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ABSTRACT

A PROCESS FOR IMPLEMENTING DEVOTIONAL PATTERNS FOR MEMBERS OF THE SAN DIEGO CENTRAL SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

by

Limuel M. Liwanag

Adviser: Ferdinand O. Regalado

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Project Document

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: A PROCESS FOR IMPLEMENTING DEVOTIONAL PATTERNS FOR MEMBERS OF THE SAN DIEGO CENTRAL SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

Name of researcher: Limuel M. Liwanag

Name and degree of adviser: Ferdinand O. Regalado, PhD

Date Completed: August 2017

Problem

A church with declining membership for over 20 years and almost devoid of additional new member through baptism is a pastoral concern. Such is the situation with San Diego Central Seventh-day Adventist church. This scenario appears contrary to the biblical formula for individual as well as congregational health that Jesus emphatically stated in John 15. Connectedness to Jesus, the Vine, naturally results in fruitfulness. When a person does not bear fruit, it may indicate a lack of or no connection to the Vine at all. Connection to Jesus is nurtured and sustained by a devotional pattern. A process that assists church members to implement meaningful and consistent devotional patterns that enhances their

personal relationship with Jesus. It will concur with the biblical notion that doing for Jesus comes after being with Him.

Method

A process for implementing devotional patterns was formulated and conducted for volunteer participants on February to April 2013. It consists of a 10-week, once-a-week closed group session designed to encourage, deepen, and personally assist participants in their desire to form and/or enhance their devotional practice. This was followed by a once-a-month meeting for the subsequent three months. A Journey curriculum was utilized for this period along with an interactive group setting. To measure the effectiveness of this process, a survey questionnaire was obtained from the entire congregation and the volunteer participants before the sessions and from the volunteer participants again after the sessions. The data collected were analyzed and interpreted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software and with the aid of a qualified statistician. It should be noted that research tools used in formal qualitative and quantitative research were applied to the research related to this intervention project but this does not constitute formal qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods research since the Doctor of Ministry program does not provide a research methodologist to oversee the process.

Results

The volunteer participants perceived that their church is welcoming and conducive for learning and growth more than their perception before the Journey sessions. The Intrinsic motivation indicates that they agree strongly than before about the

divinity of God who is worthy of their affection and on-going relationship. The Extrinsic motivation suggests that they move farther away from regarding their relationship to God as a means to get what they wanted. After the six-month period of this study, the participants registered a decline on Practicing their Faith which means praying and meditating a little less, reading the Bible on their own less, and telling someone about God and helping others a little less than before the Journey session. This can mean that the period of time allotted to assess the overall impact of the Journey regarding Practicing of Faith may have been too short. It can also mean that the effect of the Journey process on Practicing of Faith is less reliable if the volunteer sample is too small, or maybe the participants were more honest in responding to the questionnaire after the Journey experience.

Conclusions

The intentional carving of time to learn and share personal experiences relating to God for at least 10 consecutive journey weeks enhances a person's view and relationship with God. It appears that it would require more than six months to adequately assess this process' effect on the Practice of Faith such as time alone with God, personal reading of the Bible, telling someone of God, and helping other people. A biblical view of God importantly prepares a person for a meaningful and consistent devotional pattern which correspondingly ensures fruitfulness in life.

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

A PROCESS FOR IMPLEMENTING DEVOTIONAL PATTERNS FOR MEMBERS OF THE SAN DIEGO CENTRAL SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

A Project Document

Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Ministry

by

Limuel M. Liwanag

August 2017

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A PROCESS FOR IMPLEMENTING DEVOTIONAL PATTERNS FOR MEMBERS OF THE SAN DIEGO CENTRAL SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

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

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Personal History

I have come to acknowledge that God's calling is dynamic. Allowing God's leading in my life has made me aware of responsibilities I have not thought of before. When I perceived that God was calling me to pastoral ministry, I did not have the slightest idea that He was also preparing me to be a Bible instructor at the College of Theology at the Adventist University of the Philippines. My only intention for coming to the States was to attend Andrews University to finish a doctorate degree to further my involvement in the academic community. Yet God had something different in mind from what I had envisioned. His plan is always best, and yielding to it will ensure a fruitful result. He knows me better than anyone else in this world, even better than I know myself. In my quest for professional advancement, God knew that I needed more than academic preparation. Most importantly, I needed a heart-shaping experience. So what I initially perceived as delays in my plan happened to be enrollment into God's leadership curriculum, which included ensuring that my entire family maintained a saving relationship with Jesus.

A former colleague in the Philippines who was then serving as a missionary in Mexico brought to my attention certain possibilities for starting my upgrading desire.

After discovering that Andrews University offered a new program that aligned with my interest, I began negotiating with them, even though the registration deadline had already past. I prayed for God's leading, pleading that if this was the time for me to start upgrading that He would open the way for me. It was a long shot. The enrollment requirements seemed too much for me to accomplish given the time left before the start of the intensive class. But God helped me in this process and I was accepted at the last possible moment.

Even before attending my first intensive class, I knew that something did not line-up in regard to my relationship with God. I yearned for something I did not have.

Engaging in a deep study of the Word of God, and a somewhat inconsistent devotional time with Him proved insufficient. I still believed in the 28 fundamental beliefs of my beloved church and found nothing amiss in my knowledge of God and His ways. My sense of emptiness was not about doctrine or any biblical issue. Yet deep inside me was a longing for authentic evidence of being with God.

Based on my pastoral observation, I was not surprised to discover that my personal longing to be in God's presence in a meaningful and consistent way was the same experience of other members of the church I was serving. This was later confirmed after I conducted a ministry assessment of the church in conjunction with a requirement for another course I was taking. Even a cursory observation can reveal a problem in a church that has been experiencing a membership decline for the past 25 years. I was impressed with the need to be genuinely connected to Jesus and that being with Jesus comes before doing for Him. I could not dismiss this nagging impression that fruitfulness, which should include optimum employment of spiritual gifts, is eventually

manifested in baptism of souls that are added to church membership. This could result from a collective effort of the church family as a whole as they joyfully exercise their individual giftedness. And all along, Jesus taught this model of spiritual growth in John 15 that many of us appear to ignore.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop and implement a process that will facilitate the development of a devotional pattern by members of the San Diego Central Seventh-day Adventist Church. Volunteers were invited to commit to the 10-week, once-a-week closed group session that allowed them to discover devotional patterns that fit their life context. A monthly follow up meeting ensued over the next three months to further enhance their devotional practice and spiritual growth in experiencing God. To assess the effectiveness of the process, a statistical evaluation was used to quantify the change in the devotional practice of the 18 volunteers who participated in the aforementioned sessions and follow-up meetings. The statistical measurement provided descriptive data based on the pre- and post-session surveys conducted with the 18 volunteer participants. The entire process is evaluated and narrated in Chapter 5, along with the recommendations and conclusions derived from this project.

Statement of the Problem

The spiritual growth paradigm that Jesus taught in John 15 claims that fruitfulness in Christian living is achieved by a genuine connection with the Vine, the Lord Himself.

A tangible manifestation of this healthy relationship is the church's intentional participation in the Great Commission (Matt 28:16-20) that would include membership

increase through baptism. When baptism is almost nil and membership continues to decline for a period of over 20 years, it appears that church members and their leaders are not connected to the Vine at all.

Some members of the San Diego Central Seventh-day Adventist Church indicated that a consistent and meaningful devotional practice was rare among the members.

Attending weekly worship services alone cannot remedy this disconnection from God.

Real craving for the divine is replaced by preferences that feed self, which result in a dichotomy of spiritual and temporal life that turns Christianity into a profession that eventually neglects the gospel commission. Because doing for God comes after being with Him, there is a need to experience God on a daily basis.

Justification for the Project

Human beings were created for relationship and by design naturally yearn for the presence of God. Sin estranged them from the Creator and consequently hid God's face. The grace of God maintains an initiative to reach down to humans, yet it takes an intentional and consistent practice of being with God to nurture a meaningful relationship with Him. The Bible is clear that fruitfulness in the spiritual arena requires a conscious choice to abide in God. Fruit bearing does not exist outside of a divine connection. Being connected with God heals brokenness in people and empowers the Christian life for effective ministry. God longs for man as much as man longs for God. Life *per se* combined with the influence of society makes it harder for anyone, even with a sincere desire, to seek God's face.

Expectations for the Project

This project will help members of the San Diego Central Seventh-day Adventist Church discover a devotional pattern that will allow them to establish a regular time with God. This project will also assist them in understanding that doing for God comes after spending time with Him. This project will serve as a catalyst for them to develop a life committed to God, resulting in a natural involvement in witnessing, as well as other programs and activities of the church. This project will challenge me to strengthen my devotional pattern so that I may serve as a resource to those who are still struggling to establish their own pattern. This process may also serve as a model for other local churches that might want to embark on this particular journey.

Delimitations of the Project

This project was designed with the church history, ministry, and spiritual context of the San Diego Central Church family in mind. The process to facilitate the development of devotional patterns implemented in this research was tailored to fit the life situation of the volunteer participants from this particular church. The goal is for the volunteer participants to develop their own pattern of devotions that will satisfy their inherent craving for God, and in the process naturally bear fruit that will result in people being baptized into the kingdom of God. When this project is deemed successful, the remaining members of this church can then utilize the same process. My hope is that this particular process will be beneficial to other local congregations, not only in the local conference where the church is affiliated, but also in a wider circle of churches in the local division.

Limitations of the Project

The participants of this project are volunteers who responded to the invitation I diligently and carefully advertised through the church bulletin, email roster, and mailing addresses of the members and adherents of the aforementioned church. Whereas I also conducted a pre-session survey for the entire congregation, the effect of the process for implementing devotional patterns was limited to the perception of the volunteers who participated in the process and the pre- and post-session survey. Hopefully, this particular process can be utilized with the rest of the church members to achieve the expected outcome.

Definition of Terms

Although certain words used in this study carry inherent meaning, they are distinctly used to express the intention of the researcher and what is typically understood in this particular pastoral and Christian-spirituality arena. The following is a brief explanation of their intended meaning.

Devotional pattern is essentially synonymous to spiritual discipline, which is basically man's attempt to commune or connect with God. It refers to any method of reaching out to God such as prayer, reading of the Scriptures, repentance, worship, etc.

Process is an experiential and personal engagement in a method or vehicle that is helpful for achieving a desired outcome or result. In this study, *process* refers to the sessions designed to cultivate a consistent and meaningful devotional practice. It is a means rather than an end. It is dynamic and accommodates legitimate, unexpected turn-of-events that contribute to overall achievement of the set goals.

Covenant in its simplest form is equivalent to a promise. It is an agreement between two parties, regardless of whether both are of similar status, or one is of greater or superior status to the other.

Relational Covenant refers to God's self-initiated and divinely binding contract between Himself as Creator and man as His creature. God pronounced this relationship bond to particular persons such as Noah, Abraham, and David who recognized and accepted His superintendence. In Genesis 17:7 for instance, God promised to be God to them and to their descendants after them.

In this study, the *image of God* in humans pertains to the comprehensive likeness of the Creator they received, particularly in their capacity to respond and relate in concrete ways to the communicative and relational initiative of God.

Communion with God means spending time with Him, sharing and exchanging intimate thoughts and feelings expressed in devotional patterns such as reading the Bible, praying, meditating from the Word, worship, etc.

The Journey is the shorter form of The Journey to Reach the Next Generation, a program designed to foster spiritual transformation of church, mission, education, and market leaders through a six-retreat commitment for a period of six years. The Leadership Institute facilitates this program.

A Journey or simply Journey, on the other hand, refers to the six-month closed group session I conducted to implement meaningful and consistent devotional patterns for the volunteer members and adherents of the San Diego Central Church. It consists of a 10-week, once-a-week session that is followed by a three-month, once-a-month meeting.

Adherents are those who regularly attend church services and participate or support the mission and activities of the church, even though they are not baptized members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Description of the Project Process

This project was prompted with a desire to see the Great Commission flourish through the intentional involvement of members of the San Diego Central Church. The realization that this was not happening at the time I was on the pastoral staff of the church, and knowing that over the past 20 years the church was not only decreasing in membership, but was unable to add significant new members through baptism was cause for pastoral alarm. My pastoral observation led me to assess the connectedness of the members to the Lord Jesus, who taught that abiding with Him results in fruit bearing.

The pursuit of the theological foundation for this research affirmed God's unfathomable desire to relate with man not only corporately, but also on a personal level. In response to divine prodding, human beings relate to God through devotional patterns designed to continually nourish a fruit-bearing connection with Him.

In the literature review I conducted, it was evident that doing for God comes after being with Him. The research confirmed that intentional and meaningful devotional patterns consequently prompt people to share their faith. The Holy Spirit then convicts the people these searchers preach to or share with to accept God's loving invitation to be saved into His kingdom.

Based on these insights, a process to implement devotional patterns was pursued. Informed by the theological foundation, a review of literature, and an understanding of the ministry context of the church, I prepared materials for a 10-week, once-a-week

closed group session designed to encourage, deepen, and personally assist participants in their desire to form and/or enhance their devotional practice. This was followed by a once-a-month meeting for the subsequent three months. Having obtained the approval of the church board to conduct this particular study with church members and adherents, an invitation to participate to this Journey was sent through the church's Sabbath bulletin, email pool, and mailing addresses with a self-stamped return envelope. The letter also included a response form to determine ahead of time how many volunteers would participate. Eventually, 18 signed up for these Journey sessions.

Inspired by the study of Jensen (2009), a survey questionnaire was used to establish the spiritual climate of the congregation and the volunteers before the Journey was conducted. A post-session survey was also taken from the volunteer participants to determine the effect of the Journey in their overall devotional experience. The congregation's pre-session survey also assisted in understanding the spiritual temperature of the church and in gathering information necessary for future reference.

A narrative report from the survey questionnaire is discussed in Chapter 5, as well as the outcomes, recommendations, and conclusion related to the process. A personal reflection of the researcher from this entire process is also presented in the same chapter.

CHAPTER 2

TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE BIBLICAL IMPORTANCE OF A DEVOTIONAL PATTERN

Introduction

The prohibition of God for the first couple to eat of the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil lest they die (Gen 2:16, 17) attests that He made them "as mortal creatures subject to death" (Peth, 2002). However, should Adam and Eve choose to remain obedient to God's covenantal instruction, they could live forever (Gen 3:22-24). That being the case, Knight (2003) deduces that eternal life was promised on condition of obedience, and if they were to disobey, death would ensue.

Inherent in the divine blueprint to live forever is the privilege of harmonious communion with God, being created in His own image (Gen 1:26, 27). In a nutshell, Shea (2000) emphasizes that "to be created in the image of God means to have received a comprehensive likeness of the Creator" in the physical, rational, moral, and emotional realm. Human beings were endowed with the highest form of intelligent communication of all creatures, except the angels (Ps 8:5; Heb 2:5-9). Their emotional capacity allows them to express and receive love as God does, and therefore, to naturally pursue an ongoing, consistent, and meaningful communion. But by eating of the forbidden fruit, our first parents "disabled themselves for communion with God" (Cairus, 2000, p. 223) in unhindered face-to-face conversation (Gen 3:8-10). Isaiah laments that iniquities and

sins hid God's face "so that He will not hear" (Isa 59:2).

After the fall, it became natural for human beings to avoid their Maker. The innate prodding of God on the human mind has all but vanished with the passing of time, and without divine intervention, people will continue to chase the wind for meaning in life.

There is a need to recover a meaningful relationship and time with God.

This chapter will explore the biblical importance of intentionally creating a space to commune with God, which is what "devotional pattern" or the popularly known spiritual disciplines essentially means. Two major points are presented: first, that communion is basically God's initiative of being with man and secondly, that a devotional pattern is actually man's initiative of being with God. A devotional pattern is contingent upon communion, that is, fellowship between God and man occurs when man appropriately responds to God's wooing.

In my discussion of "Communion: God's Initiative of Being with Man," I will show that God embeds His holy desire to commune with man in His (a) covenantal relationship validated through His attributes of (b) love and (c) personhood. In "Devotional Pattern: Man's Initiative of Being with God," I will demonstrate that man's efforts to connect with God arise out of (a) a heart for God, (b) an appraisal of God, and a development of (c) a devotional pattern that is exemplified in the life of David. A theological reflection follows that becomes the foundational process for implementing a devotional pattern pursued in this project.

Communion: God's Initiative of Being With Man

There are several reasons that hinder spending an intentional and meaningful time with God. The first is a valid question, "Why would an infinite, omnipotent, omniscient,

omnipresent, Creator-God be interested in meeting and talking to a mortal being like me?" Another reason would be an awkward sense of talking to a spirit, someone who cannot be seen or touched. Still another has to do with an inability or lack of knowledge about what to talk about. Then there's the "What's in it for me?" mentality. Regardless of the reason(s) one has for avoiding relating to God on a personal level, a common denominator is a lack of understanding the need to commune with God and a process to pursue it.

Arthur (1999) describes this dilemma in the context of the covenant between David and Jonathan (1 Sam 20:14-16). David agreed to show kindness to Jonathan and his posterity when he became king, even after Jonathan was gone. When David assumed the reign, Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth, was living a tough life. Apparently, he did not have any knowledge concerning the covenant of the new king and that of his father. Little did he expect that his appearance before the king would suddenly catapult his life to a place of prominence, security, provision, and unaccustomed privilege "to eat bread at the king's table continually" (2 Sam 9). Arthur insists that understanding covenant opens access to rich, unfailing, and sufficient promises of God for His children that are typically hidden under a veil of ignorance. This understanding also allows one to experience the intimacy of God's love as a Father who longs for His children to enter His presence.

In the discussion that follows, I explore three biblical foundations and expound on the reality that God indeed initiates communion with man.

A Covenantal God

A theological structure that has attracted considerable attention among theologians is the biblical concept of the covenant (Gen 9:8-17; 15:9-21; 17; Exod 19-24;

Num 25:10-13; 2 Sam 7:5-16; Jer 31:31-34; Green, 2008). Extensive scholarly work has been written in an attempt to understand its origin, meaning, and purpose (Walton, 1994). Simply put, a covenant is equivalent to a promise. It is an agreement or contract entered into by two parties, in which either both are of similar status or one is superior in status to the other.

The first usage of the word *covenant*, translated from the Hebrew word *berit*, which occurs 290 times in the Old Testament (OT), is in Genesis 6:17-18 and reads:

And behold, I Myself am bringing floodwaters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die. But I will establish *My covenant* [emphasis added] with you; and you shall go into the ark—you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you.

Dumbrell (1984) explains that the context surrounding this usage suggests a perpetuation of an already existing covenant rather than an establishment of one. He further emphasizes that God is "determined to maintain it" (e.g., Lev 26:44, 45; Deut 4:31) despite human failures and the human sinful condition. He did not wait or require any human concurrence, as evidenced by the phrase "my covenant." This phrase "my covenant," underscores a significant revelation of God to His people found in Genesis 17:7 that says, "And I will establish My covenant [emphasis added] between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you [emphasis added]." Here we find an exclusive promise of God summarized in the statement "I will be your God, and you shall be my people," which is reiterated throughout the Scriptures (Exod 6:7; Lev 26:12; Deut 26:19; 2 Chr 30:9; Jer 7:23; Ezek 36:28; 2 Cor 6:16-18; Rev 21:2, 3). This particular promise, which is "the essence of God's covenant" (Ferguson & Wright, 1988), also reveals the relational aspect of the covenant God established from the beginning.

Whereas biblical covenant was particularly authenticated by God with Noah (Gen 9:8-17), Abraham (Gen 15:9-21), Moses (Exod 19-24), David (2 Sam 7:5-16), Israel (Jer 31:31-34), with believers throughout Christian history, and until its final consummation at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, God appears to have unilaterally executed it at some point before the fall of man. McKay (2001) alludes to Hosea 6:7 as a significant passage that places Adam in a relational covenant with God. This text reads, "But like men they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt treacherously with Me." The word "men" can also be translated "Adam" based on the original text. Here, we see God rebuke Israel and Judah for their insincere attempt to repent. God compares their lip-service repentance to when Adam transgressed the relational covenant He established with him at creation. God expects mercy or covenant fidelity from them and a knowledge of Him more than any sacrifice or burnt offerings (Dybdahl, 2010).

There are three instances in the Genesis narrative where God appears to talk face-to-face with the first human beings before they fall into sin, namely: (a) the dominion mandate and food provision instructions (Gen 1:28, 29); (b) prohibition to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:16, 17); and (c) the wedding ceremony (Gen 2:22). Given the instructive nature of these encounters, some form of a covenant is underway. God unveils His eternal purposes for them and the human family, which includes how they are going to utilize their time and how their sustenance is provided in God's perfect creation. Henceforth, the succeeding encounter of Adam and Eve with God is tainted with the heavy consequence of sin that hid God's face from them (Isa 59:2).

The first occasion we find in the Genesis account that suggests God's intentional and regular visit with the first couple (Anderson, 1997) is incidentally connected with

their disobedience regarding His expressed prohibition (Gen 2:16, 17). Genesis 3:8, 9 states:

And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?"

The ensuing narrative suggests that God, Adam, and Eve were not conversing face-to-face anymore because the couple "hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God" as soon as they knew of God's literal and physical visit with them. As God pronounces the consequences of Adam and Eve's disobedience, they are in close proximity to one another, although separated by the trees between them. Disobedience or unfaithfulness to the relational covenant that existed between God and Adam and Eve estranged their habitual, affectionate, and uninterrupted communion with each other.

What then is the importance of the covenant as it relates to God's initiative of communing with man? The answer is revealed in the purpose of the covenant as described by Walton (1994):

God has a plan in history that he is sovereignly executing. The goal of that plan is for him to be in relationship with the people whom he has created. It would be difficult for people to enter into a relationship with a God whom they do not know. If his nature were concealed, obscured, or distorted, an honest relationship would be impossible. In order to clear the way for this relationship, then, God has undertaken as a primary objective a program of self-revelation. He wants people to know him. The mechanism that drives this program is the covenant, and the instrument is Israel. The purpose of the covenant is to reveal God." (p. 24)

As a covenantal God, He encapsulates His desire and longing to pursue a meaningful and consistent relationship with human beings through the relational covenant He Himself has established. Walton clarifies that relationship with human beings is God's ultimate goal, which is achieved when they know Him through His self-

revelation. The relational covenant facilitates this process, informs them to stay on course, and warns them of the consequences of a deliberate invalidation of divine initiatives (e.g., Deut 6 and 7). In the relational covenant, human beings are accountable to God regarding how they live their lives (e.g., 2 Chr 15:1-15). Their relationship with God is enriched when they choose to abide in the covenant connection (e.g., 1 Kgs 9:4-9). When they realize and accept this divine primordial connection, they, in a sense, bind themselves to a journey of communion with their Creator-God in this life and eventually in the life to come, a foreseeable attentive time of being with God.

