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# A Strategy To Increase Spiritual Maturity by Practicing Spiritual Disciplines at Berean Seventh-day Adventist Church in Houston, Texas

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ABSTRACT

A STRATEGY TO INCREASE SPIRITUAL MATURITY BY PRACTICING SPIRITUAL  
DISCIPLINES AT BEREAN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST  
CHURCH IN HOUSTON, TEXAS

by

Robert W. Norwood

Adviser: Brad Cauley, DMin

## ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Professional Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: A STRATEGY TO INCREASE SPIRITUAL MATURITY BY PRACTICING SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES AT BEREAN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN HOUSTON, TEXAS

Name of researcher: Robert W. Norwood

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Brad Cauley, DMin

Date completed: February 2023

### Problem

Berean Seventh-day Adventist Church has been a pillar in the Third Ward community of Houston since the 1900s. Berean has two distinctions. It is the only Seventh-day Adventist church in downtown Houston. It is also the only predominantly African American Seventh-day church in the area. Its DNA has always been community and civic minded. Like many other churches, Berean is a commuter church. There are two individuals who live near the church;

however, the majority of the members who attend Berean commute to the church to minister to the community.

Berean was established by individuals who had a desire to minister in an urban context, more specifically in the Third Ward community. Berean was established as a collaboration between two churches. Berean also had the first and only Adventist Christian school in the metro Houston area. However, due to the relocation of several members, the school has since been closed down.

Berean is experiencing a paradigm that is a reality in other churches as well, which is a lack spiritual maturity among a percentage of leaders and laity in the church. This lack of spiritual maturity among members and leadership translates into lack of evangelism, amoral behavior, inauthentic fellowship, estranged relationships, lack of having a biblical worldview, and other fruits of spiritual immaturity. The church, like other churches in this situation, finds itself struggling to grow and be the church that God called it be. There is an unwritten assumption that church attendance equates to spiritual maturity. However, the researcher dismisses this thought and believes spiritual maturity is an intentional and consistent practice of spiritual disciplines which will have a positive impact on spiritual maturity. He proposes that what is missing is an experiential knowledge and power of the Holy Spirit among spiritually mature church members and those who lack spiritual maturity. Because of this lack of experiential knowledge of the Holy Spirit for spiritual maturity, research shows that churches are declining, plateauing, and dying. This can be noted in church divisions, lack of authentic fellowship, lack of empowering laity, and lack of authentic worship, as well as noted in other areas of church culture. It can also be seen in a lack of leaders empowering and challenging church members to become spiritually mature. The practice of spiritual disciplines for spiritual

maturity is paramount in today's environment because spiritual maturity is the essential element in creating a healthy church. Spiritually mature members will create a spiritually healthy church which will lead to churches growing organically. When there is a public evangelistic meeting, new believers who join the church through baptism, profession of faith, or transfer of membership will be loved and disciplined. They will go through a process that will ground them, grow them, and prepare them for the soon return of Jesus Christ.

### Method

The investigator approached the project with a clear objective in mind—to create a program that would have a positive impact on spiritual maturity at the Berean Seventh-day Adventist church through the practice of spiritual disciplines and measure if the program had a positive impact on the spiritual maturity of the selected volunteers. A guided journal of selected spiritual disciplines was created with the sole purpose of seeing if the practice of those disciplines had a positive impact on the volunteers. Twenty-one spiritual disciplines were selected for the guided journal. The researcher proposes that any church member, believer, or seeker will continue to mature spiritually as they continue to practice other spiritual disciplines. The volunteers took pre- and post-assessment questionnaires (see Appendices A&B). The volunteers met with the investigator twice a month via Zoom to answer questions or concerns.

### Results

This study determined that the intentional and consistent practice of spiritual disciplines had a positive impact on the spiritual maturation of those individuals who went through the 21-day guided journal. Six of the seven individuals who consistently engaged in the 21-day guided journal reported that their spiritual discernment and awareness of the moving of the Holy Spirit

increased during this period. The individual who did not actively engage in the 21-day guided journal found some increase but not at the level of the other participants. The post-assessment survey was a valuable tool in measuring the effectiveness of this project. When juxtaposing the pre- and post-assessment questionnaires, it became evident that going through the 21-day guided journal had a positive impact on the selected volunteers. There was a positive impact even with the one volunteer who did not engage the 21-day journal consistently (see Appendix C).

### Conclusion

Research shows that there was a common pattern with individuals who experienced a move of God. This pattern was also found in individuals who God used throughout history. The commonality with all of these individuals was the fact that at one time or another, the believer practiced some type of spiritual discipline which did two things. First, it prepared and matured a believer to receive the Holy Spirit. Secondly, it allowed the believer to gain access to supernatural power through the Holy Spirit. Research also indicated that there has to be an intentional effort on the part of the believer who wanted to experience a personal encounter with the Holy Spirit. This can be done through the practice of spiritual disciplines. In light of this, it must be noted that church attendance does not equate to an intentional effort to practice spiritual discipline. Pastor(s) or leader(s) would have to be the catalyst for this, or a believer would have to decide that they wanted to become spiritual mature and allow the Holy Spirit to lead and guide them.

Going through this project, the investigator became keenly aware that through the intentional and consistent practice of spiritual disciplines, along with a relationship with the Holy Spirit, any church member, seeker, or believer can be empowered to grow the kingdom of God

by maturing spiritually. The investigator holds the premise that spiritual maturity does not happen overnight but is an ongoing process. This process continues until Jesus Christ returns. However, spiritual maturity can be documented by individuals who demonstrate the fruits, gifts, and administrations of the Holy Spirit and have a biblical worldview. Secondly, spiritual maturity occurs when a believer experiences a personal revival—or personal Pentecost—through a personal encounter with the Holy Spirit.

Lastly, research shows that spiritual maturity is contingent upon a believer or church member becoming emotionally spiritually healthy; therefore, this project was designed for any believer to experience that personal revival, to mature spiritually by practicing spiritual disciplines, and experience the Holy Spirit in a way they have not yet experienced. The investigator also believes that the implementation of the 21-day guided journal may be essential for church growth and urges the church structure (i.e., Seventh-day Adventist conferences, unions, and divisions) to provide the 21-day guided journal as a resource to their pastoral team.

Andrews University  
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Doctor of Ministry

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Robert W. Norwood  
February 2023



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"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8, New International Version). This project was inspired, guided, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Even when daunting personal and professional situations precluded a realization of this project, the power of the Holy Spirit encouraged me to finish the work that God had started.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In 2019 the Pew Research Center reported that both Protestants and Catholics are experiencing losses in their share of the population. Currently, 43% of adults in the United States identify with Protestantism, down from 51% in 2009. One in five adults (20%) are Catholic, down from 23% in 2009. Meanwhile, all subsets of the religiously unaffiliated population—a group also known as religious “nones”—have seen their numbers swell (Pew Research Center, 2019). J. White (2014) gives a deeper understanding of the reality of the ‘nones’ when he writes: “The nones now make up the nation’s fastest growing and second largest category, eclipsed only by Catholics, outnumbering even Southern Baptists, the largest Protestant denomination” (p. 17).

Self-described atheists now account for 4% of adults in the United States, which is up modestly but significantly from 2% in 2009. Agnostics make up 5% of adults, up from 3% a decade ago; 17% of Americans now describe their religion as “nothing in particular”, up from 12% in 2009. Members of non-Christian religions also have grown modestly as a share of the adult population (Pew Research Center, 2019).

These alarming statistics suggest that something different must happen or that something is missing or lacking in a church members’ religious experience. It is proposed that the something that is lacking is the intentional practice of spiritual disciplines for spiritual maturity. Regardless of denomination affiliation, there are certain practices that

transcend religious doctrines and dogma. Those practices are referred to as spiritual disciplines. These disciplines allow believers to find meaning in life through their experiential faith, grow in Christ, grow closer to God, and experience the Holy Spirit in a profound way. Evidence shows that these practices are missing components in a church member's, believer's, or seeker's spiritual experience. The evidence is clear that there is an exodus of individuals who attend church or even believe in God. Research suggests that this alarming trend could be reversed if the practice of spiritual disciplines were the primary focus in a church member's spiritual life.

Believers are looking for practical theology. Willard (1988) states, "But our practical theology has not always been successful. As the church has moved from period to period in its history, our leaders have not always been sufficiently wise and powerful in their work of equipping the saints" (p. 15).

The Barna research group did a post pandemic study on spiritual growth and the findings show that individuals are more open now than before to spiritual growth. CEO of Barna, David Kinnaman writes, "In an October 2022 Barna survey of 2,000 U.S. adults, three out of four (74%) say they want to grow spiritually. Additionally, the same proportion (77%) say they believe in a higher power. Nearly half (44%) say they are more open to God today than before the pandemic." (Kinnaman,2023)

Church members, believers, and seekers are wanting a spiritual encounter or awakening. They feel that there is a divine supernatural power waiting for them. Yet they, along with many church leaders, are in a quandary as to how to access that power, according to Willard. Willard (1988) says, "By the middle of this century, we had lost any



recognized, reasonable, theologically, and psychologically sound approach to spiritual growth, to really becoming like Christ” (p.16).

This dissertation addresses Willard’s concern. Since the church is the body of believers who are called to be followers of Christ, it becomes a moral and spiritual imperative that believers practice spiritual disciplines to become spiritually mature, to grow closer to Christ, and lastly, to help others grow in Christ. The purpose of this project is for believers or those seeking a closer relationship with Christ to practice spiritual disciplines for spiritual maturity. For church members who practice these spiritual disciplines, the manifestations of these practices will lead to spiritual maturity.

Research indicates that the urgency to practice spiritual disciplines empowered by the Holy Spirit is more prevalent now than ever before. America is during a spiritual crisis. Scholars from various secular and faith-based entities are noting this trend in society. Kidder (2011) states,

The Holy Spirit gave the church the power to live in the kingdom of God while they were still on earth. They had a taste of eternity in their hearts. In the same manner God’s grace will move upon us as it did on the early church and enable us to live the life of Jesus with effectiveness. (p. 75)

Today’s modern church needs this supernatural power to address the needs and issues in these times. God’s power is still available. The practice of spiritual disciplines will allow any believer to connect to that never-ending source of divine power.

After looking at the current research on the state of the church in this postmodern era, it is noted that there is a lack of spiritual maturity that exists in churches that are declining or dying. Given the current statistical evidence, this trend will only get worse as we prepare for the soon return of Jesus Christ, if there is not a Spirit-led intervention implemented to curtail this trend. This spiritual maturity will occur when church

members practice spiritual disciplines that are empowered by the Holy Spirit. When believers practice these disciplines, their spiritual lives will grow. The greatest danger of neglecting the spiritual disciplines is the danger of missing God forever—not because personal piety earns anyone a place in heaven—but because it characterizes those who are on their way there. In other words, some who fail to practice the disciplines disregard them because they simply have no appetite for them, and they have no appetite for them because they have no hunger for God leading to spiritual maturity. They do not know God, so these God-given means of personally experiencing and enjoying God have little appeal. To them, the spiritual disciplines are tedious religious duties to be endured as little as conscience or reputation will allow, not a banquet of God on which their famished souls long to feed as much as possible (Whitney, 2014).

Scripture points out that there are spiritual disciplines that one can and should practice. The New Testament church experienced phenomenal growth after practicing the following spiritual disciplines: Prayer, repentance, confession of sins, forgiveness, surrender, waiting on the Holy Spirit, being empowered by the Holy Spirit, and evangelism.

Prayer, for example, can be seen as one of the primary catalysts for the expansive growth in the New Testament church. Luke 11:9-13 states,

So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!

When the disciples received the gift of the Holy Spirit, they went from being afraid to witness the power of God to being powerful witnesses through the demonstration of the Holy Spirit. This is demonstrated in Acts 5:15-16:

As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by impure spirits, and all of them were healed.

The disciples experienced spiritual maturity after they practiced spiritual disciplines and had an encounter with the Holy Spirit. Burrill (1993) gives a crystal-clear example of what happens to individuals who are imbued with the power of the Holy Spirit:

In response to what Christ Himself had promised in Mark 16:15-18, miraculous signs and wonders occurred with increasing rapidity. The disciples spoke with new languages (Acts 2:1-4), the sick was healed, and miracles occurred. All of these were spiritual gifts that empowered the church for action. (p. 16)

When spiritual disciplines are practiced, it will cause a spiritual chain reaction in the church that will lead to church members becoming spiritually mature, which should lead to organic church growth. The researcher affirms E. G. White's (2010) assertion that "the greatest need for the church is a revival of godliness" (p. 9). It provides some beneficial context to this assertion when Clouzet (2011) writes:

After forty years of successfully restoring many truths ignored in the Bible, the Adventist Church became adept in theological sword fighting but real life was missing from many members. They had the truth, but somehow, it did not make them free. Preachers proclaimed the law until the church was dry "as the hills of Gilboa." For years, Ellen White urged the church to look to Jesus. Finally, in 1887, she penned her famous statement, "A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. To seek this should be our first work." (p. xvi)

The spiritual disciplines are those practices found in Scripture that promote spiritual maturity among believers in the gospel of Jesus Christ. They are the habits of devotion and experiential Christianity that have been practiced by the people of God

since biblical times (Whitney, 2014). These habits can be noted in the Old Testament to the New Testament. While this definition is a good base, spiritual disciplines are also those activities that focus on God or are gifts from God. For example, David played the harp, which was a gift from God that was a blessing to others. Joseph had dreams, another gift from God that was used to help others and glorify God. God has given all believers some type of gift that can also be a spiritual discipline that will bring an individual into the presence of God. It could be singing, cooking, journaling, administration, preaching, or any other activity which God has given an individual to glorify God or to enter into the presence of God and strengthen believers. Willard (1998) also affirms that idea that spiritual disciplines can be those activities other than those listed in the Bible that will draw a believer closer to God and grow them in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

This project took place at the Berean Seventh-day Adventist Church located in Houston, Texas. The following is a description of the context in which the project was implemented.

### **Description of the Ministry Context**

The researcher is the senior pastor at the Berean Seventh-day Adventist Church located in the heart of Houston. Berean is the only Seventh-day Adventist church located in the heart of Houston and is considered a mother church, since other churches were started from members from the church. The church is known for its community service program. For example, when the city of Houston had a major hurricane in 2017, Berean was one of the major contributors to the relief efforts. There have been several churches

formed in the surrounding communities from members who left Berean. However, the formation of a couple of those churches was not intentional but due to some disgruntled members.

Even though there has been a decline in membership and tithing, Berean remains one of the top 10 churches in returning tithe to the Southwest Region Seventh-day Adventist Conference. Berean has a diverse socioeconomic group of individuals who attend the church. The church members include working professionals, retirees, youth, and young adults. The youth and young adults at Berean SDA Church are very active in church and the community. The church has an outstanding relationship with conference and community leaders. However, according to research from the Barna Group and the Pew Research Center, there is an underlying issue elaborated on in the next section.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Berean Seventh-day Adventist Church has been a pillar in the Third Ward community of Houston since the 1900s. However, like many other churches, there is a percentage of leaders and laity who lack spiritual maturity which leads to a lack of accountability, amoral behavior, and spiritual immaturity. This has a negative impact on other areas like authentic worship, lay member involvement fellowship, unity, transparent communication, respect for leadership, returning a faithful tithe, and organic church growth, as well as other areas which impact church growth and culture. Dr. Kidder (2011) lists four areas that are essential in church growth: worship, lay member involvement, authentic spirituality, and servant leadership. The researcher agrees with these four

points; however, these four components cannot become a reality if church members are not spiritually mature to see the benefits in these areas.

Evidence shows that churches like Berean do not have an experiential knowledge of the transformative power of the Holy Spirit, due to a lack of practicing spiritual disciplines. Clouzet (2011) states that “without the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in our lives and in our church, we are going nowhere. What we need, what we cannot do without, is the power of the Holy Spirit work in our efforts” (p. xvii).

The aforementioned scenario gives a crystal-clear picture of why there was a valley of dry bones then and even now. It is possible that the valley of dry bones foreshadows the condition of believers and congregations who used to work for God but did not have the continual infilling of the Holy Spirit. Scripture states that all Ezekiel had to do was prophesy to the bones and the Holy Spirit did the rest. Spiritual maturity is the primary reason the church is not experiencing growth like in the book of Acts. Spiritual maturity is contingent upon church members practicing spiritual disciplines which will translate into spiritual maturity. The next section identifies the Statement of the Task.

### **Statement of the Task**

Systematic methodology is needed when dealing with the subject of church members becoming spiritually mature; however, without the anointing of the Holy Spirit, all methodologies are an exercise in redundancy. It is with this in mind that the researcher plans to develop, implement, and evaluate a systematic process that will increase the practice of spiritual disciplines that will lead to spiritual maturity among church

members, which the researcher believes will lead to organic church growth. Burrill (1993) says that.

We need to witness a rebirth of the laity concurrent with the wholehearted preparation for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Laity must once again become ‘the church.’ Likewise, pastors need to revise their church role and return to their biblical job description—as a trainer of the laity. (p. 12-13)

As with many human subject-based projects, there will be some obstacles associated with implementing this project. The next section deals with the foreseen obstacles.

### **Delimitations**

The scope of this project was limited in several ways. First, while still considering the wider body of methodologies for church growth theory and practice, the project itself was framed within a faith-based viewpoint and conducted in a Seventh-day Adventist context. Second, the project was implemented at a Seventh-day Adventist church with baptized members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Third, selection of volunteers was limited, due to the fact that the congregation was not ethnically diverse. Fourth, the project was implemented with a selected group of seven individuals.

Given the missional imperative to create a viable and practical project, the objective in this process is described in the Description of Process.

### **Description of the Project**

The project process included building a theological foundation, reviewing recent literature, developing, and implementing an intervention, and then evaluating and reporting the results within a selected research methodology and protocol.

There were four salient components upon which the project was based on. The first was Old Testament literature that focused on the Holy Spirit. The second was the New Testament model of practicing spiritual disciplines for spiritual maturity. The third was the impact the Holy Spirit had on the lives of biblical characters before and after they reached the Holy Spirit. The last was the practical application of the Holy Spirit and the personal relationships between the Holy Spirit and individuals.

### Theological Reflection

With many Adventist and non-Adventist churches experiencing a decline in attendance, it was felt best to particularly examine church growth principles found in four areas. The first is Old Testament literature that focuses on how the Holy Spirit was important in the creation of this world, empowers individuals to do God's will, and revitalizes individuals. Next is the New Testament model for the practice of spiritual disciplines, with particular emphasis on those disciplines practiced by believers who received the Holy Spirit. The third area is the lives of the disciples of Jesus before and after they received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, along with Apostle Paul. The fourth one is the practical application of practicing spiritual disciplines to lead to spiritual maturity. Reflection on these things, undergirded by a biblical foundation, led to the formation of a strategy that addressed the daunting challenge of church decline.

