of voices, asks, “Does prayer have any real impact in the outer world or is it merely a private conversation with God?” (p. 115). In his book on prayer, Yancey shares Richard Mouw’s story about a tourist who observes a devout Jewish man praying at the Western (‘Wailing’) Wall in Jerusalem. When asked if he believed his prayer was heard, he answered, ‘It is like talking to a wall’” (p. 116). When interviewing a Chinese pastor, Yancey remembers asking him “‘What can Christians in the rest of the world do for you?’” and he recalls the fervent answer, “‘You can pray. Please tell the church to pray for us’” (p. 117). Reflecting on this experience, Yancey says “The first time I heard that answer, I wanted to say, ‘Yes, of course, but we honestly do want to help. What else can we do?’” but now realizes that “Christians who have no
access to earthly power truly believe prayer gives them access to a greater power” (p. 117).

Throughout history, there have been many who truly believed that prayer matters, that it does make a difference. For example, Foster (1988) believes that of all the spiritual disciplines, “prayer catapults us onto the frontier of the spiritual life,” and is most central because “it ushers us into perpetual communion with the Father” (p. 33). Those involved in prayer have found repeatedly that “to pray is to change” because the almighty God has chosen prayer as “the central avenue to transform us” (p. 33). While those looking to God to experience change, those who are unwilling to change tend to abandon it. “The closer we come to the heartbeat of God the more we see our need and the more we desire to be conformed to Christ” (p. 33). By communing with God in prayer “we begin to think God’s thoughts after him: to desire the things he desires, to love the things he loves, to will the things he wills.” The time comes in people’s lives when they start having the experience of Enoch because they “are taught to see things from [God’s] point of view” (pp. 33-34).

But the power of prayer is not limited to an individual’s personal life alone; God invites all “to change the world by prayer” (Foster, 1988, p. 35). And, like the other disciplines, how to pray is something a person needs to learn. Foster points out that Jesus’ disciples asked him to teach them to pray (Luke 11:1). “One of the most critical aspects in learning to pray for others is to get in contact with God so that his life and power can flow through us into others” (p. 38).

Prayer is not limited to one form or to one approach, but includes everything from begging to praise to thanksgiving to meditation to contemplation, and arises from a
thought, desire, or is spoken through audible words. We find in Scriptures that prayers are as varied as the individuals who pray them. Ackerman (2001) has observed that different types of prayer fit certain personalities; “various forms of prayer are used for different times of life. Some people are attracted to thinking prayer, while others want to involve the heart or the body. Some want written prayers; others insist that their prayer be spontaneous” (p. 26). Ackerman notes that we often outgrow the prayers of childhood, only to “rediscover childlike prayers in maturity” (p. 26). Since prayer is “the opening of the heart as to a friend”, the ways of communicating something to God change according to the needs and situations (White, 1908, p. 93).

Prayer changes us by drawing us closer to God and letting him mold us into His likeness. In Psalm 25:4-5, David describes the process that prayer takes a person through: “Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.” When discussing this passage, John Maxwell (1996) says it “contains three key phrases: show me, teach me, and guide me” (p. 9). He sees a progression in the way God deals with us. He points out the fact that when God shows us His standards and His will for our lives, it is not always easy on us. “It almost always requires us to grow and to change” (p. 9). As we accept what God shows us, He is able to teach us, and not until we are teachable and growing is he finally able “to guide us, to lead us into His plan and purpose;” and “When God shows me, He has my heart. When God teaches me, he has my mind. When God guides me, He has my hand” (p. 9).

Coneff (2011) developed an approach to prayer that incorporates key aspects that are emphasized by many authors. To illustrate, prayer connects the human heart (White)
to the divine power (Yancey) so that God brings transformation (Foster) by showing, teaching and guiding us (Maxwell).

In Coneff’s (2011) approach to prayer, the first objective for participants is to open their hearts to allow God to reveal the negative messages they received when they were wounded, abandoned, rejected, so that they may be ready for a deeper healing, connecting their stories to the story of Christ. The second objective is to provide an opportunity so that the participants can see where Christ identifies with them by connecting their stories with Jesus’ story on Calvary, their wounded hearts with the heart of the wounded healer. The third objective is for participants to receive the power of the resurrection and the characteristics of the life of Jesus (kindness, peace, purity, love, acceptance, forgiveness, etc.). This prayer provides a powerful experience because it connects the human heart to the heart of God.

To summarize, the integration of the three spiritual disciplines of Bible study, worship, and prayer into the life provides a better picture of God, brings our hearts closer to his, and calls for alignment of the life with His will through transformation. God reveals the need, provides the means, and gives the grace and power to fulfill the need.
CHAPTER IV

PROGRAM DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION, AND EVALUATION

Background

This project developed through a process of evolution.

As a young pastor in Ecuador I noticed that people could be in the church for many years without experiencing significant change and spiritual growth. They would experience the same issues year after year. This challenge triggered my quest to understand how a pastor could help church members experience spiritual change and transformation that would last so they would grow spiritually.

When I started the Doctor of Ministry program at the Seventh-day Adventist Seminary, I was most interested in understanding how to facilitate spiritual change and transformation among members. The first topic that captivated my interest as “the answer” was spiritual disciplines. Later on, a guest speaker came to a doctoral class and dealt with the complexities of bringing change within the context of a congregation. He explained how the inevitable triggering events in a change process, if managed correctly, could make change possible without splitting the congregation.

At the same time, in the Texas Conference I was a part of, a two-year program for pastors called “Focusing Leaders” was started to bring personal spiritual renewal. For me the pieces of the puzzle started to come together to form a fuzzy picture of what would eventually become this project.
I started to implement changes in my church by trying out what I was learning from classes, from reading, and the focusing-leaders program. I began to notice a spiritual revival among some of the members but at the same time, I was aware that the same people were losing their spiritual strength as they struggled with interpersonal relationships. Although I had been focusing on helping church members practice some of the spiritual disciplines, it became evident that there were missing pieces in the puzzle of spiritual formation.

It was at this time that the concept of a multi-dimensional spiritual formation process gained my attention. The first awareness came when I read the book Renovation of the Heart by Willard (2002). His perspective was holistic; every aspect of the human being needed to be organized around God. I realized that, in addition to spiritual considerations, the emotional, the social, the physical, and the mental were important dimensions that needed to be integrated for spiritual formation to be well rooted. The cognitive was usually a part of spiritual programs, the physical was an aspect members were well informed in, but the social and emotional were generally missing.

Although I had already been exposed to the relationship between emotional health and spiritual formation, the final pieces of the puzzle came into even clearer focus when I was introduced to the “life model” approach to ministry by Friesen et al and the book The Emotionally Healthy Church by Peter Scazzero (2003). My concept of spiritual formation as an integrated multifaceted experience that included emotional health—all in the context of community and divine interaction—was now complete. I was eager to develop a pilot program to test my conceptual model. It appeared to me that the primary elements necessary to approach spiritual formation holistically had been selected.
Program Design

My new attempt to engage church members in spiritual formation began with an examination of Scripture and relevant literature in order to develop a process-oriented, experiential, holistic program. After gleaning the various concepts, elements and process principles from the theological foundation and review of literature, the next step was to integrate them into a viable program that would educate a small group of people about the multi-dimensional reality of spiritual formation, engage them in the activities that would provide a practical experience in this kind of approach to spiritual formation, and equip them for their lifelong journey of Holy Spirit-driven, holistic spiritual growth.

Program Principles

Scripture and literature suggested that the following principles should be included in a 12-session pilot program plan for a small group of believers designed to introduce participants to the multi-dimensional experience of spiritual formation.

1. The program elements and process must be intentionally planned and implemented if it is to accomplish its purpose effectively. Christianity has often assumed that spiritual growth will happen automatically without understanding and practicing the principles that enable it.

2. The program needs to be conducted by following a written curriculum that provides for the program principles, elements, and processes that are important for achieving its purpose and objectives. The curriculum plan should include a program overview as well as plans for sessions that provide for the essential aspects of knowledge, skills and behaviors, attitudes and values and commitments, strategies, and presentations.

3. The program needs to be informational, interactive, and experiential. Both
the mind (understanding) and heart (will) need to be engaged so that change can be experienced. It has been frequently observed that Adventist programs tend to emphasize a cognitive more than an experiential approach.

4. The effectiveness of the program for participants is related to their readiness for change and their sense of urgency for change. The more desperate a participant is the more effective and long lasting their change will be. Initial participant readiness and sense of need is expected to increase as a result of participation in the program.

5. The program should include and involve every human dimension, including cognitive, emotional, social, physical, spiritual and heart (which includes the will and human spirit) aspects. However, because the physical has been dealt with in other church programs, it did not need to be included in this program.

6. The program needs to provide the concepts and tools necessary to equip the participants to lead their own spiritual formation journeys after the program is completed.

7. The program should be designed to be reproducible by introducing participants to, and equipping them with, the knowledge, skills, behaviors, attitudes, values, and commitments necessary for sharing with others what they have learned.

8. The program must include the Holy Spirit’s involvement because genuine Christian spiritual formation by definition is a Spirit-led process. The goal of spiritual formation is conformity with Christ, which only comes through heart transformation. This inside-out process can be achieved only through the interaction of the human will in response to the grace of God who initiates the process.

9. The program is expected to contribute to the quality of life participants will experience and how it affects the process of spiritual growth, rather than attempt to focus
on conversion since participants have already accepted Christ and received the gift of salvation.

10. The pilot program will only introduce participants to the process of experiencing a holistic, Spirit-led transformation, along with the skills learned. Those participants who are ready for change and have engaged in the program should be better able to guide their own spiritual journeys.

Program Elements

1. The first program element is a basic knowledge overview of the concepts involved in the spiritual formation process, including an understanding of the selected program elements and processes. Other program elements include instruction and experience in community, emotional health and maturity, a God-given calling, and the spiritual disciplines of Bible study, worship, and prayer.

2. Community is a necessary context in which to experience change and spiritual formation. Participants need to experience belonging, practice relational skills, and be held accountable as they participate in the triads and the program community.

3. Emotional health and maturity is a special focus of this spiritual formation program because this dimension is not usually connected to spiritual formation, and spiritual growth will be limited or prevented if there are unresolved issues in this area.

4. A God-given calling that is discovered, understood, and lived out should be an ongoing outcome of the spiritual formation process. Remembering significant past and present experiences can help identify God’s calling and provide a life purpose.

5. Spiritual disciplines provide the space and opportunity for God and humans to connect and interact so that spiritual growth can happen, although they are not goals in
themselves. The three disciplines that seem indispensable for experiencing spiritual formation in a program are Scripture, worship and transformational prayer.

Process Principles

1. The participants should be encouraged to live in continual surrender to God because spiritual formation rests on the premise of death to self and cannot continue unless this foundation is firmly established and maintained.

2. The elements and processes need to be sequentially organized even though they may be fluid and overlap. Change models are usually organized in the form of stages that provide a conceptual picture of the desired change and its process and give direction to the change process.

3. It was believed that pre- and post-program self-assessment surveys in the areas of spiritual and emotional health and maturity as well as readiness for change would provide valuable information to help provide evidence of the program’s effectiveness.

4. Each session needed to include a review of the concepts presented in previous sessions so that, as the big picture unfolds during the program, the holistic nature of the elements and process of spiritual formation is grasped and becomes internalized.

5. Motivation is an important aspect of the program and should be well integrated into the program process. If people do not want to change they will not participate in a meaningful way or they will reject what is being presented. The degree of desire and/or desperateness tends to correlate with the degree and extent of the need and the benefits.

6. Accountability needed to be a part of the program process so that participants would have feedback and support as they sought to learn, practice, and internalize the
spiritual formation experience. Triads are especially helpful for addressing this need.

7. Tools and skills introduced to participants needed to be practiced during the sessions as well as between them so that they would be well learned and could be developed into habits after the program was completed.

Program Implementation

Mechanics

After designing a program that would include the relevant principles, elements, and processes to include in the pilot program, the next challenge was to select the particular mechanical aspects of delivery that would be effective in implementing the program—the who, where, when, and how.

The program consisted of an initial information meeting to explain the program and establish participant commitments; 12 two-hour sessions which met twice a week (Sabbath afternoon and Monday evening); and a couple of extra sessions for participants who needed help with their timelines. Session frequency had both advantages and disadvantages. Several already-scheduled church events made having the program last longer than seven weeks nearly impossible. But the frequency kept the momentum strong, the session content fresh in the minds of the attendees, and attendance commitment easier.

A total of 16 people were regular program participants who attended from beginning to end. Six more participated in the program in spite of limited attendance. Of the total of 21 participants who attended, 14 came from the Richardson Spanish SDA Church and seven from the Spring Valley SDA Church, a church recently planted by
members of the Richardson church. There were 8 men and 13 women.

Four criteria were set for the selection of participants. First, the participants should be capable of sharing what they learned with others in their church family. Second, participants should represent a wide range of those who make up the church community according to the length of time they have been baptized members. The length of time since baptism ranged from a new believer to nine years. Third, both male and female participants were selected so that each triad could be composed of only male or female participants. Because there were eight males and 13 females, and because several were irregular attendees, it was deemed acceptable for a triad to have only two or as many as four members when necessary. Fourth, each participant needed to show a willingness to participate in the program and make a commitment to engage in all the sessions and activities insofar as possible. All the participants who went through the program met the criteria except for those who had a scheduling conflict with work on Monday evenings. The program was held in a room in the fellowship hall of the Richardson Spanish Seventh-day Adventist Church.