A Loving God

The apostle John declares that God loves us first (1 John 4:19) and that we can know and believe His love for us (1 John 4:16). He emphatically states, "everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love" (1 John 4:7, 8). Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown (1997) define knowing God "spiritually, experimentally, and habitually." The biblical context of knowing God indicates an ongoing relationship that describes an intimate union between husband and wife (Gen 4:1). On this note, Wiersbe (1996) attests, "to know God means to be in a deep relationship to Him—to share His life and enjoy His love." Canale (2000, p. 111) rightly claims that indeed "love is a relational reality."

The Bible is replete with assuring expressions of God's love. Understandably, one may relate better to the biblical declaration, "God is love," (1 John 4:8); "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" (John 3:16); "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (Exod 34:6, NRSV); "O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his

steadfast love endures forever! (Ps 118:1, NRSV); "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8).

However, God's love for us is never out of necessity. God did not create man to satisfy His own need to have an object to love. Paul refutes this notion when he addressed the men of Athens in the midst of the Areopagus and emphasized that God does not need anything "since He gives to all life, breath, and all things" (Acts 17:24, 25). God's love transcends the worst relationship status men and women can have with Him and still lavishes it upon them for their benefit (Elwell, 2001). Such self-sacrificing love is deeply rooted in His very nature and ultimately manifested by the death of His Son on Calvary's cross.

Being the author of love, God demonstrates how love operates in a relationship in a way that is understandable to us. In His perfect plan, God created male and female social beings (Gen 2:18) and early on established that both of them constitute the completeness He designed them to become. God further accented their relationship with the oneness principle that they need to pursue by leaving their previous family ties (Gen 2:21-25).

The woman was created out of a rib from the man, signifying the most intimate relationship they could possibly have. Man was never created higher than the woman to rule over her, nor vice versa. Both possess equal worth and virtues in the sight of their Creator-God, though with significant differences as male and female. They were endowed with the potential to live a fulfilled and complete life in the context of a harmonious cultivation of knowing each other, which they were designed to enjoy. The moment they were "joined" to each other, they formed a "new unit of human existence"

(Dybdhal, 2010), which has roots in the covenant setting. The communion that exists between them is bound by sanctity and grows deeper only with mutual respect and fulfillment of the role each of them plays (Eph 5:25, 22; Col 3:18). Anything short of this divine arrangement ends in relational breakdown.

God's love is also evident in the context of family relationships. As Israel entertains the thought that God has forgotten them (Isa 49:14), God assures them of His compassion and love and shows that in an extreme and abnormal situation a mother may forget her suckling child but states, "I will not forget you" (Isa 49:15). "As a hen gathers her brood under her wings," God wants to gather His children together (Luke 13:34). "As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him" (Ps 103:13). The profound relationship of a father to his children speaks deeply of God's love for His children. Jesus introduces His Father, who is also their "Father" (Matt 5: 16, 45, 48; 6:1, 4, 6, 8, 9) and wants His followers to establish that endearing relationship with Him.

While the world's destiny hinges upon the unfathomable love of God, "it is a personal, intimate thing, too" in as much as God loves people, not just populations (Tozer, 1961, p. 109). It is this intimacy, inherent in a love relationship that dictates God's longing for man's company, not only in general, but with a one-on-one aspect as well. God desires to cultivate a love relationship with each individual person He created, as evidenced by His meticulous interest in the number of hairs on everyone's head (Matt 10:29-31). One way of expressing love is to spend time with the loved one. The deeper the love, the more intense is the longing to be with the beloved. Reciprocating mutual love and knowing God in a biblical sense is what He expects of His children (1 John 2:4, 5). Throughout the Scriptures we find God's command to love God with all your heart,

mind, and soul (Deut 6:5; Josh 22:5; Matt 22:37). Understanding and accepting God's unconditional love awakens a longing desire in people to know Him and to cultivate and maintain a meaningful love relationship with their Creator, which is apparent in intentional moments to be with Him.

A Personal God

There is sufficient evidence in the Bible that the Creator-God of heaven and earth and everything in it (Gen 1:1, 31) is also a personal God. The tri-unity of God and His self-revelation are among the reasons McKay (2001, pp. 29-47) finds to reveal the personality of God. However, Kiš (2000, p. 678) claims that the oneness in God's thought, will, character, and activity manifest His personhood, which is evident in Numbers 23:19. Attached to these personal qualities of God is His longing desire to intimately connect with man.

David poetically expresses God's beautiful thought toward him in a psalm he wrote that says, "How precious are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand; when I awake, I am still with You," (Ps 139:17, 18). Jeremiah echoes God's definitive plan (Job 42:2; Prov 19:21; Jer 1:5) as he writes to the exiles in Babylon saying, "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jer 29:11).

The Scriptures show God as a person in His act of creating man. The biblical narrative informs us that "God formed man of the dust of the ground" (Gen 2:7). Matthews (1996) explains that the word "formed," from Hebrew *yasar*, indicates an activity such as a potter working on a particular project (Isa 29:16; Jer 18:4-6) or

someone making wooden images (Isa 44:9-10, 12; Hab 2:18). In this divine proceeding, "we are allowed to peer, as it were, into the workshop of God and to watch His hand performing the mysterious act of creation" (Nichols, 1978). As the crowning act of Creation, man being created in the image of God (Gen 1:26, 27), was placed on an elevated position above all other creatures. The "image of God" in man primarily points to the function of man as a representative of the Creator over the rest of the creatures (Gen 1:26, 27; Ps 8:6-8). It also necessarily points to the representational functions of human beings, including but not limited to physical, intellectual, social, and spiritual endowments and their ability to commune with God (Cairus, 2000, p. 208).

Hasel and Hasej (2002) refer to man as a new order of being:

God created man and woman in His image and likeness, a most profound communion and a most meaningful relationship could exist between Him and human beings. This God-man relationship is God's fantastic gift to humanity. God made people so that this relationship would exist and could grow throughout the ages. Human beings are the crown of creation because they have been made especially to enjoy fellowship and communion with their Creator. (pp. 9, 10)

Contrary to the typical manner in which man appraises God, we should bear in mind that God is a person and that we can cultivate a relationship with Him in a manner similar to how we would cultivate a relationship with any person (Tozer, 1996).

Summary

The initiative of God to commune with man is evident in the Scriptures, particularly in the relational covenant He established at creation. It is also highlighted in His attributes of being a loving God, and yet a personal being capable of a genuine relationship with man. It was God's plan to enjoy meaningful interaction with man corporately and with each person individually. Disobedience and unfaithfulness to a

divinely initiated communion separated man from God as a consequence of sin. Yet we find God in consistent pursuit of men and women in His longing to be with them.

We now turn our attention to man's part in this relationship.

Devotional Pattern: Man's Initiative of Being With God

Paschal (2002) appropriately raised the inquiry, "If man is not made for God, why is he only happy in God? If man is made for God, why is he so opposed to God (p. 71)? Created in God's image, human beings have been given a unique capacity to respond to their Creator's relationship initiative using their own free will. They are equipped to utilize their God-endowed moral choice inherent in a genuine relationship founded on love. God clarified this when He instructed Adam and Eve to stay away from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:16, 17).

Adam deliberately chose the consequence of Satan's deception of Eve (1 Tim 2:14). God had to banish them from the Garden of Eden to avoid the possibility of suffering the consequences of their sin "and live forever" (Gen 3:22). God ensured that this unfortunate eventuality did not occur by placing "cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life" (Gen 3:24). Henceforth, Adam and Eve would forfeit the sublime privilege of conversing with God face-to-face, not because God abandoned His relational covenant with them, but because they sinned. Isaiah expresses the universal predicament of man after the fall by underscoring the reason behind the voided favor to speak with God without hiding in fear (Gen 3:8-10). "But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear" (Isa 59:2). In response to Moses' bold entreaty to see His glory (Exod 33:18) hundreds of years before,

God showed His goodness, proclaimed His name, and declared His graciousness and compassion to whomever He wishes (Exod 33:19). But He said, "You cannot see my face; for no man shall see me and live" (Gen 33:20; see also John 1:18).

Shame, alienation, mistrust, and a communication gap are among the results of man's separation from God because of sin. Although the "image of God" in man is not completely obliterated by sin, humans naturally find themselves in a controversy against God. Without divine aid, their attempt to connect with God falls short (Rom 3:10-11, 23), and yet their inherent longing to commune with God remains an uncharted, difficult, frustrating, futile pursuit of happiness.

Humans are also efficient and masterful in evading ways to seek God, an atrophic spirituality that eats away His great purpose for their lives even in the midst of being occupied doing His work. Fadling (2011) accurately identifies this tension between doing for God and being with Him when he observed that many are "pursuing the work of God to escape the face of God." Doing is perceived more important and appeases God for willful or ignorant resistance being with Him. Such fallacious belief jettisons God's original initiative of being with man.

Despite these tragedies and the inevitable results of man's rebellion against God, scores of people throughout history have deeply recognized, understood, and actively pursued entering into a meaningful communion with God (Foster, 2001), not from a sense of duty or obligation, but by an inward prodding initiated by the prompting of the Holy Spirit. The psalmist expressed this universal longing of man for God, "As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God" (Ps 42:1, 2). This deep longing and thirst for God demands intentional

and meaningful time with God, facilitated through a devotional pattern. As God utilized a relational covenant to commune with human beings, a devotional pattern is their means of in turn communing with Him.

The following section focuses on the life of David, one of the heralded Bible heroes. As a prominent figure in both testaments, David's dramatic life has captured the attention of scholars and laypeople alike. In addition to the Psalms, the Holy Writ includes 54 chapters on his life and mentions his name 1,127 times (Kaynor, 1989). As we shall see, David's remarkable character deserves special attention, not only because of his great achievements, heroism, and leadership, but because of the devotional pattern he demonstrated, resulting in a consistent, maturing, and loving journey of communing with God. The human drama in David's life was real. His successes, struggles, pain, failures, and submission to God's correction approximate the different contours of our spiritual journey and "there is no part of our lives that does not find some point of illumination or encouragement or rebuke in this life" (Peterson, 1989). Understandably, the story of David speaks to millions of believers throughout time (Pippert, 1996). We shall discover what prompted him to avail of such a meaningful relationship and the devotional pattern he practiced, which exemplifies all other Bible characters who sustained a pattern of communion with God.

A Heart for God

The passionate love of David for God, his earthy spirituality, his uncompromising humanity (Pippert, p. ix), and his strength and resolve to follow his Lord even under divine discipline, earned him the reputation in the words of the apostle Paul as "a man after God's own heart" (Acts 13:22).

David was the youngest son of Jesse of Bethlehem (1 Sam 16:10, 11). Based on *Yalkut HaMachiri*, as well as *Sefer HaTodaah* (section on Sivan and Shavuot), Weisberg (2016) interestingly reveals the drama surrounding the upbringing of David and the great influence his mother had during the 28 years he was despised and ignored, not only by the people in his community, but by his own flesh and blood. According to Weisberg, the name of David's mother is *Nitzevet bat Adael*. Weisberg underlines that *Nitzevet* chose a vow of silence following her ancestress Tamar, who was prepared to suffer the consequence of her plan rather than putting Judah in jeopardy. She said, "Torn and anguished by David's unwarranted degradation, yet powerless to stop it, Nitzevet stood by the sidelines, in solidarity with him, shunned herself, as she too cried rivers of tears, awaiting the time when justice would be served."

David describes this difficult, painful, and almost endless ordeal of his life in Psalm 69:8, 12, 21:

I have become a stranger to my brothers, and an alien to my mother's children. Those who sit in the gate speak against me, and I am the song of the drunkards. They also gave me gall for my food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

These humiliations came to a close when Samuel the Prophet anointed David as the new king of Israel (1 Sam 16:13), though the act was unclear to the rest of his family.

However, the final confirmation of David's lineage legitimacy and being the appointed king of God in all Israel materialized when all the elders of Israel came to him at Hebron and anointed him king over them (2 Sam 5:3).

With the apparent chaotic upbringing of David, how did he develop a notable view and deep understanding of God? The fifth commandment of the moral law (Exod 20:12) indicates the value and significance of the family relationship in Jewish life. Rock

(2000, p. 742) points out that the "home was the center of religious practice." When Moses reminded Israel of the great proclamation "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength" (Deut 6:4, 5), both father and mother were commanded by God to instruct their children. Moses further specifies the essential yet practical process with which this *shema* can be inculcated to the young. In Deuteronomy 6:6-9 he said:

And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

No matter how challenging the family context of David while growing up, he must have been taught about the covenant relationship of God with His people Israel. He grew up reciting the *shema*, and with the diligent care, comfort, and instruction of his mother who "is seen as the central focus of the family and its religio-ethical purpose" (Rosen, 2001), David receptively embraced the unconditional love and faithful promises of the Lord (2 Sam 7:22) who was able to deliver him from the paw of the lion and the bear (1 Sam 17:37). MacLaren (1955) states that David may have received instruction from one of the schools of the prophets that Samuel managed (p. 17). Kaynor (1989) points out David's interest in spiritual matters (p. 24) was similar to his ancestor Jacob who displayed interest in God early in his life (Gen 25:27; 29-34). This affinity for spiritual things gradually prepared David to possess a heart for God that evidently clamored for substantive time for communion with Him throughout his life (e.g., Ps. 63:1, 2)

An Appraisal of God

The thoughts of David toward God reveal a constant communion with God and a musing of His Word. The manner in which he expresses them are calculated to extol the Almighty God in His rightful lofty place. For instance, David exclaims "Give unto the Lord the glory due His name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness" (Ps 29: 2); "The Lord sat enthroned at the Flood, and the Lord sits as King forever" (Ps 29:10; see also Ps 100). For David, God was not some distant and impersonal deity incapable of relating to His creatures. While God is worthy of praise and adoration, this same God is also able to stoop down and be present in the various landscapes of man's experience.

David asserts:

The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; the God of my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge; my Savior, You save me from violence. I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised; So shall I be saved from my enemies (2 Sam 22:2-4).

The pronoun "my" shows David's personal relationship with his God. God is involved in his daily affairs. The presence of God gives him security and assurance of victory regarding every kind of foe determined to take him out. David also expresses a deep longing for God that nothing else can satisfy. This is vividly demonstrated in Ps. 63:1, 2 where he admits, "O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, to see Your power and Your glory."

David's complete and wholehearted trust and dependence upon God's superintendence over his life is profoundly depicted in the 23rd Psalm. When David says, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want," he proclaims the sufficiency of God in all

aspects of human existence and recognizes His unfailing providence. David supremely values his God.

Devotional Pattern

David's family context provides a meager insinuation regarding his devotional practices while growing up. Aside from providence, David's entrance into prominence as the chosen king of God occurred after Saul became marginalized (1 Sam.16:11). While hidden from his father and brothers, David's anointing by Samuel marked the beginning of a rich, on-going trust relationship with his God because "the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward" (1 Sam 16:13).

Of the 150 Psalms in the Bible, 75 are attributed to David's authorship. The range of expression of David's psalms is wide and varied indeed. It "corresponds with the circumstances of his life...the early shepherd days, the manifold sorrows, the hunted wanderings, the royal authority, the wars, the triumphs, the sin, the remorse" (McLaren, 1955), which show the making of a man hand-picked by God for his spirituality, humility, and integrity (Swindoll, 1997). The chapters that allude to his experience on the field while watching the sheep of his father (e.g., Ps 23) indicate the development of a lifetime of trustful confidence in the superintendence of God over his life.

When David was summoned by King Saul for the purpose of fighting the Philistine champion Goliath, the king was unsure of David's competency to fight the giant (1 Sam 17:31-33). David recounts to the king his aggressive experience of protecting the sheep, of killing a lion and a bear, to back up his courage of facing the Philistine who does not stop defying the armies of the living God (1 Sam 17:34-36). More than anything, the bold claim of David who said, "The Lord, who delivered me

from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine" (1 Sam 17:37) gave Saul the confidence that the Lord God of Israel would give victory to them, thus permitting David to accept the historic duel.

David's confidence in accessing divine power to help him fight his battle for the Lord is reminiscent of a life wholly surrendered to God, which was brought about by spiritual training and discipline in the solitary, lonely, obscure, monotonous, and yet real (Swindoll, 1997) journey in life as a shepherd. Being a shepherd prepared David in many ways to become a great ruler of his nation. This served as a strong foundation for his eventual practices of maintaining a strong relationship with his Lord. David's availability for divine tutoring while a shepherd prepared him to enter into God's presence in the most difficult, life-threatening, embarrassing, and even the most joyous, worshipful, and festive occasions of his life.

The following instances from the Psalms show the patterns of his devotions.

- 1. Prayer—Dake (2000) attributes 50 actual prayers of David in the Psalms (Pss 3-7; 9; 12:1-13:6; 16:1-17:15; 19:1-20:9; 22; 25:1-31:24; 35:1-36:12; 38:1-41:13; 51; 54:1-61:8; 64; 69:1-70:5; 86; 108:1-109:31; 119; 124; 132; 139:1-144:15) and seven more from First and Second Samuel. This does not include several prayers of an unknown psalmist, which are also attributed to him (Pss 10; 33; 43:1-44:26; 71; 85; 88; 102; 106; 118; 120; 123; 125; 129; 137). Peterson (1989) claims that David was "the most prominent of all who wrote prayers in Israel." Undoubtedly, David's life was literally bathed in prayer, which speaks of its importance to him.
- 2. Meditation—Vine (2014) identifies eight "meditation words" in the book of Psalms, of which five are written by David (Pss 5:1; 19:14; 63:5, 6; 104:33, 34; 119). The

most familiar meditation passage here is that of Psalm 19:4, which states, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord my strength and my Redeemer." As a shepherd, David would have had considerable time to meditate. He learned to apply this process in his daily interaction and decisions, which on one occasion spared him from taking the life of God's anointed. At the insinuation of his men, David cut off a corner of Saul's robe in lieu of killing him when Saul went into a cave to attend to his needs, which incidentally was utilized by David and his men for hiding. However, "David's heart troubled him because he cut Saul's robe" (1 Sam 24:5). Here, David apparently engages in hagah (Hebrew for meditate), which "involves murmuring and mumbling words" (Peterson, 1989) and calculated his action and its implication. Since meditation "engages both heart and mind [and] involves a life that is careful to avoid sin in order to engage with God" (Vine, 2014 p. 14), applying it in the situation at hand allowed David to revisit his motives and permitted an unction of spiritual discernment to govern his action, which eventually proved him to be a true leader (Nichols, 1978).

3. Worship— David knew how to worship, which is essentially ascribing to God the worth due Him. It is a response to and an encounter with God in a way that our heart touches His heart and conversely, we also feel His touch (Kidder, 2009). David's worship intention was deliberate and not out of necessity. After hearing from Nathan the covenant God entered into with David and his posterity (2 Sam 7:12-16), David sat before the Lord (v. 18). Kaynor (1989) explains, "this was no ordinary sitting, not relaxation. David's desire was to meet purposefully with the Lord, to be conscious of His presence and to worship Him." As David underwent an inventory of himself, his

family, and God's providence over his entire house (2 Sam 7:19-21), he could contain himself no longer and voiced his sublime adulation, "Therefore You are great, O Lord God. For there is none like You, nor is there any God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears" (2 Sam 7:22). David's view of God as the Creator of heaven and earth was the very foundation of his belief. In Psalm 8, he exalts God for the wonder of His creation and praises Him for man's elevation above all other earthly creatures. This classic foreword of entering to worship God is captivating:

O Lord, our Lord, how excellent *is* Your name in all the earth, who have set Your glory above the heavens! When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honor. (vv. 1, 3-5)

Steussy (1999) classifies two types of psalms that relate to worship, liturgy and praise. For liturgy, she identifies Psalms 56 and 65 among the psalms written by David that fall into this category. For praise, she includes Psalms 8, 29, 68, 103, and 145. Over time, David intensified his vision of God, despite his human failures.

4. Confession—Jesus' words are applicable to everyone, even to those called to high positions of authority. He said, "For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required" (Luke 12:48). This particular biblical injunction also encompasses the celebrated case of adultery and murder committed by King David (2 Sam 11). No amount of achievement could dismiss the transgression David tried to cover up. In due time, his gracious, long-suffering, just, and loving Lord initiated his recovery. David would learn and choose to submit to divine tutelage. Upon Nathan's confrontation regarding his serious crime with the phrase "you are the man," David

succumbed to the Spirit's wooing and exclaimed, "I have sinned against the Lord." Psalm 32 provides an elaborate confession of David during this incident. His penitent words reverberate the ineluctable consequences of prolonging a humble admittance of sin (Swindoll, 1997, p. 197). David describes his experience:

When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into a drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin to you and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. (Ps 32:3-5)

David preceded this humble confession with the blessing of forgiveness (Ps 32:1-2). Confession appears to be a necessary pattern of devotion that not only restores David to a right relationship with God, but endears him to the God whose compassion does not fail, whose faithfulness is great and His mercy is new every morning (Lam 3:22, 23).

5. Repentance—Many are the sins David committed (e.g., 1 Sam 21:2, 13) and yet none is comparable with the murder and adulterous blunder he endeavored to conceal. In fact, Henry (1994) calls it "the greatest blemish upon his character," as implied in 1 Kings 15:5: "David did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, and had not turned aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite." The appropriate and accurate words David used to describe the painful process he went through only approximate the real experience he underwent. Nonetheless, his prayer of repentance (Ps 51) became a beneficial expression of his genuine longing to be forgiven, cleansed, restored, and admitted into the presence of God. The joy and blessing of forgiveness David realized upon repentance echoes down the corridor of time and assured people that "God is there to

- offer it" (Lardinais, 2017). David's repentance exemplifies his desire for a total loving communion with God (Ps 51:2, 7, 10, 11, 12).
- 6. The Scriptures—The place of the Scriptures in David's life was obviously central to his relationship, not only with God, but with his fellow man. Notice his high and noble regard of the Scriptures:

The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. (Ps 19:7-10)

David's familiarity with the Torah was sprinkled in his psalms (e.g., Pss 8, 33, 119). He hid God's Word in his heart to avoid sin (Ps 119:11) and considered it a lamp to his feet and a light to his path (Ps 119:105). David was solidly grounded in the Word of God, meditated upon it, and obeyed it.

Summary

God created human beings with the ability and capacity to respond to divine communion initiatives without any trace of coercion. However, sin hid God's face from them and naturally hinders them from meaningful fellowship with Him. However, all is not lost. As men and women realize their need of God, connect with Him through devotional patterns, and open their heart to receive His love, He honors their efforts much like what is evident in the life of David. This leads to sublime thoughts expressed in an exalted and truthful appraisal of God. We noticed that David's lofty thinking about God caused him submit to His providential leading no matter the consequence. God was so much a part of David's life that he was not inhibited in expressing his thoughts, emotions,

plans, and everything else in between. The times in David's life where he sought or permitted God to occupy eventually formed a pattern of communion such as prayer, meditation, worship, confession, and repentance. It is no wonder that David's life exemplified a genuine relationship with God that demonstrated a satisfying time with Him.