After developing his foundational principles for his project through his theological reflection, the investigator wanted to ascertain if research affirmed his preconceived views or gave another perspective. He sought to understand research in the following areas. The first was the soundest way to measure the practice of spiritual



disciplines. The second was to see if there was any literature that dealt with the practice of spiritual disciplines. The third area was Holy Spirit and church growth. Last and not least was the impact of spiritual disciplines on individuals.

### Review of Literature

The literature review built upon the theological foundation in seeking to discover if the practice of spiritual disciplines had a positive impact on spiritual maturity with church members. Within this scope, the following was ascertained: (a) the soundest way to measure the impact of practicing spiritual disciplines had on the selected volunteers; (b) how the practice of spiritual disciplines impacted the volunteers' understanding and relationship with the Holy Spirit; (c) how the practice of spiritual disciplines impacted the volunteer's stewardship, Bible reading, prayer, and other spiritual practices; and (d) the impact of the Holy Spirit on spiritual maturity. Determining the above enabled a strategy to be developed that precisely addressed the challenge of church decline. After reviewing the selected literature, the investigator was able to articulate his journey on how this project came into existence.

### Development of the Intervention

The intervention developed out of the investigator's own personal journey with the Holy Spirit and seeing the manifestation of the working of the Holy Spirit in his life. During his pastorate, the researcher noted a symbiotic relationship between the practice of spiritual disciplines (or the lack thereof) and spiritual maturity. Evidence through the

literature review shows that the Holy Spirit is and was the primary agent responsible for spiritual maturity. Burrill (1993) writes,

The early disciples spent ten days praying for the deluge of the Holy Spirit. The instruments were ready to be used by God. The Holy Spirit was poured out upon the waiting company, and immediately they became involved in the fulfillment of Christ's mission. (p. 16)

The project was structured into ten phases. Each phase detailed the practical applications needed to implement the project. Phases are detailed in the Structure of the Intervention.

#### Structure of the Intervention

The intervention was divided into ten phases. The first phase was the creation of a guided journal. This guided journal was 21 days long and consisted of five components: Scripture, selected reading, question and answer, a Scripture fill-in-the-blank, and a prewritten prayer.

The second phase was the selection process for the volunteers. This process included getting board approval to do the project at Berean Seventh-day Adventist Church, then selecting the volunteers. A diverse group of individuals within the cultural context of the church was desired. Seven individuals who came from different socio-economic backgrounds, genders, and varied relationships statuses, were selected. The oldest was 92 years old and the youngest was 22 at the time the project began.

In phase three, volunteers were contacted through phone calls, emails, and texts. In phase four the volunteers signed an informed consent form. The form detailed the expectations of the program. In phase five, a pre-assessment questionnaire was administered to determine where volunteers were in their practice of spiritual disciplines.

This was used as a baseline to see the growth after the volunteers went through the guided journal.

In phase six, volunteers were met with bi-weekly to see if they had any questions about the guided journal. This allowed for a chance to see if the questions were clear enough for the volunteers to understand. In phase seven the objectives for the project were set. The primary objective was twofold. First, to see if the practice of spiritual disciplines by the volunteers impacted their spiritual growth, and second, to see if those practices translated into church attendance, return of tithe and offering, prayer time, and Bible study time. In addition, the researcher wanted to see how practicing spiritual disciplines impacted their relationship and understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit had in their lives, and if the volunteers would recommend the program to others.

Phase eight detailed the project expectations. It was expected that after the volunteers went through the guided journal that there would be a profound manifestation of the Holy Spirit in their personal and public lives. Second, it was expected that the practice of spiritual disciplines would have a positive impact on spiritual maturity which then would lead to organic church growth. Church growth can be measured a number of ways. It can be measured by the number of church members who are seeing a manifestation of the fruits of the spirit. It can be seen in church members actively engaging in different forms of evangelism. It can be seen in the four areas which Kidder mentions in his book *The Big Four: Secrets to a Thriving Church Family*. It can also be measured through a church utilizing the NCD (Natural Church Development) survey (see Appendix G). Other measurements for this included seeing the number of individuals

who attend in-person service and online, how individual spiritual growth went, and the participation in active small groups.

In phase nine the volunteers took two post-assessments (see Appendices A & B). The first assessment was a questionnaire which was compared with the pre-assessment questionnaire to see how or if the volunteers grew spiritually after they went through the guided journal. The other assessment was a survey (see Appendix D). A survey was created on [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com) to allow the volunteers to answer anonymously. This was done to gauge the effectiveness of the guided journal.

This concise introduction has offered a glimpse of the challenge of church growth through the practice of spiritual disciplines for spiritual maturity at Berean Seventh-day Adventist Church. The interpretive analysis of this case study is intended to offer insights as to the spiritual and professional value of the practice of spiritual disciplines not only in the Berean Seventh-day Adventist Church but for the broader Christian church as well. It is the researcher's hope that it will be an encouragement and guide to others who are looking for a practical spiritual tool that can have an impact on the local church and on the advancement of the kingdom of God.

Given this project included human subjects, a salient methodology and protocol program was created that was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

### Research Methodology and Protocol

Evaluating the intervention required the establishment of a salient methodological system and protocol. Seven individuals were selected to gauge the practice of spiritual disciplines in their lives. This was planned to explore the volunteers' understanding and

praxis of the guided journal. The idea of a small group setting to allow the volunteers to dialogue and provide a safe place for the volunteers to express their concerns and revelations as they progressed through the guided journal was valued. An unexpected delimitation occurred when the world was impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the pandemic did not stop the program from being implemented for two reasons. First, the program was originally designed to be an independent study; second, technology—specifically Zoom—allowed the volunteers to meet face-to-face virtually with the researcher.

All of the volunteers signed an informed consent form. Measures were taken to ensure the confidentiality of data and participants, as well as the credibility and reliability of the study. An interpretive narrative of the intervention data is offered in Chapter Five. Conclusions from the interpretation of data, along with overarching conclusions from the project as a whole, are detailed in Chapter Six.

There are some terms that may have a common connotation. Other terms are elaborated in this section to establish a clear basis of understanding.

### **Definitions of Terms**

While some of the selected spiritual disciplines may be familiar, the investigator did not want to be presumptuous and think that all of the selected spiritual disciplines were known. Some of the spiritual disciplines have specialized meanings and need to be defined at the outset.

*Spiritual maturity* is defined as a radical and intentional reordering of one's priorities, changing over from fulfilling selfishness desires to focusing on pleasing and

obeying God, and growing in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Spiritual maturity does not stop at any particular age. It is a continual process to grow in Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit to fulfill the call of God on a person's life.

*Spiritual disciplines* are practices found in Scripture that promote spiritual growth among believers in the gospel of Jesus Christ. They are spiritual habits that will help a church member, believer, or seeker grow in Christ. They are the habits of devotion and experiential Christianity that have been practiced by the people of God since biblical times (Whitney, 2014).

For this project, the definition of spiritual disciplines has been expanded to include activities that focus on God or activities that are gifts from God. For example, David played the harp, a gift from God meant to be a blessing to others. Joseph had dreams, another gift from God that was used to help others and glorify God. God has bestowed all believers with some type of gifts that will bring them into His presence. It could be singing, cooking, journaling, preaching, or any other activity that God has given individuals to glorify Him or to enter into His presence and strengthen the inner/spiritual person.

*A healthy church* is a church that is intentional about the spiritual maturity of its members. Kidder (2011) identifies these four elements of a healthy church. It has systems in place for church members to grow in their spiritual gifts, has an authentic worship experience, is intentional about empowering laity and leadership, and is intentional about connecting with the community and other believers.

*Prayer and fasting* are two spiritual disciplines combined by Jesus in Mark 9:29, "And he said unto them, this kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting."

Throughout the Bible, prayer is one of the primary spiritual disciplines that a believer uses to connect with God. Stated simply, biblical fasting is refraining from food for a spiritual purpose (Franklin, 2008).

*Crucifying the flesh* is the process in which a believer surrenders their desires and will to God and the word of God. Galatians 5:24 states, “Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” Nee (1997) further elaborates on this concept when he writes, “The Holy Spirit has only one goal in all of His discipling work: to break and dismantle the outer man so that the inner man can break forth” (p. 10).

*The latter rain* is the Holy Spirit filling believers. E. G. White (1962) describes the latter rain in the following way:

The latter rain, ripening earth's harvest, represents the spiritual grace that prepares the church for the coming of the Son of man. But unless the former rain has fallen, there will be no life; the green blade will not spring up. Unless the early showers have done their work, the latter rain can bring no seed to perfection. (p. 506)

There are spiritual activities that can be done that can bring a person closer to God. Those activities can be as simple as a walk in the park or the beach while observing God's handiwork in nature. They could be cooking or playing an instrument as David did in the Bible. While these activities may not be found in the Bible, they can bring a person closer to God when practiced daily. This allows an individual to commune with God.

*Dying daily to self* is a concept that the Apostle Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 15:31 and Romans 8:36. “I die daily” echoes Jesus’ command to those who want to follow Him: “If anyone would come after me let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me” (Luke 9:23).

This a conscious spiritual discipline that involves a person intentionally surrendering daily to God for His will to be done in their lives. It is living out the scripture found in Luke 22:42: “Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me; nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done.”

*Discipleship of the mind* is being cognizant of the thoughts that a person focuses on. The Bible reminds us of the following: “...casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalted itself against the knowledge of God and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor 10:5). The Apostle Paul penned the following as well: “Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing, and perfect will” (Romans 12:1-2).

Leaf (2013) affirms the need and the power of disciplining the mind when she writes, “You have an extraordinary ability to determine, achieve, and maintain optimal levels of intelligence, mental health, peace, and happiness, as well as the prevention of disease in your body and mind” (p. 13). E. G. White (1915) affirms the need and power of disciplining the mind when she writes,

Train and discipline the mind by study, by observation, by reflection. You cannot meet the mind of God unless you put to use every power. The mental faculties will strengthen and develop if you will go to work in the fear of God, in humility, and with earnest prayer. A resolute purpose will accomplish wonders. (p. 275)

*Spiritual warfare* is recognizing that individuals on earth are caught in the middle of a spiritual war between Christ and Satan and must be prepared to stand for God in this spiritual battle. Scripture reminds us of this battle in Ephesians 6:12, Colossians 1:16, Luke, 4:18, and 1 John 3:8. Spiritual warfare is the essence of the Great Controversy between God and Satan. Even though the Bible and E. G. White speak about this spiritual



warfare, there are individuals in our churches and community that do not believe that we are in a spiritual battle. This is why we see that:

Jesus began to instruct his disciples (and therefore us] how to conduct spiritual warfare. He taught how to bind and loose (Matt 12:19; 16:19; 18:18; Mark 3:27). He taught how to engage the enemy by closing and tearing down his gates (Matt 16:18).” (Ing, 1996, p. 16)

*Spiritual authority* is the spiritual discipline of recognizing that the absolute authority is in God. Lucifer was dismissed from heaven because of a violation of God’s authority (Rev 12: 7-12). The controversy of the universe is centered on who shall have the authority, and our conflict with Satan is the direct result of our attributing authority to God (Nee, 1972, p. 12).

*Random Acts of Kindness (RAK)* is a simple concept of showing Christ to others by doing an unexpected act or acts of kindness to individuals. The definition for RAK is in the phrase. It is doing charitable deeds for individuals without expecting anything in return. It is not limited to paying for groceries in a store for a stranger, paying for the person’s meal who may be behind an individual in a drive-through, or acts of service for a neighbor, family, or stranger. It can be doing any activity which shows the love of Christ to other individuals.

*Getting past the past* is constructively dealing with past hurts that were inflicted by others are leaving with regret from a decision that was made. Augustine (2005) writes, “Consciously or not, past events can play over in our minds much like a video on auto-rewind” (p. 18).

This reality is more common than not. Therefore, the spiritual discipline is dealing with the past in such a way to bring healing and wholeness to an individual by creating a

safe place for the individual to reflect and share their past experiences. A professional counselor may need to be contacted to help deal with some issues that may arise.

*Emotionally healthy spirituality* is a concept which Peter Scazzero (2017) reasons that a large part of a believer's life lies untouched by Jesus Christ. Peter Scazzero believes that a believer cannot enjoy the fruits of spiritual maturity without becoming emotionally mature. In his book, he dissects the modern methods of discipleship when he states that the majority of current discipleship methods and spiritual formation outlines only tackle some of what is below the surface in a believer's life. "The problem is that a large portion...remains untouched by Jesus Christ until there is a serious engagement with what I call 'emotionally healthy spirituality' unseen" (p. 17).

## CHAPTER 2

### THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

The decline in church growth and multiplication is evident in many churches in the United States. This trend was exacerbated by the pandemic caused by Covid-19. With this daunting reality in mind, it would be best to examine the biblical church growth model found in the book of Acts in the New Testament; therefore, there will be a focus on how the practice of spiritual disciplines impacted the spiritual maturity of believers in the New Testament church.

Spiritual maturity is contingent on the believer or seeker practicing spiritual disciplines for spiritual maturity. With this as a foundational premise it is believed that church growth will happen organically as members mature spiritually.

Spiritual maturity is growing in Christ. It is the breaking of the outer person/flesh/selfish desires and growing of the inner person empowered by the Holy Spirit. Spiritual maturity is coming to the light and knowledge of Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul states in 1 Corinthians 13:11, “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.”

If a believer is spiritually mature, that will have a positive impact on other areas of believer’s life through prayer, tithing, relationships, administration, mental health, emotional health, and physical health and even church growth.

The New Testament church growth model was contingent upon individuals growing in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. The model was as follows: First, individuals accepted Jesus Christ. Second, once an individual accepted Jesus Christ they became a believer. Third, they were baptized in water and with the Holy Spirit. Fourth, the Holy Spirit was responsible for believers' spiritual growth. Fifth, this growth happened when believers practiced spiritual disciplines. Sixth, the church grew as a result of spiritual maturity as believers, empowered by the Holy Spirit, met the everyday needs of people. With this model, church growth and multiplication were solely accomplished through the power of the Holy Spirit empowering individuals to witness, perform miracles, signs, and wonders. The Bible reminds the reader that those who received the power of the Holy Spirit were able to be used by God to build up the Kingdom of God through preaching (Acts 5:12), signs, and wonders (Acts 5:15, Acts 19:12).

By believers allowing the Holy Spirit to use them, the Holy Spirit created a culture of continual growth. "The Lord added 3,000 souls" (Acts 2:41). In Acts 2:47 it says, "the Lord added daily." In Acts 4:4 another 5,000 men were added to the church and Acts 5:12 says that "multitudes" were added.

It became evident that before individuals were used by God and empowered by the Holy Spirit, they had to go through a process. For this theological reflection, this process is called the practice of spiritual disciplines.

Mark Finley (2011) shows how several of these spiritual disciplines were practiced before individuals could receive the power of the Holy Spirit. In practicing these spiritual disciplines in the New Testament church, church growth went from adding members to multiplying members by those individuals practicing spiritual disciplines.

“And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration” (Acts 6:1).

Biblical evidence affirms that the Holy Spirit is the main source for believers growing in Christ. Church growth was an organic outcome of that spiritual maturity. The impact of spiritual maturity and the impact that it has on church growth through the power of the Holy Spirit can be noted throughout the Old and New Testaments. In Exodus, Moses—who had a stuttering disability—was used mightily by God after his burning bush experience. Before Moses’ experience he was an outcast because he chose to follow God instead of living in Pharaoh’s place and because of the crime he committed in Egypt. But after the experience with the burning bush, God moved in the life of Moses in a supernatural way. In the book of Judges, God anointed Samson to be a deliverer of God’s people. But the biblical records show that samson found himself in an entanglement with Delilah of the Philistines. However, after he repented (became spiritually mature) he was imbued with power to pull down the pillars and destroy a large number of the Philistines.

In the New Testament, the best example of spiritual maturity can be seen in the life of the disciples and the Apostle Paul. The Apostle Paul, on the road to Damascus, had an encounter that matured him spiritually (Acts 9:3-9). This divine appointment changed his life. He went from killing God’s people to becoming one of the gospel’s greatest advocates. In John 13:37–38, it is noted that Peter, in his spiritual immaturity, tells Jesus that he will never leave or forsake Him. In the same text, Jesus tells Peter that he will deny him, and Peter did. But, in Acts we see the same Peter, after maturing spiritually, is

now full of the Holy Ghost preaching a sermon that leads to 3,000 people joining the church (Acts 2:41)

Spiritual maturity is important to church growth because when one peruses the Bible, they find a tapestry of the Holy Spirit's working interwoven in Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation. It is evident that many believers in God have substituted the working and power of the Holy Spirit for manufactured work. Chadwick (1937) states:

We are acting as though the only remedy for the decline were method, organization, and compromise. The Church is failing to meet modern needs, grip the modern mind, and save modern life. The saints are the ordained rulers of the earth, but they do not rule; indeed, they have dropped the scepter and repudiated the responsibility. The helplessness of the Church is pathetic and tragic. There might be no such Person as the Holy Ghost. (p. 5)

Many well-meaning practicing Christians miss the blessings of the Holy Spirit because they have not received the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul sets the foundation for this paper and issues that need to be addressed in today's church and community. This admonition from Paul is a divine clarion call to help the world to understand the need for the Holy Spirit. "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" he asked them, 'No,' they replied, 'we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit' (Acts 19:2).

One could ask the same question to members of any congregation, whatever their denomination. The reality and problem with many of today's churches is that many of the members have heard about the Holy Spirit or Holy Ghost—depending on which Bible translation is used—but they have not received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Or they are missing the blessings of the Holy Spirit because an emphasis on the practice of spiritual disciplines for spiritual maturity has been lacking in the church.

The need for the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer is more paramount now than it has ever been. Why? The problem can be found in II Timothy 3:1 when the author

declares, “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.” The answer can be found in Acts 2:17, “In the last days, God says, ‘I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams.’”

Christians proclaim they believe in God and the Bible; the question becomes, “Where is the Spirit of God in their personal and public lives and the churches they attend?” The fire of the Holy Spirit should be empowering the lives of believers and the church.

The Holy Spirit is important to individual transformation, salvation, and empowerment. The Holy Spirit is equally important to church growth and multiplication. Chadwick (1937) continued with this thought when he wrote:

The Holy Scriptures declare Him to be the revealer of all truth, the active agent in all works of redemption, and from first to last the instrument of Grace in the experience of salvation. In Him, and through Him, and by Him, is the power that saves. Illumination and Conviction, Repentance and Regeneration, Assurance and Sanctification, are all the work of God the eternal Spirit. To the Church, He is the Source and Supply of wisdom and power. The Church is the Body of Christ, indwelt and controlled by the Spirit. He directs, energizes, and controls. From first to last this Dispensation is the Dispensation of the Spirit. (p. 4)

When considering church growth, the Holy Spirit should be at the forefront of any conversation when it comes to church growth, multiplication, and revitalization. It is the role of the Holy Spirit to draw individuals into the knowledge of God. Many people with this modern mindset for church growth and multiplication attempt to do a Revelation seminar or a Daniel seminar or some type of public evangelistic effort to draw people in. However, these methods many times are not fruitful because it is a method that is not powered by the Holy Spirit. Even when it comes to knocking on doors and handing out

tracts, the Holy Spirit has to be the One who draws and empowers individuals to do the work.