There was an introductory meeting on February 12 for the Richardson Church and February 14 for the Spring Valley Church to explain the program and elicit commitment. The participants were informed that the program would give them tools to embark on a lifelong journey of spiritual growth. During the introductory meeting, attendees were given four assessments to evaluate their levels of spiritual health, emotional health, maturity, and readiness for change.

The combined group met a total of 12 two-hour sessions following the introductory meeting. The first two-hour session took place over the weekend of
February 19, 2011 and was followed by 11 additional consecutive sessions of teaching and activities. At first, the plan was to hold the sessions once a week, but because a 12-week period was too extended a commitment for both the presenter and the participants with so many church related programs during the week and on weekends, it was advisable to hold the sessions twice a week: Sabbath afternoons and Monday evenings.

Three issues challenged the program: attendance, length of program, and venue. The first challenge was difficult to handle: several participants invited others to come along, and some who heard about what was happening came uninvited. The second was the length of program: a seven-week period of sessions may be appropriate for a pilot program, but would likely be insufficient for a regular program. More time would be needed to practice the skills and firmly root the new changes in paradigms and habits. The third challenge was the venue. The room in the fellowship hall proved to be too small for the triad groups to meet, but on Sabbaths, the sanctuary was occupied for various other programs. In addition, having so many people on the church grounds proved to be distracting.

The Curriculum

The curriculum was planned to include both the elements necessary for spiritual formation and a logical sequenced process to bring about spiritual change within the context of a faith community. Notice the Curriculum Overview on the next page.

The first unit introduced participants to a brief overview of the program concepts: what spiritual formation really is, what the divine resources for connecting with God are, how change takes place, how emotional health and maturity impact spiritual growth, and how all these aspects help to develop a purposeful life led by God.
# Table 1

## Program Overview

SPIRITUAL FORMATION WITHIN THE FAITH COMMUNITY:
THE BEGINNING OF A LIFE JOURNEY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Session Topic</th>
<th>Desired Participant Goal</th>
<th>Spiritual Disciplines Focus</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unit 1 - THE COMMUNITY AS A PLACE TO BEGIN THE SPIRITUAL FORMATION PROCESS</strong></td>
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</table>
| 1 | Spiritual renewal, spiritual formation, spiritual disciplines, transformational prayer, emotional health, change, accountability | To become acquainted with key elements in the spiritual formation process and with transformational prayer | Scripture: Elijah’s Carmel experience (1 Kings 19:1-18)  
Worship: Submit to God’s leading in the spiritual formation process |
| **Unit 2 - THE COMMUNITY AS A PLACE TO EXPERIENCE BELONGING & DEVELOP RELATIONAL SKILLS** | | | |
| 2 | Spiritual context in community | To embrace Christ as the center of belonging and the unifying factor of true spiritual community | Scripture: Healing the paralytic (Mark 2:1-12; Heb 2:9-10; 4:14-16)  
Worship: Praise God for this community  
Prayer: Straight 2 the Heart |
| 3 | Sharing life in community | To experience incarnational life through giving and receiving within the community | Scripture: Joseph faces his brothers (Genesis 45:1-28; Isaiah 53)  
Worship: Exalt God for life-giving relationships  
Prayer: Straight 2 the Heart |
| **Unit 3 - THE COMMUNITY AS A PLACE TO RECOVER EMOTIONALLY & GROW INTO MATURITY** | | | |
| 4 | Joy within the community | To experience joy as foundational for recovery | Scripture: Parable of the Lost Son (Luke 15:11-32; Luke 24)  
Worship: Praise God for the gift of joy in recovery  
Prayer: Straight 2 the Heart |
| 5 | Barriers to recovery | To identify traumas that limit or prevent recovery | Scripture: A woman with a flow (Mark 5:24-34; Psalm 109)  
Worship: Adore God for enabling-providing forgiveness  
Prayer: Straight 2 the Heart |
| 6 | The recovery process | To practice the steps in the process of recovery | Scripture: Paul’s recovery process (Acts 9:20-31; Psalm 109)  
Worship: Praise God for discernment as we recover  
Prayer: Straight 2 the Heart |
| 7 | The maturity process | To understand the primary task and its problem in each stage of growing into maturity | Scripture: David and his sons (2 Samuel 11-14; Psalm 51)  
Worship: Exalt God for working all things for good  
Prayer: Straight 2 the Heart |
| 8 | Fear versus love | To experience the process of moving from fear bond to love bonds | Scripture: Peter’s conversion (Luke 22:54-62; Gethsemane to Calvary)  
Worship: Praise God for his love casting out our fears  
Prayer: Straight 2 the Heart |
| **Unit 4 - THE COMMUNITY AS A PLACE TO START LIVING GOD’S PURPOSE FOR ONE’S LIFE** | | | |
| 9 | Developing a time line | To learn to see the past from God’s perspective | Scripture: Moses’ spiritual formation (Acts 7:18-37; Rom. 8:28-29)  
Worship: Submit to God’s teaching  
Prayer: Straight 2 the Heart |
| 10 | Identifying lessons and values | To learn the lessons and values from their past | Scripture: Mary’s gift (Luke. 7:36-50; John. 20:1-18; John 15)  
Worship: Praise God for giving us in our past  
Prayer: Straight 2 the Heart |
| 11 | Developing a calling statement | To learn how to discover and develop a God-given calling for life | Scripture: Abraham’s calling (Genesis 11:27-12:9; Ephesians 2)  
Worship: Exalt God for provision to live out our calling  
Prayer: Straight 2 the Heart |
| 12 | Celebrating and sharing | To celebrate and share the outcomes of their time line and calling statement | Scripture: Paul’s testimony (Philippians 3:12-21; 2 Timothy 4:6-8; Luke 10)  
Worship: Praise God to complete what He has begun  
Prayer: Straight 2 the Heart |
Unit 2 introduced participants to the necessity and opportunity for participants to experience spiritual formation in the context of a supportive community of believers for maximum effectiveness. In this unit, participants experienced belonging, practiced relational skills to improve their social interactions, and learned to hold each other accountable.

Unit 3 introduced participants to the concepts and principles of emotional health and maturity, and the skills that help to bring those challenged in these areas to health and maturity. These would help to remove barriers to spiritual growth. Unit 4 helped participants develop a God-given calling based on their past and present experiences and to celebrate their program experience. Finally, the entire program process was immersed in divine power in order to move participants from merely understanding to actually experiencing transformation through God’s intervention in the space provided by the key spiritual disciplines of Bible study, worship and transformational prayer. The curriculum purpose was to equip participants to embark on a life journey of more effective spiritual growth by experiencing and sharing the holistic approach to spiritual formation.

In addition to the Curriculum Overview, a comprehensive curriculum plan that includes a two-part lesson plan for each session was prepared. The first part includes the topic; desired participant goal; teaching objective; desired participant outcomes in the categories of knowledge, skills and behaviors; and attitudes, values and commitments. The second part charts the strategies with the proposed times and desired outcomes and teaching notes for each. These two-part session plans are included in Appendix A.

The implementation of the elements and processes of the curriculum are described in greater detail below.
Curriculum Elements

The elements became the program content that provided the information and directed the participants towards achieving the program-designed goals. These goals became dynamic through various activities during the 12-sessions.

The first unit consisted of one session and established the foundation for the whole program. The first session was designed to create an environment in which participants would be guided into an experience of spiritual renewal. It also provided the participants with an opportunity to accept the crucial role of the Holy Spirit in making the process of spiritual formation possible and effective. It acquainted the participants with the concepts and key elements that comprise the spiritual formation process, and introduced them to the experience of transformational prayer.

The second unit included sessions two and three. They focused on the community as a pace to experience belonging and develop relational skills. Session two was designed to enable participants to embrace Christ as the center of belonging and the unifying factor of any true spiritual community. Session three focused on community as a place in which to experience incarnational life through giving and receiving in the community. It developed the relational skills necessary to experiencing belonging, especially the skill of reflective listening.

The third unit included five sessions that confronted participants with the necessity of recovering emotionally in order to experience growth in their spiritual life. Session four introduced joy as foundation for recovery, session five enabled participants to identify the personal barriers that would prevent their recovery, and session six guided participants through the steps necessary for the recovery process to take place. The last
two sessions focused on moving participants from recovery into maturity. Session seven enabled them to understand the primary tasks necessary for each stage of the maturity process and the problems that arise if the tasks are not accomplished; and session eight taught them how to experience the process of moving from fear bonds to love bonds, a crucial step for growing into maturity.

The fourth unit included four sessions to direct the participants to recognize the need for living God’s purpose for their lives as they continue to grow through the spiritual formation process. Session nine provided participants with an opportunity to learn how to see their past from God’s perspective. Session ten guided participants to remember past experiences and the lessons learned to discover what their values are. Session eleven equipped them to pull together what they learned in sessions four through ten so they could discover and develop a God-given calling for their lives. The final session, number 12, gave them an opportunity to celebrate, share, and evaluate God’s work in their lives through the program.

Each of the 12 sessions used the spiritual disciplines of Bible study, prayer, and worship as the primary means of teaching, enabling and encouraging them to experience the transforming power of God through the spiritual formation process.

**Curriculum Process**

The program process was designed to move people from knowledge to experience in each of the sequenced sessions. While cognitive knowledge is necessary for spiritual formation, more than cognitive knowledge is required. The heart must be engaged, and heart change only really takes place within the context of community as people open themselves to genuine relationship with each other and with God. It is God’s
intervention in the space provided by the spiritual disciplines that enables the Holy Spirit to empower the individual to will and to do what has been learned.

Pre- and Post-surveys

Surveys in the key areas of spiritual and emotional health and maturity, as well as readiness for change, were given before the program began and at its conclusion. These self-assessed perceptions provided valuable information to the facilitator and individual participants for raising awareness, guiding the program process, revealing trends, and demonstrating movement in the progress of change. Four surveys were selected and translated into Spanish. They revealed participant perceptions concerning their spiritual health, emotional health, level of maturity, and readiness for change.

Community

One of the purposes in selecting a group to go through this process instead of sharing the material to the participants as a group of individuals was to enable the group to become an immediate community where the learning could be tested. Spirituality is relational, how we relate to God and to others, and the only way we can understand how to relate to others is in the context of a group of others. Relating with others in community reveals the worst and best in a person. When in a community, becoming like Christ includes becoming an authentic person who is willing to hold others accountable and be held accountable by other community members.

Triads

The group was divided into two large groups, one of men and one of women. These two groups were then divided into triads (ideally groups of three). The purpose for
this arrangement was to provide through the triads a context in which the participants could interact, exchange ideas about their experiences in the process, apply the lessons of Scripture, and develop a sense of accountability. During each session, the participants were seated according to their triads and were provided several opportunities to interact. Transformational prayer also took place in the smaller community of the triads.

Repetition and Review

Since many of the concepts and terminologies were new for the group, the material from previous lessons was reviewed every session so that the knowledge would be well understood and the holistic nature of spiritual formation grasped and remembered. The better the participants could understand and embrace the concepts and their interrelationships, the better the chances they would have to engage in and experience them and integrate them into the motivation and behavior of daily lives.

Interactivity

The presentations were conducted in a way that elicited participation and interaction. There were times when questions were asked so that the answers or opinions could be shared with the whole group. At other times, participants were asked to share within the context of their triad.

As the program progressed, many opportunities were given for the participants to share what they were experiencing. On one occasion, each participant had a chance to share with the whole community the answer to two questions. The first was: When God sees you, what do you think he sees? In addition, the second was: What is he saying to you about this? It was very moving to hear their responses, to feel and experience the
support that had developed within the group community, and watch it being shown and expressed in many different ways.

In the last unit (sessions 9 through 12), there were several opportunities for the participants to share. As they worked on their time lines and as they shared the personal callings that emerged from the lessons and values written on their timelines, they shared from their hearts the way they saw God working through the history of their lives to bring them to where they were at that moment. They shared what they understood God calling them to be and do. The more they shared the deeper the experience became for everyone.

During the last session, there was a celebration. People brought food to share and as they ate, they expressed what the experience of this spiritual formation program had meant for them. It was thrilling to hear the ways God was working in their lives. As testimonies of God’s power that changed specific challenges in their lives were shared, the participants were greatly encouraged to keep moving forward. In addition, they understood that the program experience was only the beginning of their life-long spiritual journey.

Spiritual Disciplines

From the very beginning, the purpose of the program was to help participants see the spiritual disciplines of Bible study, prayer, and worship as venues through which God wanted to meet them in a personal way in order to develop a deep and transformational love relationship with them. After the topic material for each session was shared, participants were invited to read a passage of Scripture that related to the topic in order to place the topic within a real life story found in the Bible. The participants read the story by themselves, and then shared, first in their triads, and then in the larger group, how they
experienced the story in relation to the topic and what the story told them about God’s power and their own life journey.

Transformational Prayer

A very important—perhaps one of the most important experiences in the program—was the transformational prayer. The pattern is one called “Straight 2 the Heart” developed by Paul Coneff. Participants were taught how to lead a person through a three-step prayer process centered on the cross of Christ. Each step is intended to soften the participant’s heart so he or she would be able to experience healing by identifying with the suffering of Christ during his passion week and on the cross. Scripture and its application made the experience very real.