Learnings

God's plan for creating human beings is indisputably noble and marked by a divine intention to last for eternity. God saw the plight of man after creation and incorporated into the original blueprint a process to sustain His unselfish desire to be in a meaningful relationship with humans. God utilized the relational covenant to implement a perpetual arrangement, assuring their divine connection and worthwhile time alone with Him. Inherent in this relational covenant is a form of incentive and disciplinary correction that assesses their faithfulness.

God maintains the initiative of pursuing communion with His people by lavishing them with unconditional love and highlighting it with manifestations of being a person capable of giving and receiving affection. Although the consequence of sin may make it harder for this divine-man relationship to flourish, nevertheless, the prospect is real and achievable, as evidenced in David's spiritual journey. God will not dismiss any human attempt to genuinely connect and spend time with Him. He knows and recognizes their deep thoughts of Him and honors the means or patterns of devotion intentionally dedicated to enter into His presence.

There is an urgent need then to recapture the biblical understanding of God's initiative to be with man. There is a need to realize that a relationship with God is

tantamount to a covenant with Him and signifies a lifetime commitment of faithfulness and obedience to the provision contained in the relational covenant that includes spending time with Him. Time with God is never wasted time. It is necessary to spend time being nourished and ready to meet the varied experiences life brings. Time with God nurtures life's purpose. It enhances and strengthens one's resolve to embrace divine assignments that will lead to the ultimate glory of God.

With the challenges of living in a sinful world, a focus on the goal of a meaningful relationship with God requires intentionality. A devotional pattern is a helpful and healthy practice to enhance one's communion with God in the same way that God nurtures His longing for man through relational covenant. A devotional pattern is not an end in itself, but a means to achieve priority time with God. Fruitfulness will naturally occur, which contributes to the rationale of existence. God is always at the center of this pursuit.

The above reflections were utilized in devising a process that will help members of the San Diego Central Seventh-day Adventist Church establish a pattern of devotion. We are now ready to assess literature that will enhance the process for implementing a devotional pattern for members of the aforementioned local church.

CHAPTER 3

REVIEW OF LITERATURE RELATED TO THE IMPORTANCE OF DEVOTIONAL PATTERNS

Introduction

It has been noted that the beginning of the 21st century ushered in a keen interest in faith and spirituality for many people. Paulien (2000) observes, "people are more comfortable talking casually about their spiritual commitments," which was uncommon in previous decades. "This fascination with the spiritual was everywhere," says Peace (2006). You find it in popular music, movies, books, politics, and especially in the Christian community of faith. But beneath this popular clamor for divine Presence, a genuine connection with the God who actually has a genuine longing to commune with human beings in a corporate or individual setting, remains untouched. As believers pursue Christian practices devoid of Christ Himself, some form of emptiness ensues. VinCross (2014) perceptively accounts for this emptiness as "a call of desperation for meaning," which points to a "desperate need for renewal in Christian spiritual practice."

Certain literature has called attention to the value and need to engage in spiritual disciplines or practices, which I prefer to call devotional patterns, as a human attempt to connect with God and experience His presence. In the previous chapter, I argued that man's effort to connect with God actually occurs in response to His initiatives. God is

always faithful in His part of the relationship and is and will be constantly waiting for our response. The challenge I see in relation to connecting with God is for each of us to discover and practice meaningful and sustainable devotional patterns. In this context, I review literature that will enhance this spiritual journey.

In this chapter, I pursue three sections that will demonstrate and enhance a process that will help implement a devotional pattern at the San Diego Central Church. The sections are as follows: (a) impact of a devotional pattern, (b) factors that distort/inhibit a devotional pattern, and (c) apprehension for the biblical pattern of devotion.

Impact of Devotional Pattern

Attempts have been established to discover, understand, and learn from the correlation between spiritual growth and spiritual practices (Hawkins & Parkinson 2011; Jensen, 2009; Sahlin, 2003; Barna, 2001; Lee, Rice, & Gillespie, 1997). These studies have their own context, yet they basically concur with the claims of the Bible about Christian living. The essence of Christianity and the hope it contains rests upon knowing God and having a personal relationship with Him. This personal relationship with God does not happen through a program, a study, or a method, but by a vibrant, on-going, intimate connection with Him (Blackaby, Blackaby, & King (2008).

Spiritual Growth

An interesting but not totally surprising result of the REVEAL Spiritual Life Survey, spearheaded by Hawkins and Parkinson (2011) involving 1,000 diverse congregations and over 250,000 participants, reveals that *reflecting on the Scriptures* has

"a greater impact on spiritual growth" than all other factors (p. 19). The researchers claim that if there is only one thing accounting for spiritual growth that people at all levels must engage in, it is reflecting on the Scriptures. They also discovered "a new lens" for looking at spiritual growth and "a new way of understanding" to lead a spiritually dynamic congregation (see book for the rest of the findings).

Barna's (2001) research indicates a discrepancy between personal spiritual development and intentional effort to achieve those goals. Respondents who identified a deep, personal commitment to the Christian faith as a top priority in their life ironically invest little energy to pursue it. This apparent contradiction shows that adult believers who acknowledged their personal responsibility to develop their spirituality do not consider it to be a pressing need because of their exposure and familiarity with the "principles and nuances of the Christian faith" (p. 34). However, Barna noticed that those who are actively engaged in personal spiritual development other than attending church services, manifest interest to learn and implement Christianity into their lives and more likely responsive to other spiritual growth opportunities.

Barna's findings reveal that having a spiritual goal does not automatically translate to an actual relationship journey with God. Having some knowledge of God or the Christian faith is not equivalent to having a real and meaningful practice of that faith. His study reinforces the biblical fact that knowledge about someone does not guarantee a true relationship with that person (Matt 7:21-23; 25:11). Hawkins and Parkinson show the positive benefit of actually practicing a devotional pattern, such as reading the Bible. They found a direct relationship between spiritual growth and reflective reading of the

Bible. This finding concurs that reading the Bible and reflecting on its meaning in life has a growth effect, which was emphasized by Jesus (Matt 4:4; Deut 8:3).

Sharing of Faith

Based on the completed questionnaire from the Valuegenesis Project in 1989, Lee, Rice, and Gillespie (1997) utilized a stratified random sample of youth from the United States and Canada who had both parents present at home to investigate the correlation between family worship patterns and behavior. Their findings reveal that worship patterns with youth who are actively involved in reading, praying, and sharing their religious experience were rated as meaningful and interesting and were associated with high levels of active faith. Frequency of conducting family devotion without youth involvement results in lower levels of active faith. Consistency of family worship that engages youth in reading, praying, and talking about their faith experience with God ranks the highest in active faith. Although the other findings of this study are worth looking into, they do not directly relate to the interest of this particular study.

This study of Lee, Rice, and Gillespie concurs with the Hawkins and Parkinson research conducted almost 20 years later. Personal engagement in the practice of faith contributes to its growth. The more a person is exposed to a repetition of the practice of faith such as reading the Bible, praying, and sharing, the greater the growth potential. Mere watching and listening to prayer for instance does very little in helping a person learn how to pray. Giving that same person a chance to pray or helping him/her say a prayer results in actually practicing it sooner or later.

Jensen (2009) also shows the direct relationship between engagement in a particular pattern of devotion and spiritual growth. Jensen examined the correlation

between frequency and duration of spiritual practices with the frequency of mission or verbal sharing of faith. With the assistance of a research consultant, Jensen compared two different surveys conducted two years apart using virtually the same questionnaire. The earlier one was conducted among 15 Seventh-day Adventist churches and subgroups, whereas the second survey was among 18 churches, six denominations, and two parachurch organizations. Jensen reports that both the Adventist samples and the interchurch displayed a clear relationship between spiritual practices and mission. In both samples, "frequency in talking about the work of God in one's life correlated strongly with time with God, prayer, and Bible reading" (p. 247). Jensen specifically underscores a strong relationship in the Adventist sample between verbal witness and time with God and Bible reading. He showed that the more time that is spent alone with God and the longer it takes to do it, the more the person engages in talking about the work of God in their life.

A study by Sahlin (2003) was based on nationally and privately sponsored surveys that included Seventh-day Adventist members and churches. My particular interest in this study relates to the results on spiritual disciplines and personal devotions.

Sahlin remarks about the Adventist Church's emphasis on the importance of spiritual disciplines in coming closer to God and notes, "some place greater emphasis on certain practices than do others" (p. 67). He states that a majority of the churches emphasize personal devotions, Sabbath keeping, and family worship. Interestingly, nine of ten local Adventist churches "emphasize personal devotions, including prayer, Bible study, and related practices" (p. 67). Adventists also engage in fasting and display religious pictures in their homes, but are not strongly emphasized in the teaching ministry

of the church. Spending time in personal devotions, such as prayer and Bible study, also came up strongly in the survey. Comparing Adventists with all other faiths in the general survey reveals that "Adventists are far more likely to engage in personal devotions" (p. 67), which indicates a strong impact of church life on members who attend.

Summary

In this section, we find that a believer can assume spirituality as a priority and yet do nothing to foster it because of their familiarity with the teachings and practices of the Christian faith. However, when a person prioritizes spirituality and actually engages in practices such as Bible reading and prayer, it contributes to the spiritual growth of that person. Personal participation in devotional practices, such as reading the Bible and prayer, whether with family or alone, results in active missional activity such as talking about faith and experiences with God to other people. The longer and more frequent this time spent with God, the higher the occurrence of witnessing involvement. Interestingly, Seventh-day Adventists appear to engage in more frequent and sustained time alone with God, such as Bible reading and prayer, compared with people of other denominational persuasions.

Factors That Inhibit Devotional Patterns

The purpose of this section is to evaluate the factors identified or highlighted in spiritual discipline practices to guide the formulation of practices that will be considered in the project to be conducted at the San Diego Central Seventh-day Adventist Church. In our efforts to practice spiritual disciplines, some have experienced stagnancy rather than growth (Fadling, 2013; Swenson, 2004). The disciplines being practiced apparently have

no power or are ineffective in addressing the believer's struggle (Seamands, 1991; Scazzero, 2006). Two factors, namely, absence of priority and emotional disturbance, are discussed in this section. Understanding these particular phenomena broadens my horizon and ability to assist participants who may be in a similar situation.

Absence of Priority

People today are accustomed to getting what they want and getting it *now*.

Fadling (2013) notes, "hurry is a way of life in which advertisers have been mentoring us for years" (p. 11). The effect of this scenario of hurried living has gripped us from entering into God's rest and forbids us from cultivating attentiveness in the presence of God. Fadling views hurry as a primary culprit as to why people do not experience the presence of God. He points to the expectation of our culture, where hurry connotes efficiency, productivity, achievement, and success, whereas reflection projects slowness and other unpleasant negative connotations. Fadling points out the unhurried life of Jesus and the importance of learning to emulate it. The unhurried life Jesus emphasized is far from laziness and actually enhances genuine productivity without compromising God's perpetual invitation to "be still and know that I am God" (Ps 46:10). An unhurried life prepares believers for a genuine relationship with Jesus, apart from our hurried pace of life.

A hurried life is brought about by multifarious events happening around us simultaneously that beg our attention. Swenson (2004) calls it progress. The advent of numerous inventions and development in every aspect of life leaves one with so many choices. Although most are not inherently bad, they have the potential to distract us from focusing on the more important reason for living, "even those with a deep spiritual faith

are not spared" (p. 15). Swenson asserts that these temptations create stress and a heavy load that eventually exceeds our limits and affects all levels of relationship. The absence of a buffer zone to absorb ineluctable occurrences in life directly affects the quality of life of a person according to Swenson. He describes it as "marginless" living (p. 13), with margin being the space between our load and our limits that safeguards our sanity and prevents over-reaching. A margin also opens up important opportunities such as serving the church, community, and time with God. Without a margin, people are subject to stressful living, illness, pain, and an inability to cultivate healthy relationships with people, especially with God.

A hurried life ends up in marginal living, which is a visible consequence of distorted priorities in life. There is wisdom indeed in heeding Jesus' emphasis on prioritizing things in life to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matt 6:33) so that legitimate concerns fall within their proper spheres and will be provided for according to His perfect wisdom and riches.

Emotional Disturbance

Seamands (1991) addresses an issue he calls "damaged emotions" in prohibiting spiritual growth. He contends that the saving grace and love of God, though powerful and strong, does not automatically heal these emotions, which have roots in unpleasant, painful, and neglectful experiences of the past. He insists that it is unwise to casually dismiss a deeply-rooted emotional struggle by simply pointing out Bible promises, encouraging more prayer, and having more faith. Nor is it appropriate to rashly assign evil behavior to demon possession without careful assessment of the situation. Seamands identifies four evidences of a biblical diagnosis called "infirmities"— a condition

between man's sins and sicknesses that include a sense of unworthiness, perfectionist complex, super-sensitivity, and fear. Seamands states that people suffering from these diagnoses will have difficulty approaching the Christian life, which place them in a condition where "believing is a great risk, decisions tear them up, faith comes hard, witnessing is difficult, launching out in the Holy Spirit and really surrendering to God is almost a trauma" (p. 19). They need to recover from this condition and find healing in order to benefit from any devotional pattern put into practice.

Scazzero (2006) confronts a phenomenon in the Christian life that for him may make or break one's relationship with God. At the outset, he claims, "It is impossible to be spiritually mature while remaining emotionally immature." By *emotionally immature* he means "emotional aspects or areas of humanity," which in his experience remain untouched even after 17 years of devotedly following Christ. Scazzero demonstrates from his experience the inefficiency of growing into full spiritual maturity while still wallowing in the comfort zone of emotional immaturity. A quick example based on his experience is unintentionally or intentionally wearing a facade of goodness, love, and hospitality toward a person to project a self-centered good image, reputation, or Christian virtue while inwardly suppressing anger, ridicule, and despising toward the same person. He lists 10 symptoms indicating emotionally unhealthy spirituality, including: using God to run from God, dying to the wrong things, doing for God instead of being with God, and spiritualizing away conflict.

Whereas both Seamands and Scazzero see the import of dealing with emotional disturbance, Seamands advocates for the aid of the Holy Spirit who helps with our weaknesses (Rom 8:26) and some decisive choices on the part of the disturbed person

that allow the Holy Spirit to work in healing *damaged emotions*. Scazzero sees emotional health and practices of spiritual disciplines as vehicles for restoring spiritual maturity. He traces spiritual transformation to the integration of emotional health and what he calls "contemplative spirituality," which includes practices such as communing with God, solitude and prayer, and spiritual rest—"a call to a radical and countercultural life" (Scazzero, p. 58). He clearly shows the positive benefits of intentionally engaging in devotional patterns throughout a given day, which provides a "delight in being with God" (Scazzero, p. 55).

Summary

People who neglect to establish priorities in life may either fall on one or both inhibitors of a devotional pattern namely, a hurried life and "marginless" living. A hurried life falls prey to society's ill-advice to do, produce, and achieve more at the expense of savoring important moments in life. It also contributes to a failure to establish a meaningful relationship with God. "Marginless" living is symptomatic of a life lived without a buffer zone or space to accommodate unexpected occurrences in life. This results in a stressful life catapulted into psychosomatic illness and pain that inhibits a sacred space to cultivate an ongoing meaningful fellowship with God. Emotional disturbance, such as damaged emotions and emotional immaturity, results from the sinful tendency of man. Healing by the Holy Spirit and the help of devotional patterns restores a victim to a healthy condition that is capable of entertaining God's intentional communion with them.

Apprehension of the Biblical Pattern of Devotion

Literature concerning spiritual disciplines or devotional patterns abounds. Not a few have generated great influence and a following, while simultaneously generating criticism from certain sectors of the Christian community of faith, such as that of Foster (1998) and Willard (1988). A review of the literature in this study will attempt to learn the rationale behind the implementation of devotional patterns, trace their Biblical rootedness, and garner insights relevant to establishing patterns to be included in the project to be conducted at the San Diego Central Church. I will discuss three factors that lead to an understanding of the Biblical pattern of devotion, namely, the rationale for devotional time, practices leading to a devotional time, and the core biblical pattern of devotion.

Rationale for Devotional Time

Throughout history, people have recognized the value of connecting with God. Recent references to this phenomenon include "hunger" (Dybdahl, 2008; Tucker, 2007), "sacred chaos" (Rhodes, 2008), and "wasting time with God" (Issler, 2001), to name a few. This attempt emanates from a deep-seated and divinely orchestrated human need to relate to the Creator. In this segment, we focus on the reasons expressed by fellow sojourners in a life-long journey of intimacy with God.

1. An Ongoing Communion With God

Dybdahl (2008) recognizes devotional patterns or *hunger* for God as a divine initiative meant to establish an ongoing communion with Him in Jesus through the Holy

Spirit. The realization of this basic expression of a Christian is deeply personal and surpasses educational attainment, upbringing, culture, or one's status quo. The road to this spiritual escapade might be different for everyone, but always begins in response to divine prompting to search for God. Dybdahl also sees devotional patterns as a pilgrimage and concurs with Thad Rutter's *double longing* quest for God where a person principally discovers a longing, "a deep hunger for God and a sense of His presence" (p. 19). In this process, a second even stronger longing awaits the searcher, who discovers that God intentionally desires communion with man. This process eventually becomes a spiral cycle of an endless closeness between man and God.

Tucker (2007) conveys a similar concept to Dybdahl, referring to this quest for a genuine intimacy with God as "daily habits of the spiritual life" (p. 8). Similar to Foster, Whitney, and Calhoun who wrote before him, Tucker emphasizes that these channels for spiritual growth do not measure spirituality, but are a method for knowing God that lead to the "process of spiritual formation" (p. 9).

Calhoun (2005) traces engagement in any spiritual practice/devotional pattern to a desire to make room for God to be present in life. She recognizes that this desire is actually Spirit-initiated, which is an appetite "hidden in our desperations and desires...for the Lord and Giver of life" (p. 16). Calhoun straightforwardly warns of any notion that spiritual disciplines transform anybody into the likeness of Christ. Conversely, she attests that discipline conducted aside from the Holy Spirit's prodding and work sabotages "transformation and numbs us toward God and the truth" (p. 18). She states that spiritual disciplines position us to where we begin to notice God and respond to His word to us. Calhoun does not believe in a one-size-fits-all spiritual discipline. She invites all to

discover for themselves, according to their life context and journey, a pattern that will help them make space for God through a spiritual practice.

2. Advantage of God's Availability

Rhodes (2008) echoes that a block of time alone with God provides a meaningful connection with Him, which she calls "sacred chaos." She dwells on the challenging endeavor of creating a block of time amidst the typical time-demanding seasons in life. She articulates strongly that God is able to meet anyone in any circumstance in their lives, even in the midst of chaos. The devotional patterns she developed based on her experience are geared toward intentionally meeting with God in a meaningful and fruitful way, even if only for a couple of minutes. She also invites people to watch for the *kairos* moment, a burst of quality time in which God can break in and attend to your minutes of intentional connection with Him.

3. Achieve Godliness

Whitney (2014) underscores that the reason for spiritual discipline is for the purpose of godliness (1 Tim 4:7). He points to the biblical roots of spiritual disciplines practiced by believers since biblical times. Spiritual disciplines do not become drudgery when viewed in a proper perspective, that is, godliness, or to become like Christ. Whitney describes spiritual disciplines as both personal and interpersonal. This is important to understand to evade the possible tension between practicing the disciplines individually and corporately. One is not more important than the other. Both are necessary to achieve. It is also valuable to distinguish between practices and character qualities. Whitney explains that spiritual disciplines are activities (practices such as reading, meditating, and praying) and not attitudes (character qualities such as joy). Similar to Calhoun, Whitney

believes that spiritual disciplines are a means and not an end in themselves. Engaging in discipline without the purpose in mind, which is godliness "is vain and nothing more than an empty husk of godliness" (p. 9).

4. Know God and be Known by Him

Issler (2001) shows that God desires to be *known* by His human creatures and sense His presence more deeply. A desire to know and be known primarily opens a genuine interactive relationship that requires intentional connectedness. Issler prefers to use the term "wasting time with God" to describe a deliberate pursuit for a meaningful friendship with God. It is aimed at growing in intimacy with Him based on continual and mutual self-revelation and enhanced by a lifestyle to know God through the practice of devotional patterns. The degree to which man may know God depends on his intention and efforts to know God, according to the Apostle James, "draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (Jas 4:8). God is willing and available for friendship and He will recognize our efforts to waste time with Him in as much as He possesses an even stronger desire for this friendship. Issler also highlights the importance of "steady training" in devotional patterns that manifest the driving force behind a person's life.

5. Access Divine Grace

Foster (1998) views spiritual disciplines as a call to move from the physical or material to the spiritual realm of life in response to the emptiness that pervades the world. It is a "door to liberation" from the stifling slavery of self-interest and fear. Aware of the ingrained habits of sin and the only remedy prescribed by the Scriptures to overcome it by accepting the free gift of righteousness in Jesus Christ, Foster emphasizes that the spiritual disciplines are given by God as an avenue to access His grace. He asserts that

the disciplines "allow us to place ourselves before God so He can transform us" (p. 7). He further shows the role of spiritual discipline in receiving God's grace and rightly places us where He can work with us and bless us. For him, devotional patterns by themselves do not impart holiness or any virtue pleasing to God, but are a means to achieve something spiritual and bring into our lives the abundance of God.

6. Cooperate and Interact With God

Willard (1988) asserts that a discipline for the spiritual life or "exercises unto godliness" are activities undertaken "to bring us into more effective cooperation with Christ and His kingdom" (p. 156). He compares the benefits of spiritual disciplines to a routinely pursued activity that makes a person familiar or practice spiritual disciplines with ease. It follows that a repetitive practice of spiritual discipline places the one practicing it into "more and more interaction with the powers of the living God and His kingdom" (p. 157). Willard avoids legislating a particular discipline viewed to be sufficient to provide the heart's longing for God. He instead invites us to try different activities and expect that God will eventually lead in those activities that will help prosper a walk-in Christ.

Summary

The observances of devotional patterns are not an end in themselves, but a means to an end. In this particular section, we traced the reasons for the observance of devotional patterns. Six reasons emanated from the previous discussion, namely, to have an ongoing communion or connection with God, to know God and be known by Him, to access divine grace, to cooperate or interact with God, to achieve godliness or holiness,

and to take advantage of God's availability. These rationales actually manifest the desire of God to establish and maintain a relationship with each of us.

Practices Leading to a Devotional Time

Spiritual disciplines have been practiced for centuries, dating back to Bible times. Some have endured the passing of time and are being followed today. Some have been skewed to fit a particular preference or subjective interest. I explore the biblical pattern of devotion in the following section; however, an understanding of the extent and limits of the literature and the reasons for the practice of spiritual disciplines will serve as a basis for formulating a helpful list of spiritual disciplines for participants of this study.

A more comprehensive and current list of spiritual disciplines is included in the work of Calhoun (2005). I will use this as a reference to compare the literature I have chosen in this particular chapter.

Calhoun divides the 62 disciplines/patterns she enumerated and discussed under seven larger groupings, of which the first letter forms the acronym WORSHIP namely, worship, opening self to God, relinquishing the false self, sharing my life with others, hearing God's Word, incarnating the love of Christ, and prayer. Her list of devotional patterns is comprehensive, systematic, useful, and practical. Her work approximates the broad perspectives, needs, and practices of believers from various faith communities. I enumerate it below for the purpose of showing the extent to which devotional patterns have been developed over the years.