Burrill and Evans (2014) write, “The church does not grow because of it uses the right methodologies; but when those methodologies are mixed with good soil, water, sunshine, growth happens all by itself” (p. 12-13). The right soil is the soil that is cultivated in the Holy Spirit. This can be seen in the book of Acts when Peter preached one sermon and 3,000 souls joined the church in one day. This paradigm shift in Peter's life is noteworthy because before his Pentecostal experience he lied to Jesus, cut off a man's ear, told people that he did not even know Jesus, and walked on water when the other disciples did not even dare to get out the boat. But after he matured spiritually through encountering the Holy Spirit, his life changed through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The theological foundation of the researcher's project will focus on creating a project that will focus church growth and multiplication by the practice of spiritual disciplines that, as the Apostle Paul points out, will strengthen the inner man, “that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being” (Eph 3:16).

### **Who is the Holy Spirit?**

The Holy Spirit in Christian thought is considered the third person of the Godhead called the Trinity. This thought comes from the Latin (*trinus*), meaning threefold. Christian biblical scholars hold that the Godhead consists of three coeternal



consubstantial persons or hypostases: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The fifth Seventh-day Adventist fundamental belief states the following:

God the eternal Spirit was active with the Father and the Son in Creation, incarnation, and redemption. He is as much a person as are the Father and the son. He inspired the writers of Scripture. He filled Christ's life with power. He draws and convicts human beings, and those who respond are renewed and transformed into the image of God. Sent by the Father and the Son to be always with His children, He extends spiritual gifts. (*28 Fundamental Beliefs*, 2015, p. 4)

The Bible and other biblical scholars make it clear that the Holy Spirit is a person; the Third person of the Godhead. The Bible shows how the Holy Spirit takes on human attributes, which is similar to how Jesus was divinity wrapped in humanity. One can note in the following Scriptures how the Holy Spirit can take on human attributes: “And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” (Eph 4:30). “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:26).

### **What is the Role of the Holy Spirit?**

People have said, “If I didn’t have Jesus, where would I be?” The real question is, “Where would a born-again Christian be without the Holy Spirit?” Biblical scholars have rightly noted that if it were not for the power of the Holy Spirit, there would be no universe, no world, no creation, and no Bible. It was through the working of the Holy Spirit that this world was formed. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of the God was hovering over the waters" (Gen 1:1-2).

If there was no Holy Spirit there would be no power to proclaim the gospel message, no power to heal the sick, and no power to cast out demons. No power to transform lives and no power to live a holy life. The Holy Spirit is the divine agent who brings all believers into the knowledge of God and prepares and protects them until Jesus Christ returns. In Ephesians 6, the sword of the Spirit is the Holy Spirit. The oil in the lamps of the 10 virgins also represents the oil of the Holy Spirit.

The role of the Holy Spirit in many churches, religious circles, and non-religious circles has been grossly misunderstood. Some believe that only that speaking in an unknown tongue (known as ‘glossolalia’) is a sign of salvation. The Apostle Paul refutes this notion by saying, “I thank God that I speak in tongues more than any of you. But in the church, I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue” (1 Cor 14:18-19).

Others believe that there is no such person as Holy Spirit and that the world was brought about by a cosmic accident. However, both notions and everything in between fall short of understanding the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer.

Stamp and Adams (2003) present a great foundational understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit in a person’s life. It mentions four roles of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. They are:

1. The Holy Spirit is the agent of Salvation, convicting us of guilt, revealing the truth about Jesus.
2. The Holy Spirit is the agent of sanctification. At conversion, believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and come under His sanctifying influence.
3. The Holy Spirit is the agent of service, empowering believers to build up the Kingdom of God and tear down the devil's kingdom.

4. The Holy Spirit is the agent who incorporates believers into the one body of Christ (pp. 1,676-1,677).

The researcher would also add to this list by saying that the Holy Spirit gives discernment and wisdom to the believer. This wisdom and discernment can help a believer engage with other believers, no matter the faith tradition. Evans (2020) writes, “There are a number of words that start with “un” that we might use when considering have a spiritual conversation with a secular person; uneasy, unnatural, uncomfortable, and unpleasant.” (p. 46) He goes on to say that “As we explore biblical approaches to these conversations, my prayer is that the “un” is removed so that these conversations become easy, natural, comfortable, and pleasant” (p. 46). Having the wisdom and discernment to interact with different individuals is a gift from God. God will give a believer discernment and wisdom to engage in conversations with those who come from a secular background and those who are believers.

The Bible declares that it is the Holy Spirit that empowers individuals to do what God intended for them to do. In other words, God did not limit the Holy Spirit to work only in the church ethos. The original intent of the Holy Spirit was to be an agent of transformation, a teacher, and a guide. The Holy Spirit was to bring the anointing to carry out the God-given tasks and draw people to God inside and outside of the church walls.

### **The Symbols of the Holy Spirit**

A believer or seeker who is spiritually mature will understand and appreciate the symbolic meaning of how the Holy Spirit can be manifested. Scripture reminds the reader, “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are

foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14).

Spiritual maturity is paramount in understanding the word of God. If a believer is not spiritual mature the word of God can become a tool of division instead of the good news that it was designed to be. This section will note how symbols are used to indicate the presence of the Holy Spirit.

The Bible shows us that nine symbols represent the Holy Spirit. They are the dove, fire, oil, light, wind, the cloud, the seal, water, and wine. The dove can be seen in Mark 1:10 when Jesus was being baptized the Scripture reminds us that the Spirit came down like a dove. This account is also noted in the books of Matt 3:16, Luke 3:22, and John 1:32. The manifestation of the Holy Spirit fire can be found in Acts 2:3 “Then when looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them.” It can also note another example of this Holy Spirit fire in the book of Exodus chapter 3:1-5 when God spoke to Moses through a burning bush.

Another symbol of the Holy Spirit is seen in the book of James,

Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he has committed sins, they shall be forgiven” (James 5:14-15).

There is no power in the oil itself; the power is found in the faith of those who use the oil empowered by the Holy Spirit. One can also note the use of the oil when Samuel used the oil to anoint David as the new king over Israel when God was no longer pleased with Saul.

The Holy Spirit brings the light of illumination, the light of understanding, guidance, and clarity. Before reading the Bible, one should ask the Holy Spirit to bring

illumination or understanding to the text. Once this illumination occurs, the Holy Spirit will bring all things to a believer's remembrance when Scriptures are studied.

Illumination is also another term for revelation—insight to things that would be otherwise unknown. This revelation can be found when the Bible is read. It can be seen in John 14:26, 1 Corinthians 2:10-12, and many other places in the Bible.

The Holy Spirit is also represented by the wind. The original Hebrew and Greek words for “Spirit” can be translated as “wind.” In the Acts of the Apostles, it is seen when they were in the upper room praying. In Genesis 1:2, the Holy Spirit represented is seen as wind hovering over the waters. Also, in the book of Genesis, it is the Holy Spirit that brings life. One of the most well-known Scriptures that depict can be found in the book of Ezekiel.

Then he said to me, “Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, “This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Come, breath, from the four winds and breathe into these slain, that they may live. So, I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army” (Ezek 37:9-10).

What stood out in this text is the fact there is a vast army of God's people who, for whatever reason, had become a valley of dry bones. From the researcher’s perspective, this Scripture can be compared to a megachurch that God called to do great things in his name; but for some reason instead of spreading the gospel message, they were turned into a valley of dry bones that had been petrified due to being in the sun too long. This valley of dry bones is a lack that is still present in many churches today. This is evident when there are people in the pews who do not want to go out and win souls for Christ or individuals in leadership who want a title but do not want to serve. This is a valley mentality. Could it be that many of the millennials in church and members of our church

are leaving because instead of getting revived, they are experiencing dryness every time they go to church?

The reality of dry bones is too common in many churches today. Many well-meaning Christians are so busy doing church that they do not realize that the Holy Spirit had left the building.

Contemplating farther on this valley of dry bones: When there is no Holy Spirit actively working in the church, demons come in and take over. When there is no Holy Spirit in the church, minor things become major and major things become minor. When there is no Holy Spirit in the church people start fighting over parking spots, the color of the pews, women's ordination, drums in the church, and state conferences and regional conferences fighting over members. When the Holy Spirit is not central or present in a church or a person's life there will be an increase in spiritual immaturity. This will translate into no relationship with Jesus, church infighting, divisions, selfishness, jealousy, envy, adultery, undermining, lack of respect for leadership, no fruits or gifts or administrations of the Holy Spirit, no genuine relationship with God and others, and more importantly, no biblical worldview.

The aforementioned scenario gives a clear picture of why there was a valley of dry bones then and even now. It is possible that the valley of dry bones foreshadows the condition of believers or a congregation who once worked for God but did not have a continual infilling of the Holy Spirit. Scripture states that all Ezekiel had to do was to prophesy to the bones and the Holy Spirit did the rest. Given the aforementioned scenario, it is noticeable to see why there was a valley of dry bones that was a vast army—it could be possible that they may have been working for God but did not have a

continual infilling of the Holy Spirit. Scripture states that all Ezekiel had to do was to prophesy to the bones and the Holy Spirit did the rest.

Another symbol for the Holy Spirit is a cloud which can be found in different books of the Bible. Such examples are found in Exodus 16:10: “While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of the Lord appearing in the cloud,” and 2 Chronicles 5:1:

The trumpeters and musicians joined in unison to give praise and thanks to the Lord. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals, and other instruments, the singers raised their voices in praise to the Lord and sang: ‘He is good; he is love endures forever.’ Then the temple of the Lord was filled with the cloud.

In the book of Ephesians, the reader is reminded of two things: First, they should not grieve the Holy Spirit. Secondly, it is the Holy Spirit that seals a believer until Jesus Christ returns. “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption” (Eph 4:30).

Even in the book of Revelations, it is noted that God’s people have a seal. “Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servant of God.’ Then, I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all tribes of Israel” (Rev 7:1-8).

This seal is not a visible seal. Biblical scholars suggest that this seal is a way of indicating that people find their identity in relationship with God and Christ. This seal or relationship does not mean that people are exempt from all earthly suffering. It does show that God has claimed them and gives them the promise of eternal life.

The next manifestation of the Holy Spirit is represented by water. Why water? Water cleanses and refreshes; it represents new birth. This refreshing is demonstrated in John 4 when Jesus is speaking to the Samaritan woman. This woman was thirsting for

something more than she had. Jesus exposes her thirst when he asks her to get her husband and she replies she does not have a husband. "Jesus said to her, 'You are right when you say you. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have said is quite true.'" (John 4:17-19).

This woman was thirsting for companionship. She was lonely and her loneliness drove her to look for love and attention in different men. Jesus tells the woman that if she keeps on drinking from worldly wells, she will keep on being thirsty. But if she drinks from the water, he has to offer her that she will never thirst again. As Jesus put it, "“Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4:13-14).

Finally, the manifestation of the Holy Spirit is seen in the symbolic representation of wine.

No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. Neither do people pour new wine into old wine skins. If they do, the skins will burst; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved. (Matt 9:16-17)

This new wineskin represents a new creation in Jesus Christ. It presents the transformative power of the Holy Spirit.

### **The Fruits of the Spirit**

A benefit of a believer, church member, believer or seeker being spiritually mature is the fruits of the Spirit. This fruit is a byproduct of spiritual maturity as observed from Acts 2:42-47. This shows that churches which are authentically growing are doing



so because individuals are growing spiritually and become spiritually mature. This maturity does not mean that a person is perfect. It suggests that a believer or church member is actively maturing in Christ beyond the mistakes that they may make.

One of the benefits of a church being full of the Holy Spirit is the fruit of the Spirit. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law” (Gal 5:22-23).

The book of Galatians lists the benefits of receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. When one receives the Holy Spirit, the fruits will follow. The Holy Spirit gives us the power to reject sinful desires. The Apostle Paul affirms this when he wrote:

I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. (Rom 7:15-17)

As a person surrenders daily to God through the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit starts to change this individual's character to be more Jesus and grow in his image.

Biblical scholars suggest that Paul used the analogy of 'fruit' to help us understand the working of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer. The fruit is produced by the Holy Spirit when the Christian is obedient to the Holy Spirit. Spiritual maturity is evident when the fruits of the Spirit are active in the life of a believer.

There is no particular order that the fruit of the Spirit can be manifested in a person's life. For the purposes of this paper, the researcher will begin with the fruit of love. Biblical love is not self-seeking. It is a choice, not a feeling. Throughout the Bible, one is reminded that they should choose to love because God is love. The reader is commanded to love their enemies and to love one another. The best definition of this love

can be seen when Jesus Christ went to the cross that was a sacrificial love. The Apostle Paul gives us the best definition of love.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with truth, always hopes, always preserves. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where is knowledge, it will pass away. (1 Cor 13:4-8)

The next fruit of the Spirit is joy. Gospel artist Shirley Caesar penned a song, “This Joy I Have.” In it she states: “This joy I have the world didn’t give it and the world can’t take it away” (Caesar, 2016, track 11). The Bible says this, “Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart” (Ps 37:4).

Having joy in the Lord means that one is not concerned about the transitory things of this world. Joy in the Lord helps us look towards the coming of Jesus Christ and the eternal joy that a person will have at the second advent of Jesus Christ. When one looks at the things that are going on in this world one notes that the divorce rate is at an all-time high among Christians and non-Christians alike, along with higher rates of depression, suicide, and mental illness. The list goes on and on. Many of these issues occur because people are dealing with an issue of misplaced joy. Their joy is placed in worldly things. The Scripture reminds us that true love is found only in God and God alone.

Love not the world, neither the things of the that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever. (1 John 2:15-17)

The next fruit of the Spirit is peace. The peace that Jesus gives is synonymous with ‘rest.’ He puts it this way: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not be afraid”

(John 14:27). Since the world will pass away, one can say that the world does not offer much peace. This is evident when one turns on the television or looks at their news feed on their electronic devices. The world cannot give peace because true peace can only come from the peace giver and that is God. This reminder is found in the book of John, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

This is a representation of that peace one can have when they place their faith in Jesus. The Bible reminds the reader of the following. They will have trials and tribulations in this world; however, the believer can also have peace when they place their faith in Jesus.

The next fruit of the Spirit is forbearance or patience. As a practicing Christian, the believer should demonstrate to others the same type of patience God shows to them. This patience can only be manifested through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Kindness and goodness are the next fruit of the Spirit. In the African American church, it is often said, "God is good all the time, and all the time God is good." God's nature exhibits goodness and kindness. This goodness and kindness are modeled through the life of Jesus. God demonstrates this in parables and His actions. Even while on the cross Jesus stated, “Father forgive them for they know not what they do.” This shows the compassion and kindness that Jesus had for God’s creations. E. G. White (1899) writes that kindness and goodness are part of the great plan of salvation. "It would be well if those occupying positions of trust in our institutions would remember that they are to be representatives of Jesus. True goodness, holiness, love, compassion of tempted souls must be revealed in their lives” (p. 7).

The next fruit of the Spirit is faithfulness. Because of a person's sinful nature, many times believers attempt to be faithful, but are unfaithful: Unfaithful to God, people, and themselves. God knew that humanity could do nothing within themselves; therefore, God sent Jesus Christ to show the world that even when tempted that they could be faithful to God and keep their faith in God. The book of Hebrews reminds the believer of the importance of faith in a person's daily faith walk, "But without faith, it is impossible to please: for he, that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb 11:6).

The Holy Spirit empowers us to keep and exercise that type of faith. Only through the empowering of the Holy Spirit can anyone hope to have the type of faith that can move mountains; faith that will help a person keep their peace even in the storms of life. This type of faith can only be found when believer seeks God's face and make Jesus the Lord and Savior of their life.

The eighth fruit of the Spirit is gentleness. The fruit of gentleness helps the believer bear other people's burdens without the burden becoming burdensome. When a fellow believer stumbles, power is given through the Holy Spirit to help in the restoration process. For example, when Jesus spoke to Lazarus while Lazarus was in the tomb, Jesus could have called down angels to remove Lazarus' bandages; however, Jesus required those standing around to remove Lazarus' bandages. This is significant in the restoration process because God calls us to help in the process by gently restoring; this restoration process is noted in Galatians 6:11.

The last fruit of the Holy Spirit is self-control. One can look at the elected official who is married but having an affair. One can also see this in the Bible when King David

had an affair and had the woman's husband killed. This issue of lack of self-control can be seen in the personal lives of Christians and non-Christians when things are bought out of immediate gratification that individuals cannot afford. It can be seen when a person eats, smokes, or drinks things that are not good for their bodies and their relationships with other individuals and God. The book of Galatians makes crystal clear the need for self-control.

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. (Gal 5:16-18)

In other words, there is a dire need to exhibit self-control that is controlled by the Holy Spirit. If self-control is not controlled by the Holy Spirit, that same self-control can lead to pride and selfish ambitions and desires. This notion is paramount because right after Galatians 5:16-18 the reader is warned of the consequences when they do not walk in the Spirit:

Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Gal 5:19-21)

### **The Gifts of the Spirit**

The Bible shares that there are benefits and gifts for the spiritually mature. Psalms 103:1-4 says,

Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies.

Once a person is baptized in the Holy Spirit, they are given gifts to do ministry. These gifts are designed to be used in the church for the building up of the body of Christ, but also gifts that can be used in everyday life. Another term for this is called the 'anointing'. For example, King David was anointed by Samuel as the new king. It was through the anointing of the Holy Spirit that Sampson was able to do miraculous things through the power of God. Even Jesus did not do any miracles until He was anointed in the Jordan River.

The Apostle Paul affirms these gifts in 1 Corinthians 14 when he states that a believer should, “desire spiritual gifts.” He goes on to list the spiritual gifts that are available to the believer,

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit. To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. (1 Cor 12:7-11)

If a believer genuinely believes in God and the Bible, then there must be a belief in the manifestation of the spiritual gifts that the Holy Spirit promised to give those who have been baptized in the Holy Spirit. This manifestation can come in many forms such as healings, miracles, signs and wonders, the gift of discernment, the gift of wisdom, the gift of speaking in tongues, the gift of witnessing, the gift of entrepreneurship, and other gifts that will build up the Kingdom of God.

It must be noted that Ephesians 4:11-13 states that the body of Christ (believers) were given five-fold ministry gifts for the building up of the body of Christ. They are apostles, prophets, evangelists, preachers, and teachers. “And he gave some, apostles; and

some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors, and teachers. For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ (Eph 4:11-13). Two of these gifts are not recognized in many of today's churches; however, it was important to remember them for they were mentioned in the Bible.