The first step allowed God to guide the participants in discovering what lies they had learned to believe about themselves from past experiences. The second provided an opportunity for each participant to discover how Christ’s struggle connects to his or her own experience. The third helped participants understand how Christ experienced a struggle like their own by going through the dark days leading up to the cross, dying for them and rising to heal their wounded hearts to set them free and give them their true identity as his children. The main objective of this type of prayer is to take participants through the events of the Passion Week to connect the participant’s heart to the heart of Jesus. The goal is to help the participants identify with him in his suffering so they can experience the power of his resurrection and receive their true identity as his children.

Program Evaluation

The purpose of this project was to design and implement a multidimensional pilot
program for spiritual formation. Now the question left to answer is: *Did the pilot program succeed in showing promise of being more effective than traditional approaches?*

To evaluate the pilot program, we will examine each curriculum element in order to assess its effectiveness and contribution to the program, and to evaluate the effectiveness of the program as a whole in starting those in the group on a lifelong journey of holistic spiritual formation. The sources of information for evaluating the program’s effectiveness will be the perceptions of participants from their surveys, comments, and evaluations of the program, as well as the observations of the facilitator.

The curriculum included evaluation by providing three types of assessments. First, participants responded to four surveys: one for spiritual health, another for emotional health, a third for maturity level, and a fourth for change readiness. These were administered both before the program began and after it was completed. All of these are self-assessments designed to provide information based on the perceptions of the participants themselves. A sample of the four survey instruments is included in Appendix B (English version) and Appendix C (Spanish version). Second, participants were invited to write an evaluation at the conclusion of all 12 sessions to express how the short, introductory program had affected them. Third, the evaluation was completed by including anecdotal evidence and observational notes regarding the attitudes, involvement, and performance of participants and effectiveness of the program that had been recorded at the end of each session by the project’s designer-presenter-facilitator.

It is important to emphasize that the goal for using the self-assessment tools was to observe individual and community trends in participant responses and to evaluate the
usefulness of using the surveys for a qualitative, descriptive evaluation. Therefore, evaluation of the curriculum and program were not intended to be statistically significant since random selection and various other methods of control were not used, and the number of participants too small. Furthermore, the pilot program was too short for evaluating what is necessarily a long-term process. However, the survey responses and trends provided informative data to add to other observational techniques.

It is impossible to separate the different dimensions because they together make up a human being. However, it is useful to isolate them in order to recognize characteristic aspects of each.

Community

People need to have a strong sense of belonging in order to have a healthy identity, to be open and vulnerable, to trust and share, to learn and practice effective relational skills, and to be able to be held accountable and hold others accountable. Program participants felt a strong need for community. For example, when participants answered the pre-session survey question asking whether they felt they were a “vital participant” in a community with other believers, the majority indicated they only “sometimes” felt that way. Therefore, I recognized that, as indicated by the literature review, including triad groups and limiting the number of participants were important for creating the type of community that contributes to a healthy environment in which to belong.

At the beginning, people were not very comfortable with each other, especially in their triads. Several wanted to be with their friends, but I divided them so that there would be one person in each group who had been trained to lead the transformational
prayer. By the end of the program, however, participants expressed their strong appreciation for the lessons they had learned, but admitted that one of the greatest challenges was learning how to understand others rather than judge them. This is significant since the survey results from the pre-test showed that they thought they were “usually” judgmental or critical of others, but by the time the program finished, they believed they were “seldom” judgmental, were “rarely” critical of others, and were “more consistently” open to hearing and applying constructive criticism. The post-program survey results also showed that they more frequently admitted when they are wrong and asked forgiveness more readily, and were more often able to resolve conflict more respectfully.

The community context made a positive difference in participants’ awareness of themselves and how others saw them. For example, participants realized at the end of the program that they were not as slow to speak and as quick to listen to others as they had earlier thought, but by then they thought other participants would describe them as more responsive listeners. Participants felt they had learned to be more approachable, gentle, open, and transparent, and felt that people in great pain or sorrow would more often tend to seek them out because they were more in touch with their own losses and sorrows. It is also interesting to note that, by the end of the program, participants said they were less concerned about what others would think of them if they made changes, but were more concerned about those who would be uncomfortable if they did because some people benefited from their current behavior.

Participant responses to survey questions supported the need for a safe and warm community in which to belong, practice relational skills, and hold each other accountable.
As a group, more than three-fourths of the participants said at the end of the program that they were “usually” or “always” more loving, were able to forgive more quickly, and had a more growing concern for the spiritual and temporal needs of others. Participants said it was “mostly true” that they did not need approval from others to feel good about themselves. If they confronted someone who had hurt or wronged them, they would not usually blame.

A comparison of facilitator observations, along with participant behavior and evaluations during and after the program, indicated that the attempt to build a warm community context was not only desired but was also successful. For example, several of the participants planned a few activities outside of the sessions to build and strengthen community with the family of participants. Also, when others wanted to join the program after it had already started, the original participants said they felt uncomfortable with latecomers because they already felt they had started becoming a community. Another challenge came when a participant would miss a session, forcing participants to join another triad, which compromised the developing sense of belonging, trust, and sense of accountability. This was especially true in the triad discussions and transformational prayers because they were usually concerning personal issues.

Emotional Health and Maturity

The emotional-maturity dimension was a significant focus for this program. I observed that this was probably the area of greatest interest for people, perhaps because they had never heard much about it in the context of spiritual formation. Participants asked about additional material to continue growing and learning in this area. I expected people to realize how much spiritual formation can be enhanced or decreased by the state
of their emotional health, and I observed that the majority of the group quickly understood the connection between the emotional and the spiritual.

I hoped that people would be willing to share about the struggles in their emotional world with God through transformational prayer, and within their triad. It was heartwarming to see how very compassionate the participants were with one another as they shared. I was amazed to see how it was almost as if people had been waiting for a safe environment to open up their hearts concerning their struggles in this area. I was pleasantly surprised to see how very honest people were about their emotions and did not hesitate to share in their triads and in the larger group.

It is extraordinarily important for participants to recognize emotional traumas they had experienced in their lives that needed recovery so that spiritual growth and maturity could continue or begin. I expected people to discover how well attuned they were with their emotional world and realize what was needed to heal the emotions that had been damaged. I saw how people accepted the reality that we are all emotionally wounded and how wonderful it is to be able to find strength in God to move on. The group emphasis throughout was not to find someone to blame but to find strength in God to move forward. Participants had fun learning and practicing several exercises that helped them to experience greater joy in their relationships.

Two participant surveys addressed the emotional maturity dimension: the “Inventory of Emotional/Spiritual Maturity” (Scazzero, 2003, pp. 75-87) and “Maturity Stage Survey” (Wilder, 2005). The comprehensive Inventory was designed by Peter Scazzero to help the members of his large church deal with emotional issues that were limiting their spiritual growth. It is intended to help respondents get a sense of whether
their commitment to Christ has touched the emotional components of their lives, and if so, to what extent (p. 75). After they tabulated the responses, a respondent was able to see and understand whether they are an emotional adult, adolescent, child, or infant. The interpretation guide describes the characteristics for each of the four levels of maturity (pp. 86-87). The complete survey, inventory results, and interpretation guide can be found in Scazzero (2003), pp. 59 through 66.

As a group, program participants fit into the “emotional adolescent” category. The highest measure was scored in the section labeled “General Formation and Discipleship” and was 22.71, just below the beginning base for the adult category. The lowest measure was found in the “Principle 7: Slow Down to Lead with Integrity” category. The pre-program score was in the emotional child category, but the post-program score did reach the baseline for the emotional adolescent. The principle covers such issues as spending sufficient time alone with God, taking a day each week for Sabbath-keeping, and maintaining the priority of family over church work.

The other six principles cover additional emotional components of discipleship. They include Principle 1: Look beneath the Surface (recognizing the reality of emotional issues), Principle 2: Break the Power of the Past (recognizing how the past influences the present), Principle 3: Live in Brokenness and Vulnerability (recognizing our own weaknesses, failures, and mistakes), Principle 4: Receive the Gift of Limits (recognizing the need for prioritizing and balancing life’s demands), Principle 5: Embrace Grieving and Loss (recognizing negative emotions that God needs to resolve), and Principle 6: Make Incarnation Your Model for Loving Well (recognizing how to see from another’s perspective). The first four measures were in the upper half of the emotional adolescent
category, and the last four near the adolescent category baseline. The scores for the post-program surveys were in every case higher than those filled out before the program began.

The group agreed that several statements were nearly “very true”. These include:

I am willing to explore previously unknown or unacceptable parts of myself, allowing Christ to transform me more fully; I can see how certain “generational sins” have been passed down to me through my family history, including character flaws, lies, secrets, ways of coping with pain, and unhealthy tendencies in relating to others; When I confront someone who has hurt or wronged me, I speak more in the first person (“I” and “me”) about how I am feeling rather than speak in blaming tones (“you” or “they”).

The survey results showed that participants made progress in several areas over the course of the program. Participants were able to be less easily offended or hurt, were far less judgmental or critical of others, were able to openly admit their losses and disappointments, became more responsive listeners, were less afraid to ask themselves or others difficult and uncomfortable questions when necessary, were better able to put marriage and children above responsibilities to church and others, and were able to more regularly take a 24-hour period each week for Sabbath-keeping—to stop, rest, delight, and contemplate God. One struggle that improved only slightly was the ability to experience and deal with anger in a way that leads to growth in others and oneself.

The Maturity Stage Survey has five sections: Infant Stage (motivations and regulations), Child Stage (competency), Adult Stage, Parent Stage, and Elder Stage. Each section has from 12 to 19 tasks that should be accomplished in the particular stage.
Respondents were simply to check “yes” or “no” depending on whether a statement was true or false for them.

According to Wilder (2005), maturity means being fully developed for one’s age. The Maturity Stage Survey helped participants to realize that age and maturity are not equivalent and where they were in the maturity process. They learned to understand the primary tasks and primary problems in each stage of the maturity process, particularly the stage they believed they were in, and how to move from fear bonds to love bonds in their relationships. Most of the participants acknowledged that most of their close relationships had fear bonds, and showed interest in learning how to move from fear to love. They were surprised to see the problems that come as a direct result of immaturity at the different stages, and were eager to find out what to do in order to move forward in the maturity process. A lot of laughter resulted as people shared which stage they thought they were in. Many saw themselves in the first stages.

In their evaluations at the end of the program, participants mentioned the lessons they had learned. One was the principle that they can only change their responses rather than someone else’s. They learned how to examine their lives to draw positive and negative conclusions, how to share their painful stories, and how to love and understand people by remembering outward behavior cannot be judged because they do not know what a person has gone through. Participants felt challenged to be consistent, to be honest with themselves, and accept themselves as God does without feeling guilty.

God-given Purpose

Finding a God-given calling or purpose for life was a natural extension of all that had been learned in the program. I observed that having dealt with emotional health and
maturity really helped the participants to have a better picture of how God was guiding them in their lives, and the activity of developing a timeline was enriched by all that had taken place the previous weeks. People had a better understanding of themselves and their past. Comments by participants told about being grateful they had learned how see their lives from childhood to the present.

I expected participants to learn how to see their lives through God’s perspective, to be able to draw lesson and values from the ways in which God had guided them in their past, and to learn how to use the findings to develop a God-given calling for life. Developing the time line (writing events and circumstances both good and bad) was a painful but very rewarding experience. Participants expressed deep emotions as they wrote what they saw God calling them to be and do.

The participants were very candid about their past and they were excited to share what they saw as God’s purpose for their lives. The excitement showed up in the post-program surveys when participants responded much more positively than before the program began to two statements: I am able to thank God for all my past life experiences, seeing how he has used them to uniquely shape me into who I am; and I sense the unique ways God has gifted me individually and am actively using my spiritual gifts for his service. At the end of the eleventh session, I had everyone share in front of the group what they had discovered. It was one of the most moving experiences of the whole program. God really showed up as the participants enthusiastically shared what they saw him calling them to be and to do. We prayed a blessing on the participants at the end of their sharing.
At the end of the program, participant evaluations expressed appreciation for learning that God has a purpose for them and having the opportunity to find out what it is by looking back to see how God has lead in their lives. To see God’s guidance in their past and present gave them hope for the future.

Spiritual Disciplines

The spiritual disciplines of Bible study, worship, and prayer were selected as the special avenues to connect with God.

The pre-program surveys indicated that participants did spend some time in the Word of God and prayer, but the post-program surveys revealed a greater interest and frequency in doing so. When asked if they were increasingly governed by God’s Word, nearly half of the participants could respond “only sometimes” before the program began, but after the program, 85% answered “usually” or “always”.

One of the powerful aspects of the program was bringing the Scripture into the realm of daily life struggles. Each Scripture was chosen to make the teaching for the session come to life. As people shared in their triads and then in the larger group how they were experiencing the Scriptures, they realized that its teachings were having a powerful impact on their lives. Through comments and dialogues, I was able to see that participants were beginning to see the biblical stories a completely new and different way. They were starting to see the people in the Bible as real people dealing with real issues who experienced deep and real change.

I expected prayer to be a special way the participants could open up their hearts to God in order to be changed from the inside out. At the beginning of the transformational prayer sessions, those leading out appeared to feel somewhat mechanical, as though they
were not ready to guide someone through the process. Although I spent several of the first sessions explaining and showing them step by step how to guide the prayers, they still seemed to feel uncomfortable. But towards the end, those leading the prayer became more and more comfortable as they guided the process. Since we had prayer every session, everyone in the triads was able to lead out several times.