WORSHIP: Celebration, Gratitude, Holy Communion, Rule of Life, Sabbath, Worship.

OPEN MYSELF TO GOD: Contemplation, Examen, Journaling, Practicing the Presence, Rest, Retreat, Self-Care, Simplicity, Slowing, Teachability, Unplugging.

RELINQUISH THE FALSE SELF: Confession and self-examination, Detachment, Discernment, Secrecy, Silence, Solitude, Spiritual Direction, Submission.

SHARE MY LIFE WITH OTHERS: Accountability Partner, Chastity, Community, Covenant Group, Discipling, Hospitality, Mentoring, Service, Small Group, Spiritual Friendship, Unity, Witness.

HEAR GOD'S WORD: Bible Study, Devotional Reading, Meditation, Memorization.

INCARNATE THE LOVE OF CHRIST: Care of the Earth, Compassion, Control of the Tongue, Humility, Justice, Stewardship, Truth Telling.

PRAY: Breath Prayer, Centering Prayer, Contemplative Prayer, Conversational Prayer, Fasting, Fixed-Hour Prayer, Inner-Healing Prayer, Intercessory Prayer, Labyrinth Prayer, Liturgical Prayer, Prayer Partners, Praying Scripture, Prayer of Recollection, Prayer Walking.

Foster's shorter list of spiritual disciplines is divided into three parts, inward, outward, and corporate. Inward disciplines refer to the personal devotional practice of intimacy with God, outward accounts for a personal interaction with the world in general, and corporate seeks the practice of discipline with other people. Willard differentiates his list between abstinence, which addresses the perennial hurry sickness to open a space of being alone with God, and engagement that issues a call to serve the needs of others. Although there are differences in application, Whitney shares a basic resemblance with Foster's list. Noticeably, he highlights the value of Bible study by devoting two chapters to it. Whitney's other disciplines are prayer, worship, evangelism, serving, stewardship, fasting, silence and solitude, journaling, and learning.

Issler (2001) imbeds each devotional pattern he promotes into the chapter discussions he divides into "Making Room for God" and "Deepening our Friendship with God." His list of disciplines/patterns includes meditation, hospitality, confession, watchfulness, personal retreat, prayer, lament, and practicing the presence of God.

Dybdahl (2008) dwells on what he calls the Core Habits of Communion, which include worship, repentance, confession, and forgiveness, prayer and meditation, study and guidance, and community. He adds fasting and solitude and simplicity as supporting habits. Interestingly, Dybdahl underscores the importance of worship among the other disciplines and designates it as a "gateway to communion" (p. 29), partly due to a heartfelt worship encounter brought to his attention via a personal testimony that started an unquenchable longing that led him to the other disciplines/patterns he practiced.

Tucker (2007) based his list on the perspective and experience of the authors of the book of Psalms. The choice of the chapters he discussed concurrently touches a particular discipline/pattern that provides him a biblical list that is slightly longer than that of Dybdahl. In addition to Dybdahl's disciplines, Tucker adds assurance, thanksgiving, generosity and trust, rest, praise, and fear God.

The devotional patterns Rhodes (2008) endorses for people under sacred chaos time are prayer, listening to God's voice, spiritual sight, silence (spiritual breathing), *lectio divina* (sacred reading), communing with God (solitude), hiding in Christ, and Sabbath (soaking in the presence of God). Rhodes' devotional patterns emerged from her frustration to secure a sufficient block of time to exercise communion with God. Instead of trying to experience God by allocating time alone with God, she discovered that the same devotional patterns can be exercised even in the midst of what she calls chaos. She tried to use her situation to intentionally connect with God in the context of *kairos*—quality time not quantity time.

Summary

Calhoun's list of devotional patterns is comprehensive and includes the patterns of devotion listed by other authors. The list of devotional patterns by each author largely depends on the author's thesis of the book and has nothing to do with listing additional or fewer disciplines. The authors have their own emphasis in their work that naturally affects the number and the kind of devotional patterns included in their discussion.

Core Biblical Pattern of Devotion

The previous section includes lists of devotional patterns discussed in the literature cited. Although practicing all of them may appear daunting, those patterns are not meant to be observed in their entirety. One can begin with a pattern that responds to the current contour of life and may progress down the road. It is with this understanding that the devotional patterns included in the core list have been chosen.

1. Reflecting on the Word

The preeminence of the Scriptures among other pursuits of devotional patterns cannot be contested. Whitney (2014) states, "No spiritual discipline [devotional pattern] is more important than the intake of God's Word" (p. 22). It is a wonderful source where we can satisfy our hunger for God (Tucker, p. 146). It is the basis of establishing and promoting all other disciplines. God speaks to us in various ways, but especially through His Word. Foster (1998) emphasizes the value of studying the Scriptures, which for him requires repetition, concentration, comprehension, and reflection (pp. 64-66). Dybdahl (2008) adds one more to Foster's four steps, namely, holy purpose (p. 68) to instill that

any attempt to study the Scriptures must necessarily end in the transformation of life rather than mere amusement or intellectual pursuit.

I previously mentioned the impact of reflecting on the Bible to spiritual growth (Hawkins & Parkinson; Jensen, Sahlin). The evidence is traceable and the experience is repeatable. Nomenclature has been applied to this discipline such as meditation, examen, Bible study, devotional reading, and reflective reading. As long as the Bible is correctly utilized with the purpose of understanding the revealed will of God, whatever manner is being used, the end result is the same, spiritual growth, formation in the image of God, and eventually, life eternal (John 17:3; 1 John 5:11-13).

2. Prayer and Fasting

The pattern of prayer may present different images to different people due to their religious background, upbringing, and biblical understanding. Peterson (1992) suggests that mature prayer is dominated by a sense of God. We pray in response to His initiatives to converse. White (1908) perceptively states that prayer is a heart-to-heart conversation with God so that we may receive Him, not down where we are, but up where He is. Hunter (1986) presents a perspective of prayer that has the potential to correct misunderstandings. He outrightly negates the notion that prayer is a way to get from God by claiming that it is a means God uses to give what He wants. Indeed, God is the center of prayer and the Bible informs us that He expects us to pray (Matt 6:5-7, 9). Many shun prayer because of a perceived difficulty in doing it. But prayer is a learned discipline (Whitney, 2014, p. 85), and by persistence and practice one may experience conversing with God from a couple of minutes to a longer period of time (see Hybels, 2008).

Along with prayer, fasting is a discipline practiced by Jews and Christians alike (Calhoun, 2005 p. 219), yet its purpose and methodology can be misunderstood. People in Bible times engaged in this practice for right or wrong reasons (Matt 6:16-18; Mark 9:29; Luke 2:37). However, the benefit God intends to impart from this practice remains true even today. There is a need of a proper understanding of this devotional pattern to reclaim its blessing. Dybdahl's (2008) definition helps in placing fasting in its proper context, which is completely, selectively, or partially refraining voluntarily from some substance (most often food and/or drink) or practice (p. 86). Whitney (2014) adds that the ultimate goal of biblical fasting is "to become more like Christ" (p. 192). While there might be physical benefits in engaging in biblical fasting, it is clear that the end goal is a better connection with God. To miss this biblical instruction negates the result (Mark 2:18-20).

3. Confession and Repentance

The entrance of sin into the human family necessitates a constant evaluation of self (1 Cor 10:12). Even though the consequence of sin naturally leads to rebellion against God's purposes for our lives, the apostle John discloses God's desire for our everyday walk, "these things I write to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1). Pride opposes humility, a requisite to confession and repentance. Issler (2001) asserts that a failure to confess is an act of hiding from God, much like Adam and Eve in the garden (p. 83). Confession and repentance are intertwined with each other. You cannot have one without the other. Confession is the first act of repentance (Tucker, 2007, p. 36) the

offender an opportunity to admit the wrong committed. Then repentance follows, which is essentially a change of direction, a turning away from sin (White, 1908, p. 23).

It may be important to point out the difficulty of exercising the discipline of confession, especially in the context of community (Foster, 1998). The biblical mandate Jesus expounded in Matthew 18 provides a forum for an offender to first admit privately the fault committed, but is elevated to a core group and eventually to the congregation if the first and second steps are not heeded. Confession before a community, even of believers, is necessarily a difficult experience to bring healing and restoration. Willard (1988, p. 188) appropriately reminds the need for restitution in the process of accessing the discipline of confession whether privately or in the context of community. Restitution is rooted in Scripture (e.g., Exod 22:1-31), and a complete restoration and peace from above ensue following such a humble practice.

4. Worship

As a spiritual discipline, a discussion of worship may be spared from current issues that polarize worshippers across many denominations due to preference or lack of a clear stand on these issues. I have yet to find literature about spiritual disciplines that does not regard worship as a discipline, regardless of the extent of the list. Whitney's (2014) assertion that worship is both an end and a means in devotional patterns puts it in the right context. Worship is basically a response to the presence of God that evokes humble prostration in obedience and devotion to Him and sends the worshipper into a life of service and excitement for the doings of God in his/her life (Kidder, 2009, p. 8). Worship is the ultimate goal of the church (Pippert as quoted by Dybdahl, 2008, p. 22) and naturally an end in itself. However, worship is also a means to godliness in the

context of spiritual disciplines. When biblically applied in one's life, worship increases and sustains fellowship with God either in private or personal devotion. There are many areas in worship worth investigating, but they have little use in this particular section.

5. Solitude and Sabbath Rest

There is indeed a virtue in exercising solitude and Sabbath rest. Although these two are separately treated in most lists of devotional patterns, I believe they are similar in principle and application as far as benefit is concerned. The biblical context of solitude can be traced back to the practices of Jesus Himself as Foster (1998, p. 97), Calhoun (2005, p. 112), and Dybdahl (2008, p. 93) point out. The biblical account pertaining to Jesus' practices of solitude and his advocacy about it for His disciples is sufficient (e.g., Matt 4:1-11; Luke 6:12; Matt 14:23). Intentional connection with God through solitude imparts strength and confidence in His rulership, regardless of the current situation in life. Seizing the silence (Rhodes, 2008, pp. 61-65) that is identical to solitude can impart solace at anytime, anywhere. Solitude or silence is not confined to a solitary place, though it is ideal. You can deny yourself interaction and the company of other people (Willard, 1998, p. 160) and cultivate inward attentiveness to create a space for meeting with the divine, even in the midst of a crowd. This allows God to reveal things that He cannot reveal in your ordinary preoccupation (Calhoun, 2005, p. 113).

Sabbath rest here does not necessarily refer to the biblical seventh day of the week, though it cannot be excluded. A periodic rest is built into our system as the biblical seventh day of the week originally conveys. Cummings (2001) beautifully connects the seventh-day Sabbath with God's gift of "an unforgettable day of undivided attention." God purposely created this day of love to unite man to Himself and to enjoy a holy

communion. This is the basic emphasis in the observance of Sabbath as part of a devotional pattern. Many believers may choose a different Sabbath day than the biblical seventh day of the week and pursue the benefits of such discipline. A scheduled retreat or personal vacation may offer similar results as long as the focus is on getting away from the routine of life and focusing on the companionship that God awaits to impart. McNeal (2000) captures the essence of Sabbath discipline in saying that Sabbath is an invitation to enter into the presence of God and enjoy His company, "to show you His love and a time to make you a champion at living."

Summary

The biblical pattern of devotion highlighted in this section is primarily an entry pattern in a journey of ongoing communion with God. These basic devotional patterns are truly vital and necessary in an attempt to relate to the Almighty.

Learnings

This chapter demonstrates the necessity of engaging in devotional patterns. I have presented strong evidence linking spiritual growth with a devotional pattern such as reflective reading of the Bible. Personal participation in family worship also increases active involvement in missional activity, such as talking about one's experience with God to other people. The frequency and length of the devotional pattern, such as reading the Bible, increases the length of time of personal witnessing involvement. The actual studies I shared in this chapter concur with the biblical principle that doing for God comes after being with Him (John 15:5).

I have also shown that there are situations in life where mere practice of a devotional pattern does not move a person to grow, due to factors that inhibit the progress

of a devotional pattern. It is wise to deal with these inhibitors appropriately and to proceed with the habit of devotion soon after.

Another reason that concurs with the importance of devotional patterns is the review of selected literature I conducted. Six reasons emanated from the discussion establishing the benefits or blessings of devotional patterns: (a) to have an ongoing communion or connection with God, (b) to know God and be known by Him, (c) to access divine grace, (d) to cooperate or interact with God, (e) to achieve godliness or holiness, and (f) to take advantage of God's availability. These rationales actually manifest the desire of God to establish and maintain a relationship with each of us.

This chapter provides important information for formulating pertinent materials in a process for implementing a devotional pattern for members of the San Diego Central Seventh-day Adventist Church.

CHAPTER 4

A DEVELOPMENT PROCESS FOR DEVOTIONAL PATTERNS

Introduction

Christian Seventh-day Adventists are largely aware of the value of a devotional practice. Those who were raised in an Adventist home have memories of morning and evening family worship and an emphasis on personal Bible reading. These particular patterns emanate from the teachings of Jesus, who emphasized the value of being with God in relation to Christian living and witness. The Scriptures testify that intentional and meaningful connection with God produces fruitfulness. Where there is no evident fruition in Christian living, one may wonder about the reality of that divine connectedness.

However, there can be a genuine desire for divine connection although current practice appears incapable of touching the core of one's spirituality. One may become perplexed by the spiritual struggles and challenges in the journey of life. Challenges or a problem in the arena of connecting with God may be broad and complex. Yet, a process to revitalize or even discover a devotional pattern suited for one's personal context may change the landscape of the heaven-bound journey.

This study was prompted by a desire to see consistent and comprehensive growth at the San Diego Central Seventh-day Adventist Church, of which I became a part in 2009. Church growth can be measured according to certain indicators but "the best

indicator of church growth and health is the baptism ratio" (Fillinger, 2008). Baptism reflects a church's degree of involvement in reaching the lost contained in the Great Commission (Matt 28:16-20). As will be discussed in the succeeding section, the San Diego Central Church is a merger between two churches. Before the merger, I conducted a ministry assessment of this church under the name Poway Church and discovered that membership started to dwindle after 1983, reaching its lowest by 2009, with 85 members registered on the church book. In that same year, the North San Diego Fil-Am group of which I was the pastor, merged with Poway Church, bringing the membership up to 134 (*Figure 1*). There is not a single reason for this consistent membership decline. The church leaders' and members' genuine and strong connection to God, sustained by a meaningful devotional pattern, would prevent such a scenario.

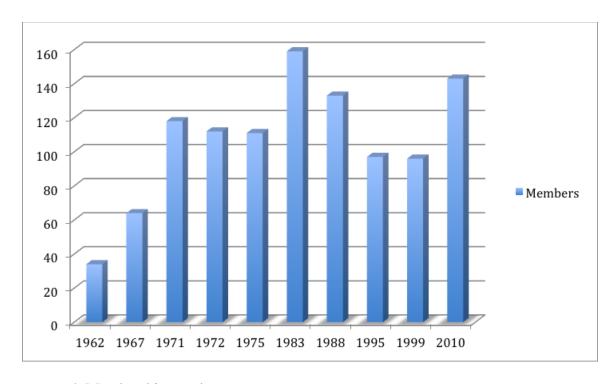


Figure 1. Membership trend.

In this chapter, I explore the church's context of ministry and selection of participants. I then move to a discussion of the process for developing devotional patterns that includes the research methodology I employed and the Journey to Reach the Next Generation that contributed to a great degree to the reason for pursuing this project. The last section of the chapter is a narrative of the project implementation and a corresponding conclusion.

Context of Ministry

The San Diego Central Seventh-day Adventist Church, located at 13940

Pomerado Road, Poway, California, 92064 was established on November 5, 2011. It was a fruit of more than a year of discerning the will of God concerning a merger between the Poway Seventh-day Adventist Church and the San Diego Korean Seventh-day Adventist Church. The Southeastern California Conference with headquarters in Riverside, California oversaw this historic merger process. This was the first time that the Conference pursued and encouraged a multi-cultural church merger in order to strengthen Adventist presence in this local territory by intentional involvement in serving the community and maximizing available resources of these two local congregations for a stronger and consistent fulfillment of the gospel commission.

The San Diego Korean Seventh-day Adventist Church was organized a decade later than the Poway Seventh-day Adventist Church. The Korean Church conducts two main services each Sabbath, typical in Seventh-day Adventist Korean churches in North America. An earlier worship service is rendered in the Korean language, catering to first generation immigrants, followed by an English worship service, catering to their children

who were raised in this country. At the time of the exploratory merger between these two local congregations, the English worship service of the Korean church identified themselves as the Growing Vine Ministry, which opened their doors to minister not only to English speaking Korean descendants, but also to anyone who is looking for a meaningful worship experience they offer, regardless of ethnic affiliation. The Growing Vine Ministry saw a great opportunity to minister to college and university students in the area, which became one of their outreach foci that enriched their worship experience and outreach involvement. Most of these students are Adventists studying in local colleges and universities.

The Poway Seventh-day Adventist Church that was organized on December 3, 1960. This church ambitiously dreamed of a suitable worship venue for the church family and the community that they envisioned a decade after they were organized. Church services have always been conducted in the Youth Hall in anticipation of building a sanctuary that will seat more than 200 people.

The construction of the main sanctuary building had been the dream of the church family and the pastors assigned to this church for decades. Rallying the church members to this seemingly daunting task, Pastor Richard Moore began exploratory talks in 2008 with the North San Diego Fil-Am group, who had been using the church's Fellowship Hall for worship services for almost a decade, to consider joining the Poway church. He believed that the merger will not only help the building project, but would also boost the church ministries offered to both members and community alike. After much prayer, consultation, and the blessing of the Conference, the merger consummated in May 2009, with 57 adults and children comprising the North San Diego Filipino-American Group,

an affiliate of the San Diego Filipino-American Seventh-day Adventist Church located in Chula Vista, California. I have served as the stipend part time pastor of this group since 2003.

Pastor Moore, the current pastor of the Poway Church, entrusted me with responsibilities that allowed me to be actively involved in the life of the church. A year after, circumstances in both the Korean and Poway churches opened a dialogue to merge. This was officially pursued in a meeting between the pastors of both congregations in 2010, namely Pastor Hwi Kim, Pastor Richard Lee, Pastor Richard Moore, and myself, respectively. As a result of that exploratory talk, we felt it necessary to seek the counsel of the Conference on this matter. The Conference then provided a checklist of important things to consider in the merger. This became the model for future church-merger endeavors in the Conference realm.

Meanwhile, a couple of years before the consummation of the merger, Pastor Moore sensed that in order to pursue sustainable church growth and a relevant response to the gospel commission, a serious revisit of the mission and vision of the Poway Seventh-day Adventist church was necessary. The entire church family participated in this visioning process, which took two years to complete. I was actively involved in this process. Incidentally, I started my Doctor of Ministry degree with Andrews University Theological Seminary around this period. As I prepared a class project entitled "Ministry Situation Assessment: The Poway Seventh-day Adventist Church," I wondered about the inability of both the Poway Seventh-day Adventist Church and the North San Diego Fil-Am group to expand the kingdom of God in their territorial location. It appeared that their presence in the community did not create a meaningful impact for the kingdom's sake.

Although increased membership is not the only indicator of effective church growth, it certainly hints at the spiritual health of the leaders and the entire congregation.

In Jesus' paradigm, fruit bearing is a natural consequence of being connected to the Vine. "Without Me, you can do nothing" Jesus categorically stated (John 15:5).

Sahlin (2003) validates this biblical model in his findings that Adventist congregations that have a strong emphasis on spiritual disciplines are "more likely to be growing churches." A lack of intentional, meaningful, and vibrant communion with God results in personal stagnation, disinterestedness in the affairs of the Lord's work, fruitlessness, and a failure to go and make disciples of all nations (Matt 28:19).

My pastoral observation has led me to identify a key factor that may have hindered the growth of the church spiritually and numerically. Church members appear to rely heavily on their Sabbath attendance for spiritual nourishment. If they do have time with God during the week or on a daily basis, it is not feeding them to a point of growth and fruit-bearing. The model that Jesus exemplified in His own life and ministry for bearing fruit in John 15 transcends time and culture. When pursued with sincere commitment and intentionality, the result will doubtless coincide with His argument, that is, connection to the Vine naturally produces fruit.

The merger process included a decision by both the San Diego Korean and Poway churches to begin worshipping together, which began in late September 2010. Since then, the two churches have worked constantly to provide a worship atmosphere that caters to the cultural and language preferences of their adherents. Two Sabbath services are maintained, an earlier service in the Korean language, followed by an English one. While the Korean worship service is going on, the English worshippers conduct a Sabbath

School program and lesson study and vice versa. The pastoral staff of both churches corroborate together. The Growing Vine Ministry and Poway worship together with no language barrier because both were already conducting worship services in English prior to the merge. By the time that I finalized my project proposal, I had already ministered to this church group for a sufficient period to validate my initial pastoral observation. So even with the eventual merge of the San Diego Korean and Poway churches, my proposal was not significantly affected.

Selection of Participants

The focus of my study was the English-speaking congregation of the San Diego Central Church and the purpose of the research is to develop and implement a process that will facilitate the development of a devotional pattern by members of the San Diego Central Seventh-day Adventist Church. To achieve this, I asked for the commitment of participants:

- 1. To participate in a general survey that will assess their personal devotional practice.
- 2. Selected volunteers will commit to a 10-week closed session that will be followed by a monthly meeting for the following three months to establish a pattern of devotion.
- 3. To participate in an exit survey at the end of the project.

The research will take no more than six (6) months to complete the three distinct aforementioned activities.

Description of Participants

All "project participants" met the following criteria:

- 1. Aged 18 years or over from the moment they volunteered to participate in the study
- 2. Members/adherents of the San Diego Central Seventh-day Adventist Church
- 3. Willing to participate and to provide informed consent for their participation in the aforementioned research activities.

Due to the broad range of socio-economic, health, financial, employment, ethnic, and mental health factors among the members/adherents of the San Diego Central Church, volunteer participants were screened to ensure that they met the criteria. No one was involved in this research who did not give informed consent.

Recruitment Process

The following announcement was included in the church's bulletin for a period covering four (4) consecutive weeks. The volunteers accepted and fulfilled the criteria outlined in the previous section.

Volunteers are sought to participate in a study being conducted by Pastor Limuel Liwanag as part of his DMin studies. Two surveys will be conducted; one in the San Diego Central SDA Church at the beginning of the study and the other by the participants of the study toward the end. The same survey instrument will be used for both the volunteer participants and the church. A process for implementing a consistent devotional pattern will be offered through a 10-week closed group session. All personal data will be kept confidential. Volunteer participants must meet the following criteria: Aged 18 years or over at the time of volunteering to participate in the project; a member/adherent of the San Diego Central SDA Church; able and willing to participate in a 10-week closed small group session, including a succeeding monthly meeting for the following three months. Participants will participate at their own cost (time and travel to and from the small group session venue, and will not receive any compensation for participating in the study.