### **The Need for the Holy Spirit in a Believer's Life**

The book of Joel and the book of Acts give us one of the main reasons why believers need the Holy Spirit in their lives. "And afterward I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream your young men will see visions" (Joel 2:28).

The book of Acts reaffirms this prophecy by saying, "In the last days, God says, 'I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams'" (Acts 2:17).

The question that has to be asked at this juncture is *Why does the Lord need to pour out His Spirit in the last days?* The answer to this question is found in the books of Matthew, Luke, and Timothy.

In Matthew, it says, "And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places" (Matt 24:6-7). One can see clearly that Scriptures are unfolding as the Bible has predicted. Clear evidence of this can be found when one reads the newspaper or as a pastor listens to the testimony and concerns of their congregation.

The book of 2 Timothy gives the reader a solemn example of the need for the Holy Spirit in the life of individuals and the church.

But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people. (2 Tim 3-5)

Wardle (2010) paints a sobering picture of today's church juxtaposed to the earlier church. "Jesus showed us that one cannot live the Christian life or in the Kingdom ministry without a vibrant relationship with the Holy Spirit (p. 39). He goes on to give us the main reason God said that He will pour out is the Spirit in the last days. It is also there is a paramount need for the Holy Spirit to be active not only in today's churches but also in the life of a believer.

The society in which we live is not tame. Nor is the unseen force of darkness that seeks to steal, kill, and destroy. Beneath the surface of even the most civilized community lies tremendous brokenness and pain. People of every race, age, gender, economic level, and religious disposition are impacted by forces, either subtle or overt, bent on misery and death. (p. 15)

### **The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Maturity**

One cannot discuss spiritual maturity or even church growth without including the Holy Spirit. God designed the church of the living God to mature believers spiritually and send them out into the world to help others mature spiritually. This model is lacking in many of today's churches. Research shows that spiritual maturity is an intentional result of the practice of spiritual disciplines empowered and guided by the Holy Spirit. The intentionality of practicing spiritual disciplines is missing in many churches and the fruits of it being missing are noticeable.



Some have said that the book of Acts is about the apostles, but the book of Acts is about the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the lives of God's disciples. The apostles were able to heal, deliver people from satanic attacks, and speak with power only by the infilling of the Holy Spirit. Acts 1:8 sets the stage for the phenomenal growth of the early church, and it also sets the stage if a believer wishes to tap into that power of the Holy Spirit. The Bible gives us a promise that is sadly misunderstood or received. The book of Acts tells us about this promise, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

The key word in the previous paragraph is witness. When there is a trial, a witness tells the jury what they have experienced or seen. They testify about an event. When the gift of the Holy Spirit is received the believer can be a witness to the power of God. A person can talk about the handkerchief that healed people (Acts 19:12), but there must also be an acknowledgment of the power that changed Peter after he was touched by the Holy Spirit. For example, pre-Holy Ghost experience Peter lied to Jesus, lied about even knowing Jesus and pre-Holy Ghost Peter cut off a man's ear. On the other hand, once Peter was touched by the Holy Spirit he preached and 3,000 people joined the church. During this period, the early church grew by leaps and bounds.

This demonstration of the Holy Spirit's role in spiritual maturity cannot be denied. But, often in today's context, theological students and church leaders have been conditioned to lean on seminars, presentations, and religious gimmicks to get people through the church doors. Clouzet (2011), former director of the North American Division of Evangelism, wrote that,

Most of us live our lives gasping for air as if drowning three inches below the waterline. We have grown so accustomed to this condition that we are oblivious that a whole new world exists just above us. ...In our quiet reveries with God, deep down, we know another dimension could be ours if we choose it, or if we knew how to get there." He goes on to say, "After forty years of successfully restoring many truths ignored in the Bible, the Adventist Church became adept to theological sword fighting, but real life was missing from members. They had the truth, but somehow, it did not make them free. (p. 16)

The very next sentence is the nail that drove his point home. Clouzet states, "Preachers proclaimed the law until the church was dry "as the hills of Gilboa" (p. 16).

This last sentence captures the reality of many churches. There is truth being preached but there is dryness. People come to church Sabbath after Sabbath to get a refreshing of the Holy Spirit. They go to the well to get some water, but sadly they leave the church dryer than they came. When the researcher read that sentence, he immediately thought about Ezekiel 37:1-5 and the valley of dry bones:

The hand of the Lord was upon me and carried me out in the Spirit of the Lord and set me down in the midst of the valley, which was full of bones, and caused me to pass by them round about: and behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest. Again, he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus, saith the Lord God unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live.

This dryness is the reason many of today's churches are not growing the way God and the Holy Spirit intended them to grow. This dryness can be seen in individuals now who are looking for something more than the church to fill a void. It can be seen in the communities where many Adventist churches are located as the community passes by the church daily and wonders if the church is a Seventh-day Adventist or Jehovah Witness building. This dryness can be seen in board and business meetings that focus on parking lots and things that have nothing to do with evangelism or salvation.

E. G. White (2010) was given a vision about this dryness, which is why she penned the following:

Our heavenly Father is more willing to give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him, than are earthly parents to give good gifts to their children. But it is our work, by confession, humiliation, repentance, and earnest prayer, to fulfill the conditions upon which God has promised to grant us His blessing. (p. 9)

### **What Happens When the Holy Spirit is not Received?**

E. G. White (2010) tells us that “The warmth of their first love is frozen up, and unless they are watered by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, their candlestick will be removed out of its place, except they repent and do their first work” (p. 167). When there is no Holy Spirit in the church or the life of a believer, the church life and personal life of the believer become an unwelcomed routine. When a person attends church, the evidence is very clear when there is no Holy Spirit in the church. There is no love, joy, peace, self-control, gentleness, no fruits and gifts of the spirit, no miracles, signs, and wonders. When there are seminars there are no baptisms; people come in the front door and leave out the back door. When the Holy Spirit is not primary, the church will morph into a social club. Auxiliaries will become silos for individuals to control and grab power. The focus will become internal to traditional perseverance instead of external to be mission focused and mission driven.

When there is no Holy Spirit in the personal life of a believer, the abundant life that Jesus often spoke of is not there. A believer goes from living to existing, going through the same routines with no meaning. When there is no Holy Spirit in the personal life of a believer, a person cannot love their enemies; they cannot find rest in Jesus as the

Bible declares. When there is no Holy Spirit in the personal life of a believer, many of them may end up like sons of Sceva.

And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus, I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded (Acts 19:14-16).

Without the Holy Spirit, there will be no signs and wonders. No manifestation of miracles in the church or the personal and public life of the believer, and no deliverance for evil influences. When there is no Holy Spirit, the church will continue as normal and blame God because the church is not growing; often not realizing that spiritual maturity and personal growth are impacted and powered by the Holy Spirit. E. G. White (1894) gives a sobering warning about rejecting the Holy Spirit.

It is a dangerous thing to doubt the manifestation of the Holy Spirit; for if this agency is doubted, there is no reserve power left by which to operate on the human heart. Those who attribute the work of the Holy Spirit to human agencies, saying that an undue influence was brought to bear upon them, are cutting their souls off from the fountain of blessing. (para 4)

### **How to Receive the Holy Spirit**

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is for everyone. The problem is that many believers do not know how to receive the Holy Spirit or the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Many are like the disciples whom Paul met who had never heard of the Holy Ghost (Acts 19:1-2).

Many individuals who claim to be Christians have the same testimony. Upon hearing this information Paul laid hands on them and they received the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

And he said unto them, unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues and prophesied.” (Acts 19:3-6)

Laying hands is one way of receiving the Holy Spirit. In Luke, the Scripture reminds readers all they must do is ask,

Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” (Luke 11:11-13)

Smith (2008) affirms that church growth and multiplication are contingent upon a continual infilling of the Holy Spirit. “The Holy Spirit to charge of the work of God, and thousands were converted to Jesus Christ” (p. 17). There are many reasons why the church and its members need the Holy Spirit. The first of the two most important reasons can be found in 1 Corinthians 12:3, “Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” The second reason is found in the parable of the 10 virgins, “And you shall receive power when the Holy Ghost comes upon you” (Acts 1:8).

In conclusion, this theological reflection highlighted the basic premise for this project. Church growth and multiplication are contingent upon individuals receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit through practicing spiritual disciplines. The Bible affirms these practices in Acts 1:14, Acts 24; 2:38, and Ephesians 3:16.

The researcher acknowledges that in some parts of the Bible the Holy Spirit was received by laying on of hands. However, this project will focus on the creation of a

viable process where individuals can receive the gift of the Holy Spirit through the active practice of spiritual disciplines.

## CHAPTER 3

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Given the daunting reality that many churches in the United States are either plateauing, declining, or dying, the researcher felt it best to create a program that addresses this current problem through researching literature that focuses on spiritual maturity. Dr. Byrd (2018) recognizes that there is a problem with contemporary church models which is impacting church growth. He writes, “Nevertheless, while worldwide membership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is climbing the growth rate for the North American division, which includes the United States has shrunk in comparison to the other world divisions composing the Seventh-day Adventist Church” (p. 12). Even though church growth is not the primary purpose of this dissertation, there is evidence that suggests that the practice of spiritual disciplines for spiritual maturity will have a positive impact on church growth.

The problem of spiritual immaturity is addressed through the lens of increasing spiritual maturity through the practice of spiritual disciplines at Berean Seventh-day Adventist Church. There are two realities that need to be addressed. The first is the assumption that church members’ spiritual growth is automatic through church attendance. The second is an awareness that spiritual maturity is an intentional, ongoing process for a church member, believer, or seeker

Spiritual maturity is growing in Christ. The Apostle Paul writes,

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.” (Phil 3:12-14)

Research shows that spiritual maturity is a process which can be articulated in stages. One of the key components to becoming spiritually mature is for the believer to become spiritually healthy. The first component of becoming spiritually mature is satisfying a spiritual hunger that God has placed on the inside of humanity. Studies have shown that often that hunger is filled with worldly things, like the quest for power, money, selfishness, jealousy—just to name a few. Spiritually maturity is satisfying this spiritual hunger for God through spiritual formation. Dybdahl (2015) writes,

The hunger for God is not to be denied, squelched, suppressed, or reasoned away. God has place it in us to be nurtured, cherished, and satisfied as only He can do. He meant it to draw us on a quest, a search, a pilgrimage to find Him. (p.10)

Tenney (1998) echoes this sentiment and masterfully articulates the main issue in many churches. He writes, “Unfortunately, the Church today spends countless hours and much energy debating where God has been, how heavy he was when He was there, and even His gender. To true God chasers, all these things are immaterial” (introduction).

He goes on to make a profound statement that should be resonate with all believers. A true God chaser is not happy with just past truth he must have present truth. God chasers do not want to just study from the moldy pages of what God has done; they are anxious to see what God is doing. (introduction)

Tenney captures the paradigm that is a current reality in many churches today. A reality that focuses on past accomplishments and traditions instead of focusing on the exciting things God is doing today.

This hunger for God and God chasing in not a new concept. It is the reason believers attend houses of worship. It is the reason we should exist—to experience this



move of God. However, in a believer's quest to find God, they may get sidetracked by the devil and/or selfish ambitions or both. The believer may attend church with good intentions but allow the devil to take their focus off of Jesus and forget the primary reason they attend church. This can happen with leadership and laity. A believer's frustrations with a current religious system that is not focusing on God or does not have systems in place for spiritual maturity may cause a believer to leave the church and go from church to church looking to fill that void. This often leads to the following: spiritualism and other *isms*; a believer choosing not to attend service in a church building; leaving the church altogether.

Second, spiritual maturity is the formation of Christ-like character in church members, believers, or seekers. Spiritual maturity is coming to the light and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

The researcher holds the belief that there is a significant correlation between spiritual maturity, financial maturity, mental maturity, and physical maturity. Biblical scholars affirm that a person's '*being*' is composed of mind, body, and spirit. Given this reality, it is important to understand that spiritual maturity is just as important as physical maturity-if not primary in the growth process.

It is important because humanity was born in sin and shaped in iniquity, according to the Bible. Therefore, humanity has a proclivity to sin—it is in humanity's nature. And because this is the case, many decisions are made from carnal passions and/or from selfish motives. Selfish decisions come from giving in to carnal desires. These carnal desires can be compared to an embedded virus like in a computer—the computer being a person's flesh. The cure, the anti-virus, is the practice of spiritual disciplines.

There is an interesting oxymoron reality in place. Even though a believer matures chronologically and physically we are reminded that the spirit or the inner person is renewed daily. “For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day (2 Cor 4:16). This concept is revolutionary and needs to be at the forefront of theological conversations. Once the Holy Spirit empowers the inner/spirit person, this will impact and inform the decisions a believer makes. The Holy Spirit empowering the inner/spirit person will allow the believer to get victory of their sinful nature. It will allow a believer or seeker to have the fruits and gifts of the spirit and walk in the Spirit, as stated in Galatians 5:16. This empowering will cause church members to want to witness and have the power to witness. It will create a church culture that causes individuals to seek God in Spirit and in Truth. It will cause church members, believers, and seekers to grow spiritually.

There is a theological assumption that if a believer will mature spiritually that maturation will have a positive impact on how that individual understands finances, makes decisions, and take care of their physical body, and grow the church. Mulholland (2016) states,

the process of spiritual formation is to form us in the image of Christ. When the New Testament writers speak of “the image of Christ,” they mean the fulfillment of the deepest dynamics of our being. Given this thought, it is imperative to examine and critique literature the deals with development spiritual development on an intimate level. (p.41)

Willard (1998) created a visual image of the impact of spiritual disciplines combined with the power of the Holy Spirit in transforming a believer’s life. He calls it “The ‘Golden Triangle’ of Spiritual Growth” (see Appendix E). He writes “This image is

designed to suggest the correlation in practical life of the factors that can certainly lead to the transformation of the inner self to Christlikeness” (p. 347).

Willard (1998) emphasizes several points in spiritual maturity. There are two that are especially important in the area of spiritual maturation. The first is to know that the function of the Holy Spirit is, first, to move within our souls, especially our minds, to present the person of Jesus and the reality of the kingdom. The second is to know that after we receive the new life, the Spirit continues to move upon and within us to do the kinds of works Jesus did (through the gifts of the Spirit) and to grow the kind of inward character that manifest itself in the “fruit” outcome of the Spirit in our outward life: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, and similar traits of Christ (Gal. 2:23-25).

Scazzero (2017) adds another dimension to spiritual maturity when he argues that the emotionally healthy spirituality of a believer is paramount in a believer’s spiritual maturation. High performing churches have members who believe in authentic fellowship, empowering leadership and laity, servant leadership, and relevant worship experiences. However, according to Scazzero, this can only become a reality when church members are spiritually healthy. With this being the case, then the process would be as follows: Church growth is contingent upon spiritual maturity of church members. The spiritual maturity of church members does not happen overnight; it is an ongoing process. The key component in this process is becoming spiritually healthy. When church members become spiritually healthy, spiritual maturity will be the outcome and church growth will become an organic reality.

The researcher will examine literature that focuses particularly on spiritual disciplines that lead to spiritual maturity and the relationship between the practice of the

Holy Spirit and the practice of spiritual disciplines that impact spiritual maturity. This conclusion was drawn after analyzing a plethora of information presented by research groups like the Barna Group and Pew Research Center, as well as from those who have done extensive research on church growth and noted an alarming trend in the decline in churches in the United States. It is postulated that this alarming trend can be reversed when a congregation actively engages in the practice of spiritual disciplines led and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

The following question will be answered through the literature review: What factor(s) must be present for a believer to become spiritually mature? As part of laying a foundation for the practice of spiritual disciplines in a congregational setting, the researcher will review selected literature that deals with spiritual disciplines, and spiritual maturity methodologies, the practice of spiritual disciplines, and the role of the Holy Spirit in spiritual maturity. Priority will be given to recent studies, articles, books, statistical analysis, as well digital references which deal with the subject of spiritual maturity. Given the scope of the subject, literature that may not be as recent but examines the role of the Holy Spirit in spiritual maturity and how the Holy Spirit empowers individuals through the practice of spiritual disciplines will be examined.

In the theological reflection chapter, the four points that are germane to this project are found in the dialogue between the prophet Ezekiel and the Lord in Ezekiel 13:1-3. The first point is the realization that a vibrant congregation can eventually die. The second point is that practices should be in place to keep a church from dying. The third point is how the Holy Spirit can be manifested in a believer to impact church

growth. And the last point consists of looking at the role of the Holy Spirit in resurrecting a plateaued or dying church.

The text was studied through the lens of the following questions: How did the bones become dry? Could certain methodologies be implemented to prevent this scenario? What spiritual disciplines (if any) can be gleaned from the conversation between Ezekiel and the Lord? How important was the Holy Spirit in the regenerative process of the valley of dry bones?

There are methodologies that focus on church growth from a corporate perspective. This project will look at how spiritual disciplines add to the spiritual maturation of church members. For example, there are initiatives such as Church Planting Boot Camp, Plant1000, SEEDS Church Planting Conference, or the evangelical North Carolina church planting conference called the “Gathering”. These conferences address church growth methodologies via creating new churches. Cauley (2020) completed a study on church growth in conferences in the United States and writes that “Conferences would benefit from hosting Church Revitalization Conferences (see [www.regenerateconference.org](http://www.regenerateconference.org)) to inspire, educate, and train church leaders and members” (p. 133).

These conferences involve both organizational leaders and church revitalization experts. The conference church growth director may also organize practicum weekends to take church revitalization teams or church boards through the beginning stages of the revitalization process (Cauley, 2020). The researcher was not shocked to see that this reality of dryness is prevalent in today’s churches in the West. Rainer (2014) gives an account of a church that was once vibrant but lost its vision. “I was the church’s

consultant for over a decade ago. The church had reached its peak attendance many years earlier. The worship attendance of 750 in 1975 took place during “the good old days” (p. 4). He goes on to say, “By the time I arrived, the attendance had fallen to an average of eighty-three. The large sanctuary seemed to swallow the small crowd on Sunday morning” (p. 5). The researcher agrees with this alarming trend. The researcher has noticed this trend even in Seventh-day Adventist churches. Clouzet (2011) claims,

After forty years of successfully restoring many truths ignored in the Bible, the Adventist Church became adept in theological sword fighting, but real life was missing from many members. They had preached the law until the church was dry “as the hills of Gilboa.” (p. 16)

In the Adventist Church, the emphasis is on eschatological prophecy and other doctrines, which is needed. However, a look at the New Testament model for church growth shows those individuals who practiced spiritual disciplines and were empowered with the Holy Spirit met the everyday needs of believers which included healing, financial increase, deliverance, and so on. Churches were designed to be the body of Christ to meet the needs of every believer.