I found it fascinating that, even though those guiding the process seemed uneasy, those experiencing the prayer found God bringing healing and transformation in many areas of their lives. It was amazing to see how God’s power was not from the one guiding the process but in the participants who were connecting with him in the context of the cross of Christ. I observed how people felt that God could identify with their pain and suffering. It was moving to hear people share how they were finding freedom from the burdens and pain they had been carrying for a long time.

In their closing evaluations, participants expressed how valuable it was to grasp the true meaning of the suffering Christ went through at the cross for them—and for all humanity. They said how important it was to learn that they could identify with Jesus, and how he is the only one who could really identify with their pain, suffering, humiliation, rejection, and physical abuse. They felt he was the only one who would really understand them, and were strengthened to believe he would always be with them.

I expected worship to be the natural response of the participants to what they were learning about God’s being and doing. Times were set aside to praise God for what He was doing in the lives of participants, and the praise increased as participants in the group shared what God was doing in their lives. According to the surveys, participants indicated they enjoyed worshipping with others as well as being with God alone in quiet
reflection. While this was mostly true for the group in the pre-program surveys, it became very true by the time the program was over.

When asked whether the spiritual disciplines were “increasingly important” to them, 100% of the participants said yes—and three-fourths responded “always”. It was inspiring to see that many of them were making the connection that transformation comes as Scriptures are read, prayer is experienced, and worship and praise are shared as new beams of God’s love are seen.

Program Effectiveness

So far, the benefits from the elements evaluated above show that each of them was effective in making a difference in the spiritual, social, and emotional lives of the participants, and together gave them a stronger sense of purpose and calling from God. However, it is important to evaluate what kind of impact the program as a whole made on the spiritual health of the participants, and whether the program was able to start them on a life-long journey of more effective spiritual growth. Before going into a discussion of these, a few words must be said about how ready the participants were for change.

Readiness for Change

People are ready for change to the extent they are motivated for it. In other words, the stronger the sense of need or urgency, the greater the chance change will take place and become a part of life. If a person’s negative past is still troubling them, or their present circumstances are very difficult to handle, there is a heightened sense of readiness. Readiness for change could certainly influence the effectiveness of the program.
The Readiness Assessment is a useful survey to indicate how ready a respondent is for change. It presented eight statements that were important for positive motivation and thus readiness, and eight statements that would detract from readiness. The respondent was to check how important a statement was for them in one of five categories: not, slightly, somewhat, quite, or extremely. Each check had a numerical value, and readiness was determined by the sum of those values for the eight positive statements and for the eight negative factors. The factors included how change would affect the respondent as well as their perceptions as to how change would affect others. Positive factors included such things as feeling or functioning better, being happier, or worrying less if changes were made; and whether others would be better off or happier with the respondent’s change. Negative factors included such things as the amount of time-effort-energy required to change, the possibility of failure, what would have to be given up, the benefits of current behavior for oneself or others, and whether others would be uncomfortable with change.

The results of the survey were both expected and unexpected. Many of the participants had so many issues that burdened them that their negative concerns worked against their positive readiness. The pre-program survey responses revealed that only two persons qualified for the minimum level of a negative score, although 11 qualified above the minimum required for positive motivation. In the post-program responses, five qualified for being under the minimum for negatives, and 14 qualified above the minimum for positives. But, to be truly ready, a respondent needed to qualify in both the negative and positive areas. Unfortunately, only one participant was “ready” for change at the beginning of the program, but by the end of the program, three participants were
fully ready, and another two were borderline ready.

The areas that had the most negative responses were: the amount of effort and energy changing would take the things that would have to be given up, and the benefits that would be lost both to the respondent and to others if current behavior changed. It is interesting that there was little fear of failure, and respondents were not worried about others being uncomfortable or thinking less of them if changes were made.

The areas that brought the highest positive responses were mostly associated with how much better off the respondent would be—healthier, happier, more functional, and feeling better about himself or herself as a result. Again, whether people would be happier if they changed did not seem to be important.

One analysis showed that several participants actually lowered their positive score on the post-program survey. Perhaps they realized more fully the power of the past to control the present, took the concept of change more seriously, became more realistic, were not ready or committed enough, or even less certain they could make the changes as quickly as they had hoped. In a variety of ways on their end-of-program evaluations, many participants noted the challenge of putting what they had learned into practice in their personal lives and in their relationship with others. They acknowledged the importance of taking the time and putting in the necessary effort.

To summarize the findings of the readiness survey, busy lives and challenging issues seemed to work against the readiness of most participants. However, I realized that just the fact that people attended the sessions showed that they were interested in the program and that they wanted something different. Most ended Nevertheless, I could see that many of the attendees were not as desperate about change as they themselves thought
they were. They wanted it but they were not willing or able to do what it would take to experience change, at least at the beginning of the process. As the program continued to develop, I observed that a few were really ready to experience deep change. They became more vulnerable and were more willing to open up. I believe that those who were more ready for change were people who had already dealt with emotional issues in their lives before they attended this seminar, by either reading, lectures, or some other means. Another group who were very open to experience change in their lives were those who were desperate about something they were presently going through in their lives.

**Spiritual Health**

The Spiritual Health Diagnosis survey lists ten questions to diagnose a person’s spiritual health. The questions include habits of thirsting for God, becoming more loving, grieving over sin, and being a quicker forgiver. In relation to the disciplines, questions ask about being governed by his Word and finding the spiritual disciplines increasingly important. In relation to God, are respondents more sensitive to God’s presence, and do they yearn for heaven and to be with Jesus? In relation to others, do respondents have a growing concern for the spiritual and temporal needs of others, and delight in the bride of Christ? The results from the pre-program survey were generally affirming. Responses of “usually” or “always” to the ten diagnostic questions ranged from half to nearly 90%. The two lowest areas were being more loving and a quicker forgiver.

When the participants took the post-program survey, the results in every question area were stronger than the pre-program results, and nine of the ten areas were significantly higher. The tenth question in the Spiritual Health Diagnosis survey was “Do
you yearn for heaven and to be with Jesus?” Three-fourths of the respondents said they always long for heaven in the pre-program survey, but this number was nearly 100% at the end of the program. The “always” response for the other question areas ranged between a third to three-fourths of the participants. By the end of the program, nearly three-fourths of the group said they always thirst for God and found the spiritual disciplines increasingly important in their lives. Two-thirds found that they were always more sensitive to God’s presence.

By the end of the program, between three-fourths and 100% of participants gave a “usually” or “always” response to every question except the one concerning grieving over sin. It is the only question that participants felt less sure about. This may indicate they became more aware of the mercy and holiness of God and less sure about their own during the program.

Another survey on spiritual health is Part A (General Formation and Discipleship) of Scazzero’s (2010) Inventory of Emotional/Spiritual Maturity. It consists of seven questions concerning salvation, worship, devotions, spiritual gifts and service, community and belonging, stewardship, and faith integrated into life together. The four categories of response are not very true, sometimes true, mostly true, and very true. Of the eight subtests in the inventory, Part A scored closest to the “emotional adult” category. As in the other subtests, the group scores on the post-program surveys were higher than the pre-program scores. Of particular not is how confident respondents feel about their adoption as God’s sons and daughters, rarely questioning his acceptance of them. As a group, participants believed this statement was “very true”.

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One of the strongest evidences of the program’s effectiveness that was expressed in the post-program participant evaluations was the burden to be reconnected to God and become spiritually healthy. Participants wanted to give themselves completely to God, open up their hearts to God, get peace in areas that had been hidden, find healing for their souls, and always be able to forgive. One participant mentioned the joy of learning the root of what had been torturing her or him so that the memories no longer hurt as they did. The challenges participants recognized they now faced included letting their insecurities go, dying to self, not failing to trust God or hold on to his hand, and maintaining a focus on continually allowing the Holy Spirit to lead their lives.

My post-program goals for participants included understanding where they were in their spiritual walk, growing in their commitment to God, maintaining a close relationship with God—especially through the practice of spiritual disciplines, and increasing their commitment to fulfilling God’s mission. The surveys tend to support my observations that these goals were generally met. However, I saw repeated evidence that, although growing spiritually was desired by most participants, it was not yet a value that was being put into practice faithfully.

**Spiritual Formation**

If the holistic concept of spiritual formation was to be firmly rooted at the beginning of the participants’ life journeys, I realized that they must become acquainted with the spiritual formation process as a whole. They needed to understand that, in order to experience spiritual formation, they must begin with a spiritual renewal. Then they needed to understand the basic concepts of spiritual disciplines, transformational prayer, emotional health and maturity, principles of change, community belonging, and
accountability as they relate to the spiritual formation process. It was especially important that they understand that emotional health is a crucial but often neglected aspect in the spiritual formation process. Finally, they needed to understand that the spiritual formation process is a long process—a journey of a lifetime.

These objectives were achieved. Most of the participants became familiar with the concepts, but the terminology and content we shared with them, and the holistic approach that shows how important all parts of the process are, was new. But participants understood two very basic things about spiritual formation. First, that it is a lifelong process and second, that it encompasses all dimensions of a person. During each session, we repeated what spiritual formation was so that the concept could be firmly implanted in the participants’ minds. I observed that participants understood that they played an important role in the spiritual formation process. I observed that there was hope in people’s eyes as they realized that the same kind of principles that had “formed” them up to that point in their lives, could “transform” them into the likeness of Jesus.

I believe the program supported the claim that spiritual formation is experienced as these different areas are addressed. There seems to be sufficient evidence that where a participant has the greatest need, he or she experiences the elements that relate to that need more deeply. From participant observations as well as my own, it seems that since emotional and spiritual health go hand-by-hand, it is helpful to address them together.

Both from my observations and from comments made by participants, there is a concern about how to continue implementing what has been learned. I believe that dealing more in depth with the change process might be very helpful.
It became clear sometime into the process that there was not enough time during a 12-session program for behavioral changes to become firmly rooted to be perceived. But attitudinal changes were clearly perceived. Knowing the participants helped me to evaluate more objectively the perceived changes in their attitude towards life, especially when in the context of their community.

Addressing emotional health and then providing transformational prayer as a way for God to facilitate personal change, which resulted in a better-than-expected outcome. People seemed to be more in tune with their needs as they took them to God in prayer. Many of the participants expressed both verbally and in writing the freedom from many issues God had giving them through transformational prayer. Having people find their God given calling after they had allowed God to bring healing to very painful areas of their life seemed to move people into meaningful service much more quickly than I had expected. I had a few participants share how God was already using them since they had gotten a clearer picture of their God-given calling. Understanding of course, that spiritual formation is a lifelong process, it seems that using these elements together in the context of community could unleash people’s potential for ministry more rapidly and effectively.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Traditional programs of spiritual growth and formation of church members are limited by not addressing interpersonal issues and emotional immaturity. Christians need to continue to grow spiritually throughout their lives, but growth for many seems to be sporadic, limited, or even non-existent. They desire the freedom that comes from change but often do not understand how to achieve it.

This problem became evident in the Richardson Spanish S.D.A. Church where, in spite of numerous programs and activities promoting spiritual growth and formation, members were unable to integrate this knowledge into their lives and thus continued to struggle with the same personal and interpersonal issues. The impact of this problem on church health was negative and was reflected in the NCD survey results. I was determined to design and implement a spiritual formation program that would address these needs. This project is the result of an attempt to find a solution to the problem.

The purpose of this project was to implement an integrated, multidimensional spiritual formation process that would include the three primary disciplines of Scripture, worship, and prayer in the context of community. The pilot program was designed to test whether such a community-based multifaceted approach that included the elements of emotional health, maturity, and purpose as well as the spiritual disciplines would provide
a more effective means of guiding members in the process of transformational spiritual formation. Therefore, the project task was to educate the group regarding the need for emotional health and maturity in the context of spiritual formation using the above mentioned spiritual disciplines, to engage each individual in the experiential task of self-awareness and personal transformation within the context of the group community and the practice of these disciplines, and to evaluate the effectiveness of the program by analyzing participant responses and progress as well as the observations of the designer-facilitator-presenter.

For the Christian, spiritual formation is the necessary and natural process of becoming like Christ through the presence of the Holy Spirit. Although Scripture does not present the concept in any systematic way, there is abundant information found in its themes, passages, concepts, and stories. The biblical foundation is established through the motif of creation-reversal-restoration.

God’s plan for spiritual formation is a process that lasts a lifetime as every dimension of the whole person gradually becomes transformed—the thoughts, body, emotions, social aspects, and heart (will and choice). It involves belonging to a faith community and is facilitated by the divine-human interaction made possible by the Holy Spirit through the resource of the spiritual disciplines, especially those of Bible study, prayer and worship. Spiritual formation has the two-fold purpose of growing Christians into maturity and equipping them for a life journey of living out their God-given callings.

A review of relevant literature revealed a strong consensus that biblical transformation can take place when spiritual disciplines are integrated and the Holy Spirit is present and the person receives God’s gift of grace and responds to his guidance and
power. A program for spiritual formation is most effective when it is multidimensional, intentional, planned and well sequenced, conducted in a community context, includes both information and experience, when participants are ready for change because they have an awareness of need that includes a sense of urgency, when issues that would diminish or neutralize that need are averted, and is reproducible.