In addition to the bulletin announcement, I sent a personalized letter (see Appendix) through mail or email, which ever was most convenient for each recipient, to all members and adherents of the church to ensure that no prospective participant would miss the invitation. For mailed letters, I also included a stamped return envelope to minimize if not totally eradicate obstacles to respond to the invitation whether participating or not.

Privacy of Research Participants

To maintain the confidentiality of the survey participants, I waived the option for participants to write their names anywhere in the questionnaire. I had full control of the survey questionnaire at all times and only the research participants for the 10-week closed session completed and signed an individual consent form. For purposes of measuring and comparing the result of the intervention I conducted, I instructed the participants for the 10-week closed session to use a code name which I could access. I also requested that participants commit to respect the privacy of their fellow participant's journey revelation and experience-sharing, especially during group or companion exercises.

I also discussed with the participants during the orientation of the 10-week

Journey discomfort or changes that may occur as a result of participating. Although the
changes I expected were positive as far as the Christian journey is concerned, in cases
requiring particular attention due to perceived or real spiritual difficulty I offered
personal counseling in the area of understanding biblical principles of devotional practice
and the experience of personal spiritual growth. Furthermore, research participants were
offered the option of counseling sessions from a qualified Christian counselor should they
so desire. During this time, research participants were offered the choices of continuing,
modifying, or terminating their participation in the research. In the course of the Journey
session, no participant chose this path, of which I was relieved.

Development of Devotional Patterns

The desire of God for a relationship with human beings is everywhere in the Bible. The ultimate expression of this desire is God's appeal, "My son, give Me your heart" (Prov 23:26; see also Prov 4:23; Jer 17:9-10; Ps 4:4; 7:9; Prov 21:2; Ps 73:1; Deut 30:10; 1 Sam 12:24; Ps 51:10; Matt 5:8). Salvation occurs when the heart is eventually surrendered to Jesus through the persistent wooing of the Triune God. But this initial love affair must flourish, which requires "looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith" (Heb 12:2). Christ's death on the cross is a perpetual reminder of this great need to fashion the heart into God's heart. A process to foster and maintain this experience is to connect, relate, and prosper—a devotional pattern invitation of Jesus Himself (John 15; see *Figure 2*).



Figure 2. A Process for devotional patterns.

Devotional Patterns Connect to God

As mentioned in the previous chapter, a devotional pattern is nothing more than a human attempt to connect with God and experience His presence. It is pertinent to realize though, that God at the outset initiates this divine-human rendezvous discussed in Chapter 2. God longs for human company more than one can understand. Throughout human history, God has imbedded His desire to fellowship with created human beings through the relational covenant He established. God innately expects human endearment in return. As if that was not enough, He lavishly punctuated this arrangement with His unfathomable love, underscoring His capacity to receive human affection as a personal God Himself.

Separated by sin, humans have lost their natural devotion for God. Approaching God has become an intentional enterprise that does not naturally occur. But those who draw near to God find Him drawing near as well (Jas 4:8), witnessed from the exemplary life of David. David's in-born affinity to spiritual experience caused him to increasingly clamor for God to a point of developing a genuine heart for Him. He grew dependent upon God in every contour of his experience. His appraisal of God is utmost and obviously prevalent in the many psalms he wrote. Gradually but intentionally and meaningfully, David developed a pattern of devotion in response to the varied experiences that life presented to him. David early recognized the indispensable role of the Scriptures in his life, considering them a lamp to his feet and a light to his path (Ps 119:105). David meditated upon the Scriptures, recorded amazing prayers, exalted the Almighty in worship, and was humble to confess and repent.

Devotional Pattern Fosters Relationship

A devotional pattern is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. In the context of relational covenant explored in Chapter 2, human beings miss out on the availability of God's unlimited resources due to a failure to relate to Him as evident in the life of Mephibosheth (2 Sam 9). Walton eloquently captures the significance of a relationship with God by emphasizing that it is the goal He sovereignly executes (p. 6) through a mechanism that drives this program I prefer to as relational covenant. A genuine relationship with God does not exist outside of a truthful relationship with fellow human beings. A vertical relationship always manifests itself in a robust and undeniable horizontal relationship. A heart that yearns for God finds its fulfillment in obeying Christ's command, "love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12).

Devotional Pattern Sets Out to Prosper

Spending time with God is not confined to reading the Scriptures, meditation, and prayer. Devotional patterns encompass one's response to the varied situations in life as a person interprets and understands his relation to the overall superintendence of God. In the literature review, I showed a direct relationship between practicing devotion and personal spiritual growth (prosper). Devotional practice also results in active sharing of faith. Recent research on spirituality reviewed in Chapter 3 also validated the biblical formula for growing in spirituality and bearing fruit, that is, connectedness to the Vine. This also shows that being with God comes first before doing for God.

Pre- and Post-Session Survey

I was attracted to the possibility of identifying a problem, developing a plan to address it, implementing the plan, and evaluating the result to find out if and how the plan contributed or not to the solution of an existing problem. So, when I learned about *action research* I knew I wanted to do something similar. Applying action research to my project dissertation was not easy until I came across the work of Jensen (2009), who explored the correlation between spirituality and mission and faith maturity utilizing a statistically tested questionnaire (see Appendix). In this work, he discussed the merits of the question design and validation with a degree of confidence. After analyzing the questionnaire and understanding what it was meant to measure, I concluded that this same questionnaire could be used for the current project. For copyright consideration, I acquired permission to use the survey questionnaire. I decided to employ this tool to assist in examining the faith maturity of the San Diego Central Church, their mission, and spiritual practice involvement.

To measure the effect of the plan/intervention that I calculated based on the theological foundation and review of literature, I conducted a pre- and post-session survey with a six-month interval between. Two groups took the pre-session survey, the entire congregation and the 18 volunteer participants. Both groups took the test at the same time. I instructed the volunteers to place a code on their questionnaire that they in turn informed me about so I could match their pre-test survey with the post-test survey taken at the end of the six-month intervention period. I input the data collected from the surveys in an Excel file. At the appropriate time, Dr. Jerry Thayer, a university research

person acknowledged by the seminary, computed these data. With his assistance, I analyzed the results and prepared a narrative that is reported in the following chapter.

The Journey to Reach the Next Generation

The Journey to Reach the Next Generation (The Journey) is a program facilitated by The Leadership Institute (TLI)—an interdenominational ministry devoted to the spiritual transformation of church, mission, education, and marketplace leaders and their organizations. TLI was established in 1989 and began *The Journey* program in November of 1993. The Journey is a response to "the immense challenge of reaching, assimilating, and mentoring the generations that represent the church's future" (The Journey, 2011).

I had the privilege of participating in The Journey (February 2011-October 2012) that comprised six retreats over a period of two years. My local Conference invested in this venture by sending pastors to establish and enhance their bearing in spiritual leadership as well as personal enrichment of their own devotional patterns. In fact, The Journey alumni continue to receive support from our local Conference through a follow-up retreat every year. Personally, this has impacted the devotional practices I would not likely have experienced outside of this exposure. The learning experience in community and the cultivation of time alone with God called EPC (Extended Personal Communion) have contributed greatly to the impetus of the current study.

Aside from my learning experience in the Doctor of Ministry program of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, my Journey experience was helpful in conceptualizing the project that I pursued. At the Journey we were invited and challenged to the three relationships Jesus called all His followers to commit to—abiding, loving one another, and bearing witness (John 15). This paradigm

was pursued throughout the Journey retreats not only in presentations, but most especially in practice. With the permission of the director, I incorporated some Journey materials into the curriculum I designed for the Journey project I conducted.

Project Implementation Narrative

After inviting members of the church to participate in the project, the first step was to administer a pre-group session survey involving the entire church—the English-speaking congregation. I conducted the first survey test during the announcement period between Sabbath School and the worship time on January 26, 2013. No other activity was going on during the time the survey test was taken, ensuring that all the participants could focus on answering the questions. I calculated the time it would take to answer the survey questionnaire and determined that it would take seven minutes or less. I distributed pencils along with the one-page questionnaire to avoid any delay in looking for writing material and kept the collected questionnaires in a secured place. To further maximize participation, I distributed the questionnaire again the following Sabbath for those who happened to miss church or for whatever reason did not attend church the previous week. This time though, no special time was allotted for answering the questionnaire.

I found Jensen's survey instrument to be helpful in establishing the current spiritual temperature of the church and as a means for evaluating whether the process I was going to implement would make a difference in the devotional pattern of the volunteers. The rationale for using this particular questionnaire is basically to assess the relationship between time with God and fruit-bearing or mission involvement and the faith maturity of church members. I intended to compare the pre-group session data with the post-group session data that I collected from the research participants. The rest of the

church member's pre-group session data will be used for comparison to determine any change or discrepancy in the research participants as a result of the intervention I introduced.

I met with the 18 volunteers who signed up for the 10-week session to be implemented after church service on the Sabbath I conducted the general survey. Since their questionnaire was coded, I separated it from the remaining questionnaires. That first meeting was an orientation for the up-coming sessions. I reiterated the salient points of their participation and invited them to any inquiry that they may have about the project I would be conducting. We also discussed and decided on the time and day of the meeting.

To maximize participation during each session, I divided the whole group into two sub-groups based on their time availability namely, Group A and Group B (Table 1).

Table 1

Time and Date of the Journey

Date	Group A	Group B	Venue
February 1	4-5:30 PM	6-7:30 PM	Fellowship Hall
February 8	4-5:30 PM	6-7:30 PM	Fellowship Hall
February 15	4-5:30 PM	6-7:30 PM	Fellowship Hall
February 22	4-5:30 PM	6-7:30 PM	Fellowship Hall
March 1	4-5:30 PM	6-7:30 PM	Fellowship Hall
March 8	4-5:30 PM	6-7:30 PM	Fellowship Hall

Table 1 Continued.

Time and Date of the Journey

March 15	4-5:30 PM	6-7:30 PM	Fellowship Hall
March 22	4-5:30 PM	6-7:30 PM	Fellowship Hall
March 29	4-5:30 PM	6-7:30 PM	Fellowship Hall
April 5	4-5:30 PM	6-7:30 PM	Fellowship Hall

Group A was primarily composed of senior members of the church ranging in age from 45-78 years and Group B from 24-50 years. We ended our orientation meeting with a wonderful prayer and eager anticipation for the experience each of them would have for the next six months that included once-a-month meetings for three months.

A Journey: A Covenant to Take an Intimate Walk With Jesus

The main focus of my project was the once-a-week meeting for 10 consecutive weeks, called *A Journey: A Covenant to Take an Intimate Walk with Jesus*. I chose a closed-group format to enable me to measure any change resulting from the sessions I conducted. At the orientation, I also emphasized the necessity of participants committing to complete the sessions, except in extreme circumstances. It was not easy to obtain such a commitment, especially from busy working people who comprised nearly half of the participants. However, after realizing the design of the project I would be conducting, all the participants were amenable to this strict arrangement. During the opening session, I distributed a folder containing session materials for each participant.

The format (Table 2) of the meeting was basically patterned after the closed group meeting presented in our class (Walshe, 2011) and my experience in taking the Journey retreats. The whole session was an hour and a half, but it was not uncommon to extend time for another 20-30 minutes. While I endeavored to follow the time segment, I also allowed some degree of fluidity as needed. The Personal Growth Section (PGS) is a time where I presented specific topic to enhance the participants' devotional patterns. I chose the topics based on my pastoral assessment of their need and growth areas. In the Daily Scripture Focus (DSF), participants were given ample time to practice what had been presented during the PGS. This is where I demonstrated a necessary practice/habit to be cultivated in the Christian journey.

Table 2
Session Format

Parts	Activity	Time
1. Remarks	Welcoming everyone to the meetingPraise timePrayer	7 mins
2. Transition Exercise: Community building	 History giving story sharing	18 mins
3. Personal Growth Section: Devotional Habits	 Stepping into the Scriptures Discover the Bible come alive in personal experience 	35 mins
4. Daily Scripture Focus: Time Alone with God	 INTERFLOW Time Spiritual Companion sharing Group sharing Prayer	30 mins

Out of my learning experience on meditating, reflecting, and reading the Scriptures, I adopted my own process that I shared with my Journey participants. I used the acronym INTERFLOW, the verb form of which means "to flow together, merge," "to flow into each other, intermingle." The noun form means "a flowing between two or more entities." Thus, INTERFLOW represents **Inte**ntional **Reflecting on** the **W**ord. The following process was used with INTERFLOW time:

- 1. Pray. Permit God through the Holy Spirit to enter your time and space. Ask Him for humility and illumination.
- 2. Choose a passage (a few verses, a chapter, etc.).
- 3. Read twice, reading it slowly the second time.
- 4. Watch for word(s), phrase(s), or whole texts that speak to your personal context (personal issues, family, work, church, friends, especially pertaining to relationships).
- 5. Dwell on this thought (time depends on what you set aside).
- 6. Ask God what this passage means to you.
- 7. Pray for humility and courage to pursue the direction He wants you to go.

To enhance familiarity with the INTERFLOW time process, the participants agreed that I would send them an INTERFLOW passage on a daily basis for the 10-week period. For most participants, I sent the passage via text message. A few preferred that I send it via email. Acknowledging that each of the participants have different times alone with God, I decided to send the passage after midnight of the previous day so it would be available to whomever woke up the earliest and decided to conduct time alone with God.

When the 10-week meeting was over, the next step was a once-a-month Journey meeting for the next three successive months. The rationale for this pattern was twofold:

a) to maintain a connection with the participants and at the same time allow them to practice a devotional pattern suited for their personal context, and b) to complete the sixmonth period from the time the Journey session began until the end of the three-month session. This timeframe accommodated whatever change theory one espouses pertaining to the length of time a change (habit) can occur. In every monthly session, I asked participants to fill out an "inner journey" and "outward journey" form to help them visualize specific areas of Christian living that they could foresee doing or intentionally plan to do.

Learnings

Devotional pattern is a means to restore a right relationship with God that was tarnished by the devastating effect of sin. To facilitate this process, I conducted a 10-week Journey session with the core values to connect, relate, and prosper. I also employed an action research methodology with the intention to statistically measure and describe the effect of the process as perceived by the 18 volunteer participants. The whole congregation participated in a survey intended to calculate the spiritual condition of the entire church, which established a baseline reference necessary to find if any change was effected by the process. Activities and exercises such as INTERFLOW time and monthly after Journey meetings were positioned strategically to sustain the establishment of a pattern suitable to each participant's individual context.

In the following chapter, I will discuss the result of the devotional-pattern process I conducted as well as the challenges encountered, including some recommendations that will enhance further effectiveness when this process is utilized.

CHAPTER 5

OUTCOMES, EVALUATION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter will first discuss the methodology of research employed to assess the effect of the intervention implemented to address the problem identified in this project. Then the discussion will move to the outcomes of the research along with the corresponding evaluation. The questionnaire used evaluated the profile of church members, the climate of the church, the religious motivation of members, and the way they practice faith. The main section of this chapter narrates the outcomes of *A Journey process*, designed to help participants implement devotional patterns that fit their personal context. A discussion on the impact of this project on the researcher ensues, followed by recommendations for further study. The last section focuses on the conclusion, not only for the chapter, but for the entire research.

Research Methodology

The work of Jensen (2009) provided in this study is the impetus for pursuing action research wherein after a problem was identified and analyzed, a plan to address the problem was implemented. An evaluation of the results of the action taken ensued. After considering the results, new concerns were identified, which actually gives opportunity to adjust the plan so that when the process is repeated, a better result will be expected.

A lack of significant new members being added to the church through baptism is indicative of a bottom line issue of misconnection with God. A factor that can contribute to this is the scarcity of understanding or skill to commune with God. By providing a process to develop devotional patterns that nourish consistent, meaningful, and intentional time with God, fruitfulness will be a matter of course. As Jensen (2009, p. 248) indicated, there is an additive connection between reading the Scriptures and sharing about God. The longer the time spent in reading the Bible, the greater the missional desire to share about God.

To evaluate the process for implementing devotional patterns for members of the San Diego Central, the 18 volunteer participants were administered the same survey questionnaire (Appendix B) before and after the process. The process constitutes a 10-week-once-a-week session with an hour and a half duration discussing and implementing devotional patterns and relevant spiritual growth areas. A daily INTERFLOW passage was distributed to the volunteer participants for this 10-week period. An hour and a half follow-up once a month was conducted for the succeeding three months after the session ended. Participants were encouraged to submit inner and outward journey goals of a perceived need to implement into their Christian walk for the three-month period and beyond. They were also given opportunity to connect via phone, email, Facebook, or personal conversation outside of the session meetings with their chosen spiritual companion for spiritual and personal support and encouragement in their Christian journey.

The survey questionnaire measured the respondents' self-perception about the climate of the church, their motivation for religious life, and how they practice their faith.

Additionally, it asked profile questions and about church leadership roles. A pre-session survey was also taken from the rest of the congregation to compare and establish the spiritual climate of the volunteer participants and the church in general.

The descriptive data collected for all surveys were analyzed and interpreted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software with the assistance of a qualified researcher. The result is presented in the following section.

Outcomes and Evaluation

Membership Profile

As discussed in the ministry context in Chapter 4, two main language groups conduct separate worship services at the San Diego Central Seventh-day Adventist Church. These are the Korean service and the English service. The focus of my study was the English-speaking congregation, with a book membership of roughly 150. Of this number, a total of 58 members and adherents participated in the pre-session survey, including the 18 volunteer Journey participants. Among the members, 43.1% are male and 56.9% are female. Among the participants, 22 or 37.9% range in age from 18-35 years. The remaining percentage (62.1%) is 36 years and older. Asians are the predominant race of the members with 63.8%, followed by Hispanic 17.2%, White 13.8%, and all others 5.2% (see Table 3 and Figure 3).

Table 3
Gender and Age Range

	Male	Female	18-35	36+
Gender	43.1%	56.9%		
Age Range			37.9%	62.1%

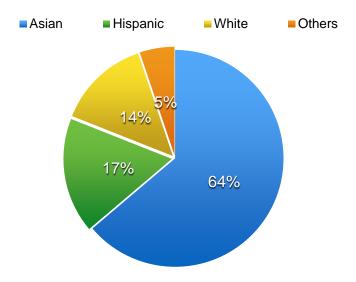


Figure 3. Membership composition.

Church Climate

In the survey (see Appendix for ranking detail), respondents were asked to rank 1-9, from *disagree totally* to *agree totally*, according to their personal perception, the warmth of the church and its thinking climate. Four questions addressed the warmth aspect, namely; a) it feels warm, b) it accepts people who are different, c) it is friendly, d) strangers feel welcome, and five questions addressed the thinking climate such as; a) I learn a lot, b) most members want to be challenged to think about religious issues and ideas, c) it challenges my thinking, d) it encourages me to ask questions, e) it expects people to learn and think. With a mean score of 7.56, pre-session respondents ranked between agreeing moderately (ranked 7) and agreeing strongly (ranked 8) concerning the warmth and thinking climate of the church. This means that members in general feel that

their church is a welcoming church and that teaching and preaching are conducive for learning and growth.

Religious Motivation

The motivation questions in the survey measured the faith maturity of the respondents based on the Intrinsic/Extrinsic scale (Jensen, 2009, pp. 245, 246). Intrinsic motivation sees the inherent worth of God as the basis for relating to Him ("religion as an end"). Extrinsic motivation relates to God on the basis of the benefits acquired ("religion as means"). Of the 13 items, the respondents ranked 1-9, from disagree totally to agree totally. There were seven extrinsic items, four intrinsic ones, and two somewhat in between so we calculated these items separately. The mean score for the extrinsic items was 5.4, nearly equivalent to agreeing somewhat. The mean score for the intrinsic items was 7.15, equivalent to agreeing moderately (*Figure* 4). Because both items were between intrinsic and extrinsic, the mean score was equivalent to agreeing moderately.

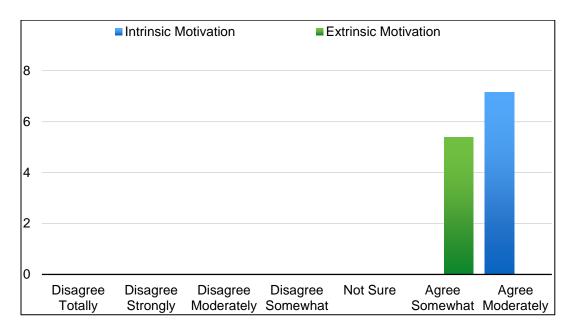


Figure 4. Religious motivation.

These results suggest that respondents only agree moderately to the intrinsic worth of God and agree somewhat to the extrinsic worth of God. This means that church members practice faith for the benefit they derive from relating to God while recognizing to a moderate degree that they relate to Him for who He is and not for what they can get out of Him. Based on this survey, it appears that church members in general are not certain of their view about God and how to relate to Him.

Practicing Faith

This section indicates the religious behavior of the pre-session survey respondents. They were asked two questions; a) the number of minutes they met alone with God on an average day the previous week of responding to the survey, and b) how often they pray, read the Bible, witness, help others, or teach. For the second question, respondents were given eight options ranging from 1-8 that were equivalent to *never* to *more than once a day*. The mean score for the number of minutes they spend alone with God was 3.98, which is equivalent to 21-30 minutes on an average day. When asked about the times they pray or meditate, they indicated about *once a day* (mean = 6.76). They read the Bible on their own *once a week* (mean = 5.47), tell someone about God two or three *times a month* (mean = 4.47), perform acts of mercy and compassion almost *several times a week* (mean = 5.54), and teach a class or group in church/ministry *less than once a month* (mean = 2.29).

Some of these results are impressive and yet something seems amiss. To spend 21-30 minutes of time alone with God on an average day is good, which probably corresponds to praying or meditating about once a day. But the number of times they indicated that they read the Bible is only once a week. This is far less than the Scriptural

mandate to meditate upon the Word of God "day and night that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it" (Josh 1:8). Jesus taught His disciples the necessity of craving the Word of God on a daily basis (Matt 6:11) because He knew that, "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matt 4:4). So then, it should not be surprising to notice that the member's involvement in telling someone about God is two to three *times per month*, which I would postulate may result from a lack of connection with God through reflective reading of His Word. Indeed, you cannot give what you do not have.

Participants' Pre- and Post-Session Survey

The nucleus of this research is the effect of the process or plan implemented to address the problem identified at the beginning, that is, an insufficient devotional practice. The process pertains to the intentional and committed carving of time to refresh, adjust, or learn devotional patterns in community that will fit each individual's life context. This process basically involves a 10-week-once-a-week meeting designed to teach or enhance devotional practice. Eighteen volunteers responded to the invitation to participate. In the following, I compare their pre- and post-session survey.

It is pertinent to reiterate that the profile of the 18 volunteer participants before the session or the implementation of the process is included in the previous discussion. These volunteers have a high regard for their church's hospitality and appreciate the learning and growing they experience from the church's teaching and preaching. They spend considerable time alone with God on an average day (21-30 min), which might be referring to praying or meditating since they too appeared to read their Bible only once a week. Their motivation for relating to God is also unclear because they see it as a means

to an end, and yet also view it as an end in itself. However, a closer look at their survey result before the start of the session reveals a slightly different picture.