Research revealed through the literature review that churches that are plateaued or dying have gotten into a cultural habit of meeting a believer’s physical, financial, and social needs through human activity while relying little on the empowering of the Holy Spirit to meet those needs. In the New Testament model of spiritual maturity, the opposite is evident. Believers did not have a lot of financial resources; however, when they became empowered by the Holy Spirit, lives were transformed. The believers who came in contact with the disciples who were full of the Holy Spirit experiences deliverance, healings, and other miracles.

E. G. White (2010) echoes the need and the power of the Holy Spirit that is occurring in churches when she writes:

Our Heavenly Father is more willing to give his Holy Spirit to them that ask Him than are earthly parents to give good gifts to their children. But it is our work, by confession, humiliation, repentance, and earnest prayer, to fulfill the conditions... (p. 9)

Within this scope, the following will be ascertained: (a) The role of the Holy Spirit in spiritual maturity; (b) if the New Testament Model for spiritual maturity is still prevalent in today's church environment; (c) the Holy Spirit and the practice of spiritual disciplines; (d) how the practice of spiritual disciplines impacts spiritual maturity; and (e) the soundest way to measure the impact of the practice of spiritual disciplines.

Theologically and critically examining these factors will allow the researcher to develop a strategy that will address the underlying spiritual condition that impacts spiritual maturity.

### **The Role of the Holy Spirit in Church Growth**

The role of the Holy Spirit is grossly misunderstood in regard to church growth and multiplication and the manifestations of this neglect can be seen in the following areas: there are low to zero baptisms; little to no excitement for evangelism; in-fighting in the church; tithing decrease; lack of TMI (Total Member Involvement); the church is experiencing plateauing, declining, or even death; spiritual and moral apathy; a dearth of accountability; and spiritual dryness has become the norm.

The aforementioned list is the exact opposite of what a healthy church should be, according to recent studies. For example, Schwarz (2015) highlights eight characteristics of a healthy church which can be measured when a church takes the Natural Church

Development (NCD) survey. He writes that a healthy church should have high marks in the following areas: Empowering leadership, gift-based ministry, passionate spirituality, effective structures, inspiring worship service, holistic small groups, need-oriented evangelism, and loving relationships

Through the practice of spiritual disciplines, those areas mentioned by Schwarz (2015) would positively impact the growth of the church. The Holy Spirit is the missing essential element for spiritual maturity that should positively impact church growth. If church growth methodologies are not empowered by the Holy Spirit, there will be little or superficial growth in these areas.

The New Testament growth model affirms this idea. Individuals practiced spiritual disciplines like prayer, fasting, humiliation, and repentance. According to the New Testament account, believers who received the Holy Spirit were endowed with the gift of the Spirit. They moved in miracles, signs, and wonders. The disciples who were fearful became bold and proclaimed the gospel message. Once they were endowed with the Holy Spirit, they were able to draw individuals to the church by preaching, teaching, and moving in the gifts of the Spirit. Authors may disagree on church growth methods but affirm the importance and power of the Holy Spirit in church growth. It is agreed that there is a lack of the presence of the Holy Spirit in a lot of today's churches. There are a lot of conferences, books, and seminars on the need for the Holy Spirit in churches. But there is a disconnect or lack of application when it comes to the Holy Spirit being active in many postmodern churches.

Tozer (as cited in Brown, 2014) says,

If the Holy Spirit were withdrawn from the church of today, 95 percent of what we do would go on and no one would know the difference. If the Holy Spirit had been



withdrawn from the New Testament church, 95 percent of what they did would stop, and everybody would know the difference. (para. 6)

Other authors affirm this insight. For example, Burrill (1993) states,

The Holy Spirit supernaturally enables the church to accomplish its mission to reach the world for Christ. We can never divorce the Holy Spirit from the mission of the church. This was the whole reason for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. (p.14)

Fee (1996) gives this perspective on the need for the Holy Spirit in this era:

If the church is going to be effective in our postmodern world, we need to stop paying mere lip service to the Spirit and to recapture Paul's perspective: the Spirit as the experienced, empowering return to God's own personal presence in and among us, who enables us to live as a radically eschatological people in the present world while we await the consummation. (p. 15)

Fee (1996) is saying, that to reach this postmodern world, believers need to have the same experience with the Holy Spirit as Paul did. "The Spirit as the experienced, empowering return to God's own personal presence in and among us, who enables us to live as a radically eschatological people in the present world while we await the consummation" (p. 15).

E. G. White (2005) affirms this reality when she writes,

Wherever the need of the Holy Spirit is a matter little thought of, there is seen spiritual drought, spiritual darkness, spiritual declension, and death. Whenever minor matters occupy the attention, the divine power which is necessary for growth and prosperity of the church, and which would bring all other blessings in its train, is lacking, though offered in plentitude. (p. 50)

She captures the foundational premise of this project in the aforementioned quote. It is solely the responsibility of the Holy Spirit to grow the church, as seen in the New Testament. Humanity is the vehicle through which the Holy Spirit moves. The empowering presence of the Holy Spirit should be the primary focus of any congregation and without that power, as pointed out by E. G. White, churches will eventually die.

In speaking about the Apostle Paul, Fee (1996) challenges the reader to look at the readings of Paul critically and more importantly spiritually. He writes, “Hence I offer this ‘invitation’ to read Paul afresh, to recognize the crucial role of the Spirit in his life and thought, and in that of his churches” (p.15).

The examiner adamantly agrees with Fee to the degree that once a believer critically and spiritually studies the life of Paul, the believer can see how the Holy Spirit played the primary role in the conversion and empowering of the Apostle Paul. This is the model which should be the standard in all Christian churches. The model is that a believer like Paul was not born saved. But, when a believer encounters the Holy Spirit as Paul did, four things will happen. The first is an invitation. Next is a conversion or transformation experience. The third thing that happens is they live life in the Spirit. And last, but not least, there is a proclamation of the gospel of Christ.

It is the Holy Spirit that draws individuals to Christ-this is the invitation. Once a believer comes to Christ, then there is a conversation and then a transformation through the power of the Holy Spirit. E. G. White speaks about this step-by-step process in her book *Steps to Christ* (2003). The church’s role is to create a spiritual environment where individuals are encouraged and taught to practice spiritual disciplines empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Murray (2006) continues in this vein,

Few believers realize the walk with God that their Father has prepared for them. And fewer are willing to discuss what the cause of the failure might be. We must acknowledge that the Holy Spirit, through whose divine omnipotence this inner revelation comes, is not fully realized in the church-the body of Christ-as He should be. In our preaching and in our practice, He does not hold the place of prominence. (p. 8)

Researchers have done in-depth studies on churches that have plateaued, declined, or died, and tragically, many of them did not die due to the recent Covid-19 pandemic. Rainer (2014) points out four things a church must address so it will not die: First, the church must admit and confess its dire need. Second, the church must pray for wisdom and strength to do whatever is necessary. Third, the church must be willing to change radically. And fourth, that change must lead to action and outward focus.

Research points to the fact that the pandemic accelerated the decline and death of many churches.

The study, published in April, estimated that in the decade ending in 2020, 3,850 to 7,700 houses of worship closed per year in the United States, or 75 to 150 congregations per week. It also projected those numbers will double or triple in the wake of the pandemic. The biggest reason for church closings is a decline in church membership. A March poll from Gallup found that fewer than half (47%) of Americans say they belong to a church, synagogue, or mosque, down from more than 70% in 2000. (Shimron, 2021)

Research has shown that even before the pandemic, churches died due to systemic issues which were left unaddressed and/or the leadership and members did not have the right tools/methodologies along with the power of the Holy Spirit to reverse the trend.

The Church knows quite well both the reason and the remedy for failure. The human resources of the Church were never so great. The opportunities of the Church were never so glorious. The need for the work of the Church was never so urgent. The crisis is momentous, and the Church staggers helplessly amid it all.” (Chadwick, 1937, p. 5)

Chadwick goes on to say,

The Church has lost the note of authority, the secret of wisdom, and the gift of power, through persistent and willful neglect of the Holy Spirit of God. Confusion and impotence are inevitable when the wisdom and resources of the world are substituted for the presence and power of the Spirit of God. (p. 5)

The aforementioned quote by Chadwick was written in 1937; the literature review suggests that this trend has gotten worse. The researcher believes that the Holy Spirit

wants to work and is willing to imbue believers with the power of God; however, miracles, signs, and wonders have been replaced by skepticism and human activity has—in too many instances—replaced the moving of the Holy Spirit in congregations. If one juxtaposes this Western trend with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in continents like Africa, one notes a stark difference.

Kraft (1997) recounts a trip to Nigeria and how they perceived Christianity “The Nigerians “knew” that whatever power Christianity brought it was not adequate to deal with such things as tragedy, infertility, relational breakdowns, and troublesome weather. It did not meet their deepest spiritual needs” (p. 4).

Bevere (2013) captures the current condition of many Christian churches. He lists what a believer’s life and church atmosphere will be like without the Holy Spirit: First, there is virtually no Christian life without the Holy Spirit.

Without the Holy Spirit, Christianity is dry, monotonous, and mundane. Without the Holy Spirit, our labor is draining and wearisome. Without the Holy Spirit, there is no fellowship with God. Remove the Holy Spirit from a church and one of two things will happen: It will morph into a social club, or it will become a religious institution (p. 4).

Bevere continues to write:

The trust is... There is no revelation without the Holy Spirit. In fact, without the Spirit Scripture becomes lethal; for we are told “the letter kills but the Spirit gives life” (2 Corinthians 3:6). There is no vision without the Holy Spirit. There is no joy without Him. There is no peace without Him. There is no freedom without the Holy Spirit. (p. 4)

The church has entered a new era and is on the precipice of greatness or irrelevance. God designed the church to be a light; a citadel for those who are spiritually lost, for those who desired a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. It was called forth by God to prepare humanity to be the body of Christ for the world. God designed the

church—His ecclesia—to be a spiritual storehouse and powerhouse. The power comes from the Holy Spirit.

The New Testament church evangelistic model is the example that is needed in this postmodern era. Peter denied Christ but after being filled with the Holy Spirit, preached a sermon and 3,000 individuals joined the church. The church went from addition to multiplication through the Holy Spirit.

The New Testament church, which was birthed by the Holy Spirit, demonstrated the fruits of the Holy Spirit. The converted disciples—empowered by the Holy Spirit—demonstrated miracles, signs, and wonders. The researcher believes that miracles, signs, and wonders are not the end goal. However, when a believer is empowered by the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit will be manifested through the believer and show the world the power of God. These signs and wonders included healings, demonic deliverances, restoration, wisdom, and much more. The researcher adamantly believes that the work of the Adventist church would be more advanced if the leadership and membership understood the power of the Holy Spirit in their public and personal lives.

Murray (1982) claims that the reason for Pentecost in the New Testament was to make the church what God designed the church to be. With this thought in mind, the researcher believes that through the practice of spiritual disciplines, each individual will experience their own personal Pentecost. Murray solidifies the importance of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer when he writes,

I spoke of what the Spirit will do in individual believers. Think of what the blessing will be when the church as a whole answers her calling to be filled with the Spirit and exhibits the life, the power, and the very presence of her Lord to the world. (p. 28)

E. G. White (2005) states that:

The church is God's appointed agency for salvation of men. It was organized for service and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world. From the beginning it has been God's plan that through His church shall be reflected to the world His fullness and His sufficiency. (p. 9)

Poet Robert Frost once said in the poem *The Road Not Taken*, "Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference" (1916). The entity standing and looking at the road is the church and the leaders of the church. For so long the church has been going down a particular road and many times relying on human methodologies instead of the Holy Spirit. Chadwick (1937) affirms this reality when he writes,

The Church has lost the note of authority, the secret of wisdom, and the gift of power, through persistent and willful neglect of the Holy Spirit of God. Confusion and impotence are inevitable when the wisdom and resources of the world are substituted for the presence and power of the Spirit of God. (p. 5)

To understand the role of the Holy Spirit in spiritual maturity one must first understand the following in regard to the Holy Spirit: (a) The person and purpose of the Holy Spirit; (b) The significance of the Holy Spirit in spiritual maturation of church members or believers; (c) The significance of the Holy Spirit in personal growth; (d) How does one receive the Holy Spirit?; and (e) What is the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the practice of spiritual disciplines?

The researcher discovered that even though church growth experts may differ on methodologies for church growth, the role of the Holy Spirit is a central component in many of their methodologies. For example, Cauley (2016) notes the importance of the Holy Spirit in creating an environment where churches that have plateaued or declined rely on the Holy Spirit for revival, renewal, and transformation. Burrill (1996) also articulates the importance of the Holy Spirit. "We must remember that the fulfillment of

Christ's mission will not occur simply from employing the correct methodology. Of utmost importance is our dependence upon the power of the Holy Spirit to convict and convert the heart" (p. 9).

These are two examples where two insightful authors have different methodologies for church growth; however, they both affirm the need for the Holy Spirit in their methodology. The researcher holds the premise that methodologies are needed for the organization. However, it is the Holy Spirit that brings the increase.

The researcher believes that the right methodologies alone are not enough to have a positive impact on spiritual maturity. Burrill (1996) affirms this sentiment when he writes, "While the Holy Spirit can make disciples with poor methodology, this author believes that when the Church employs methodology consistent with the mission of Christ, our members will receive much greater empowerment through the Holy Spirit" (p, 10).

These points of discussion affirm the fact that role of the Holy Spirit is essential for spiritual maturity. Hernandez (2018) insightfully reminds readers that the Holy Spirit can be found in every book of the Bible. When one looks in the Bible, one notes that from Genesis to Revelation, the presence of the Holy Spirit was and still is critical in the growth of the church. The Holy Spirit was responsible for the creation of the world (Gen 1:2), responsible for empowering God's people for mighty exploits (Judg 14:6), and responsible for teaching, comforting (1 Cor 12-14), and preparing God's people for the return of Jesus Christ (Matt 25:1-13). One will also note how the Holy Spirit is responsible for the fruits and gifts of the Spirit. (Gal 5:16-26, 1 Cor 12:1-26).

The importance of the Holy Spirit in spiritual maturity cannot be denied. Kidder (2011) hits the nail on the head when he writes:

The early church was born out of a radical transformation that took place after the Holy Spirit descended upon it. It was when we “were filled with the Holy Spirit” that the otherwise-unremarkable disciples began to preach “as the Spirit enabled them” (Acts 2:4). (p.74)

Walvoord (1991) echoes the importance of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer when he writes, “Few Subjects are of more immediate moment in the experience of the believer in Christ than the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in His relation to the spiritual life” (p. 10). Walvoord goes on to say, “The work of the Holy Spirit in the believer has prior place because it is related to every reality of the believer’s experience (p. 163).

The researcher believes that role of the Holy Spirit in church growth is paramount to creating a healthy church culture. A culture where churches will grow organically, which means that churches will grow whether or not there is an evangelistic event. In this case, the church's vision and mission will be empowered and guided by the moving of the Holy Spirit.

Cauley (2016) acknowledges the need for the Holy Spirit in coaching pastors who are pastoring a church that is plateaued or declining. Kidder (2011) affirms this when he writes,

No single factor alone will help your church grow including some imaginary, ideal location where numerical or other increase is automatic-and no combination of efforts or strategies will make your church develop without the Holy Spirit. But with the Holy Spirit, we have very reason for optimism and enthusiasm to church growth-including effective leadership, enthusiastic involvement of members, utilizing the power of prayer, and inspiring and dynamic worship.” (p. 31)

Understanding the role of the Holy Spirit is essential in church growth. To go deeper into the understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit in church growth, one must



analyze three aspects of the Holy Spirit. The first is the Promise of the Holy Spirit. The second is the Person of the Holy Spirit. The last is the Purpose of the Holy Spirit.

The next section will go deeper into unpacking the aspects of the Holy Spirit.

### **The Promise of the Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit is also known as the Spirit of God. In Hebrew, the Holy Spirit is referred to as the Paraclete in Greek: παράκλητος, or Paráklētos. In the English language, Holy Spirit can be interpreted as “advocate,” “counselor,” and “helper.” Jesus references this in John 14:16. In King James Version it reads, “And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever.” When glancing at the juxtaposition of this text in the NIV and the NKJV, one notes how the term for the Holy Spirit changes with the version being used. In the NIV it says, “And I will ask the father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever.” In the NKJV, it says, “And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever.”

One of the most important and overlooked methodologies in spiritual maturity can be noted in the book of Matthew chapter 3:13-17:

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented. As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

The Bible says that Jesus was baptized and when he came out of the water, the Holy Spirit descended like a dove. An important aspect to address is the fact that Jesus did not do any miracles until He was baptized by the Holy Spirit. In order to be true

followers of Christ, we should be baptized as a visible sign of committing our lives to Christ. To be transformed into the likeness of Christ and to do the miracles as Jesus did, we also need to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. The Bible reminds us of the promise that "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father" (John 14:12).

The best example of the transformative power of the Holy Spirit can be seen with the disciples of Jesus Christ. Jesus' closest disciples believed within themselves that they would never leave or forsake Jesus,

Peter replied, "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will." "Truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." But Peter declared, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." (Matt. 26:33-35)

Jesus' disciples, before being empowered by the Holy Spirit, thought that they had the power to stand for Jesus during His persecution; however, during the trial of Jesus, all the remaining disciples who were close to Jesus denied Him and tried to desert Him. But after the Holy Spirit empowered these same disciples, the record shows that there was a marked difference in their character, commitment, and the power they had. Example after example demonstrates that the disciples who were fearful before the Holy Spirit had divine boldness after receiving the Holy Spirit. Peter preached one sermon and 3,000 souls joined the church. The Bible records that individuals were being healed by Peter's shadow after he received the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:15). The disciples were able to cast out demons; articles of their clothing like aprons and handkerchiefs had so much power that healing that they healed people (Acts 19:12).

Smith (2007) correctly states that it is not merely an option but an imperative that the believer receives the Holy Spirit. “Jesus was our example in all things. In His life we see the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a special, separate event following His water baptism. This event equipped Him for victory over Satan and for His ministry” (p. 22).

Smith (2007) affirms the importance of Jesus’ water baptism and then Spirit baptism as the divine model for every born-again believer in Christ. Individuals have correctly emphasized that evangelism should lead to baptisms; however, once a person is baptized, they should be also baptized with the Holy Spirit. The latter has been overlooked too often in the church, which is why a person can be in the church for years and not be committed or converted. It is the belief of the researcher that once a person or congregation is filled with the Holy Spirit, that there will be a significant change in their character and conversations. The need to evangelize will become a priority. The church will grow naturally through the power of the Holy Spirit. A church without the Holy Spirit will see no growth; in-fighting will be the norm and no fruits nor gifts of the Spirit will be present. Church members and leadership will also be more concerned with their personal agendas than God’s agenda. A church without the Holy Spirit will not be able to discern that the needs have changed. Eventually churches decline and die spiritually, if not close entirely.