The project involved the development, implementation, and evaluation of a 12-session pilot program for a small group of members from the Richardson and Spring Valley Seventh-day Adventist Spanish Churches. Two curriculum documents were created to guide program development and implementation: (1) To guide the development of the program, a one-page overview grid that presented the four unit divisions and the 12 session topics along with the desired participant goals and spiritual disciplines focus for each, and (2) to guide the implementation, a session plan for each of the 12 sessions that included the topic, desired participant goal, teaching objective, desired participant outcome, and a strategy plan to guide the session.

Conclusions

I believe that each element introduced in the pilot program is of great importance and I would continue to integrate all of them in a program for guiding the spiritual formation of parishioners. I also believe the coherence achieved by the integration of every dimension made a stronger impact on participants than could have been achieved otherwise. In addition, coherence seemed to be strengthened by the logical and needs-based sequence in which the elements were introduced.

Having community as the context was essential because it seems that no significant spiritual change occurs outside of a relational context, especially since it
provides participants an opportunity to have a greater awareness of themselves and a better idea of how others saw them. Some even came to see this community as a safe and meaningful family.

Dealing with emotional health and maturity is essential for spiritual growth. It seemed to be very helpful in awakening in the participants a desire to experience change, as they understood the “why” of some of their problems. It also showed them the areas where more change was needed. Participants were not discouraged by what they were learning and experiencing because the spiritual disciplines that were integrated into the session issues enabled them to feel that they finally had an arena (space) where they experienced the God who came in and communed with them, bringing deep healing.

If the only thing the program accomplished was bringing self-awareness and developing tools for community and emotional maturity—even with the integration of the spiritual disciplines, I would have felt that a key element was missing. I believe that helping participants find a God-given calling or purpose at the end of the program tied everything together and freed participants to take their first steps into the life-giving stream of ministry in a way that was meaningful to them. As participants developed their time lines from the significant experiences they remembered, they were inspired to see how God had been with them throughout their lives and how He had used those experiences, both good and bad, to shape them for their special calling and mission.

The surveys provided participants with a personal sense of where they were in the different areas of their lives. I felt that the effectiveness of the surveys was somewhat limited by the lack of knowledge that some participants had on the subjects being addressed, especially as they took the pre-program surveys. In order to correct that
problem, it might have been better to administer the surveys only at the end of the session. However, the pre- and post-surveys also served to help me see where participants had shown progress in the course of the program.

From the study, it seems safe to conclude that both cognitive and experiential knowledge are essential and should be included together in the process of spiritual formation. Also, because the participants were not very well acquainted with the concepts of the elements used in the program, it became very important to repeat and review the concepts previously covered every session.

**Recommendations**

I recommend that pastors contextualize the concept of a multidimensional program for their particular congregational needs. It is important to note that this pilot program was conducted for participants from Hispanic congregations. What differences would need to be taken into consideration if designing a multidimensional program for an Anglo church, or some other ethnic group? Another contextual area to consider is taking into account the greatest needs in the congregational community, whether emotional, maturity, and/or spiritual areas. A third area for consideration is the degree of exposure to psychological surveys, terms, and concepts in determining what type of content to present and how deep to make the presentations. Also, if the types of information and skills were new to the group it would be beneficial to have monthly follow-up meetings after a program has ended for reinforcement and sharing.

I recommend others implement the same type of multidimensional program for spiritual formation over a longer period of time, such as having only one meeting a week, to see whether there would be a significant difference in the results. In addition, it would
be informative to evaluate the same community group three, six, nine and 12 months after the program ended. Such a trial would provide additional data especially in the experiential area. Other delivery options covering more sessions over even longer periods of time could be designed. And as the presenter gets more experience facilitating the program several times, the program will improve.

I recommend that anyone designing such a program create a participant’s workbook and manual to help participants grasp, review, assimilate, and practice the concepts and skills taught during and after the program. Unfortunately, I was unable to provide the full written material at the beginning of the program, and participants acknowledged such a manual would have been very useful. Ideally, the participant’s manual and workbook should be ready to hand out at the very beginning of the program.

I recommend others take the general program design and experiment with various aspects and options. For example, better tools for evaluating the design, implementation, and effectiveness of the program could be explored so that the program improves as it is implemented. Making sure a comfortable and suitable place for the sessions seems to be very important to the participants’ willingness to engage in and take advantage of the process. The selection and/or development of video clips and power points for illustration would make the presentations more effective. After participants finish a program, it would be advantageous to help them find practical ways of living out the God-given purposes for their lives.

I recommend that pastors consider how to use those who have gone through the program to help in the future. In fact, it might be useful to take two groups a year through the program, one group comprising people who lead different ministries in the
church, and the other group with people who are new members. If possible, find out which participants have a passion for sharing this material so they could be given the opportunity to co-lead in facilitating the program. This would enable more people to lead in the future.

Finally, I recommend exploring other avenues that could contribute to the effectiveness of the program. One example is to include some of the concepts of the program content in the preaching topics throughout the year. This would be useful in exposing those who have not yet gone through the program to its benefits, and reinforcing the concepts and principles in those who have already gone through it. Another example is inviting participants who have benefitted from specific topics in the program to share their testimony with the congregation. Not only would this increase credibility but it would also encourage vulnerability.
APPENDIX A

SESSIONS PLANS
Spiritual Formation within the Faith Community:
The Beginning of a Life Journey

Unit 1: The Community as a Place to Begin the Spiritual Formation Process

Session 1

TOPIC
Spiritual renewal, spiritual formation, spiritual disciplines, transformational prayer, emotional health, change, and accountability

DESIRED PARTICIPANT GOAL
To become acquainted with key elements in the spiritual formation process and with transformational prayer

TEACHING OBJECTIVE
To acquaint the participants with the key elements in the spiritual formation process

DESIRED PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES
Knowledge
Upon successful completion of the lesson, participants will
1. Begin to understand the spiritual formation process
2. Understand the essential role of the Holy Spirit in spiritual transformation
3. Recognize three spiritual disciplines as instruments in the process
4. Become aware of how change takes place
5. Realize the necessity of emotional health in the spiritual formation process
6. Accept the importance of accountability and choose triad partners

Skills & Behaviors
During the lesson, participants will know how
7. To participate in a triad
8. To participate in Bible study, worship, and transformational prayer

Attitudes, Values, Commitments
As a result of the lesson, participants will
9. Value and commit to practicing the three spiritual disciplines daily
10. Accept the role of the Holy Spirit in enabling spiritual transformation
11. Make a commitment to participate weekly in the triad
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<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Teaching Notes</th>
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<td>Direct instruction</td>
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<td>Spiritual formation process (Willard) Definition, concepts, human dimensions</td>
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<td>2, 10</td>
<td>The Role of the Holy Spirit in spiritual transformation</td>
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<td>3, 8, 9</td>
<td>Spiritual disciplines (three spiritual disciplines; Bible study, worship elements, and transformational prayer)</td>
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<td>Elijah’s Carmel experience (1 King 19:1-18) Topical method</td>
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<td>Change</td>
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<td>Emotional health</td>
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<td>Story</td>
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<td>Illustrate the necessity of emotional health in spiritual formation</td>
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<td>Triad selection</td>
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<td>6, 7</td>
<td>Activity that facilitates the selection of triad partners</td>
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<td>Worship</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Submit to God’s leading in our spiritual formation process</td>
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<td>Transformational Prayer</td>
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<td>2, 8, 10</td>
<td>Explanation and demonstration</td>
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Spiritual Formation within the Faith Community:
The Beginning of a Life Journey

Unit 2: The Community as a Place to Experience Belonging and Develop Relational Skills

Session 2

TOPIC
Spiritual community context

DESIRED PARTICIPANT GOAL
To embrace Christ as the center of belonging and the unifying factor of true spiritual community

TEACHING OBJECTIVE
To enable the participants to grasp the necessity of belonging and to embrace the community for the spiritual formation process

DESIRED PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

Knowledge
Upon successful completion of the lesson, participants will
1. Realize the crucial role of community in genuine spiritual formation
2. Discover the benefits of belonging to a community suitable for spiritual formation
3. Have explored the implications of spiritual adoption

Skills & Behaviors
Upon successful completion of the lesson, participants will know how
4. To improve their sense of belonging
5. To assess the health of other communities they belong to
6. To improve their skills in the use of the three spiritual disciplines

Attitudes, Values, Commitments
During the instruction and activities participants will
7. Make a commitment to build community within the group
8. Make a commitment to work on a personal weakness that damages community
## STRATEGY PLAN

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<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Teaching Notes</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Spirituality formation process</td>
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<td>Change</td>
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<td>Prayer</td>
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<td>Emotional health</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Accountability</td>
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<td>Spiritual disciplines</td>
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<td>Direct instruction</td>
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<td>Community elements</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Implications of spiritual adoption</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discovery</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Guidelines to improve a sense to belonging</td>
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<tr>
<td>Direct instruction</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Ways to assess the health of a community</td>
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<td>Direct instruction</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Commitment to work on a personal weakness</td>
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<td>Role play</td>
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<td>Community elements</td>
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<td>Journal</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Implications of spiritual adoption</td>
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<td>Scripture</td>
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<td>1, 2, 3, 7</td>
<td>Mark 2:1-12</td>
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<td>Worship</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Praise God for this community</td>
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<td>Explanation and demonstration</td>
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Spiritual Formation within the Faith Community:  
The Beginning of a Life Journey

Unit 2: The Community as a Place to Experience Belonging and Develop Relational Skills

Session 3

TOPIC
Sharing life in community

DESIRED PARTICIPANT GOAL
To experience incarnational life by developing skills while giving and receiving within the community

TEACHING OBJECTIVE
To provide experience in relational skill development while guiding participants to give and receive incarnational life within the community

DESIRED PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

Knowledge
Upon successful completion of the lesson, participants will
1. Understand the concept and three dynamics of incarnational living
2. Learn how to enter another’s world
3. Know how to maintain one’s individuality
4. Discover how to hang between one’s own and another’s world

Skills & Behaviors
Upon successful completion of the lesson, participants will know how
5. To apply incarnational living to their lives
6. To practice the three relational skills important for incarnational living
7. To improve their use of the three spiritual disciplines

Attitudes, Values, Commitments
During the instruction and activities participants will
8. Value discovering another’s world
9. Commit to being faithful to who we are while entering another’s world
10. Practice reflective listening in their daily lives
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<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
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<td>Prayer</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review session 2</td>
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<td>Question: why is community necessary for spiritual formation? Review the key elements in the spiritual formation process in session 1</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Concept and three dynamics of incarnational living</td>
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<td>Motivator</td>
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<td>2, 3</td>
<td>How to enter another’s world while maintaining one’s individuality</td>
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<td>Direct instruction</td>
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<td>2, 3</td>
<td>Dilemma: The challenge of having to live in two worlds</td>
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<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4, 8</td>
<td>How to hang between our own and another’s world</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5, 8</td>
<td>Apply incarnational living to their lives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scripture</td>
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<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 7</td>
<td>Genesis 45:1-28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Worship</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Exalting God for God-living relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7, 9</td>
<td>Journal to God what you like about who He has made you and commit to being faithful to who you are as you relate to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7, 9</td>
<td>Prayer and thanksgiving for who God has made you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformational prayer</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>7, 10</td>
<td>Participants start praying for one another in their triads</td>
</tr>
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<td>Total time</td>
<td>120 min</td>
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Spiritual Formation within the Faith Community:
The Beginning of a Life Journey

Unit 3: The Community as a Place to Recover Emotionally and Grow in Maturity

Session 4

TOPIC
Joy within the community

DESIRED PARTICIPANT GOAL
To experience joy as foundational for maturity and recovery

TEACHING OBJECTIVE
To enable participants to comprehend and experience joy and understand how joy is foundational for maturity and recovery

DESIRED PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES
Knowledge
Upon successful completion of the lesson, participants will
1. Know what joy is
2. Understand why joy is foundational for maturity and recovery
3. Learn the process of returning to joy

Skills & Behaviors
During the lesson, participants will learn how
4. To build joy in the context of relationships
5. To return to joy
6. To improve their use of the spiritual disciplines

Attitudes, Values, Commitments
Upon successful completion of the lesson, participants will
7. Value joy
8. Commit to practicing the skills for building and returning to joy
<table>
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<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Teaching Notes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Prayer</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review session 3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Question: how have you applied incarnational living to your lives since we last met? Review the key elements in the spiritual formation process in session 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Motivator</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Parable of the lost son in Luke 15:11-32: ask the question why the young son lost joy and how he regained it</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scripture</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Nehemiah 8:10</td>
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<td>Direct instruction</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>Teach what joy is and why it is foundational for maturity and recovery</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1, 2, 4, 8</td>
<td>Practicing skills in building joy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prayer</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Confess the emotions in your life that rob your joy</td>
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<td>Direct instruction</td>
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<td>3, 5</td>
<td>Teach the process of returning to joy</td>
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<td>Role play</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3, 5, 8</td>
<td>Practicing the process of returning to joy through role plays</td>
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<tr>
<td>Worship</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Praise God for the gift of joy in the midst of the recovery process</td>
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<td>Commitment</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Discussion and commitment within the triad</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transformational prayer</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Participants continue praying for one another in their triads</td>
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Spiritual Formation within the Faith Community: The Beginning of a Life Journey

Unit 3: The Community as a Place to Recover Emotionally and Grow in Maturity

Session 5

TOPIC
Barriers to recovery

DESIRED PARTICIPANT GOAL
To identify traumas that limit or prevent recovery

TEACHING OBJECTIVE
To help participants identify and overcome the barriers that limit or prevent recovery