It is interesting to note that when we compare all the different variables of the survey questionnaire between the congregation and the volunteer participants, the participants scored higher, regardless of the difference (Table 4). This means that the volunteer participants are more mature (for lack of a term to use) to some extent than the average church member. For instance, the volunteers (mean = 7.87) almost agree strongly (ranked 8) on the overall church climate questions. Instead of devoting 21-30 minutes of time alone with God on an average day, the volunteers spend 31-40 minutes (mean = 5.29).

Table 4

Congregation and Volunteers Comparative Mean Score

	Congregation (Mean)	Volunteers (Mean)
Church Climate	7.56	7.87
Intrinsic Motivation	7.15	7.97
Extrinsic Motivation	5.40	4.53
Practicing Faith	4.75	5.29
Pray/Meditate	6.76	7.46
Reading Bible	5.47	6.62
Tell (witness)	4.47	4.91
Acts of mercy	5.54	5.73
Teach a Class	2.29	2.90

The volunteers agree strongly on the intrinsic value of God (mean = 7.97) and disagree somewhat (mean = 4.53) on relating to God merely for what one can get out of it (a means to an end). The volunteers also pray or meditate almost more than once a day (mean = 7.46); read the Bible almost once a day (mean = 6.62); tell someone about God once a week (mean = 4.91); perform acts of mercy several times a week (mean = 5.73); and teach a class at church about once a month (mean = 2.90).

But the question still remains; did the process for implementing devotional patterns assist the volunteer participants in any way? A comparison of the pre- and post-session survey for them revealed a curious result (Table 5). The post-session scores for

Table 5

Pre-and Post-Session Comparative Mean Score

	Pre Session (Mean)	Post Session (Mean)
Church Climate	7.87	8.16
Intrinsic Motivation	7.98	8.10
Extrinsic Motivation	4.57	3.82
Practicing Faith	5.29	4.74
Pray/Meditate	7.46	6.62
Reading Bible	6.62	5.54
Tell (witness)	4.91	4.09
Acts of mercy	5.73	5.27
Teach a Class	2.90	2.80

Church Climate and Intrinsic Motivation increased slightly. The increase in Church Climate meant that the volunteer participants agree strongly (mean = 8.16) that their church is hospitable, friendly, warm, accepting of people who are different, and welcoming of strangers. It also meant that at least in the past six months, they agree strongly that the teaching and preaching atmosphere was beneficial for their learning and growth.

The same could be said concerning their intrinsic motivation score wherein they more than agree strongly that relationship to God or religious experience is an end in itself. They view worshipping God for instance, to be sufficient reason to relate to Him in a meaningful way. However, the extrinsic motivation score dropped three fourths or 0.75, which is almost one ranking score. This is actually a positive result because it meant that if the participants more than disagree somewhat that relating to God must not be based on what one gets out of it (means to an end), they now disagree further, (disagree moderately).

This result coincides with their intrinsic motivation score, establishing their belief that God is not to be related to for what He can give. Bible worthies such as Job,

Abraham, and David for example learned this priority and as a result also received other things that God actually promises to give to those who enter into such a meaningful relationship with Him. This outcome enhances the practice of devotional patterns that sustain divine connection, leading to a fruitful life.

A somewhat challenging interpretation to make is the outcome of the post-session survey pertaining to Practicing of Faith that measures the manifestation of fruitfulness as a result of connectedness to God, including time alone with God and missional

involvement. Table 5 shows a decline in the mean score on the variables. After implementation of the process, volunteer participants decreased their time alone with God from about 40 minutes to 30 minutes (Practicing Faith score) on an average day. From praying or meditating more than once a day, they were doing it almost once a day (pray/meditate score). Their Bible reading time during the week also decreased somewhat. Their witnessing endeavors also reduced from almost once a week to several times a week. Their efforts to help others also reduced slightly during that week.

Looking at these results alone may imply that the process they experienced unfavorably affected their religious life since they seemed to be in a better situation before, rather than after, the session. This is where the survey questionnaire outcomes may have their limits. They did not allow a dynamic interaction to discover further the reason behind the responses. For one thing, the participants did not entirely abrogate their practices and missional involvements. They practiced them slightly less instead. The fact that they improved on their intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of relating to God revealed that their heart is in the right place and right direction. They began sensing a genuine need and desire to connect with God through devotional patterns.

The results could also mean that the week being referred to in their response on Practicing Faith was a rough week for everybody. Or, the fact that I had a small sample for this project can also affect the overall assessment of the effect of the process I implemented. It could also have to do with the limited time allotted to establish their own individual patterns of devotion. Growth in the spiritual arena can be gradual and takes some time or more time. Nonetheless, if it is systemic, which comes about as a result of

real connection with God and nurtured by meaningful devotional patterns, then the fruitbearing cycle will be naturally consistent and God honoring.

The Impact of the Project on the Researcher

The impact of this project on me is at least twofold: first, it deepened my own practice of devotional patterns, and, secondly, it confidently equipped me not only with accessible materials for conducting this same process again, but with the experience of implementing it better to achieve greater results for God's glory.

One of the reasons that attracted me to the Discipleship and Biblical Spirituality Cohort was my own personal hunger for God. At the beginning of this cohort, I was at the point where I was frustrated with my devotional practice and did not know how to change it. But I discovered from the courses I was taking that, as a leader enrolled in divine heart-shaping academy, I was called by God to share His heart. I did not grasp that in the early part of my ministry God was at work in me patiently sculpting my character. God continually exposed me to my greatest need ever, that is, a meaningful, long-lasting and satisfying relationship with Him. I also discovered that to enter into this incomparable relationship privilege, I needed to cultivate devotional patterns that would allow me to enter into God's space while allowing Him into my own personal space. This project has tremendously assisted me in visiting different rooms and corners of devotional practices that were previously veiled from me due to ignorance or an unprepared heart condition. It has also widened my perspective and granted me access to other areas of Christian journey that I would not have had access to in any other way. The personal interaction I have enjoyed while conducting the sessions has been truly inspiring.

I have also been privileged to catch a small glimpse of the personal journeys of the participants, which has been such an honor and grave responsibility to respect their personal struggles. I was blessed to be at the right place at the right time as I beheld the great need of these fellow sojourners to urgently carve priority time for them to spend with God. Such a privilege will not have likely occurred outside of this particular journey exposure.

Then, there is the accumulation of materials used for this project. You cannot be exposed to these captivating, convicting, and inspiring materials and walk away stoically unmoved. Recognizing my predominant spiritual gifts as pastor and teacher, the wealth of materials in my possession I collected and prepared for this project and from the courses I took appear to be screaming to be utilized for the benefit of others. In my current responsibility as an associate pastor, I have begun incorporating not only these materials in my usual responsibilities, but the experience I had the privilege to accumulate. In fact, I utilized the process to foster and maintain a relationship with God from Chapter 4 as an impetus to assess and define our mission and vision for the younger generation of our church (See *Figure* 5). This figure demonstrates the relevance of the materials and experience I garnered from implementing this particular project.

Based on this project, I was able to facilitate resolving the perennial challenge that the diverse ministries and groups who minister to children, youth, and young adults encounter. These different groups and ministries vie for the time and energy of our children, youth, and young adults to a point of duplicating what they are doing for them in the name of a particular ministry or group. Streamlining these events and activities directed toward the same audience saves the church resources and avoids unnecessary

expenditures, time consumption, overworked leaders, fatigue of the children, youth, and young adults. But beyond these outward benefits is the intention to prepare and engage not only the leaders of these ministry groups, but the children, youth, and young adults. Any program, event, or activity must necessarily contribute to the development or enhancement of the heart-transforming goal by connecting, relating, or prospering their relationship with Jesus. This is another tangible benefit of this project in my current ministry.

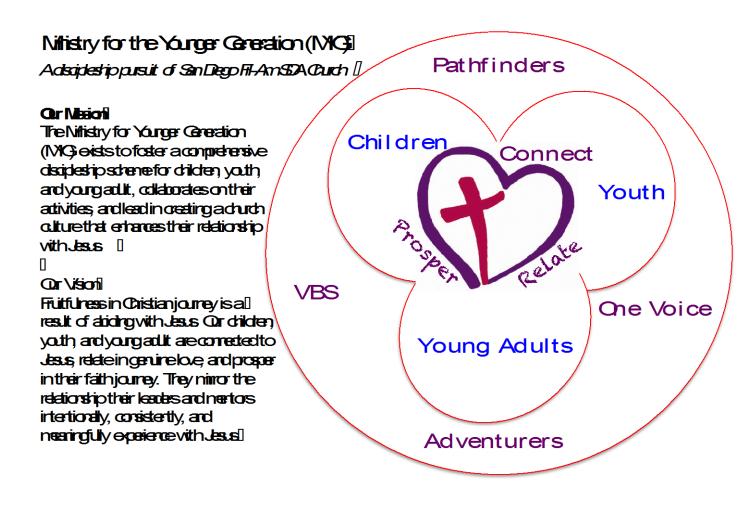


Figure 5. Ministry for Younger Generation

Recommendations for Further Study

There is always room for improvement. The following areas may prove beneficial to explore and emphasize for the benefit of the wider body of Christ.

- Accountability Partner: The landscape of life may not be the same for everyone.
 Challenges may come at different times and in varying degrees. A study on the
 accountability partner or spiritual companion and their impact on establishing and
 nurturing consistent devotional patterns will indeed bring invaluable insights.
- 2. Factors Inhibiting Devotional Patterns: An intentional research along this line may prove very important. In this research, I included it in my review of literature but was not able to include it in the survey questionnaire used.
- 3. Hybrid Assessment: The survey questionnaire is vital for an objective method of evaluation. With the assistance of personal interview data, a more comprehensive assessment will be available. Items that go with the personal interview time must be based on the survey questionnaire.
- 4. A Journey Process for local Church Leaders: I am thrilled to envision a church led by leaders who make their devotional patterns a matter of extreme importance. A study on this particular subject group may have been overdue.
- 5. A Journey Process for new Church Members: This would be a helpful ministry to take on, especially for newly baptized members of the church. It would be surprising to anticipate the results.
- 6. On-going A Journey Process: This can be applied in a church setting or for institutional workers where the participants commit to this process for a longer period. After participating in A Journey process at the beginning, there would be

- continued and intentional contact with volunteers for the next three to five years. A periodic mini A Journey sessions would be strategically scheduled during this course of time for encouragement and support. The evaluation would be taken toward the end of that period and shared with all participants during a praise program.
- 7. Devotional Patterns Implementation Period: A hindsight of this project particularly on the time chosen to take the post session survey made me realize that the period allotted for the implementation of devotional patterns consisted of only three months since A Journey process actually lasted for almost three months as well. The Journey I attended lasted for a period of two years. It would be wise and helpful to allot a sixmonth to one-year period for the participants to develop and enhance their devotional patterns before an assessment is taken again.
- 8. Race/Religious Heritage and Perception of Self/Relationship with God: Since I conducted this project with a multi-cultural race church, could one's self-perception and relationship with God be affected by race and/or religious heritage? What effect if any and how extensive would that be?

Conclusions

This project was launched with the realization of the Scriptural mandate to abide with God before any expectation of fruitfulness is entertained. But rather than a privilege to cherish, enjoy, and nurture life's purposes, spending time with God has become a delayed occasion placed at everybody's back burner and less than a personal priority. This prevailing attitude has its roots in the sinful nature of human beings. Since sin separated them from God, it has become more difficult to naturally respond to God's initiative of intentional communion. Approaching God's space is a dreaded thought and

is replaced by doing in our own strength what is perceived to be His will. This leads to a nominal relationship with God that will never end in consistent fruition.

To break away from this devastating cycle, there is a need to recapture God's original plan to maintain a deep and satisfying relationship with His created human beings that He imbedded in the relational covenant, unilaterally executed at the beginning of their existence. Throughout the corridor of time, God has perpetually and persistently revealed this divine intention through His chosen servants such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Israel, and "as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12). It will be a surpassing and surprising joy to enter into the "double longing" cycle of relationship with God that is far better to enjoy sooner rather than later.

What all of us should seriously realize is the fact that as one enters into a covenant relationship, certain expectations must be met similar to a marriage covenant. Both spouses have their individual roles to ameliorate and nurture the relationship if it is to last as long as they both shall live. It cannot be less than this. The good thing is that we need not start from scratch. Bible worthies such as David exemplified this life of ongoing relationship with God as applicable in whatever complex situation in life we find ourselves. David learned to find refuge in the midst of a turbulent stage of life through devotional patterns such as prayer, reading the Scriptures, meditation, and worship. A commitment to learn and practice these relationship-nurturing patterns leads to a genuine connection with God that naturally bears much fruit.

Unplugging from exhausting mundane living requires intentionality. Moving away from a nominal fruitless Christian life needs to embrace devotional patterns that can

be learned and nurtured. In a pilot project A Journey implemented at the San Diego Central Church, participants were invited to enter into a 10-week once-a-week covenant that met for an hour and a half, followed up by a monthly meeting for the succeeding three months.

Based on the survey questionnaire used to assess the process, the participants increased their perception of the warmth and welcoming spirit their church provided for everybody including their guests. They improved in their perception of the reason for relating to God that is vital in entering and nurturing their own devotional patterns. From being almost *not sure* whether to relate to God because of the benefits they derive out of it, they *disagreed somewhat* instead, which actually devalued their extrinsic motivation of serving God. They increased to *agreeing strongly* on the intrinsic value of God, realizing that His divinity is more than sufficient to enter into a meaningful and consistent relationship with Him.

Although causing legitimate concern to discover what appears to be an unfavorable effect of A Journey process on the participants Practice of Faith, which includes time spent alone with God and missional involvement, it can be argued that their life context at that particular period affected their response. For one thing, their perception of God and motivation for religious life are in the right place and going in the right direction. The Practice of Faith may still vary, especially as to what appears as a limited time to measure the effect of the process on their devotional practice. It may also be that the effect of A Journey process on Practicing of Faith is less reliable if the volunteer sample is too small as suggested by the qualified statistician, or maybe the

participants were more honest in responding to the questionnaire after the Journey experience.

A greater benefit of this whole project process is probably on the life of this researcher. All the preparations undertaken, from the rigorous project-proposal-approval process to the eventual execution of the project, and the evaluation and interpretation of the outcomes, not to mention the great materials utilized and the personal interactions gained, have truly impressed and deepened my conviction of the worth and urgent necessity of this life-and-death-relationship journey with God. Joining the Discipleship and Biblical Spirituality Cohort indeed enabled me to rise above the rut of spiritual lethargy that characterized my experience before taking this particular cohort. I learned a refreshing, meaningful, and transformative devotional pattern that empowered me to assist other people, especially my immediate family, discover their individual devotional pattern based on their own life context. I also utilized pastoral responsibilities such as personal Bible study, small group meetings, preaching and speaking appointments as overflow platforms of a revitalized communion with God. Practicing consistent and meaningful devotional patterns allow God to enter into our personal space leading to a consequential fruition aligned with God's purpose in our lives.

APPENDIX A

LETTERS

Survey Questionnaire Permission Request Letter

Invitation Letter

May 16, 2012

RE: Permission

Wipf and Stock Publishers 199 W. 8th Ave., Suite 3 Eugene, OR 97401

Dear Sir/Madam;

My name is Limuel M. Liwanag, a Doctor of Ministry student at Andrews University Theological Seminary. I find the Project Questionnaire, Journey to Reach the Next Generation in Appendix I p. 306 of the book you published entitled *Subversive Spirituality: Transforming Mission through the Collapse of Space and Time* (2009) an instrument helpful to achieve my purpose in my project dissertation. I have consulted with the author, Dr. L. Paul Jensen who happens to be my esteemed advisor for this project and he kindly extended his permission to use the aforementioned questionnaire. Being the publisher, I understand you hold the property right on this so I am humbly seeking your permission as well. Please send your permission confirmation via fax or email to:

Institutional Review Board Andrews University 4150 Administrative Drive, Rm 210 Berrien Springs, MI 49104-0355

Fax: (269) 471-6543 Email: *irb@andrews.edu*

Thank you so much for attending to my request as soon as you can.

Sincerely,

Limuel M. Liwanag 1678 Elmhurst St. Chula Vista, CA 91913 Tel # (619) 245-9842

email: liwanaglm@yahoo.com

May 17, 2012

Tyler Stewart

To: liwanaglm@yahoo.com Cc: L Paul Jensen, IRB

Re: Permissions

Hello Limuel,

Thank you for your email. You have Wipf and Stock's permission to use this material in your dissertation. I ask that you use a standard acknowledgement and include the words, "Used by permission of Wipf and Stock Publishers. www.wifpandstock.com"

All the best,

Tyler

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Invitation Letter

Andrews University

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Invitation Letter

For volunteer participants in a ten week closed session being conducted by

Limuel Mora Liwanag

as part of the following DMin project:

A Process for Implementing a Devotional Pattern for Members of the San Diego Central Seventh-day Adventist Church

Dear

Recent research on spiritual growth with 1,000 diverse congregations and over 250,000 people shows that personal Bible engagement moves a believer's faith journey forward more effectively than any other single practice (Hawkins, Greg and Cally Parkinson. Move. Zondervan, 2011). The challenge for many is to establish a rhythm that maximizes an experience of God during an allotted devotional time.

In view of this finding, I am seeking at least 40 volunteers in our congregation to participate in a study I am conducting as part of my Doctor of Ministry (DMin) program at Andrews University Theological Seminary. It is with hope that the research participants will contribute to the following positive outcomes:

- 1. Help the members of our church discover a devotional pattern that will allow them to establish a consistent time with God.
- 2. Help the members of our church understand that doing for God comes after spending time being with Him.
- 3. This study will serve as a catalyst for our church to develop a life committed to God, resulting in a natural involvement in witnessing and other programs and activities of the church.
- 4. This process may serve as a model for other members of this church and members of other local churches who might embark in this particular journey as well.

This study includes a pre and post group session survey for the whole congregation and a ten-week, once a week closed group session for participants. A once a month follow-up meeting will ensue the closed group session for the next three months. Volunteers must be 18 years old or over and will participate at their own expense (no compensation for participating). This study will follow the timeline below:

- 1. Pre-group session survey—January 26 Sabbath, at church during announcement time.
- 2. Closed group session—Time: 7-8:30 pm; Venue: church

Week 1: Jan 27-Feb 2 (One meeting night only either week days or weekend. To be determined after consulting with all participants)

Week 2: Feb 3-9 (One meeting night only)

Week 3: Feb 24-Mar 2 (One meeting night only)

Week 4: Mar 3-9 (One meeting night only)

Week 5: Mar 10-16 (One meeting night only)

Week 6: Mar 24-30 (One meeting night only)

Week 7: Mar 31-Apr 6 (One meeting night only)

Week 8: Apr 7-13 (One meeting night only)

Week 9: Apr 14-20 (One meeting night only)

Week 10: Apr 21-27 (One meeting night only)

3. Follow-up meeting—May 17, Friday 7-8 pm; June 21, Friday 7-8 pm; July 19, Friday 7-8 pm. All venues will be at the church.

4. Post-group session survey—August 10 Sabbath, at church during announcement time.

I do believe that part of my work as a Pastor is to help people establish a personal relationship with God and this will be realized in response to Jesus' invitation, "Come, follow Me." Coming to Jesus (spending time with Him) precedes following Him (doing what He says).

After prayerfully considering this invitation, please email your response to

<u>liwanaglm@yahoo.com</u> on or before response form below when you respo	e January 23, 2013. Please cut and paste the ond to this email.
Sincerely,	
Limuel M. Liwanag	
	Response Form
Name:	Tel #:
Yes, I would like to participate in Yes, Tell me more about it. Sorry, I can't.	in this study.

APPENDIX B FORMS AND QUESTIONNAIRES

Informed Consent Form

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Andrews University

Informed Consent Form

For all participants in a ten week closed session being conducted by

Limuel Mora Liwanag

as part of the following DMin project:

A Process for Implementing a Devotional Pattern for Members of the San Diego Central Seventh-day Adventist Church

I am agreeing to participate in the research activities being conducted by Limuel Liwanag in association with his DMin project entitled 'A Process for Implementing a Devotional Pattern for Members of the San Diego Central Seventh-day Day Adventist Church.' I understand the following:

- 1. That the purpose of the research is to develop and implement a process that will facilitate the development of a devotional pattern by members of the San Diego Central Seventh-day Adventist Church.
- 2. That the DMin project referred to above involves research requiring the participation of volunteers.
- 3. That the duration of my involvement in the research is anticipated to take no longer than six (6) months.
- 4. That all of the research which I am agreeing to participate in will be conducted either on the premises of the San Diego Central Seventh-day Adventist Church or a venue to be decided by us participants.
- 5. That my participation in the research will be voluntary, is without any form of coercion, has no impact in any way upon my membership status with San Diego Central Seventh-day Adventist Church or on my relationship with the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church or Andrews University, and will receive no financial or other compensation, is entered into of my own free will.
- 6. That I have the right to request that my participation in this research be modified or terminated at any moment, and am only required to inform the researcher (Limuel Liwanag) in writing of my decision to withdraw from the research.
- 7. That to participate in this research, I am aged 18 years or over from the day I first volunteered to participate in the research.
- 8. That my participation in the research will consist of participation in the following activities: a) A ten week closed session which will be succeeded by a monthly meeting for the following three months b) An exit survey towards the end of the study.
- 9. That while the data I provide as a result of my participation in this research may be published, my personal identity in this study will not be disclosed in any manner, published or verbal.
- 10. That to participate in the research I must be a member/adherent of San Diego Central Seventh-day Adventist Church.
- 11. That my participation in the research involves a risk of me experiencing spiritual discomfort. Spiritual growth is an intensely personal experience, and changes in spirituality are possible through participating in the research. Should I believe that I am not being benefitted through my participation in the research as I hoped, or that my spiritual growth as a result of participating in the project is more difficult and challenging for me than I had anticipated, I have the right to immediately discuss the matter with the researcher (Limuel Liwanag) and either continue, modify or terminate immediately my participation in the research.

- 12. That should I experience spiritual discomfort during my participation in the research, I may contact the researcher or the research advisor that may offer a counseling option from a qualified Christian counselor. During this time, I will be offered the choices of continuing, modifying or terminating my participation in the research.
- 13. That I may contact the Andrews University Institutional Review Board at any time should I have any concerns about the research process.
- 14. That my participation in the research may result in me receiving spiritual benefits that are as yet unknown and undefined. I have been told that because of the experimental nature of this study, it is possible that these spiritual benefits may not occur, and that complications and undesirable side effects, which are unknown at this time, including a worsening of my spiritual condition, may result.

I have been told that if I wish to contact the researcher's advisor or an impartial third party not associated with this study regarding any complaint I may have about the study I may contact Dr Skip Bell, (Andrews University Doctor of Ministry Program Director) tel: 269 471 3306, email: sjbell@andrews.edu, or at the following address: SDA Theological Seminar, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan 49104-1560.