Prior to Jesus leaving His disciples for the heavenly throne, Jesus gave them a divine command and promise to wait for the Holy Spirit. The promise of the Holy Spirit is still available today for all those who believe in Jesus Christ. Froom (1956) gives graphic details of a church or person who does not have the Holy Spirit. “The promise of

the Holy Spirit is a matter little thought of, and the result is only what might be expected—spiritual drought, spiritual darkness, spiritual declension and death” (p. 12).

E. G. White (1948) writes, “Minor matters occupy the attention, and the divine power which is necessary for the growth and prosperity of the church, and which would bring all other blessings in its train, is lacking though offered in its infinite plenitude” (p. 21). Froom (1956) states, “To receive the Holy Spirit was their supreme privilege and is likewise to be the supreme privilege of every disciple of that same Lord, while waiting for His visible, bodily return to receive them to the heavenly mansions” (p. 25). E. G. White (2005) echoes these sentiments when she writes, “The promise of the Holy Spirit is not limited to any age or to any race. Christ declared that the divine influence of His Spirit was to be with His flowers unto the end” (p. 49).

E. G. White (2005) continues with the necessity of the Holy Spirit when she writes:

The lapse of time has wrought no change in Christ's parting promise to send the Holy Spirit as his representative. It is not because of any restriction on the part of God that the riches of His grace do not flow earthward to men. If the fulfillment of the promise is not seen as it might be, it is because the promise is not appreciated as it should be. (p. 50)

Authors Froom and E. G. White capture a reality that the researcher has noted is quite common in many churches today. There are three spectrums a church can fall into. At one end the church is a healthy functioning church; in the middle the church has plateaued; at the other end of the religious spectrum, churches have fallen into a spiritual reality that consists of spiritual drought, spiritual darkness, spiritual declension, and death.

Rainer (2014) makes it clear that when a spiritual autopsy is done on a dying or deceased church, it is evident that there is a common factor or a domino effect in churches that have plateaued or died. The majority of churches that have died or plateaued have experienced some level of spiritual drought, spiritual darkness, declension, and death. As pointed out previously, churches that are showing significant growth are empowered by the Holy Spirit. The researcher believes that when churches practice spiritual disciplines, the congregation will score high on the NCD survey because the practice of those disciplines will have a positive impact on congregation.

Research strongly suggests that churches that are growing are healthy churches, as Schwartz (2015) points out. This spiritual healthiness will translate in impactful and life changing ministry which can be measured through tools like the NCD survey (see Appendix G). Those churches that are empowered by Holy Spirit have truly become Jesus' hands and feet truly and are able to meet the needs of their community.

The researcher and students of church social structures would agree that communities are different. There are some under gentrification, while another may be in an affluent neighborhood, and still another may be in the suburbs or a low-income area. However, through the power of the Holy Spirit, in any community there can be growth when believers receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and practice spiritual disciplines.

Wardle (2010) reminds the reader that the promise of the Holy Spirit was a promise of power, blessing, and a promise of transformation. He expands this idea about the promise when he raises this question, "If God has promised the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit as our gift, why is that so many Christians and churches do not seem to be People of the Presence?" (p.51).

Wardle (2010) believes that God is waiting and wanting to bestow the Holy Spirit on all believers who ask; however, he eloquently states that there are four areas that are keeping many believers from receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. They are first, an unbiblical worldview; second, ignorance; third, fear; and last, dissension among Christians.

This reality is affirmed by J. White (2014). “Among the unaffiliated are more than 13 million self-described atheist and agnostics, which is nearly 6 percent of the U.S. public, as well as nearly 33 million people who have no particular religious affiliations 14 percent” (p. 16). He goes on to report this startling trend, “The ‘*nones*’ now make up the nation's fastest-growing and second-largest religious category, eclipsed only by Catholics, outnumbering even Southern Baptists, the largest Protestant denomination” (p. 17).

These individuals need to experience a personal encounter with the Holy Spirit. Once a non-believer encounters a Spirit-filled believer who practices spiritual disciplines, they will have an experience that will be life-changing. According to Scripture, when non-believers encountered the disciples after they were filled with the Holy Spirit, their lives were changed, and they saw the power of God.

This trend suggests that there is a paramount need and urgency for believers to be filled with the Holy Spirit. This infilling will empower any believer to become excited about sharing the gospel message. It is the power of the Holy Spirit through the practice of spiritual disciplines that will draw individuals to see a life-changing relationship with Christ.

Wardle (2010) goes on to say that ignorance and fear are two more factors that are keeping believers from receiving the Holy Spirit, “There are countless Christians who

attend churches that go beyond minimizing the place of power of the Holy Spirit—they discount it all together” (p. 54). He goes on to say, “some church traditions have based their practice of faith on a belief that the manifestations of the Holy Spirit, including spiritual gifts, miracles, signs and wonders, ceased with the death of the Apostles” (p. 54).

Wardle (2010) suggests that many believers are fearful to be pushed out of their comfort zones, “We are afraid to be pushed beyond our own comfort zone and will quickly draw back from anything that threatens that” (p. 55).

There is a symbiotic relationship between the Holy Spirit and the practice of spiritual disciplines. Believers who practice spiritual disciplines spiritually prepare themselves to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Once the believer receives the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit empowers the believer to continue practicing spiritual disciplines. The researcher views the relationship between the practice of spiritual disciplines and the Holy Spirit as similar to a car battery and alternator. A car battery supplies an electric charge that travels through the starting system of the car. Once the car is running, the alternator sends the current back to recharge the battery as you drive. The battery is the Holy Spirit, the car is the person, and the practice of spiritual disciplines is the alternator.

A person can practice spiritual disciplines without receiving the Holy Spirit. They can pray, sing, preach, teach, even administrate without receiving the Holy Spirit. Similar to the Pharisees and Sadducees, a person can practice a spiritual discipline, but their hearts are far from God. The practice of those disciplines can become self-aggrandizing. The practice of spiritual disciplines is to draw a person closer to God and to grow in God.

The researcher knows that those same spiritual disciplines can be used by the devil to become satanic disciplines that will draw a person away from God.

Before the disciples received the Holy Spirit, the disciples practiced spiritual disciplines while waiting to receive the Holy Spirit. Finley (2011) list two reasons why the Holy Spirit was poured out. The first was that the timing was right. The second is that the disciples practiced spiritual disciplines: earnest intercession, deeper, faith, heartfelt repentance, honest confession, loving unity, self-examination, sacrificial humility, obedient surrender, joyful thanksgiving, and passionate witness.

### **The Person of the Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit is probably the most misunderstood person of the Trinity composed of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The researcher affirms that the Holy Spirit can be problematic to individuals in this postmodern era. The Bible says, “Spiritual things are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor 2:14). Given this reality, the Holy Spirit is intangible. We cannot touch Him with our hands, see Him with our eyes, or hear Him with our ears.

The Holy Spirit is a person. He is the third person of the Trinity. Even though He cannot be seen visibly, manifestations of His presence can be noted by the fruits of the Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit, the administrations of the Spirit, and the empowerment of the believer by the Spirit.

Although the Holy Spirit does not have a physical body, He is very much God in person for He is in possession of a mind, emotions, and a will. He teaches, guides, comforts, and abides in close fellowship and relationship with God’s children. Wardle



(2010) states, “The manifestations of the Holy Spirit are varied in expressions, power, and ministry. In the biblical metaphors, he is wind, water, fire, and dove. Who can predict or control the coming and going of One so described?” He goes on to say, “The Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, makes things happen. Kingdom things. Impossible things” (p. 40).

### **The Purpose of the Holy Spirit**

God did not abdicate this love for humanity to Satan due to Adam and Eve’s disobedience. God had a divine plan to restore humanity. God sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to set humanity free from the curse of sin. Then God sent the Holy Spirit to empower, instruct, guide, prepare, and seal all believers for the soon return of Jesus Christ.

The purpose of the Holy Spirit is twofold. The first is to restore the Kingdom of God and the second is to prepare humanity for the Kingdom of God. The Holy Spirit does this by bringing humanity back into a loving relationship with Jesus Christ. According to Scripture, because of the disobedience of one man and woman, humanity was thrown into a state of generational sin followed by generational curses. A lot was lost when Adam and Eve ate from the forbidden fruit. Not only were Adam and Eve banished from the paradise God created for them, but their divine relationship with God was also severed. Access to the Kingdom of God was hindered and Adam and Eve’s choice had a spiritual domino effect on humanity, which caused all God’s creation to have a proclivity to sin. The book of Psalms reminds believers of this fact when David writes, "he was formed in sin and shaped iniquity" (Psalms 51:5). Humanity also lost domain/authority in the world when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit. Monroe (2006) "Mankind's failure through

disobedience to his Creator resulted in the loss of his dominion over the earth. He lost his kingdom mandate, his gift of divine power. In short, man lost his kingdom (p. 15).

The Holy Spirit also is responsible for creation (Genesis 1:2), restoration (Ezekiel 37:10-14), preparing (John 14:26), empowering (Acts 1:8), and anointing (1 Samuel 16:13, Mark 6:13, Exodus 28:41, Exodus 29:7, Luke 4:18, James 5:14), in the Bible.

When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, it caused a spiritual domino effect. Humanity—who were created in the image of God—became deformed spiritually. Humanity’s reasoning faculties were marred with selfish ambitions. This can be seen with the relationship between Cain and Abel and other relationships throughout the Bible. It can be seen even more blatantly in 1 Samuel 8:4-7:

So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. They said to him, “You are old, and your sons do not follow your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have. But when they said, “Give us a king to lead us,” this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the Lord. And the Lord told him: “Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. As they have done from the day, I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you.

Seven words have changed the course of humanity, “...they have rejected me as their king...” 1 Samuel 7 shows how humanity went from a theocracy to a worldly monarchy. God in His infinite wisdom created humanity to restore and to carry out Kingdom principles here on earth. These principles could not be done without the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus was completely dependent on the Holy Spirit. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, He was taught by the Spirit, He was empowered by the Spirit at the Jordan River, and He did not do one miracle until He was baptized with Spirit. (Bevere, 2013, p. 19)

Believers are called Christians because believers are supposed to be followers of Christ. The researcher believes that believers should follow the moral and spiritual examples are Jesus Christ. He also believes that there should be two baptisms for a new believer—water baptism and the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

## **Baptism of the Holy Spirit**

The researcher believes that the key ingredient and oftentimes missing component in spiritual maturity is found in the presiding presence of the Holy Spirit Himself.

Therefore, the methodology needed is the seeking of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church. In other words, having the baptism of the Holy Spirit produces spiritual growth and spiritual maturity.

Jesus did not do any miracles until He was baptized in the water—a symbol of spiritual cleansing for all believers and then He was baptized with the Holy Spirit. The spiritual methodology of baptism should follow Jesus Christ's baptism order of first having water baptism and then having the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

E. G. White (2005) states,

Christ has promised the gift of the Holy Spirit to His church, and the promise belongs to us as much as to the first disciples. But like every other promise, it is given on conditions. There are many who believe and profess to claim the Lord's promise; they talk about Christ and about the Holy Spirit yet receive no benefit. They do not surrender the soul to be guided and controlled by the divine agencies. We cannot use the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is to use us. Through the Spirit God works in His people “to will and to do of His good pleasure. (p. 672)

This quote sets the foundational premise for the practice of spiritual disciplines. First, Christ has promised the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit that gives believers the power to do effective and empowering witnessing through the power of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit which uses a surrendered believer to be a blessing to the body of Christ. The researcher believes that the body of Christ extends beyond denominational boundaries. The body of Christ ministers to every believer. However, research affirms that many believers have talked about the Holy Spirit but have never received the power of the Holy Spirit. E. G. White (2005) goes on to say, “But many will not submit to this. They want to manage themselves. This is why they receive the heavenly gift. Only to those who wait

humbly upon God, who watch for His guidance and grace, is the Spirit given” (p. 672).

The spiritual dearth in the body of Christ is found in the quote by E. G. White. There is a lot of talk about the Holy Spirit; however, believers can only receive the gift of the Holy Spirit by living a surrendered life. This way to a surrendered life is to daily crucify flesh and be filled with the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the practice of spiritual disciplines is paramount for a believer to be who God called them to be and is an equally important to a local congregation when the members are consistently practicing spiritual disciplines.

Stanley (2005) argues that once a person is baptized that a believer receives the Holy Spirit. “It is the Holy Spirit who baptizes us into Christ—He is the One who completely covers us with redemptive blood and living presence of Christ Jesus” (p.17).

Water baptism stems from a person repenting of their sins. Even though Jesus was sinless and did not have to repent from anything, Jesus created the model for all believers to follow to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Water baptism, which is a public demonstration of a believer’s commitment to God, is the main focus of many churches. However, most churches miss the mark when the focus is only on water baptism without the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit that brings the power to produce the fruits of the Spirit. It imbues the believer with gifts of the spirit and administrations of the Spirit. It enables the believer to witness, heal, deliver, evangelize, and empowers believers to walk in the Spirit while creating a culture in the church where the church grows organically. One cannot appreciate or expect that the practice of spiritual disciplines will be impactful without the baptism of the Holy Spirit. “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost has come upon you: and ye

shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

In the book of Acts, Peter, after his conversion, told the crowd of believers to repent and be baptized, and they receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. But he also added a phrase that is good news for today’s believers when he stated, “The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:39).

In Acts 19:1-12, there is a conversation between Paul and some individuals he encountered. Through contextual implications, one can surmise that the believers to whom Paul was speaking to belonged to a congregation but had not received the gift of the Holy Spirit:

This conversation should be had with many believers. Many believers have heard about the Holy Spirit and the miracles, signs, and wonders of the Holy Spirit; however, they have not been baptized in the Holy Spirit because they either have not been told of the urgent need for the Holy Spirit or have decided that the Holy Spirit is not needed in their lives.

The gift of the Holy Spirit is needed more now than ever. But the problem for many is that even though the Bible specifically states that God will gift the Holy Spirit to anyone who asks there are very few who are actually asking or may not know the right methodology that goes along with asking for the Holy Spirit and receiving the Holy Spirit.

Smith (2008) elaborates on the fact that many believers are skeptical of the Holy Spirit.

When the subject of the baptism of the Holy Spirit was first presented at the churches I pastored, members were somewhat skeptical at first. Many thought I wanted them to begin to speak in tongues. Some felt that I was saying that the Spirit had not been with them previously. (p.8)

Even though there is a lot of information about the Holy Spirit, it is evident that there are members who do not understand the blessings they are missing in not having the Holy Spirit in their lives.

Walvoord (1991) believes in the baptism of the Holy Spirit; however, he argues that the Holy Spirit did not just appear at the baptism of Jesus Christ. “It has been demonstrated already that Christ was filled with the Holy Spirit from the moment of conception” (p. 95). The researcher believes that not only is there a baptism of the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit draws individuals to receive the Holy Spirit. One may say there is a former rain and latter rain of the Holy Spirit.

The infilling of the Spirit is necessary for the believer to walk victoriously in Christ. According to the Bible, a believer does not “know Christ in the fullest, biblical sense without the baptism of the Holy Spirit” (Smith, 2008, p. 9).

The baptism of the Holy Spirit should be of paramount importance in the life of a believer as the world prepares for the soon return of Jesus Christ. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is essential in preparing the believer for the return of Jesus Christ. One of the functions of the Holy Spirit is to create a Christ-like character in the believer. This process is interrelated to the practice of spiritual disciplines. When a person becomes a believer, the Holy Spirit begins working on the inside of the believer. This is a transformational work that takes a lifetime. E. G. White (2003) states, “education, culture, the exercise of the will, human effort, all have their proper sphere, but here they are powerless” (, p. 19).

It is the Holy Spirit's role to transform hearts. Education and culture may allow an individual to receive accolades and promotions in the world; however, it is the role of the Holy Spirit to transform the believer. E. G. White (2003) goes on to say,

They may produce an outward correctness of behavior, but they cannot change the heart, they cannot purify the springs of life. There must be a power working from within, a new life from above, before men can be changed from sin to holiness. (p. 19)

The practice of spiritual disciplines empowered by the Holy Spirit can create this holiness, for the Bible reminds the believer that “without holiness no man can see God” (Heb 12:14).

A believer cannot change their condition. It must be a power from above and within. E. G. White (2003) uses the analogy of a child trying to change its stature on its own. She continues by saying, “No more can you, by anxiety or effort of yourself, secure spiritual growth” (p. 69). The researcher affirms this principle in the practice of spiritual disciplines. There is an undeniable symbiotic relationship between the practice of spiritual disciplines and the Holy Spirit.

E. G. White (1992) reminds the reader that the Holy Spirit is referred to as the latter rain. According to her writings, it is essential for a believer to receive the latter after they have received the former rain: The Holy Spirit. She states, “The latter rain, falling near the close of the season, ripens the grain and prepares it for the sickle. The Lord employs these operations of nature to represent the work of the Holy Spirit” (183).

The importance of this latter rain is for spiritual growth. The researcher's project is based on the premise that when a believer constantly practices spiritual disciplines that those practices will cause spiritual growth in the believer. E. G. White (1992) compares this growth-as mentioned before harvest time.

As the dew and the rain are given first to cause the seed to germinate, and then to ripen the harvest, so the Holy Spirit is given to carry forward, from one state to another, the process of spiritual growth. (p. 183)

Smith (2007) affirms this when he writes, “The Spirit-filled experience is not an option for those ready to meet Jesus when He returns. It is a necessity” (p. 19). He goes on to say, “There is no other way to come out of Laodicea and be prepared for the final crisis and Christ’s second coming other than daily receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit” (p. 19).

A consistent practice of spiritual disciplines will help a believer and a church body “*to come out of Laodicea.*”

### **The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Disciplines**

What are spiritual disciplines? Whitney (2014) argues that spiritual disciplines are those practices that are solely found in Scripture that promote spiritual growth. The researcher believes that spiritual disciplines are found in Scripture as well; however, spiritual disciplines can also be those gifts given by the Holy Spirit that advance the Kingdom of God. Authors like Kidder (2011), Willard (1998), and Foster (2008) affirm that spiritual disciplines can also be activities that draw a person closer and can grow them in Christ to advance the kingdom of God. These spiritual disciplines may or may not be found in the Bible. For example, the researcher believes that spiritual disciplines can be singing, playing an instrument, preaching, administration, cooking, public speaking, etc. Foster believes that spiritual disciplines can be inward—meditation, outward—service, and corporate—worship. Kidder also believes in corporate worship along with, authentic fellowship, empowering laity, and servant leadership.



Any gift given to a believer by the Holy Spirit can be used as a spiritual discipline to grow the individual spiritually, as long as this gift glorifies God.