DESIRED PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

*Knowledge*
Upon successful completion of the lesson, participants will
1. Become acquainted with Type A and Type B traumas
2. Understand how these barriers limit or prevent recovery

*Skills & Behaviors*
Upon successful completion of the lesson, participants will be able
3. To differentiate between Type A and Type B traumas
4. To identify the personal barriers that limit or prevent their recovery
5. To improve their use of the spiritual disciplines

*Attitudes, Values, Commitments*
During the instruction and activities participants will
6. Make a commitment to be honest with themselves
7. Begin to allow God to show reveal areas that are limiting or preventing their recovery
<table>
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<th>Time</th>
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<th>Teaching Notes</th>
</tr>
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<td>10 min</td>
<td></td>
<td>Question: Pick an emotion and share with the group how you returned to joy. Review the key elements in the spiritual formation process in session 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scripture</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Case study of woman with a flow (Mark 5:24-34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct instruction</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>Type A and B traumas as barriers to recovery and how they prevent recovery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5, 6, 7</td>
<td>Request for participants to understand barriers to recovery and for faith that God will help me as I make a commitment to join him in removing them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>Have participants divide into their triads and share their understanding of what a trauma is and how traumas affect the process of spiritual formation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4</td>
<td>Story with musical through which participants are led to experience God’s forgiveness and are encouraged to forgive those responsible for their traumas in order to identify and begin to remove barriers that prevent recovery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>To adore God for his forgiveness and for giving us the power to forgive others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformational prayer</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5, 7</td>
<td>Participants continue to pray for one another in their triads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total time</td>
<td>120 min</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Spiritual Formation within the Faith Community:
The Beginning of a Life Journey

Unit 3: The Community as a Place to Recover Emotionally and Grow in Maturity

Session 6

TOPIC
The recovery process

DESIRED PARTICIPANT GOAL
To practice the steps in the process of recovery

TEACHING OBJECTIVE
To explain the recovery process and encourage participants to practice its steps

DESIRED PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

Knowledge
Upon successful completion of the lesson, participants will
1. Understand what resolves and what does not resolve traumas
2. Perceive the necessity of recovery in the spiritual formation process

Skills & Behaviors
Upon successful completion of the lesson, participants will know how
3. To apply the recovery process for resolving their personal traumas
4. To improve their use of the spiritual disciplines

Attitudes, Values, Commitments
Upon successful completion of the lesson, participants will
5. Commit to removing personal barriers by implementing the recovery and healing processes
6. Value the role of the Holy Spirit in the recovery process
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Teaching Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prayer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review session 5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
<td>Give an opportunity to participants to share with the group what a trauma is and what the differences between Type A and Type B traumas are. Review the key elements in the spiritual formation process in session 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct instruction</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
<td>What resolves and what does not resolve traumas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
<td>Participants go through the recovery process for a trauma of their choice, beginning with a journal description of the trauma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Have participants express their commitment to removing barriers through the recovery process in their triads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scripture</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4, 6</td>
<td>Acts 9:20-31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivator</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1, 6</td>
<td>Paul’s recovery process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformational</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4, 5, 6</td>
<td>Participants continue to pray for one another in their triads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7, 8, 9</td>
<td>Praise God for making the recovery process possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total time</td>
<td>120 min</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Spiritual Formation within the Faith Community:
The Beginning of a Life Journey

Unit 3: The Community as a Place to Recover Emotionally and Grow in Maturity

Session 7

TOPIC
The maturity process

DESIRED PARTICIPANT GOAL
To understand the primary task and its primary problem in each stage of growing into maturity

TEACHING OBJECTIVE
To explain the tasks in each stage of the maturity process and the problems that result when the tasks are not accomplished

DESIRED PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

Knowledge
Upon successful completion of the lesson, participants will
1. Learn that maturity is reaching the potential God has given them
2. Be able to describe the five stages in the maturity process
3. Understand the individual and community tasks in each stage
4. Realize the primary problems resulting from failing to accomplish the tasks

Skills & Behaviors
Upon successful completion of the lesson, participants will know how
5. To move from one maturity stage to another
6. To improve their use of the spiritual disciplines

Attitudes, Values, Commitments
During the instruction and activities participants will
7. Value the stage they are in
8. Commit to developing relationships that will create an environment in which the maturity process can continue
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Teaching Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prayer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review session 6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td>Based on session 6 describe Paul’s recovery process. Review the key elements in the spiritual formation process in session 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct instruction</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4</td>
<td>Definition of maturity, the five stage maturity process, individual and community tasks for each stage, and primary problems from failing to accomplish tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2, 3, 4</td>
<td>Complete a grid on the maturity stages, tasks, and problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2, 3, 4</td>
<td>Have five participants come to the front each one of them representing a stage. Have each one illustrate the importance of the stage they are in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Have participants share in their triads what they will do in order to create an environment where maturity can continue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scripture</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3, 4, 5</td>
<td>(2 Samuel 11-14) Application of the recovery process and how to move from one stage to another in the life of David and his sons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6, 7</td>
<td>Exalt God for working all things together for good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformational</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Participants continue to pray for one another in their triads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total time</td>
<td>120 min</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Spiritual Formation within the Faith Community:  
The Beginning of a Life Journey

Unit 3: The Community as a Place to Recover Emotionally and Grow in Maturity

Session 8

TOPIC
Fear versus love

DESIRED PARTICIPANT GOAL
To experience the process of moving from fear bonds to love bonds

TEACHING OBJECTIVE
To provide an opportunity for participants to experience the process of moving from fear bonds to love bonds

DESIRED PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

Knowledge
Upon successful completion of the lesson, participants will
1. Be acquainted with how love bonds differ from fear bonds
2. Understand the essential steps for changing fear bonds to love bonds

Skills & Behaviors
Upon successful completion of the lesson, participants will know how
3. To turn fear bonds into love bonds
4. To improve their use of the spiritual disciplines

Attitudes, Values, Commitments
During the instruction and activities participants will
5. Value relationships in which love bonds are present
6. Commit to continuing the process of turning fear bonds into love bonds
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Teaching Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prayer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review session 7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Question: what are the five stages and in which one are you? Review the key elements in the spiritual formation process in session 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct instruction</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2, 3</td>
<td>Teach the differences between fear bonds and love bonds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Exercise on differentiating between fear and love bonds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct instruction</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
<td>Help participants understand the basic steps for changing from fear to love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Share with the triad an example of a love bond and an example of a fear love in their own lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivator (Scripture)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6</td>
<td>Read first by yourselves, then share with the triad and then with the large group. Peter’s conversion Luke 22:54-62; Acts 4:1-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Praise God for his perfect love that casts our fear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformational Prayer</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Participants continue to pray in their triads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5, 6</td>
<td>Separate into triads and make a commitment to start the process of changing a fear into a love bond. Express gratitude for relationships in which love bonds are present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total time</td>
<td>120 min</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Spiritual Formation within the Faith Community:
The Beginning of a Life Journey

Unit 4: The Community as a Place to Start Living God’s Purpose for One’s Life

Session 9

TOPIC
Developing a time line

DESIRED PARTICIPANT GOAL
To learn to see the past from God’s perspective

TEACHING OBJECTIVE
To teach participants how to view their past from God’s perspective

DESIRED PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

Knowledge
Upon successful completion of the lesson, participants will
1. Learn to identify the key people, events, and circumstances of their past in order to understand where they have been

Skills & Behaviors
Upon successful completion of the lesson, participants will know how
2. To develop a personal time line
3. To improve their use of the spiritual disciplines

Attitudes, Values, Commitments
During the instruction and activities participants will
4. Commit to continuing to remember their past in order to enlarge their time line
5. Commit to being held accountable in their triads
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Teaching Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prayer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review session 8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>Case study: have participants describe how that person should move from fear to love bonds. Review the key elements in the spiritual formation process in session 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivator</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>Share with participants my time table and the blessings that have resulted from going through the process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct instruction</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>Share power point presentation for developing personal calling statement. Emphasize the information on developing a time line. Lead participants into submitting to God’s guidance as they begin to work on their time line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3, 4</td>
<td>Ask God to bring the past to mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>Start guiding participants through the process of identifying people, events, and circumstances of their past so they can start working on their time line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity and</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1, 5</td>
<td>Have people share with the group what they thought God saw when He saw them; what area Satan was using to destroy them; and how they thought God was going to help them overcome it. Commit to being held accountable in their triads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>commitment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scripture</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
<td>Moses’ spiritual formation (Acts 7:18-37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformational</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Participants continue to pray in their triads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total time</td>
<td>120 min</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Spiritual Formation within the Faith Community:  
The Beginning of a Life Journey

Unit 4: The Community as a Place to Start Living God’s Purpose for One’s Life

Session 10

TOPIC  
Identifying lessons and values

DESIRED PARTICIPANT GOAL  
To learn the lessons and values from their past

TEACHING OBJECTIVE  
To help participants how to discover the lesson and values from their time lines

DESIRED PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

Knowledge  
Upon successful completion of the lesson, participants will
  1. Identify the experiences of their past as recorded on their time lines that highlight the lessons God is trying to teach them
  2. Understand how their responses to people, events, and circumstances reveal their values

Skills & Behaviors  
Upon successful completion of the lesson, participants will know how
  3. To recognize the ways in which God teaches us through experience
  4. To extract the values from the past experiences recorded on their time line
  5. To improve their use of the spiritual disciplines

Attitudes, Values, Commitments  
Upon successful completion of the lesson, participants will
  6. Value how God uses painful experiences of the past to mature us
  7. Commit to aligning their lives with God’s values
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Teaching Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prayer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review session 9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Question: What have you found so far in your timeline? Review the key elements in the spiritual formation process in session 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivator</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Share examples of lessons and values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct instruction</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Share power point presentation for developing personal calling statement. Emphasize the information on how to identify the lessons from the experiences of their past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1, 3, 4</td>
<td>Have people start seeing how God has been teaching them through the experiences of their past. Help them to start drawing lessons from their time lines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct instruction</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Share power point presentation for developing personal calling statement. Emphasize the information on how to identify the values from the experiences of their past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2, 3, 4</td>
<td>Have people share information from their time lines and have their triads help them see how their response to people, events, and circumstances reveal their values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5, 6</td>
<td>Thank God for using painful experiences of the past to mature them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scripture</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1, 5, 6</td>
<td>Mary’s gift Luke 7:36-50; John 20:1-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformational</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5, 7</td>
<td>Participants continue to pray in their triads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prayer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total time</td>
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</table>
Spiritual Formation within the Faith Community:
The Beginning of a Life Journey

Unit 4: The Community as a Place to Start Living God’s Purpose for One’s Life

**Session 11**

**TOPIC**
Developing a calling statement

**DESIRED PARTICIPANT GOAL**
To learn how to discover and develop a God-given calling for life

**TEACHING OBJECTIVE**
To teach participants how to discover and develop a God-given calling for life

**DESIRED PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES**

*Knowledge*
Upon successful completion of the lesson, participants will

1. Learn to identify key events in their time lines in order to see how God is directing their lives
2. Understand that a personal calling statement consists of a biblical purpose, life-ministry values, and a personal life vision
3. Realize that a personal calling is the best current understanding of a participant’s unique destiny

*Skills & Behaviors*
Upon successful completion of the lesson, participants will know how

4. To develop a personal calling statement
5. To improve their use of the spiritual disciplines

*Attitudes, Values, Commitments*
During the instruction and activities participants will

6. Value the ways God has shaped them to live out their calling statement
7. Be thankful that God is able to accomplish his purposes in their lives
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Teaching Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prayer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review lesson 10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>Question: What are some of the lessons that you believe you have learned and are already implementing in your daily life? What are some of the values that you have? Are you living by them? Review the key elements in the spiritual formation process in session 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivator</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Share calling statements that other people have written and the impact it’s having on their lives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct instruction</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1, 3, 4</td>
<td>Share power point presentation for developing personal calling statement. Show how the work done on the two previous sessions have laid a foundation for today. Teach what a personal calling statement is and that it includes a biblical purpose, values, and a personal vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1, 4, 8</td>
<td>Have participants identify key elements in their time lines so they can see how God is directing their lives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scripture</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7</td>
<td>Abraham’s calling (Genesis 11:27-12:9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3, 4, 5, 6</td>
<td>Have participants continue their work in developing a personal calling statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5, 7</td>
<td>Exalt God for his provision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5, 7</td>
<td>Pray in the triads for one another so that God accomplishes his purposes for your lives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total time</td>
<td>120 min</td>
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</table>
Spiritual Formation within the Faith Community: 
The Beginning of a Life Journey

Unit 4: The Community as a Place to Start Living God’s Purpose for One’s Life

Session 12

TOPIC
Celebration and sharing

DESIREDPARTICIPANTGOAL
To celebrate and share the outcome of their time line and calling statement

TEACHINGOBJECTIVE
To celebrate and facilitate the sharing of participants time lines and calling statements

DESIREDPARTICIPANTOUTCOMES
Knowledge
Upon successful completion of the lesson, participants will
1. Understand the elements and complex process of spiritual formation
2. Recognize the necessity of spiritual formation within the community context
3. Understand how the tools they have learned throughout the program have better equipped them to continue on the spiritual formation journey

Skills & Behaviors
Upon successful completion of the lesson, participants will know how
4. To practice the tools they learned to live more effectively in the community context
5. To practice the spiritual disciplines of Bible study, worship, and transformational prayer to create a space for God to commune and transform the inner being

Attitudes, Values, Commitments
During this final lesson, participants will
6. Express gratitude for the opportunity to have experienced spiritual formation in the context of a community
7. Commit to continue growing spiritually for the rest of their life journeys
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Teaching Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
<td>People brought food to celebrate the conclusion of the program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
<td>Review the key elements in the spiritual formation process in session 1. Help them see the whole picture of the program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scripture</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Paul’s testimony (Philippians 3:12-21; 2 Timothy 4:6-8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>4, 6, 7</td>
<td>Have participants share with the group their personal calling statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5, 6</td>
<td>Praise God for being willing and able to complete what He has begun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity: Prayer</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5, 6, 7</td>
<td>Commitment, thanksgiving and intercession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total time</td>
<td>200 min</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Have participants answer three questions about the program</td>
</tr>
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</table>
APPENDIX B

ENGLISH LANGUAGE SURVEYS
SPIRITUAL HEALTH

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<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Spiritual Health**

- Do you thirst for God?
- Are you governed increasingly by God’s Word?
- Are you more loving?
- Are you more sensitive to God’s presence?
- Do you have a growing concern for spiritual and temporal needs of others?
- Do you delight in the bride of Christ?
- Are the spiritual disciplines increasingly important to you?
- Do you still grieve over sin?
- Are you a quick forgiver?
- Do you yearn for heaven and to be with Jesus?