I have been told that if I wish to contact the researcher (Limuel Liwanag) on any matter concerning the research or my participation in the research, I may contact him at the following address: 513 Poinsettia St, Chula Vista, CA 91911. Email: liwanaglm@yahoo.com. Cell: 619 245 9842.

I have read the contents of this consent form, and have listened to the verbal explanation given by the researcher, Limuel Liwanag. My questions concerning this study have been answered to my satisfaction. I hereby give voluntary consent to participate in this study. If I have additional questions or concerns, I may contact Limuel Liwanag at the following address: 503 Poinsettia Street, Chula Vista, CA 91911. Email: <code>liwanaglm@yahoo.com</code>. Cell: 619 245 9842.

I have been given a copy of this consent for	n.	
Signature of Subject	Date	
Signature of Witness	Date	
I have reviewed the contents of this form w potential risks and benefits of the study.	th the person signing above. I	have explained
Signature of Researcher	Date	
Signature of Witness	Date	

Survey Questionnaire

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

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Survey Questionnaire

For members/adherents of San Diego Central SDA Church in relation to a research being conducted by

Limuel Mora Liwanag

as part of the following DMin project:

A Process for Implementing a Devotional Pattern for Members of the San Diego Central Seventh-day Adventist Church

By returning this survey questionnaire, it serves as a form of implied consent.

Survey Questionnaire

For	each question, please give	ve the one resp	onse that best desc	cribes you.
1. I	am: male	fe	emale	
2. N	My age is			
3. I	describe myself as:			
	American Indiar Black or Afro-A Asian or Pacific	merican	Lati Whi Othe	
4. D	mission board, s giving care/nurtu staff, etc.) doing outreach t	s/planning for student ministry are to those in	y council, etc.) your group/church	
expo		faith whether one term "church	r not you have me	ur beliefs about God and the embership in an organized oup of believers with or
For	each statement, give one	e of the followi	ng responses:	
4 D	Disagree Totally Disgree Somewhat Agree moderately	5 Not Sure		3 Disgree moderately6 Agree somewhat9 Agree Totally
rela	trch Climate: To what exte to San Diego Central S It feels warm. It accepts people who s It is friendly. Strangers feel welcome I learn a lot. Most members want to It challenges my thinks It encourages me to as	SDA Church? are different. e. be challengeding. k questions.		

Motivation: What motivates your religious life?
I enjoy reading about my religion.
I go to church because it helps me make friends.
It doesn't matter what I believe as long as I am good.
It is important to spend time in private thought and prayer.
I pray mainly to gain relief and protection.
I try hard to live out all my religious beliefs.
What religion offers me most is comfort in times of trouble and sorrow.
Prayer is for peace and happiness.
Although I am religious, I don't let it affect my daily life.
I go to church mostly to spend time with my friends.
My whole life is based on my religion.
I go to church mainly because I enjoy seeing people I know there.
• • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • •
Although I believe in my religion, many other things are more important in my life.
Practicing Your Faith. What are you doing?
Tracticing Tour Faith. What are you doing:
On an average day in the past week, I met alone with God:
0 min.
1-10 min.
11-20 min.
21-30 min.
31-40 min.
41-50 min.
51-60 min.
1 hour or more
For the following questions, choose one: 1=never; 2=less than once a month; 3=about once a month; 4=2 or 3 times a month; 5=once a week; 6=several times a week; 7=once a day; 8=more than once a day
How often do you:
Pray or meditate, other than at church or before meal?Read the Bible on your own?Tell someone about the work of God in your life?
Do acts of mercy and compassion for others? Teach a class or group in church/ministry?
Note: By returning this survey form or questionnaire, it serves as a form of implied consent.

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APPENDIX C A JOURNEY CURRICULUM



for 10 weeks

"You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me." John 5:39 NKJV



"The soul dwelling in the pure atmosphere of holy thought will be transformed by communion with God through the study of Scriptures.

EG White COL 60.1

San Diego Central SDA Church Primary Room February 1 to April 5, 2013, 7-8:30 PM

A Journey...
A covenant to take an intimate walk with Jesus

Session 1: Starting Point

	What is the goal of Christian walk/journey? Share your answer with a partner.
II.	PGS: Enhancing Devotional Habits Market Indicators of Spiritual Growth
	1 for God 2 for each other
	How does a person attain Spiritual Growth? The Church Activity Model for Spiritual Growth A person from God in church activities which a person who God and loves
	The Spiritual Continuum A Christ. Have a basic in God but unsure about Christ and his role in their lives.
	B in Christ. Have a with Christ and made a commitment to trust Him for salvation and eternity. They are just to learn what it means and what it takes to develop a relationship with Jesus.
	C to Christ. Depend on Christ and see Him as someone who assists them in life. On a basis, they turn to Him for help and for the issues they face.
	D Identify their relationship with Jesus as the relationship in their entire lives.
	Movements Across the Spiritual Continuum 1 Spiritual Growth From Exploring to Growing in Christ 2 Spiritual Growth From Growing in Christ to Christ
	Close to Christ 3 Spiritual Growth From Close to Christ to Christ-Centered

Sharing Time: Where am I in the spiritual Continuum. What must I do to move from one continuum to another.

	ch Findings:
1. Ch	urch do not predict or drive long-term spiritual
gro	owth.
	en the most Christians fall far short of living out the
	ndates of Christ.
	thing has a greater impact on spiritual growth than on Scripture.
	iritually stalled or people account for one out of
for	ir church congregants.
	matters. Leaders in highly successful churches
ha ass un dis the	we diverse personalities and stylesfrom quiet and reserved to self- dured and commanding. But they share one key attribute: an relenting, uncompromising focus and drive to help grow people into ciples of Christ It's their heartsconsumed by Christ that make difference, (Reference: <i>Move</i> by Greg Hawkins and Cally rkinson).
Stenning In	to the Scripture
aso V	What is the goal of the Christian walk/journey? Ower Point: There is a motivation in the Christian ey than entering the heavenly kingdom and obtaining
1 Evodus 33	•30-32
1. Exodus 32	:30-32
1. Exodus 32	::30-32
1. Exodus 32	::30-32
 Exodus 32 Romans 9 	
	:1-5
2. Romans 9	8-23

III. DSF Time Reflecting on the Scripture:

Psalm 63 A Psalm of David when he was in the wilderness of Judah.

O God, You *are* my God; Early will I seek You; My soul thirsts for You; My flesh longs for You In a dry and thirsty land, Where there is no water.

2 So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, To see Your power and Your glory.

3 Because Your lovingkindness *is* better than life, My lips shall praise You.

4 Thus I will bless You while I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name.

5 My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, And my mouth shall praise *You* with joyful lips.

6 When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the *night* watches.

7 Because You have been my help, Therefore in the shadow of Your wings I will rejoice.

8 My soul follows close behind You; Your right hand upholds me.

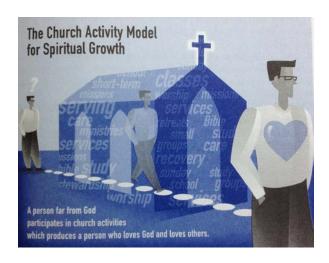
9 But those *who* seek my life, to destroy *it*, Shall go into the lower parts of the earth.

10 They shall fall by the sword; They shall be a portion for jackals.

11 But the king shall rejoice in God; Everyone who swears by Him shall glory; But the mouth of those who speak lies shall be stopped.

IV. Communion Time

Chart 1 Chart 2



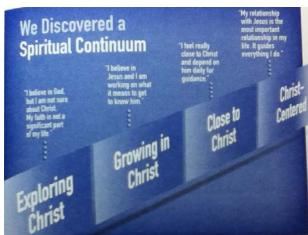
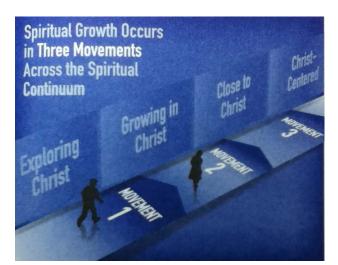


Chart 3 Chart 4





Reference: *MOVE*. What 1,000 churches reveal about spiritual growth by Greg L Hawkins & Cally Parkinson.

A Journey...
A covenant to take an intimate walk with Jesus

Session 2: Extended Personal Time with God

I.T	TE: History Giving/Story Sharing If you can, what would you change from your experience this past week?
	How did God speak to you this past week. What caught your attention the most from the passages for reflection and why?
II.	PGS: Enhancing Devotional Habits What is Time? Timeis a in which events can be ordered from the through the present into the future, and also the of durations of events and the between them, wikipedia.org/wiki/Time.
	What is Space? Space is the boundless three extent in which objects and events occur and have relative and direction. When the space?
	★ Time and Space, the two go It is hard to think of one without the other. In Western cultures we usually do not plan or attend an event without knowing a time and location with people cannot occur without some kind of shared space and time. Yet, the way that we spent time and share space with each other has been radically changed since the beginning of the age. Even a century ago we lived in a different world of time and space, (L. Paul Jensen, Subversive Spirituality: Transforming Mission through the Collapse of Space and Time, p. 1).
	Since the of the Industrial Revolution, our relationship to time and space has accelerated and changed especially in the last fifty years. Social theorists and scientists have variously described these transformations and theirs effects as "the collapse of space and time," "time-space compression," "hurry sickness" (Jensen, p. 2).

Comparisons of Pre-modern, Modern, and Postmodern Eras

(Adapted from Cassells 1997; Jencks 1996; Giddens 1990)

	Social/Economic Structures	Space/Time
Pre-Modern (10,000 BC—AD 1450	Feudal-City- Empire/Agricultural Revolution Agrarian/Handwork	Cyclical, elastic, local Social tied to place/Slow, seasonal time Local Space/Place determines
	Peasants/Dispersed	time
Modern (1450—1960	Nation-state/Industrial Revolution	Linear, standardized, universal
	Factory/Mass production	Relationships dis-embedded from place/Clock time—sequential, fixed
	Workers/Centralized	Space-time separation, compression
Postmodern (1960—)	Global/Information revolution	Linear and non—sequential
	Office/Segmented production	Instantaneous, segmented, reversible
	Office workers/decentralized	Space—time implosion

(Jensen, p. 4)

Section of time and packing more into less space eventually leads to a point of collapse. Theorist argue that we have reached or are reaching that point now. "Space-time implosion" is how Charles Jencks describes this radical new spatial-temporal phenomena produced by the historic changes of the past fifty years, (Jensen, p.3).

⊁Effects of the Collapse of Space & Time

1. A widespread _____ of social capital (the benefit derived from the activity in various communal entities such as families, small groups, groups committed to grassroots political or community endeavor, churches, clubs...).

2. The disappearance of	of neighborhood	that serves as
hubs for pleasurable as	ssociation.	
3. Contributed to the c	orrosion of	, the loss of
community, and the er		
 Effective Means of Resistin The Mover REST, Restricted Environm limited period of silence and bed, and a toilet], etc). Spiritual and character form accepting grace. Spiritual of the control of the properties of the control of the con	ng the Collapse of Spanents (12 Steps, e.g., ental Stimulation Tech solitude in a dark roation centered in	ace and Time Alcohol Anonymous; chnique [requires a om with food, water, a power
and the prayer of relinquish	ment.	
✓ Ellen White on Spiritual Discovery ✓ Educate your mind to love the hour of meditation, or with Go	the Bible, to love	ur when the soul
unite with the heavenly choir	•	0 0
* They do not realize that in a		
the school of Christ. Without inefficient, ignorant, and und spiritual training and knowled positions of influence and use	discipline and this spiritual disciple developed, and see nowedge which would quart	training, learning in in ine, they become necessity for the alify them to hold
themselves wholly to God, be	• •	
hap-hazard work that will re	C	•
Stepping Into the Scripture Jesus Commune with His Fa Mark 1:32-35		
%< Luke 5:16		
✓ Jesus' Invitation 3 <matthew 11:28-30<="" td=""><td></td><td></td></matthew>		
3<james 4:8<="" b=""></james>		
Extended Personal Commun Generations, p.7	ion (EPC)—The Jou	rney to Reach the Next

- In your EPC, use whatever helps you spend time with God in a
 meaningful way. Examples could include worship songs from your
 culture or tradition, Bible, personal journal, lunch if you prefer not
 to fast, an instrument if you play one, worship CDs, appropriate
 clothing if you wish to spend time outdoors, a blanket or some
 kind of folding chair, etc.
- 2. The goal of your EPC should be to spend the time with the Lord in whatever way he knows that you need. Therefore, begin your time by identifying your expectations and agendas for the EPC. Release these to God and the leading of the Holy Spirit. The Lord may wish to bring you refreshment, challenge, encouragement, conviction, joy, grieving, play, etc. He may lead you to any or none of the above.
- 3. Let God lead you to an activity in which you will experience the fewest distractions (away from cell phones, tasks, assignments, etc.) so you can be attentive to the Lord and focus on what he might wish to say or do.
- 4. Use some of your time with God in silence—for the purpose of listening to what he may be saying or not saying. If he says nothing, remember it is OK just to be in his presence without communication. If you are an active personality, you may find that walking or hiking helps you to be attentive to God. Find whatever focuses you on him based on your temperament and personality.
- 5. The problem of distractions is universal. You will find that your mind will wander or race to many things other than God. Here are a couple of ways to deal with them: 1) let your mind wander to the "distraction" and offer it up to God—every distraction that comes to mind is important to him; and 2) resist each distraction and then return your attention to the Lord.
- 6. If you become drowsy, let God give you a nap. Is there not an analogy between a child falling asleep on his/her parent's lap and doing the same with God? Often, students wake up from their nap refreshed and be able to be much more aware and attentive to God's voice.
- 7. Remember: "Prayer is companionship with God"—Clement of Alexandria. "Prayer is someone you are with, not something you do"—Chuck Miller.

III. DSF Time= EPC time

Reflecting on the Scripture: Isaiah 30:15-17 What do you sense God saying to you through this text about your pace of life?

A Journey...
A covenant to take an intimate walk with Jesus

Session 3: Making Disciples: What is the Christian Life?

(Adopted from: The Journey to Reach the Next Generations)

2. Causing me to become more of a	than a
bein	g.
3. How would you describe the	to yoursel
someone elseusing biblical text.	
PGS: Enhancing Devotional	Habits
Mr Underline the words and phrase	that describe relationship
Matthew 11:28-30	
28 Come to Me, all you who labor of	and are heavy laden, and I will give
you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you	
gentle and lowly in heart, and you	will find rest for your souls. 30 For
My yoke is easy and My burden is li	ight."
Mark 1:16-20	
16 And as He walked by the Sea of	
his brother casting a net into the se	
17 Then Jesus said to them, "Follow	
fishers of men." 18 They immediate	
19 When He had gone a little farthe	•
son of Zebedee, and John his brothe	
mending their nets. 20 And immedi	
their father Zebedee in the boat wit	tn the nirea servants, and went
after Him.	
John 1:12 Yet to all who received him, to thos	ea whose helieved in his name, he
gave the right to become children of	
gave the right to become children c	, G0a
& The Chairties Life is an	
A The Christian Life is an	

epping Into the Scripture Because the Christian Life is:	an ongoing relationship of intimacy with
Jesus Christ, how do I	
A. John 15:7-11	
B. John 15:12, 13, 15b	
C. John 15:18-19, 26-27	
✓ Implications A. PRIORITY ONE	
Progressive	to
	This involves modeling the
	r and the Son: through
•	as Bible study, prayer and worship.
	,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,
B. PRIORITY TWO	
Progressive	
Thi	s involves modeling the relationship
of the Father and the Son	n: by in
my	and in the
	_ of Christ.
C. PRIORITY THREE	_
	to the of
	This involves modeling the
	r and the Son: by going as a
to fulf	ill the a
the	·
8 T	
Implementations A. Abiding	
A. Abiding	
B. Loving one another	
C. Bearing witness	
\mathcal{L}	

III. DSF Time

Intentional Reflecting on the Word (INTERFLOW Time)

Interflow—flow together, merge.

- 1. Pray—permit God through the Holy Spirit to enter your time and space. Ask Him for humility and illumination.
- 2. Choose a passage (few verses, a chapter, etc.).
- 3. Read twice, reading it slowly the second time.
- 4. Watch for word(s), phrase(s), or whole text that speaks to your personal context (personal issues, family, work, church, friends especially pertaining to relationship).
- 5. Dwell on this thought (time depends on what you set aside).
- 6. Ask God what this passage meant for you.
- 7. Pray for humility and courage to pursue the direction He wants you to go.

INTERFLOW Time: 2 Corinthians 8:9

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.

A Journey...

A covenant to take an intimate walk with Jesus

Session 4: Propellant of the Christian Life

(Adopted from: *The Journey to Reach the Next Generations*)

I.TE: History Giving/Story Sharing

- 1. Where do you live? Write down your home address
- 2. He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty—Psalm 91:1
- 3. Paint a PICTURE: Come follow Me

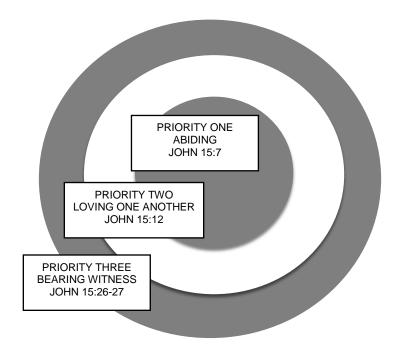
II. PGS: Enhancing Devotional Habits

Nourishing an ongoing relationship of intimacy with Jesus Christ throughout one's life span occurs by developing the lifestyle of the

____.

- The Christian lifestyle is a series of _____ circles.
- One priority should ______ the next priority. It is sequential.
- The Continual Propellant of the Christian life is...

Come to me...Matthew 11:28; Come follow me...Mark 1:17



The propellant ignites these priorities in developing godly lifestyle.

Living the Lifestyle of the Upper Room	
• The Christian life is a and not a	
The Christian life is an ongoing	of intimacy with
Jesus Christ.	-
I tend and nourish this relationship with Christ th lifestyle of the Upper Room (John 13-17)	hrough the
• When the relationship with Christ diminishes, the tasks	s often become
* The center of my life excitement	
*, overwhelming, all consuming	
* my place of	
* my place of	
The frequent outcome is the rise, my soul is starved.	mount and my
Priority One – John 15:7 Being in Communion with God	
• In abiding I sit at the with another— th	e living God.
 God meets me there through an open and 	my seeking heart.
Here my identity is	·
Priority Two – John 15:12, 13 Extending my communion with God	
• I extend my communion with God through being w ChristThe Church.	vith the Body of
• Here my identity is,	and
Priority Three – John 15:27 Further extending my communion with God	
• I further extend my communion with God throug of God in the world.	h doing the work
Here my identity is trust affirmed.	and my
Come Unto Me—Matthew 11:28—30; Come Follow M	e—Mark 1:16-20

III. DSF Time: INTERFLOW Text: 1 Peter 2:1-10

A Journey...

A covenant to take an intimate walk with Jesus

Session 5: How to Abide

I.TE: History Giving/Story Sharing

- 1. Women speaks 20,000 words per day while men only 7,000—what do you say?
- 2. How do you spend your time with God?

II. PGS: Enhancing Devotional Habits

Understanding a vehicle to help us in our abiding

The 2PROAPT—PRAY, PREVIEW, READ, OBSERVE, APPLY, PRAY, TELL

- A. Observe what it SAYS—Biblical statements...
- **B.** Observe what it means MEANS— Implications, paraphrase, outline, ask questions, etc.
- C. How does this APPLY to my life?—Implementation: What will I do, when will do it? With whom will I do it?

2 P R O A P T Diagram

Pray	Preview	Read	Observe	Apply	Pray	Tell
	Read the whole	Read it	1. What does it? 2. What does it	3. How will this influence my & today?	For God's to enable you to the truth.	With whom will I this that I might refresh &
						them?

III. DSF Time: Mark 2—Use diagram on next page.

Passage Observe what it SAYS? Biblical statements— Copy the text on which you will meditate	PRAY SAYS? ents— ch you will	PREVIEW Title Obser Implications as	VIEW READ OBSERVE Observe what it MEANS? Implications. ParaphraseOutline ask questions, etc	OBSERVE EANS?Outline	APPLY Date How do Implement will I do	PPLY PRAY TELL Date How does this APPLY to my life Implementation: What will I do—when will I do it—with whom will I do it?	TELL f to my life ill I do—when will I do it?

A covenant to take an intimate walk with Jesus

Session 6: Do We Really Need to Pray?

I. TE: History Giving/Story Sharing

How often do you pray? How long do you pray? What do you pray?

Pray/Prayer—392 X in entire Bible

First occurrence of "prayer" in the Bible—Gen: 20:7— Now therefore, restore the man's wife; for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you shall live. But if you do not restore her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours."

II. PGS: Enhancing Devotional Habits

	ances to Prayer:	
1		e world that separates
(true to m	ne) from (true for all). (Paul Miller, A Praying Life, p.105)
a.)): love, right and wr private, astrology, novels, art, relig	
h `		
υ.,	: History, science, p	buone, cars, computers, astronomy,
	physical, textbooks, trees, E=MC.	
2	Maturity—less matur	e Christian tends to view a small
"cross," s	sees less of his/her	nature and find little need to pray.
Converse	ly, mature Christian sees a	_ "cross," sees more of his/her sinful
		(Paul Miller, A Praying Life,
p. 57).	-	
	Cod's baliness willed from me	
	God's holiness—veiled from me	
	Mr. sinful nature uniled for me	
	My sinful nature—veiled from me	

3Prayer
a.) If God knows, why do we still need to pray?—
Matt 6:8; Eph 1:11; 3:20
What can I tell God if He already knows everything?
mind (pragmatist and logical): Nothing!
mind (Jesus): Anything!
 Matthew 10:29-31—an evidence of God's love whereby He shows
interest even in small or almost insignificant part of our life. Nothing
we tell Him will change His feelings towards us.
"God does not justyour prayers. He "hears" your whole He
doesn'tto what you say. He responds to whatare."
(W. Bingham Hunter, <i>The God Who Hears</i> p. 39)
1 Detay 2:7
• 1 Peter 3:7—you are the common factor in the prayer room, bedroom or board room.
• Acts 10:1-4—God responded to both Cornelius's prayers and his almsgiving, to the consistency of his whole life.
amisgiving, to the consistency of his whole me.
b.) Can prayerGod's mind?
• Psalm 115:3
• Daniel 4:35
• Isaiah 46:9-11
Illustration:
1. Isaiah 38:1-8—had Hezekiah not prayed, he would have died.
2. Mark 10:33-34; 14:35—Jesus implied that the eternal, immutable,
sovereign God responds to prayer.
 Exodus 32:9-14—God relented/repented/changed His mind.
 Anthropopathisms—expressions which explain God in terms usually used
to describeemotions. (Hunter p. 52)
 "The meaning is not that God changed His; still less that He
regretted something that He had intended to do. It means in biblical
language, that He nowon a different course of action from
that already suggested as a possibility, owing to some new factor which is
usually mentioned in the context God's and
are always conditional on man's response (e.g., Eze 2:1-9).
 Moses was not altering God's purpose toward Israel by his prayer
(Exo 32) but wasit out.