The practice of spiritual disciplines and Christian discipleship go hand in hand. “Discipleship means ‘discipline!’” The disciple is that one who has been taught or trained by the Master, who has come with his ignorance, superstition, and sin, to find learning, truth, and forgiveness from the Savior. Without discipline, we are not disciples, even though we profess His Name and pass for a follower of the lowly Nazarene. In an undisciplined age when liberty and license have replaced law and loyalty, there is a greater need than ever before that we be disciplined to be His disciples. (Edman, 2012, para 1)

Foster (2008) adds another dimension to the idea of spiritual disciplines. Foster’s foundational premises on spiritual disciplines when he writes:

Spiritual Disciplines can be seen as three movements; the inward Discipline of meditation, prayer, fasting, and study offer avenues for personal examination and change, the outward Discipline of simplicity, solitude, submission, and service prepare us to help make the world better, the corporate Disciplines of confession, worship, guidance, and celebration bring us nearer to one another and to God. Jesus told his disciples that they would do greater things. These greater things came after they were filled with the Holy Spirit. (introduction)

Believers are living with less than the great exploits the disciples did when they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Today's believers know God but lack the power of the Holy Spirit to finish the work. Burrill (1996) states, "The Seventh-day Adventist Church must enter the twenty-first century with a greater commitment to its unfinished task of taking the everlasting gospel to the entire world" (p. 8).

The Bible reminds the reader that believers are living epistles read by humans. The researcher believes that this can only become a reality when all the members are filled with the Holy Spirit. Once a believer is filled with the Holy Spirit, then they can fulfill the great commission.

## **Spirit-filled Life and Church Growth**

The foundational premise for the practice of spiritual disciplines is for believers to have a Spirit-filled life. The researcher affirms that a church building is not the body of Christ—the individuals in the church are the body of Christ. These individuals are called out of the world and out of darkness to the light in Jesus.

This calling comes with the criteria to live a holy and righteous life and to also to prepare themselves and others for the soon return of Jesus Christ. The only way for believers to live a holy and consecrated life is to be filled with the Holy Spirit and walk in the Spirit. The results of the practice of spiritual disciplines can be seen in the life of Peter. Murray (2013) writes,

I do not want you to think only of the change in Peter, in that boldness and that power, and that insight into Scriptures, and that blessing with which he preached that day. Thank God for that. But there was something for Peter deeper and better. Peter's whole nature was changed. The work that Christ began in Peter when He looked up him, was perfected when he was filled with the Holy Spirit. (p. 42)

From the Old Testament to the New Testament, evidence is shown how a nonbeliever can become a believer through a transformed life by encountering the Holy Spirit (e.g., Elijah, Elisha, Sampson, Jesus, Paul, disciples, et al.). The researcher is also aware that God is still willing to fill individuals with His Holy Spirit for those who ask to be filled.

Burrill (1993) writes,

The Holy Spirit is poured out for action—for the accomplishment of the task of Christ. We must never see the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as separate from the great function—the making of disciples. That is why we cannot finish the work without the Holy Spirit. (p. 16)

This proof in this quote is evident when a believer reads the Bible. The equipping force behind the individuals who did remarkable things for God in and outside the Bible is the

Holy Spirit. For example, Moses parted the Red Sea through the power of the Holy Spirit. David was able to defeat Goliath through the power of the Holy Spirit. Elijah and Elisha yielded themselves to the power of the Holy Spirit and did great exploits in the name and power of God. From Genesis to the book of Revelation and especially in the book of Acts, individuals who humbled themselves before God were filled with the Holy Spirit and worked for the Lord through evidence of signs and wonders.

The names of believers who are not in the Bible but who were filled with the Holy Spirit and demonstrated the power of the Holy Spirit are so many that it would go beyond the scope of this paper. But here are a few believers who are not found in the Bible, whom the Holy Spirit used in miraculous ways: Ellen G. White, Smith Wigglesworth, A.W. Tozer, William J. Seymour, Lester Sumrall, Aimee McPherson, William Ellis Foy, LeRoy From, and a host of others. Through their demonstrations of the fruits of the Spirit, gifts of the Spirit, and manifestations of power through the Holy Spirit, it is evident and recorded how they were used by the Holy Spirit.

God wants to bestow on all believers the power of the Holy Spirit. E. G. White (2005) makes this clear:

The promise of the Holy Spirit is not limited to any age or to any race. Christ declared that the divine influence of His Spirit was to be with His followers unto the end. From the Day of Pentecost to the present time, the Comforter has been sent to all who have yielded themselves fully to the Lord and to His service. To all who have accepted Christ as a personal Savior, the Holy Spirit has come as a counselor, sanctifier, guide, and witness. The more closely believers have walked with God, the more clearly and powerfully have they testified of their Redeemer's love and of His redeeming quality. The men and women who through the long centuries of persecution and trial enjoyed a large measure of the presence of the Spirit in their lives have stood as signs and wonders in the world. Before angels and men, they have revealed the transforming power of redeeming love. (p. 49)

Kraft (1989) gives a sobering description of the lack of spiritual power Western religion has when dealing with spiritual issues. He recounts a spiritual wake-up call when

he was in Nigeria. He describes a situation where missionaries went to Nigeria to spread the gospel message and there were Nigerians who accepted the gospel message; however, this is what he writes: “But they learned not to expect power except in the material realm where we had brought Western medicine, schools, agriculture, and even a Western approach to Christianity—all in the name of Jesus” (p. 4).

Kraft (1997) asserts that for the Nigerians Christianity did not have the spiritual power to meet the needs and deal with the issues they were confronted with—issues like tragedy, infertility, relational breakdowns, and troublesome weather. He states Christianity as they witnessed it, “didn’t meet many of their deepest spiritual needs” (p. 4).

This reality is still common in today’s Western religious practices. According to authors like Hinn (2004), Wardle (2010), E. G. White (2010), and Chadwick (1937), individuals who come to church are looking for a supernatural experience with God. Scholars argue that the reason spiritualism, materialism, and the like are abounding is that the church is not meeting the spiritual needs of believers.

When a believer practices these disciplines, the manifestation of these practices will be seen in the fruits, gifts, and manifestations of the Holy Spirit in an individual’s personal and public life. This model is the reason the New Testament church growth model went from adding daily to the multiplication of members (Acts 2:4, Acts, 2:41,). Research has shown that the consistent practice of spiritual disciplines will have a significant impact on church growth which can be measured by tools such as the Natural Church Development process (NCD) (see Appendix G).

Burrill and Evans (2014) note this paradigm: “Christian Schwartz has some interesting research. In his book *Natural Church Development* Schwartz identifies eight quality characteristics that exist in healthy, growing churches” (p. 15). These qualities are empowerment, gift activation, passion, effectiveness, community, need relief, and love.

Burrill (2009) writes, “Thus the principle laid down by NCD declares that a church should work on its health, and as it becomes healthy, it will grow automatically” (p. 59). He goes on to say, “The unique help that NCD provides the church is not the knowledge of the eight quality characteristics, identified by Schwartz, but in fact that the organization provides an instrument that scientifically can measure the health of the church” (p. 59).

According to Schwartz (2015), a church that focuses on these areas will indeed grow. He writes “Churches involved with NCD draw closer to their own spiritual roots, re-discover the teaching of their spiritual founders, and bring them to life” (p.72). Burrill and Evans (2014) give validity to the Natural Church Development process by stating, “Schwartz conducted his research on all the major continents of the earth with churches in over 100 countries. He has continued to collect additional data that has further substantiated what he initially discovered” (p. 16).

Schwartz (2015) administered the NCD Survey to the Adventist church. Here are some of the results:

While Adventist congregations with a relatively low quality (<45 points on the NCD health index) shrink on average, by 2.7% per year, those Adventist churches that have achieved a high quality (>55 points) display an annual growth rate of 7.5%. Adventist churches that took the NCD Survey but did not focus consistently on their respective “minimum factor” throughout the months that followed the survey (indicated by a below-average increase in their minimum area, in most cases “holistic small groups”) experienced a slight decline. Conversely, those Adventist Churches that did focus on their minimum factor, indicated by an above average increase. (pp. 6-7)

The NCD Survey measures the areas of weaknesses of a church so the church can improve in those areas. Once a church takes the NCD, they can see where their areas of weakness are. After the church takes the NCD and the church goes through the practice of spiritual disciplines, they can retake the NCD test to see the areas of growth. The practice of spiritual disciplines will grow the individual and organically grow the church.

The foundational premise for the practice of spiritual disciplines is to mature spiritually as a believer, which should have a positive corporate impact on the church and grow the church. This is paramount because as Schwartz pointed out, these practices impact church growth.

Fee (1996) writes,

If the church is going to be effective in our postmodern world, we need to stop paying mere lip service to the Spirit and to recapture Paul's perspective: the Spirit as the experienced, empowering return of God's own personal presence in and among us who enables us to live as a radically eschatological people in the present world while we await the consummation. (p. 15)

This principle is found in the writings of other church growth scholars who have experienced the power of the Holy Spirit in their personal lives and public ministries through the practice of spiritual disciplines.

Burrill (1996) writes, "It is my earnest prayer that a new breed of Adventists will emerge as the church enters the twenty-first century—an Adventist totally in tune with the Holy Spirit and empowered by Him for the accomplishment of Christ's mission" (p. 7).

There are many spiritual benefits for the believer when they practice spiritual disciplines. The believer will experience a deeper relationship with God and grow in Christ through the power of connecting with the Holy Spirit. When a believer stays

connected to the Holy Spirit, they will not only be transformed into the image of Christ but also be able to do the works Christ and His disciples did.

The Bible and biblical scholars attest to the fact that the Holy Spirit works from the inside of a believer to the outside as well as anoints a believer for ministry. Therefore, the practice of spiritual disciplines can be compared to software for a computer. The software of a computer is responsible for making sure the computer operates efficiently and effectively. When the internal program of a computer is corrupted with a virus, the computer will not function properly. In translating this idea to believers, believers were born with a virus called sin. The impact of this virus can be seen in how believers are not being the Christians God calls them to be and in their lack of spiritual maturity. To deal with this reality, the software is the Holy Spirit empowering spiritual disciplines. Once a believer practices these disciplines, there will be a change, as noticed in the book of Acts.

Scripture affirms this in the life of the Apostle Paul and the disciples. There was a stark difference in the accountability and spiritual maturity before they encountered the Holy Spirit and after. When the Apostle Paul encountered the Holy Spirit, he had a name change. The Apostle Paul tried to destroy the Kingdom of God by killing God's people; but after his conversion experience with the Holy Spirit, Paul began to build up the Kingdom of God through preaching, teaching, miracles signs, and wonders. The Apostle Paul was so used by the Holy Spirit that he authored more books of the Bible than the original disciples wrote.

The disciples were fearful before they received the Holy Spirit. Prior to receiving the Holy Spirit, they practiced spiritual disciplines. Once they received the Holy Spirit, it gave them the boldness to preach, teach, and reach men and women, boys and girls for

the kingdom of God. The Holy Spirit used them to do miracles, signs, and wonders to build up the Kingdom of God.

The practice of spiritual disciplines is needed to advance the Kingdom of God. When believers received the Holy Spirit, the church went from adding members to multiplying members for the Kingdom of God. This is the heritage of a believer when they practice spiritual disciplines.

This literature review affirms that church growth methodologies are essential to the long-term strategic church growth plan; however, methodologies are not as important as the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit as the main agent responsible for spiritual maturity. The practice of spiritual disciplines by a believer connects the believer to the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is able to move through every believer to build up the kingdom of God. As a believer practices spiritual disciplines on a consistent basis, the believer will grow spiritually as an individual. Then the church will grow corporately.

When a believer practices spiritual disciplines they are transformed into the image of Christ. The practice of this discipline helps the believer to crucify the flesh and allow the inner man/spirit man to gain control of the outer man known as the (Flesh) or fleshly desires. Calhoun (2015), “spiritual disciplines that do not help us partner with the Trinity in worship are “empty worthless acts and a perfect waste of time” (p. 22).

When the believer’s inner man connects with Holy Spirit there is a manifestation of the power of God. Calhoun (2015) makes a profound point. “Spiritual practices do not give us ‘spiritual brownie points’ or help us ‘work the system’ for a passing grade. They simply put us in a place where we can notice God and respond to his word to us” (p. 20). She goes on to say, “Disciplines are ways we open space in our lives for the worship of



God. They are not harsh but grace-filled ways of responding to the presence of Christ with our bodies” (p. 22).

This space can be obtained through prayer, fasting, reading Bible, singing, preaching, or doing those activities that bring a believer into the presence of God. For example, King David in the Bible had a God-given talent for playing the harp. David played the harp so well that King Saul had him play it when he was being tormented by evil spirits. For another person, it may be painting. For another, it may be the gift of administration. The Holy Spirit gives various gifts to different individuals for the building up of the kingdom of God. Whatever the gift is, if it brings a believer into the presence of God, it is worth practicing.

Whitney (2014) states, “by means of Discipline, let the truths of the gospel restore your soul. Engage in the spiritual disciplines given by God in Scripture so that you are continually shown your need for Christ and the infinite supply of grace and mercy to be found by faith in Jesus Christ” (p. 20).

Conversely, there is a danger in neglecting the practice of spiritual disciplines. Whitney (2014) writes, “The greatest danger of neglecting spiritual disciplines is the danger of missing God forever, not because of personal piety earns anyone a place in heaven, but because it characterizes those who are on their way there” (p.16).

The practice of spiritual disciplines serves several functions. The first is to have a deeper relationship with God. Next is that by developing a Christ-like character, we can empower every believer with the power of the Holy Spirit, prepare believers for the soon return of Jesus Christ, and prepare people of all ages to usher in the Kingdom of God.

The practice of spiritual disciplines results in the following. First, it helps to strengthen the inner spirit of people. Next, crucifying the flesh draws a believer closer to Jesus. This helps the believer know God better and prepares the believer to receive the Holy Spirit. By helping the believer to stay connected to the Holy Spirit, the believer is empowered to live a Holy Spirit-filled life. This leads to good preparation for and discernment of the latter rain of the Holy Spirit.

The church was called by God to make disciples for Christ. This process entails helping individuals mature in Christ. The researcher believes that many of the problematic issues in church are centered around individuals who are not converted and who have not been taught to grow spiritually. Walls (2021) writes, “The church is problematic, anemic, and stunted; mainly because too many believers when we meet only meet to greet, eat, argue, fuss, fight, and return home without ever having a real encounter with the Lord Christ” (p. 5). He adds clarity to this statement when he writes, “This lack of experiencing God leaves believers stunted in spiritual growth” (p. 5).

The researcher affirms this statement; therefore, the foundational premise of this project is the practice of spiritual disciplines to address the ‘spiritual stuntedness’ as pointed out by Walls (2021). He states in his book that there is a process of spiritual maturation. It is as follows:

1. No one comes into this world, be it the natural world or spiritual world, already matured. All of us begin in the same place in our spiritual growth.
2. All of us possess the power and potential for spiritual growth as Christians.
3. Spiritual growth is not automatic. It requires of us to become a student of God’s word, learning and practicing what we learned. This cannot be accomplished apart from the direct involvement of the Holy Spirit.

4. Proper appliance on the part of the Christian will assure us of spiritual growth. How much we give ourselves to Bible study, prayer, commitment to the will and words of God, and doctrinal learning.

5. Spiritual growth is measurable. One of the keys in determining our spiritual growth is seen in how much of our childish behavior and conduct we have put away; we have overcome. (p. 6-9)

The practice of spiritual disciplines is to become Christ-like. A believer is called out of darkness to the marvelous light of Christ to show forth the character of Christ. Without this type of character, a believer cannot expect to enter into heaven. Samaan (1999) writes, “Our duty to Christ must ever be linked to our devotion to Christ. For “when once the gaze is fixed upon Him, the life finds its center. Duty becomes a delight and sacrifices a pleasure” (p. 15). He goes on to say, “To honor Christ, to become like Him, to work for Him, is the life’s highest ambition and its greatest joy” (p. 15).

As a believer practices spiritual disciplines, they are called to break the outer man for the inner man (spirit man) to be released by crucifying the flesh. Nee (1997) affirms this process when he writes,

In order for a man to work for God, his inner man must be released. The fundamental problem with many servants of God is that their inner man cannot break out of their outer man. In order for the inner man to be released, it must break out of the outer man... The Lord breaks our outer man in two ways. First, He breaks it in a cumulative way, and second, He breaks it in a sudden way. (p. 8)

Discipleship is the most essential element in the practice of spiritual disciplines. Discipleship is the process of becoming like Jesus by spending time with Jesus. Discipleship classes alone will not do it. Religious forms will not do it. The personal relationship between disciple and teacher is the heart of discipleship (Discipleship Handbook, 2018).

The constant practice of spiritual disciplines aligns the believer’s will with the word and will of God so the believer can become a disciple of Jesus Christ. The Holy

Spirit's role is to help the believer grow in the character of Jesus. The Holy Spirit convicts and converts the believer.

According to Munroe (2006) and Wardle (2010) we are reminded that we are meant to live out and prepare for the Kingdom of God. Wardle writes,

Jesus showed us that one cannot live the Christian life or walk in the Kingdom of ministry without a vibrant relationship with the Holy Spirit. This is not meant to be only a concept or point of doctrine. The indwelling, infilling of the presence of the Holy Spirit is to be an experienced reality in an ongoing way and with increasing power and authority. (p. 39)

Each author in the literature review gave relevant information to affirm the need for and importance of practicing spiritual disciplines. The literature review shows that there are several benefits to practicing spiritual disciplines. The primary benefit of practicing spiritual disciplines is that it can create a church culture where there is Total Member Involvement. Members can practice spiritual disciplines in a small group setting, with the church as a whole, or individually. But more importantly, the practice of spiritual disciplines prepares a believer for the return of Jesus Christ.

The literature review revealed that the practice of spiritual disciplines empowered by the Holy Spirit is not only important to a believer's spiritual maturity but also to church growth. The practice of spiritual disciplines focuses on a believer's spiritual maturity which the researcher believes will have a positive impact on a congregation's growth. This growth can be measured through a tool like the NCD (Natural Church Development) Survey (see Appendix G).

The researcher was baffled to see that there was a dearth of information on church growth through the practice of spiritual disciplines. There is a plethora of information on church growth through methodologies, seminars, lay member training, and pastoral coaching. There is also a cornucopia of information on the Holy Spirit and the power of

the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer. There was literature that articulated the purpose for a believer to practice spiritual disciplines. However, the researcher noticed a lack of information that dealt with the practice of spiritual disciplines and how or if those practices increased spiritual maturity. There was also a lack of information on the impact that emotionally healthy spirituality had on spiritual maturity.

## CHAPTER 4

### DESCRIPTION OF THE INITIATIVE

The Barna Group and Pew Research Center gave startling facts to show that there was a decline in individuals who are attending Christian churches and those who profess to be Christians. Thus, it becomes imperative that each church looks critically at the impact of practicing spiritual disciplines that lead to spiritual maturity. With this reality in mind, two questions must be addressed: What does spiritual maturity look like in the 21st century? What process should be implemented to create an environment where believers or seekers can mature spiritually? With this information, the research indicates that spiritual maturity is contingent upon individuals who are committed to God, understand the mission of the Church, and are empowered by the Holy Spirit. Studies also indicate that commitment to God and the mission of the church are based on an individual's relationship with God. This relationship with God is strengthened through the working of the Holy Spirit in the lives of individuals who are practicing spiritual disciplines.