From book *Ten Questions to Diagnose your Spiritual Health* by Donald S. Whitney
EMOTIONAL HEALTH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Part A: General Formation and Discipleship</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Sometimes true</th>
<th>Mostly true</th>
<th>Very True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I feel confident of my adoption as God’s son/daughter and rarely, if ever, question his acceptance of me.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I love to worship God by myself as well as with others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I spend regular quality time in the Word of God and prayer.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I sense the unique ways God has gifted me individually and am actively using my spiritual gifts for his service.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I am a vital participant in a community with other believers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>It is clear that my Money, gifts, time, and abilities are completely at God’s disposal and not my own.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I consistently integrate my faith in the marketplace and the world.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Part B: Emotional Components of Discipleship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>It’s easy for me to identify what I am feeling inside.</th>
<th>Not very true</th>
<th>Sometimes true</th>
<th>Mostly true</th>
<th>Very True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I am willing to explore previously unknown or unacceptable parts of myself, allowing Christ to transform me more fully.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I enjoy being alone in quiet reflection with God and myself</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I can share freely about my emotions, sexuality, joy, and pain</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I am able to experience and deal with anger in a way that leads to growth in others and myself</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I am honest with myself (and a few significant others) about the feelings, beliefs, doubts, pains, and hurts beneath the surface of my life</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I resolve conflict in a clear, direct, and respectful way, not what I might have learned growing up in my family, such as painful putdowns, avoidance, escalating tensions, or going to a third party rather than to the person directly</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I am intentional at working through the impact of significant “earthquake” events that shaped my present, such as death of a family member, an unexpected pregnancy, divorce, addiction, or major financial disaster</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I am able to thank God for all my past life experiences, seeing how he has used them to uniquely shape me into who I am</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I can see how certain “generational sins” have been passed down to me through my family history, including character flows, lies, secrets, ways of coping with pain, and unhealthy tendencies in relating to others</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I don’t need approval from others to feel good about myself</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>I take responsibility and ownership for my past life rather than blame others</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>I often admit when I’m wrong, readily asking forgiveness from others</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>I am able to speak freely about my weakness, failures, and mistakes</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Others would easily describe me as approachable, gentle, open, and transparent</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Those close to me would say that I am not easily offended or hurt</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>I am consistently open to hearing and applying constructive criticism and feedback that others might have for me</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>I am rarely judgmental or critical of others</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Others would say that I slow to speak, quick to listen, and good at seeing things from their perspective</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>I’ve never been accused of “trying to do it all” or of biting off more than I could chew</td>
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<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>Parte B: Continuation</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>I am regularly able to say no to requests and opportunities rather than risk overextending myself</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>I recognize the different situations where my unique, God-given personality can be either a help or hindrance in responding appropriately</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>It’s easy for me to distinguish the difference between when to help carry someone else’s burden and when to let it go so that they can carry their own burden</td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>I have a good sense of my emotional, relational, physical, and spiritual capacities, intentionally pulling back to rest and fill my “gas tank” again</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Those close to me would say that I am good at balancing family, rest, work, and play in a biblical way</td>
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<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>I openly admit my losses and disappointments</td>
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<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>When I go through a disappointment or a loss, I reflect on how I’m feeling rather than pretend that nothing is wrong</td>
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<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>I take time to grieve my losses as David and Jesus did</td>
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<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>People who are in great pain and sorrow tend to seek me out because it’s clear to them that I am in touch with the losses and sorrows in my own life</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>I am able to cry and experience depression or sadness, explore the reasons behind it, and allow God to work in me through it</td>
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<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>I am regularly able to enter into other people’s worlds and feelings, connecting deeply with them and taking time to imagine what it feels like to live in their shoes</td>
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<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>People close to me would describe me as a responsive listener</td>
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<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>When I confront someone who has hurt or wronged me, I speak more in the first person (“I” and “me”) about how I am feeling rather than speak in blaming tones (“you” or “they”) about what was done</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>I have little interest in judging other people or quickly giving opinions about them</td>
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<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>People would describe me as someone who makes “loving well” my number one aim</td>
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<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>I spend sufficient time alone with God to sustain my work for God</td>
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<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>I regularly take a 24-hour period each week for Sabbath-keeping-to stop, to rest, to delight, and to contemplate God.</td>
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<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Those closest to me would say that my marriage and children take priority over church ministry and others</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>I am not afraid to ask difficult, uncomfortable questions, to myself or to others, when needed</td>
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<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>I do not divide my leadership into sacred/secular categories. I treat the executive/planning functions of leadership as meaningful as prayer and preparing sermons</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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</table>

From book *The Emotionally Healthy Church* by author Peter Scazzero
### STAGES IN MATURITY

#### Infant Stage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Motivations and Regulations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I have experienced strong, loving, caring bonds with mother/a woman</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I have experienced strong, loving, caring bonds with father/a man</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Important needs were met until I learned to ask</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Others took the lead and synchronized with me and my feelings first</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Quiet together times helped me calm myself with people around</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Important people have seen me through the “eyes of heaven”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I can both receive and give life</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I receive with joy and without guilt or shame</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I can now synchronize with others and their feelings</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I found people to imitate so that I now have a personality I like</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I learned to regulate and quiet the “big six” emotions’’</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Anger</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fear</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sadness</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Disgust</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shame</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hopeless / despair</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I can return to joy from every emotion and restore broken relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I am the same person over time</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I know how to rest</td>
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</table>

#### Child Stage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Competency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I can do things I don’t feel like doing</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I can do hard things (even if they cause me some pain)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I can separate my feelings, my imagination and reality in my relationships</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I am comfortable with reasonable risks, attempts and failures</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I have received love I did not have to earn</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I know how my family came to be the way it is—family history</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I know how God’s family came to be the way it is</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I know the “big picture” of life with the stages of maturity</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I can take care of myself</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I ask for what I need</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I enjoy self-expression</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I am growing in the things I am good at doing (personal resources and talents)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>I help other people to understand me better if they don’t respond well to me</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I have learned to control my cravings</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>I know what satisfies me</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I see myself through the “eyes of heaven”</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Adult Stage</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I have had a rite of passage into adulthood by the community</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>I am comfortable relating to the same sex community</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>I have a peer group where I belong</td>
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<td>I can partner with others</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>My relationships are marked by fairness and mutual satisfaction</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>I protect others from my power when necessary</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I protect my personal and group identity when boundaries are violated</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>I live in a way that expresses my heart</td>
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<td>I have a diverse set of roles and responsibilities</td>
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<td>I make important contributions to my family and community</td>
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<td>I can bring two or more people back to joy at the same time</td>
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<td>I use my sexual power wisely</td>
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<td>I can proclaim my spiritual identity</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I can see others through the “eyes of heaven”</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Parent Stage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I have brought others to life</td>
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<td>I have an encouraging partner</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I receive guidance from elders</td>
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<td>I have peers that hold me accountable</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I have a secure and orderly home and community</td>
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<td>I can give without needing to receive in return</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I see my family “through the eyes of heaven”</td>
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<td>I include others in family activities</td>
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<td>I am present with my family</td>
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<td>I am protective of my family</td>
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<td>I am attentive to my family</td>
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<td>I am calming to my family</td>
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<td>I enjoy my family</td>
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<td>I comfort my family</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I help my children mature</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I can synchronize the needs of wife, children, family, work and church</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Elder Stage</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>I have a community of people to call my own</td>
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<td>I am recognized by my community</td>
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<td>I have a proper place in the community structure</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I am valued and defended by the community</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I demonstrate hospitality</td>
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<td>I give life to the “familyless”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I help my community mature</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I build and maintain the community identity</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I don’t abandon when I disengage</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I share others’ feelings but still know who I am and who they are</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I continue to be the same person when provoked or tempted</td>
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<td>I bear up well under:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Misunderstandings</td>
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<td>Accusations</td>
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<td>Rage</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Contradictions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I see some of what God sees in every situation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I enjoy what God put in each and everyone</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I live transparently and spontaneously</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I build and rebuilt trust</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

From the book *Living with Men* by author Jim Wilder diagram by Ken Smith
# READINESS ASSESSMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Readiness Assessment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Some people would think less of me if I changed</td>
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<tr>
<td>I would be healthier if I changed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Changing would take a lot of time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Some people would feel better about me if I changed</td>
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<tr>
<td>I’m concerned I might fail if I tried to change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing would make me feel better about myself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing takes a lot of effort and energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would function better if I changed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would have to give up some things I enjoy</td>
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<tr>
<td>I would be happier if I changed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get some benefit from my current behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some people would be better off if I changed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some people benefit from my current behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would worry less if I changed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some people would be uncomfortable if I changed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some people would be happier if I changed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the book *The Full Plate Diet* by Stuart A. Scale, M.D., Teresa Sherard, M.D., and Diana Fleming, Ph.D., LDN
APPENDIX C

SPANISH LANGUAGE SURVEYS
1. Salud Espiritual

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>A veces</th>
<th>Usualmente</th>
<th>Siempre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>¿Tienes sed de Dios?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>¿Eres gobernado de manera continua por la palabra de Dios?</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>¿Eres más amoroso?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>¿Eres más sensible a la Palabra de Dios?</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>¿Tienes un creciente interés por las necesidades temporales y espirituales de otros?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>¿Te deleitas en la Novia de Cristo (La Iglesia)?</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>¿Son las disciplinas espirituales más y más importantes para ti?</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>¿Todavía sufres cuando pecas?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>¿Perdonas rápidamente?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>¿Ansías estar en el cielo y el estar con Jesús?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extraído del libro *Ten Questions to Diagnose your Spiritual Health* del autor Donald S. Whitney (*Traducido por Esteban R Palacios*)
### 2. Salud Emocional