Illustration: God's Control and our prayers—1) Mother cat, grabs her kittens by the back neck and carries them whenever, wherever. 2) Mother monkey, jumps from branch to branch with it's young clinging around its neck.

 What God wants, we should want, and weto pray according to His will.
 c.) Why pray if I don't what I prayed for? • Psalm 106:13-15—prayers outside God's providence invites disasters. • 1 John 5:14-15; Matthew 6:9-13—Only prayer according to God's will is granted. • " is a means God uses to give us what He wants," Hunter, p. 12.
B. Understanding Prayer 1. Prayer is the of communication between our souls and God. God speaks to us through His word; we respond to Him through our prayers, and He always listens to us. We cannot weary or Him by our frequent heart to heart communications. {Pr 1.2}
2. Prayer is the opening of theto God as to a friend. Not that it is necessary in order to make known to God what we are, but in order to enable us to receive Him. Prayer does notGod down to us, but brings us up to Him. {Pr 8.4/SC 83}
3. The praying life is thelife. (Miller, p.138)
4. Life in the
5. Watch for the story God isin your life.
III. DSF Time: INTERFLOW Text—Matthew 6:5-13

♣ Individual Prayer, Community Prayer

A covenant to take an intimate walk with Jesus

Session 7: Reflecting on the Word (Group)

	Share your Bible reading practice? What is meaningful? What challenge(s)
	o you find?
S	The soul that to God for its help, its support, its power, by daily,
	arnest prayer, will have noble aspirations, clear perceptions of
	and duty, lofty purposes of action, and a continual hungering
	nd thirsting after righteousness. By maintaining a with God, e shall be enabled to diffuse to others, through our association with them,
	the, the peace, the serenity, that rule in our hearts. The strength
	equired in to God, united with persevering effort in training the
	ind in thoughtfulness and care-taking, prepares one for daily duties and
ke	eeps the spirit in peace under all circumstances. TMB, 85
II. I	PGS: Enhancing Devotional Habits
A. Bri	inging the Scripture Alive
	Where is the Fountain of Youth?
1.	John 6:68—"You have the of eternal life."
2.	John 6:63—"The words that I speak to you are, and they are"
3.	How will you bring the Scripture come alive?
4.	A prolific 20 th century woman author discovered how
5.	Let us in go back to that scene, and, as we sit
	with the disciples on the mountainside, into the thoughts
	and feelings that filled their hearts. Understanding what the words of
	Jesus meant to those who heard them, we may in them
	a new vividness and beauty, and may also gather for ourselves their lessons. TMB, 1
6.	The words of God are the of life. As you seek
	unto those living springs you will, through the Holy Spirit, be brought into with Christ. Familiar truths will present themselves
	to your mind in a new aspect, texts of will burst upon
	you with a new meaning as a flash of light, you will see the relation of
	other truths to the of redemption, and you will know that
	Christ is leading you, a divine Teacher is at your side. TMB, 20

III. DSF Time: Reflecting on the Scripture in Group

1. Choose a
2. Identify the in the story
3. Allow each one to choose a character
4. Each person goes on their own to on chosen character in
the story.
□ Reflect what I could have been like in my character of the
story.
Are there between me and the chosen character?
☐ Is there an from God?
5. Come back in the group and share.
6. Who would you rather be in the story after hearing others tell their

story? Are their insights you gain in listening to the other characters?

A covenant to take an intimate walk with Jesus

Session 8: Revisiting the Lifestyle of the Upper Room

I. TE: History Giving/Story Sharing

- ➤ How has God been talking to you? Share a reflection from a recent time alone with God.
- ➤ What change(s) if any do you find in your devotional practice?

II.	PGS :	Enhancing	Devotional	Habits
-----	--------------	------------------	-------------------	--------

A The Continual	of the Christian life is
	Matthew 11:28
Come follow m	ne Mark 1:17
These propellants	three priorities in developing godly lifestyle.
In abiding I sit at	——————————————————————————————————————
Priority Two:	One Another—extending my communion with
God, John 15: 12, 13	•
➤ I extend my comm church.	union with God being with the body of Christ the
➤ Here my identity is	s expressed, affirmed and further formed.
Priority Three:	Witness—further extending my communion
with God, John 15:27	
I further extend m in the world.	y communion with God through doing the work of God
➤ Here my identity i	is further expressed and my trust affirmed.

B. Different Configurations of the God-Process

God's plan for our spiritual formation is a plan that results in godly, growing individuals and healthy and effective ministry. This God-process plan is illustrated by the Pitcher/Cup...Saucer/Plate metaphor. This divine design is perfect, but too often we mess it up.



1. Drained and Driven

These leaders see themselves as in charge. The motto "Leaders Lead" describes them, and "followership" is not a prominent word in their vocabulary. These leaders tend to grow impatient when things don't go their way on their timetable, they feel the pressures mount, and their personality style compels them to charge ahead. They often feel and even lead as if God is late. They empty their cup—their life—as they lead, but love and power overflowing from the Lord aren't fueling their leadership.

Lord, draw me to Yourself, to You who are the Pitcher and the Source of Life



2. My Cup Has a Crack

These leaders are faithful and busy, but tired and struggling. Their primary commitment to Saucer/Plate leaves them little, if any, intentional time for Pitcher/Cup, and any measure of blessing or fruit from Saucer and Plate may cause them to long for the Pitcher less and less. The pattern is to keep leading... and to be spiritually formed and renewed less and less. These leaders are positioned for burnout.

Lord, create in my more intentional time.



heart the desire to be about my Pitcher/Cup

3. Thriving on Events

The Pitcher/Plate...Saucer/Cup leader is often motivated by exciting programs and dynamic events. Every event needs to be bigger and better than the last, and the program-centered leader needs people to make these events happen. Too often these dear volunteers become tools in the leader's hand rather than people with a story who touch the leader's heart.

Leadership that events also tends to grace and touch in our life. programs than for

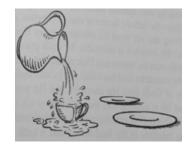
Lord, restructure ordered

therefore can be fully blessed by You.



begins with an outward focus on keep us from receiving God's experiencing His transforming We pray more often for people, including ourselves.

my leadership so that it is Pitcher/Cup...Saucer/Plate and



4. Thriving on Being with People

The leader enjoys and is people. Events are frustration or even

Pitcher/Saucer...Plate/Cup energized by being with regarded as a source of an interruption in life and

ministry. Such leaders run from person to person, and at the end of the day they are tired but somewhat fulfilled. These people-centered leaders usually do pray for others—often before praying for themselves—but they tend to have a hard time dealing with the plank of their own eye before the speck in a brother's eye. Co-dependents (folks who need affirmation regardless of the damage receiving such affirmation does to their own boundaries) often live out this pattern of ministry.

Lord, may I let You love and transform me so that You can touch people through me.

5. I love the Soul Room

The Pitcher/Cup leader is captivated by an inward and vertical focus on the Lord. These leaders know that the Soul Room is a place they can experience deep personal healing, restoration, and comfort. They treasure the greater intimacy with God they develop here. But in the Soul Room, these people stand alone, and they are reluctant to let God broaden their vision to Saucer/Plate. Their spirituality is characterized by isolation, not integration; their leadership is not influenced by their Pitcher/Cup time. They easily become leaders of the one room church: the Soul Room is the focus, and the Leadership Room is assumed. This is not the God-process.

Lord, excite me about what You can do when the Pitcher/Cup of my life flows over into my Saucer and Plate relationships.

6. God's Process for Being Effective Spiritual Leaders

Pitcher, Cup, Saucer, and Plate represent the dynamic ingredients in God's process for your spiritual transformation and godly leadership. As the Pitcher—the infinite Source of energy, direction, passion, love, and everything else you need for ministry—pours Himself into the Cup of your life, overflow is inevitable. By God's grace, this ongoing overflow spills onto the Saucer and Plate of your life, into the relationships and the ministries God has called you to. Your leadership then is an overflow of God's love, His character, and His power—of all of Himself that He is pouring into the Cup of your life. Leading from overflow like this is God-process: you receive that transforming and empowering overflow

in the Soul Room, Leadership Room. overflow and the of your heart and a fruitful honored, the and His kingdom



and it spills over into the Leadership from such godly resulting inner transformation enables long-lasting leadership ministry, and in those God is community is kept healthy, grows. To God be the glory!

Reference:

Chuck Miller. *The Spiritual Formation of Leaders: Integrating Spiritual Formation and Leadership Development.* Xulon Press (2007), pp. 323-327.

III. DSF Time: INTERFLOW Text—Jeremiah 18:1-11

A covenant to take an intimate walk with Jesus

Session 9: Spiritual Growth Model

I. TE: History Giving/Story Sharing

- What is your favorite picture of Jesus and why?
- What attribute(s) of God do you find very challenging and why?

II. PGS: Enhancing Devotional Habits

Spiritual Growth is the movement of the entire life towards God, opening every area of life to ______ with God and allowing Him to do His will.

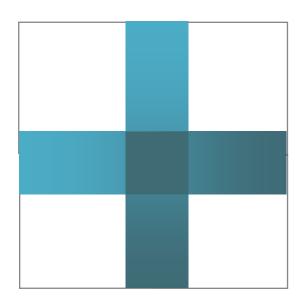
A. Four Key Ingredients to Spiritual Growth

1. Vision—Encountering _____ and seeing "Him who is invisible." This includes understanding what He _____ to do in and through us.

2. Gospel—Knowing what _____ has done and is doing for us. This includes application of this knowledge in all our relationships.

3. Lordship—Submitting, both personally and corporately, to _____ direction/control in all we are, have, and do.

4. Presence—Integrating His presence into _____ area of our lives and everything we do.



	Exploring Vision	
1.	Without God we are in our sin.	
2.	Our vision of God us.	
	We must ourselves in the context of His majesty, sovereignt	IJ,
ho	liness, and love.	•
4.	God responds to sin with destruction, but He salvatio	n to
tho	ose who believe.	
5.	We discover our real when we accept the Gospel.	
	Exploring the Gospel (of the Kingdom)	
1.	Our sin, by our nature and our acts, us from God.	
2.	God comes to us—Jesus was born a man to die for our salvation.	
3.	Salvation is a that we receive by faith.	
4.	The Gospel is the good news that God has solved our sin problem.	
5.	In Christ we can have the of eternal life—in quality now	and
in	quantity at the Second Coming.	
6.	We die in Christ and are raised to His resurrection life.	
7.	Christ defeats the controlling of sin in our lives.	
	Exploring Lordship	
1.	As Creator and Redeemer, Jesus is Lord.	
	Lordship means God into every area of life.	
3.	Lordship means we allow God unlimited access and control in our lives.	
4.	Obedience is as much a gift of grace as is	
5.	Lordship functions only with the presence and power of the indwelling C	'hris
	Exploring Presence	
	Jesus promised to be with us till the end of the world.	
	The cross is the ultimate of God's presence with us.	
	The Holy Spirit brings the presence of Christ to dwell in us.	
4.	His empowering presence fruit in our lives.	
	Oneness with God occurs to the degree the four areas are integrated. This	
	ole or oneness is always around the cross—God's most	
co	mplete revelation of Himself.	
_		
	Most problems in our lives or in the church occur in the areas of Gospel	or
Lc	rdship, or both.	
	Failure to integrate Gospel.	
	Failure to submit to Christ's Lordship.	
D		
υ.	The cause of our problems often lies in a loss of Vision or Presence.	
	Loss of Vision distorts the Gospel.	
	Loss of Presence distorts Lordship.	

E. The best answer is a combination of Vision & Presence

- * A vision of God and a sense of His presence transform the way we live and function.
- * Always begin with the **vision**, and then move through **gospel**, **lordship**, and **presence**.

F. Practical Implications

Ways to improve our vision

- Study the lives of people in whom God has worked.
- Meditate on the life of Christ.
- Develop a prayer life—talk to God as a friend.
- Memorize Scripture.
- Explore and accept how God sees you.

Ways to understand the gospel better

- Accept the reality that Jesus died for you.
- Accept that you are the object of God's unconditional love.
- Study the truths of the gospel.
- Accept that salvation is entirely the work of God's grace.
- Act on the reality that God has solved your sin problem.

Ways to integrate Christ's Lordship

- Pray for the Holy Spirit to reveal what He wants you to do.
- Ask the questions:
 - a. What difference does Jesus Christ make in my daily life?
 - b. What difference does the gospel make in my daily life?
 - c. What difference would the visible presence of Jesus make in my decisions today?
- Make Christ the priority in all decisions you make.

Ways to enhance our awareness of God's presence

- Accept the reality of Christ's promise "Lo I am with you always."
- Accept the reality of the Holy Spirit in your life—the presence of Jesus Christ (John 14:15-20).
- Make room for God in your daily life.
- Practice the presence of God.
- Invite God into specific areas and issues in your life.

III. DSF Time: John 13-31-14:4—*How has Jesus shaped Peter's view of himself? How do you want God to see you? Share.*

REFERENCE: Ben Maxson. *Mentoring for Discipleship and Biblical Spirituality Syllabus* (2012) *for DMin Program, SDA Theological Seminary, Andrews University. pp. 15-17.*

A covenant to take an intimate walk with Jesus

Session 10: Bearing Much More Fruit: Understanding the Pruning Along our Journey

our Journey
I. TE: History Giving/Story Sharing The Necessity of Pruning Process: John 15:1-2. "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit."
"And every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth [pruneth] it, that it may bring forth more fruit." From the chosen twelve who had followed Jesus, one as a withered branch was about to be taken away; the rest were to pass under the
knife of bitter trial. Jesus with solemn tenderness explained the purpose of the husbandman. The pruning will cause, but it is the Father who applies the knife. He works with no wanton hand or indifferent heart. There are branches trailing upon the ground; these must be cut loose from the earthly supports to which their tendrils are fastening. They are to reach heavenward, and find their support in God. The excessive foliage that draws away the life current from the fruit must be pruned off. The overgrowth must be cut out, to give room for the healing beams of the Sun of Righteousness. The husbandman prunes away the harmful growth, that the fruit may be richer and more abundant. {DA 676.6}
The work of pruning and purifying to fit us for is a great work and will cost us much suffering and trial, because our wills are not subjected to the will of Christ. We must go through the furnace till the fires have consumed

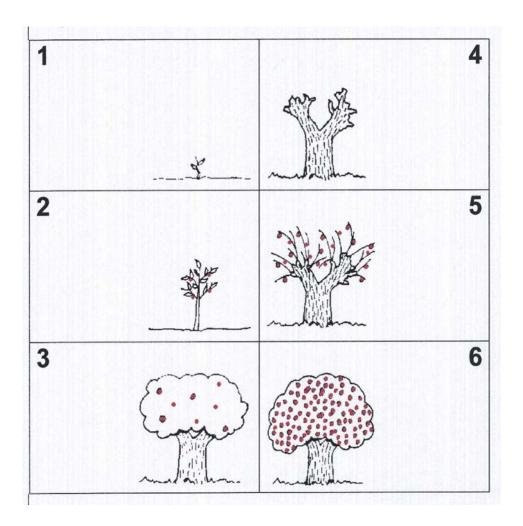
work of pruning and purifying to fit us for _________ is a great work and will cost us much suffering and trial, because our wills are not subjected to the will of Christ. We must go through the furnace till the fires have consumed the dross and we are purified and reflect the divine image. Those who follow their inclinations and are governed by _______ are not good judges of what God is doing. They are filled with discontent. They see failure where there is indeed triumph, a great loss where there is gain; and, like Jacob, they are ready to exclaim, "All these things are against me," when the very things whereof they complain are all working together for their good. {3T 66.3}

II. PGS: Enhancing Devotional Habits

A. The Illustration of a Fruit Tree

Illustrating a model developed by Janet Hagberg & Robert Guelich in *The Critical Journey* (Salem, WI: Sheffield Publishing Company, 1995). (The Journey, Retreat Two, p. 6-8)

Where do you think you are in the stages below? Have you sensed God's pruning work in your life? When? What is it like?



First Steps in Our Journey

We don't have a great deal of trouble, as a rule, understanding the nature of places like new birth (sprouting), early growth and early fruits. Our problem is when we understand the whole of Christian life and ministry as being fully contained in them.

> But, there is a great difference between the quality of early fruit and the quality of mature fruit.

Moving From Early Fruit to Pruning

"Most of us are so comfortable and self-sufficient at [the "early fruit" stage] that we have no natural tendency to move at all. In fact, stage 4 does not even look like part of the journey for those of us at home in stage 3. It does not appear to be an extension of our faith and growth. Consequently, we are not drawn in this direction. When this stage comes, many feel propelled into it by an event outside themselves. It's usually a crisis that turns their world upside down." (*The Critical Journey*, p. 94)

Why Man	y get Stuck	at Pruning	Places

 Our Definition of Success—Always Bigger & Better?

Addictive patterns of	and driven-ness.
Pursuing the of God to escape the	e of God
Moving from apparent strength to apparent we	eakness.

"Stage 3" is great... unless God is pressing you onward!

Biblical examples

- 1. James— 1:2-4
- 2. Job— 1:13-22
- 3. Paul— Romans 7:15-25
- 4. Ellen White— Sent to Australia against her will
- 5. An experience in Oswald Chamber's spiritual journey "After I was born again as a lad I enjoyed the presence of Jesus Christ wonderfully, but years passed before I gave myself up thoroughly to His work. I was in Dunoon College as tutor of Philosophy when Dr. FB Meyer came and spoke about the Holy Spirit. I determined to have all that was going, and went to my room and asked God simply and definitely for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, whatever that meant.

From that day on for four years, nothing but the overruling grace of God and the kindness of friends kept me out of an asylum. God used me during those years for the conversion of souls, but I had no conscious communion with Him. The Bible was the dullest, most uninteresting book in existence, and the sense of depravity, the vileness and badmotivedness of my nature was terrific." (David McCasland. Oswald Chambers: Abandoned to God. Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House Publishers, 1993, p. 73)

B. Pruning's Other Faces

- A Dry Desert
 The _____ of unexplained dryness
- Psalm 63:1—O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water.
- **III. DSF Time:** INTERFLOW Text—Psalm 84:1-5. Share your reflection with your spiritual companion.

A covenant to take an intimate walk with Jesus

Session 11: Prayer and Promise Meditation

(Based on the retreat conducted for my class *The Personal Practice of Biblical Spirituality* May 2011)

You are to visit each station in no particular order and meditatively read the passage in your Bible. (Seek out those prayer stations that have no one by them). As you read each text in silence, meditate on its meaning (you may utilize the INTERFLOW model). Think of how your surroundings or recent/current experience contribute to your response to the text and to God. Pray silently if you wish. Do not interrupt another person's meditation or prayer by any conversation.

Below are blanks for you to fill in the source of each text. By writing down the texts, you will know whether you have visited each text or not.

Text:		
My response		
Text:		
My response		
Text:		
My response		
Text:	 	
My response		

	 	 _	
Text:			
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My response			
wry response			

Code Name:	

The Journey Ahead—"My next Steps" (Adopted from The Journey)

A. Inner Journey- During the ten-week sessions, what has God been saying to you concerning nourishing your intimacy with Him? Identify one or two steps you sense He has given you to take in creating space for Him in your schedule over the next month.

B. Outer Journey- During the ten-week sessions, what has God led you to implement in your outer journey influence with people/relationships. Identify one or two specific steps of implementation.

A covenant to take an intimate walk with Jesus

Session 12: Reconnect, Reflect, Resume

1. The 3 R's of education originally came from the speech of Sir William Curtis in 1795 which refers to
2. The 3 R's of our journey are reconnect, reflect, and resume.
 A. Reconnect—to link or be linked together again (http://www.thefreedictionary.com). 1. Share a recap of your journey to your spiritual companion (10-15 mins) Emphasize the following: a) inward journey (abiding)—what works for you. Did you try a spiritual discipline that is new to you? (e.g., INTERFLOW model). What was the result? b) What do you find as a common hindrance to a consistent abiding time with God. What did you do or did not do? What do you plan to do? c) End with a prayer.
B. Reflect —to think seriously, to ponder, to meditate. 1. <i>Listening to God.</i> There are four ways of listening to God. We will explore one of them that is, History. In history you explore your past life/experiences. Towards the end, listen attentively to God for your future. What is he saying to you? Do you find a pattern or something? (30 min)
2. Group sharing (30 min). C. Regume recommitment radadication or resumption of an intimate
C. Resume —recommitment, rededication, or resumption of an intimate, consistent, and satisfying time alone with God. We will spend time praising the

Lord in testimony and song.

Code Name:	·	
Code i tame.		

The Journey Ahead—"My next Steps" (Adopted from The Journey)

A. Inner Journey- During the ten-week sessions, what has God been saying to you concerning nourishing your intimacy with Him? Identify one or two steps you sense He has given you to take in creating space for Him in your schedule over the next month.

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A covenant to take an intimate walk with Jesus

Session 13: A Journey towards an Unhurried Life

(Based from Alan Fadling, An Unhurried Life 2013)

I. TE: History Giving/Story Sharing
1. Speed addict, anyone?
2. Waiting: a counter-cultural practice
3. Hurrying vs. unhurried, which is more productive?
II. PGS: Enhancing Devotional Habits
A. Was Jesus' life hurried?
1. What one word would you use to describe Jesus' life?
2. Jesus' life and ministry—a model of unhurried pace
a) John 7:4-6
b) Mark 5:22-43
c) John 11:1-43
d) Luke 3:23
e) Luke 4:1-2
3. Wisdom for unhurried living
a) Psalm 46:10
b) Proverbs 19:2
c) "[The one] who hurries the things of God." –
Vincent de Paul
B. What Unhurried Life is not
1. Unhurried Life is not opposed to
a) Gen 19:14; 45:9; Ex 9:20; 12:33; Num 16:46
2. Unhurried Life isn't
a) Prov 6:6-11
3. Acedia= derived from the Greek a (for "not") and keedos (meaning "to care"), acedia is ultimately a failure of love. It's a place of apathy toward life and a kind of spiritual boredom; it's that umpteenth lap somewhere between the enthusiasm of the starting line and the celebration of the finish line. Whether midday, midlife, halftime or halfway through a big project, we're tempted to give in, give up or distract ourselves (Alan Fadling, An Unhurried Life, p.41).
C Great Commissions 1. Matthew 28:
III. DSF: INTERFLOW Text— Isaiah 61:1-3 (Trees [Oaks NIV] of Righteousness)

- II. The Journey Ahead—"My next Steps" (Adopted from The Journey)
- **A. Inner Journey-** During the ten-week sessions, what has God been saying to you concerning nourishing your intimacy with Him? Identify one or two steps you sense He has given you to take in creating space for Him in your schedule over the next month.

B. Outer Journey- During the ten-week sessions, what has God led you to implement in your outer journey influence with people/relationships. Identify one or two specific steps of implementation.

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