**Parte A: Formación General y Discipulado**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Descripción</th>
<th>No muy cierto</th>
<th>A veces cierto</th>
<th>Mayormente cierto</th>
<th>Muy cierto</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Me siento seguro de mi adopción como hijo/a de Dios y rara vez cuestiono su aceptación.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Disfruto adorar a Dios solo/a o con otros.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Paso tiempo de calidad y regular en La Palabra de Dios y en Oración.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Siento las maneras únicas en la que Dios me ha dotado como individuo y estoy usando activamente los dones espirituales para su servicio.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Soy un participante vital en la comunidad junto a otros creyentes</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Es claro que mi dinero, dones, tiempo, y habilidades están completamente a la disposición de Dios y no a mi disposición.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>De manera consistente integro mi fe donde trabajo y en el resto del mundo.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Parte B: Componentes Emocionales del Discipulado**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Descripción</th>
<th>No muy cierto</th>
<th>A veces cierto</th>
<th>Mayormente cierto</th>
<th>Muy cierto</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Es fácil para mi identificar lo que estoy sintiendo por dentro.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Estoy dispuesto a explorar áreas previamente desconocidas o inaceptables de mí mismo, permitiendo que Cristo me transforme de manera completa.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Disfruto pasar tiempo a solas reflexionando con Dios y conmigo mismo.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Puedo compartir libremente mis emociones, sexualidad, gozo, y dolor</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Puedo experimentar y enfrentar el enojo de manera que me ayuda a crecer tanto a mí como a otros.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Soy honesto conmigo mismo (y con otras personas especiales) acerca de mis sentimientos, creencias, dudas, dolores, y heridas que están por debajo de la superficie de mi vida.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Resuelvo conflictos de manera clara, directa, y respetuosa, no lo que pudiese haber aprendido en mi familia, tales como evitar, hacer quedar mal, dejar que las tensiones escalen, o ir a otros que no tienen nada que ver en lugar de ir a la persona del problema directamente.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Estoy trabajando de manera intencional a través del impacto de eventos grandes que han moldeado mi vida presente, tales como la muerte de un familiar, un embarazo inesperado, divorcio, adicción, o una situación financiera desastrosa.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Puedo agradecer a Dios por todas mis experiencias pasadas, viendo como el las ha usado para moldearme de manera única en la persona que soy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Puedo ver como algunos “pecados generacionales” han pasado hacia mí a través de la historia de mi familia, incluyendo defectos de carácter, mentiras, secretos, maneras de sobrellevar el dolor, y tendencias no saludables de relacionarme con otros.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>No necesito la aprobación de otros para sentirme bien conmigo mismo/a.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Toma la responsabilidad de mi vida pasada en lugar de culpar a otros.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>A menudo admito que me equivoqué y rápidamente pido perdón.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Puedo hablar libremente de mis debilidades, fracasos, y errores</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Otros me describirían fácilmente como asequible, abierto, gentil, y transparente.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Aquellos que me conocen dirían que no me ofendo fácilmente.</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Estoy abierto para escuchar y aplicar crítica constructiva y retroalimentación que otros puedan tener para mí.</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Rara vez juzgo o critico a otros.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parte B: Continuación</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Otros dirían que soy lento para hablar, presto para escuchar, y bueno para ver las cosas desde la perspectiva de otros</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Nunca he sido acusado de tratar de hacerlo todo o de morder más de lo que puedo masticar</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>A menudo puedo decir “no” a los pedidos y oportunidades en lugar de hacer más de lo que puedo</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Reconozco las diferentes situaciones donde mi personalidad única dada por Dios puede ser una ayuda o un estorbo para poder responder apropiadamente</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Es fácil para mí el distinguir la diferencia entre ayudar a alguien a llevar sus cargas y permitir que ellos lleven sus propias cargas</td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Tengo un buen sentido para distinguir cuando mis capacidades emocionales, físicas, y espirituales me están llamando a descansar y llenar el tanque una vez más</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Aquellos que me conocen dirían que soy bueno balanceando la familia, el descanso, el trabajo, y el juego de una manera bíblica</td>
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<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Admito de manera abierta mis desilusiones y pérdidas</td>
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<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Cuando atravieso una desilusión o una pérdida, reflexiono en como me estoy sintiendo en lugar de pretender que nada está mal</td>
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<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Tomo tiempo para llorar mis pérdidas como David</td>
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<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Las personas que están en gran dolor y pena me buscan porque es claro para ellos que soy una persona que está en sintonía con los dolores y penas en mi propia vida</td>
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<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Puedo llorar y experimentar depresión o tristeza, explorar las razones detrás de ello, y permitir que Dios pueda trabajar en mí a través de todo ello</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Puedo de manera regular entrar en el mundo y los sentimientos de otros, conectarme profundamente con ellos y tomar tiempo para imaginarme lo que se siente andar en sus zapatos</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>La gente que me conoce me describiría como alguien que escucha de manera receptiva</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Tengo un buen sentido de quien soy yo, de donde vengo, y cuales son mis valores, gustos, disgustos, pasiones, y mas</td>
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<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Puedo aceptarme a mí mismo tal y como soy</td>
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<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Puedo formar relaciones profundas con todo tipo de personas, de diferentes origen, cultura, raza, nivel educativo, y clase económica</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Personas que me conocen dirían que sufro con aquellos que sufren y que me regocijo con aquellos que se regocijan</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Soy bueno para pedirle a las personas que me ayuden a corregir mis presuposiciones con respecto a ellos</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Aquellos que me conocen dirían que mi matrimonio y mis hijos toman prioridad sobre el ministerios de la iglesia y otros</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Rara vez juzgo a otros apresuradamente en lugar de ello soy un pacificador y un reconciliador</td>
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<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Las personas me describirían como alguien que hace el “amar correctamente” mi razón de ser número uno</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Extraído del libro The Emotionally Healthy Church del autor Peter Scazzero (Traducido por E.R.P.)
3. ETAPAS DE MADUREZ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Sí</th>
<th>Etapa de Infante</th>
<th>Motivaciones y Regulaciones</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>He experimentado vínculos fuertes, amorosos y de cariño con mi madre/ o una mujer</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>He experimentado vínculos fuertes, amorosos y de cariño con mi padre/ o un hombre</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Necesidades importantes fueron satisfechas hasta que pude pedir por mí mismo</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Otros tomaron el liderazgo y sincronizaron conmigo y con mis sentimientos primero</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>El tiempo de silencio me ayudó a calmarme a mí mismo con personas a mi alrededor</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Personas importantes en mi vida me han visto a través de “los ojos del cielo”</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Puedo recibir y dar vida</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yo recibo con gozo y sin sentir culpa o vergüenza</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Puedo sincronizar con otros y sus sentimientos</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Encontré a personas a quienes puedo imitar de tal manera que ahora tengo una</td>
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<td>personalidad que disfruto</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Aprendí a regular y callar las seis grandes emociones:</td>
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<td>Enojo</td>
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<td>Temor</td>
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<td>Tristeza</td>
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<td>Disgusto</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Vergüenza</td>
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<td>Desesperación / desesperanza</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Puedo regresar al gozo luego de experimentar cada una de las emociones y puedo</td>
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<td>restaurar relaciones rotas</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Soy la misma persona con el pasar del tiempo</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sé como descansar</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Sí</th>
<th>Etapa de Niño</th>
<th>Motivaciones</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Puedo hacer cosas que no siento el deseo de hacer</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Puedo hacer cosas difíciles (aun si me causan algo de dolor)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Puedo separar missentimientos, mi imaginación y la realidad en mis relaciones</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Me siento cómodo al tomar riesgos razonables, intentos y fracasos</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>He recibido amor que no tuve que hacer nada para ganar</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sé como mi familia se convirtió en lo que es –historia familiar</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sé como la familia de Dios se convirtió en lo que es –historia Bíblica</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sé cual es “el cuadro completo” de la vida con respecto a las etapas de madurez</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Puedo cuidarme a mí mismo</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Pido lo que necesito</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Disfruto el expresarme a mí mismo de manera libre</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Estoy creciendo en las cosas que hago bien (recursos personales y talentos)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Le ayudo a otras personas a comprenderme mejor si es que ellos no me entienden bien</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>He aprendido a controlar mis antojos</td>
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<td>Sé lo que me satisface</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Me veo a mí mismo a través de los “ojos del cielo”</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Ss</td>
<td><strong>Etapa adulta</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>He tenido un rito de transición a la adultez dentro de mi comunidad</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Me siento cómodo relacionándome con las personas del mismo sexo</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tengo un grupo al cual siento que pertenezco</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Puedo asociarme con otros</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mis relaciones están marcadas por equidad y satisfacción mutua</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Protejo a otros del poder que yo ejerzo cuando es necesario</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vivo de tal manera que expreso lo que realmente hay en mi corazón</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Desempeño diversos papeles y responsabilidades</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Contribuyo de manera importante a mi familia y a la comunidad</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Uso mi poder sexual de manera sabia</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Puedo proclamar mi identidad espiritual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Puedo ver a otros “a través de los ojos del cielo”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Ss</th>
<th><strong>Etapa de Padre</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>He traído a otros a la vida</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tengo un/a compañero/a que me anima</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>He recibido guía de gente mayor que yo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tengo amigos que me hacen responsable de mis acciones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tengo un hogar y una comunidad segura y ordenada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Puedo dar sin necesidad de recibir a cambio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Veo a mi familia a través de los ojos del cielo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Incluyo a otros en actividades familiares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Estoy presente con mi familia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Soy atento con mi familia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Soy un agente de calma para mi familia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Puedo consolar a mi familia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ayudo a mis hijos en el desarrollo de su madurez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Puedo sincronizar las necesidades de mi esposa, mis hijos, mi familia, trabajo y la iglesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Sí</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Etapa de Anciano</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tengo una comunidad de personas donde me siento en casa</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Soy reconocido por mi propia comunidad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tengo un lugar apropiado en la estructura de la comunidad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Soy valorado y defendido por la comunidad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Demuestro hospitalidad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doy vida a los que no tienen familia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ayudo a mi comunidad a madurar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Construyo y mantengo la identidad de la comunidad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No abandono cuando me desconecto</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comparto los sentimientos de otros mientras tengo claro quién soy yo y quienes son ellos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continúo siendo la misma persona aun cuando me provocan o me tientan a que pierda la calma</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yo soporto bien:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Malos entendidos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Acusaciones</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ira</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contradicciones</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Veo algo de lo que Dios ve en cada situación</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disfruto lo que Dios ha puesto en cada una de las personas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vivo de manera transparente y espontánea</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yo construyo y reconstruyo la confianza</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extraído del libro *Living with Men* del autor Jim Wilder diagramado por Ken Smith (*Traducido por Esteban R Palacios*)
4. Predisposición al Cambio

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No es importante</th>
<th>Poco importante</th>
<th>Algo importante</th>
<th>Bastante importante</th>
<th>Extremadamente importante</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Algunas personas podrían pensar menos de mí si cambiase</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sería más saludable si cambiase</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambiar tomaría mucho tiempo</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algunas personas se sentirían mejor acerca de mí si cambiase</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Me preocupa fracasar si trato de cambiar</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cambiar me haría sentir mejor acerca de mí mismo/a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambiar toma mucho esfuerzo y energía</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funcionaría mejor si cambiase</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tendría que dejar cosas que disfruto</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sería más feliz si cambiase</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tengo beneficios al tener mi vida como la tengo hasta ahora</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algunas personas estarían mejor si cambiase</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algunas personas se beneficiarían de mi conducta actual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me preocuparía menos si cambiase</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algunas personas se sentirían incómodas si yo cambiase</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algunas personas serían más felices si yo cambiase</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extraído del libro *The Full Plate Diet* de las autoras Stuart A. Seale, M.D., Teresa Sherard, M.D., y Diana Fleming, Ph.D., LDN (Traducido por Esteban R Palacios)
APPENDIX D

TRANSFORMATIONAL PRAYER: STRAIGHT 2 THE HEART
# Straight to the Heart
Three Main Steps in the Prayer Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Three Main Steps In the Prayer Process: What did she learn to believe about herself?</th>
<th>Where can Christ's story connect with her story?</th>
<th>PRAYING THROUGH THE CROSS: Experiencing Christ’s Resurrection Power</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Step One:** Dear Lord Jesus, Psalm 139:23, 24  
Thank You for searching her heart, revealing the negative thoughts in this area of her life.  
List her thoughts or struggles:  
* I’m bad  
* I’m no good  
* It’s my fault  
* I’m worthless  
* I can’t speak up  
* I can’t have needs  
* I can’t be forgiven etc. | **Step Two:** Dear Lord Jesus, Hebrews 4:15  
Is there a place where You can identify with her, where Your story connects with her story?  
Or is anything more You want her to know about this? | **Step Three:** Luke 4:18; 9:22; Mal. 4:2  
Dear Lord Jesus,  
Thank You for going through the experience of  
(list where Jesus can identify), so You could suffer in Your soul, (Is. 53:11) dying for me, as me, embracing all my...  
(list thoughts/struggles etc.), rising again to heal my wounded heart, setting me free from (summarize thoughts and struggles), as I receive my true identity as Your (son or daughter). In Your Name Jesus, Amen. |

**Blessings / Step 1 Prayer:**  
Dear Lord Jesus, Are there any blessings or truths you have for her...  
Or do You want to reveal anything keeping her from receiving Your peace in her heart?  
Pre-Closing Prayer: John 10:10  
How will Satan seek to steal and destroy her freedom this week?  
What will she need to protection from his attacks as we close today’s prayer time? |

**Confessing Sin Prayer:**  
Dear Lord Jesus,  
Thank You For suffering and dying for me, becoming all my sin, (2 Cor. 5:21) paying the price for all my sins, so You could embrace all my guilt and regret, shame and condemnation, rising again to heal my wounded heart, setting me free from sin and walking me out of my prison of shame and condemnation.”  
In Your Name Jesus, Amen |

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Monday, September 12, 2011
APPENDIX E

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES


Burn, L. (n.d.). *The discipleship adventure: Calling ordinary people to an extraordinary journey on the way of discipleship*. Author.


Ortberg, J. (2005). *God is closer than you think: If God is always with us, why is he so hard to find?* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.


REFERENCE LIST


Ortberg, J. (2005). *God is closer than you think: If God is always with us, why is he so hard to find?* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.


VITA

Ricardo was born in Guayaquil, Ecuador. His early years were spent at CADE, Ecuador’s S.D.A. boarding academy, where his parents, Drs. Hector and Laura Palacios, worked as teachers (and later administrators). He graduated at Colegio del Pacifico, an Adventist high school in Guayaquil and then attended Weimar College where he earned a B.A. in Religion. Upon finishing his studies, he returned to work as a pastor and high school chaplain in Quito, Ecuador. Two years later, he again left for the United States, this time to pursue a Masters in Divinity degree at Andrews University. Here, he met fellow seminarian, Alicia Worley, and they married 1998.

In August of 1999, Ricardo and Alicia returned to Ecuador where for the next six years, Ricardo’s responsibilities included teaching and pastoring at CADE and coordinating the church’s theological extension program, serving as a district pastor and church planter, as youth director for the Southern Ecuadorian Mission Conference, youth director and ministerial secretary of the Ecuadorian Union, and as president of the North Ecuadorian Mission Conference. Personal highlights during this period include the birth of his sons, Gabriel (age 11) and Daniel (age 9) and his ordination to pastoral ministry in 2003.

Ricardo returned to the United States in 2005 to continue his doctoral studies at Andrews University. During the past six years he has served as pastor and church planter in Richardson, Texas. He is currently preparing to work as a frontier church planter in Thailand.