The spiritual disciplines are those practices found in Scripture that promote spiritual growth among believers in the gospel of Jesus Christ. They are the habits of devotion and experiential Christianity that have been practiced by the people of God since biblical times (Whitney, 2014).

The first foundational reality was the power and the work of the Holy Spirit. This model for spiritual maturity was found in the New Testament. “But ye shall receive

power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). In Acts 2:41, we see how the power of the Holy Spirit moved on individuals to hear the word of God, “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.”

The second foundational principle was the practice of spiritual disciplines. Examples of these disciplines can be found throughout the Bible. Here are three examples: “And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took a harp, and played with his hand: so, Saul was refreshed and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him” (1 Sam 16:23). This passage demonstrates how David used a gift from God to help Saul. Then in the book of Acts, one notes how the spiritual discipline of prayer was used to receive the Holy Spirit, “these all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren” (Acts 1:14). In the book of Judges, it was the spirit of the Lord—or the Holy Spirit—that was manifested in Sampson to demonstrate the power of God, “And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, and he had nothing in his hand: but he told not his father or his mother what he had done” (Judg 14:6).

The Bible, in addition to research, affirms that those believers who practiced spiritual disciplines empowered by the Holy Spirit were able to witness miraculous changes in their private and public lives, as well as mature spiritually. Through the practicing of spiritual disciplines, a person can see the power of the Holy Spirit move in

areas like preaching, teaching, singing, and other disciplines that will bring them into a closer relationship with God and while leading others into a closer relationship with God.

Now, the researcher affirms the importance of affirming the Apostle Paul's distinction between the Flesh and the Spirit:

Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God. (Rom 8:5-8)

We are also reminded in 1 Corinthians 2:14-15: "But the natural man receiveth, not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man."

When the inner man is strengthened, there is a freeway for Christ to take full possession of our entire being, making His home in our hearts. Then we will be filled, not with doctrines or knowledge, but with the riches of Christ unto all the fullness of God. All this fullness dwells in Christ (Col 1:19; 2:9). Through His indwelling, Christ imparts the fullness of God into our being (Nee, 1972).

The Apostle Paul never points to a building program or a method for spiritual maturity but emphasizes that true evangelism is done once a person is strengthened by the Holy Spirit in their Inner Man or Spirit Man. This is in line with the what the Seventh-day Adventist church believes according to the *28 Fundamental Beliefs (2021)*.

The church is the community of believers who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. In continuity with the people of God in Old Testament times, we are called out from the world; and we join together for worship, for fellowship, for instruction in the Word, for the celebration of the Lord's Supper, for service to humanity, and for the worldwide proclamation of the gospel (p. 6)



Research showed that there was a dire need in the church and even the community to practice spiritual disciplines. The Barna Group and the Pew Research Center (2019) documented the following trends as they pertain to the church. First, it appears that Protestantism and Catholicism are decreasing in numbers. At the moment about 43% of adults in the United States identify as Protestants, which is a decline of 8% from 2009. In 2009, 23% of adults in the United States identified as Catholic. It has declined to 20%. Self-described atheists used to be 2% in 2009; now it is 4% of adults in the United States. Agnostics are now at 5% of adults in the United States, which is up 3% as compared to 2009. Interestingly, 17% of Americans are now identifying as “nothing in particular” religion, which is an increase of 12% in 2009.

The researcher sought to develop a project that will help individuals develop spiritually by focusing on selected spiritual disciplines. These practices were compiled in a guided journal.

Given the great need to focus on the Holy Spirit and the accompanying impact of spiritual Disciplines, the following steps were taken in implementing the project: First was creating a *guided journal*. Second was the *volunteer selection process*. Third was *contacting volunteers*. Next, the volunteers *signed the informed consent form*. Fifth, *volunteers took a pre-assessment questionnaire* (see Appendix A). Sixth, the research *met with the volunteers*. Seventh, the *objective*. The eighth step was to go through the *project expectations*. Ninth was the *volunteers took post-assessment questionnaire* (see Appendix B) And lastly, the *conclusion*.

## **Step One: Guided Journal**

The very first step in the implementation was the development of a guided resource. This guided resource was created before the implementation process because it outlined the specific spiritual disciplines that the volunteers need to focus on. The term designated for the guided resource was a “21-day Guided Journal”. The guided journal was designed on the premise that spiritual maturity is contingent upon individuals growing spiritually and actively implementing spiritual disciplines. The examiner wanted to see if the practice of certain spiritual disciplines would have a positive impact on the spiritual growth of the volunteers, which would translate to the growth of the church. With this in mind those spiritual disciplines that would impact the spiritual growth of the volunteers were focused on; therefore, the direction of the Apostle Paul to strengthen the inner person as noted in the books of Ephesians, 2 Corinthians, and Romans, was followed.

The inner man defined: Paul uses the term inner man several times in his epistles (2 Corinthians 4:16; Ephesians 3:16). Romans 7:22–23 says that inner man is another way of describing the spiritual aspect of our nature. In contrast, the outer man represents our physical visible and carnal nature of humanity.

Romans 8:5 helps us understand this physical and carnal nature. "Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires, but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires" (Rom 8:5).

When considering the growth of the inner person, it becomes imperative to delve into the following Scriptures to understand the dichotomy between strengthening the spirit man or (person) and strengthening the carnal nature (the carnal nature refers to

decisions made contrary to the word of God). The following Scriptures give a brief overview of the consequences of operating in that nature as opposed to operating in the spirit: Revelation 22:15; 1 Corinthians 6:9–10; Galatians 5:19–21; Ephesians 5:5; 1 Timothy 1:9; Hebrews 12:14, 2 Timothy 3:2-7.

Paul in Romans 7:14-17 helps understand the urgent need to practice spiritual disciplines when he writes,

We know that the law is spiritual, but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me.

The examiner wanted to see if an intentional focus and practice of the selected disciplines would help. A 21-day guided journal to help volunteers grow and practice spiritual disciplines. This 21-day guided journal was based on the premise that external manifestations of prayer, joy, love, patience, and other spiritual disciplines become more pronounced when an individual develops and strengthens their inner/spiritual person. The researcher's foundational Scriptures can be found in the following books of the Bible:

Ephesians, Romans, Galatians, Revelations, and 1 Corinthians.

The book of Ephesians sets the spiritual foundation for the researcher,

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide, long, high, and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. (Eph 3:16-19)

In the books of Galatians and 1 Corinthians, one notes the power of practicing spiritual disciplines in Gal. 5:22-23 and 1 Cor. 13:1-13.

The volunteers will complete a 21-day guided journal. The guided journal will have six components: Scripture, devotional, questions for reflection, Scripture fill in the

blank, prayer, and YouTube videos in alignment with the daily devotional Scripture or reading. Access to the videos will be provided as a link or QR code.

Appendix F shows the format of the guided journal. Each day the guided journal will focus on a spiritual discipline. The researcher has identified the following disciplines with the understanding that spiritual disciplines can be a variety of activities that draw an individual closer to God. For this project, the researcher will focus on the following: First is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, followed by receiving the Holy Spirit. Next are the benefits of receiving the Holy Spirit and practicing the presence of God.

The spiritual disciplines include prayer and fasting, reading the Bible, the art of worship, and journaling. As well, the researcher looked at dying daily to self, the health message, and faith. There was also discipleship of the mind, spiritual warfare, spiritual authority, discipleship, and evangelism. The last five spiritual disciplines are forgiveness, random acts of kindness (RAK), getting past the past, emotionally healthy spirituality, and the power of confession.

The volunteers were asked to reflect on their experiences in a journal and apply what they learned. For example, one of the spiritual disciplines is the "Art of Surrender". Scripture tells us, "Submit yourself therefore to the God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. (Jas 4:7) James 4:10 says "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you. These Scriptures can be interpreted as "surrendering to God." But what does that process look like? How does one surrender to God? God wants us to be separate from the world; we are called to come out of the world that hates God. Come out for God and tell Him, "Lord, anything for thee. If you say that with prayer, and speak that into God's ear, He will accept it. And He will teach you what it means" (Murray, 2017, p. 12).

Once the volunteers have completed the 21-day guided journal, they will take a post-assessment questionnaire to see how they have responded to the 21-day guided journal.

The researcher surmises that after the volunteers go through the 21-day guided journal the following will occur. First is a deeper relationship with the Holy Spirit. Next is continuing to develop their relationship with God. Third is to gain insight into the workings of the Holy Spirit by seeing divine appointments. Fourth is to develop an awareness of the Acts of the Holy Spirit in their life. And last, as the individual grows spiritually through practicing spiritual disciplines, the church will grow.

The pre- and post-assessment questionnaires were designed to ascertain growth or lack thereof in these areas as covered in the section below.

### **Step Two: Volunteer Selection Process**

Since this project was done with selected church members of the Berean Seventh-day Adventist Church, the researcher presented the project to the church board of the Berean Seventh-day Adventist Church to get board approval. This approval was granted through a vote in a regularly scheduled board meeting. This was important for a couple of reasons: First, it informed the church of the project. As well, when the researcher selected the members to be part of the program, some of them came from the church board and church elders.

It was important to the researcher that the lines of communication remained open and transparent between him, the church board, and the volunteers. Once the board

approved the project, the researcher selected volunteers to be part of the implementation phase of the project.

Seven people were selected to be part of the project; it was believed that the volunteers selected would remain with the project. The volunteers were chosen from a diverse pool. The volunteers included college-age students and church members from all genders from various socio-economic backgrounds.

### **Step Three: Contact Volunteers**

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, which included social distancing protocols, the researcher contacted the selected volunteers through texts, email, and phone calls. Furthermore, the researcher stayed in contact with the volunteers bi-weekly via Zoom. During these contacts, the researcher answered any questions and concerns the volunteers had and coached them along the way. Once the volunteers were contacted, they were made aware of the scope of the project and expectations.

### **Step Four: Volunteer Sign Informed Consent Form**

Each volunteer was sent an Informed Consent Form. This form was approved by Andrews University Institutional Review Board. Once the volunteers signed the consent form the researcher began the implementation part of the project by giving the volunteers a pre-assessment questionnaire.

### **Step Five: Pre-Assessment**

To measure the spiritual maturation of the selected individuals, pre- and post-assessment questionnaires were developed (see Appendices A&B). It was essential to measure the spiritual growth of the volunteers by providing them with a pre-assessment questionnaire that was specifically designed to acquire information from the volunteers that would give the researcher a foundational understanding of where the volunteers were in their understanding and practice of spiritual disciplines. After the volunteers went through the guided journal, they took an anonymous survey to see the impact of the 21-day guided journal (see Appendix D).

This instrument will only show knowledge gained; therefore, volunteers will journal their experiences while they go through the 21-day guided journal. The volunteers will reflect on their relationship and growth in the Holy Spirit and note how the Holy Spirit impacted their lives since they started the project. They will be asked to put the following in their journals: Answered prayers; expected and unexpected miracles; how they learned to listen to God; what they learned from the experience; and how they have changed since this experience.

After the volunteers went through the journal the volunteers took post-assessments. The juxtaposition of the guided journal responses and the pre- and post-assessment questionnaires were used to see the increase in the following five areas: spiritual growth; knowledge of the spiritual disciplines; an increase of awareness of the move of the Holy Spirit in the volunteer's live; an increase in the activity of selected spiritual disciplines; and if the practice of these spiritual disciplines translated into church growth such as the returning of tithes and offering, small group involvement, prayer, reading the Bible, church attendance, personal devotional time, and witnessing.

### **Step Six: Meet with Volunteers**

The project was designed as an independent activity. However, the examiner met with the volunteers on a weekly to bi-weekly basis or as needed. During these meetings, not only were questions and concerns the volunteers had answered, but also plans were made to coach and guide the volunteers into a deeper relationship with the Holy Spirit.

Those bi-weekly meetings served multiple purposes. First, the questions the volunteers might have had as they went through the guided journal were answered. Secondly, the model of small group interaction was noted to see the conversations sparked by the volunteers going through the guided journal. Thirdly, the small group interaction was used to create a safe space, which is a term used for a meeting that allows individuals to share details about their life and development without feeling judged. As the volunteers went through the guided journal and talked about the different topics for each day, they were encouraged to relate the subject to an event in their life. This guided conversation enabled the examiner to again see if this was a practical model to be duplicated again.

### **Step Seven: Objective**

The objective of this project was to create a tool to be used in any church setting to increase the practice of spiritual disciplines empowered and guided by the Holy Spirit. The researcher believed that actively practicing these disciplines will impact church growth. It was believed that this process will strengthen the spirit man as pointed out in Ephesians 3:16-19:

That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith;



that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

The practice of these disciplines could be done in a small group setting or a corporate setting. As the individuals go through each spiritual discipline, they would be asked to reflect, discuss, or implement the spiritual discipline of the day.

After individuals go through the 21-day guided journal they can come together in their small group or corporate setting and discuss the impact that the 21-day guided journey had on their life. Once the individuals have gone through the journal they are or should be able to lead another small group through the guided journal.

The guided journal can be done online or individually, or as stated before, with a corporate group. It was believed that this tool will increase fellowship among individuals and can be used to increase membership by inviting church members or none to go through the 21-day guided journal.

### **Step Eight: Expectations**

Spiritual maturity is contingent upon the power of the Holy Spirit moving through the lives of individuals as they practice spiritual disciplines. Church growth can be once again attained through the New Testament model. That was when individual's activity looked for the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives. As noted in the book of Acts, those individuals who received the gift of the Holy Spirit did so by practicing spiritual disciplines. Finley (2011) writes:

The time is right. The hour has come. Our Lord is appealing to His church today to meet the conditions. A careful study of both the Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White reveals the experience of the disciples during those ten days in the Upper Room. They sought a renewed experience with God through the following activities:

Earnest intercession; Deeper faith; Heartfelt repentance; Honest confession; Loving unity; Self-examination; Sacrificial humility; Obedient surrender; Joyful thanksgiving; Enthusiastic witness. (p. 8-9)

Those individuals who participated in the 21-day guided journal will see the spiritual and physical benefits of practicing spiritual disciplines, and therefore create a habit of practicing those disciplines. It was the hope that each volunteer will go through the 21-day guided journal with other individuals.

Within this group, each volunteer or individual who has finished the guided journal will coach/ mentor the other individuals in the small group. This model will become a place of fellowship and spiritual growth. The small group will or can consist of individuals who are or may not be church members. It was believed that this 21-guided journal experience will allow for fellowship and spiritual growth. As the individuals cover each topic, the leader of the group will encourage dialogue about their experiences with the topic of that date. This 21-day guided journal will encourage friendship evangelism. It will allow individuals to be creative in the evangelistic experience. Individuals can have small groups/cell groups online, small groups/cell groups in person, or it can be done with family members as a devotion.

It was believed that once individuals have grown through the 21-day guided journal they would be inspired to go through the guided journal with others and intentionally invite friends into the group who are not church members. Each group would pray and ask for the Holy Spirit's leading and instruction. The growth of the group and the church was linked to active participation from the congregation who have grown through the 21-day guided journal and are willing to go through coach/mentor others in with the 21-day guided journal.

### **Step Nine: Post-Assessment**

The researcher developed a post-assessment questionnaire to measure the spiritual maturation of the selected individuals. The pre-assessment questionnaire was compared to the post-assessment questionnaire to gain insight as to the spiritual maturation of the selected individuals. It was noted if the volunteers increased their practice of spiritual disciplines after going through the 21-day guided journal (see Appendix D).

The researcher also used the post-assessment questionnaire to note if there was an increase in awareness of divine appointments as pointed out by Evans (2020). “A divine appointment is the Spirit-guided intersection of people’s lives for God’s purpose” (p. 4). The researcher explained to the volunteers what a divine appointment, as defined by Evans) should look like.

Particular attention was paid to the following areas to see if there were increases after the volunteers went through the guided journal: The returning of tithes and offerings, small group involvement, prayer, reading the Bible, church attendance, personal devotional time, and witnessing. These areas because it was felt that these areas are related to the practice of spiritual disciplines.

### **Conclusion**

Research was clear that churches in America are at a spiritual impasse. This impasse can be noted in divorces, those individuals who are leaving the church, and a lack of spiritual maturity. Given these statistics, it can be concluded that these trends can be changed if individuals and churches practice spiritual disciplines that lead to spiritual maturity. Therefore, this chapter was focused on disciplines that if practiced will have a

positive impact on the volunteers who practiced them. Those practices are called spiritual disciplines. These spiritual disciplines—if practiced continually—will do two things. The first is to strengthen the inner person. The second is to lead to spiritual maturity.

As individuals practice these spiritual disciplines, they will draw closer to God and be more aware of divine appointments in their lives. The basic premise of practicing spiritual disciplines is that as individuals grow spiritually the church will grow organically.

In preparation for the volunteers to go through the guided journal, the examiner created pre- and post-assessment questionnaires and a survey. These tools were used to measure spiritual growth and acquired knowledge as the individuals went through the guided journal. Volunteers also chronicled their experience in a journal. This journal exercise served as a resource for the volunteers to see how God was moving their lives and to see how the practice of spiritual disciplines impacted their lives.

## CHAPTER 5

### NARRATIVE OF THE INITIATIVE IMPLEMENTATION

The goal of this initiative was to create a program where individuals were able to practice spiritual disciplines then measure the impact those practices had on spiritual maturity. This chapter details the results of the execution of the initiative.

#### **Step One Realized: Guided Journal**

A guided journal was created for the volunteers to use before the implementation process because it outlined the specific spiritual disciplines that the volunteers needed to practice. The guided journal was designed on the premise that spiritual maturity is contingent upon individuals growing spiritually and who actively implemented spiritual disciplines consistently. The practice of spiritual disciplines was examined to see how they impacted the volunteers to ascertain if those practices would translate into spiritual maturity and church growth, such as the returning of tithes and offering, small group involvement, prayer, reading the bible, church attendance, personal devotional time, and witnessing.

The definition of spiritual disciplines as defined by Whitney (2014) is “those practices found in Scriptures that promote spiritual growth among believers in the gospel of Jesus Christ” (p. 4). For the project, Whitney's definition is expanded to include certain practices that are found in Scripture. For example, walks in nature, cooking, journaling,

and other salient practices increase a believer's relationship with God and increase spiritual maturity.

The investigator based his research on the premise that church growth is intricately related to an individual's personal spiritual growth. As individuals practice spiritual disciplines, those practices can be seen in an increase in the following: church attendance, return of tithe and offering, evangelism, healthy church relationships, and TMI (Total Member Involvement). The NCD (Natural Church Development) assessment will be used to measure the impact the practice of spiritual disciplines has on the church.

After writing the literary review, the investigator realized that certain spiritual disciplines would have an immediate impact on the spiritual growth of an individual when the individual focused on strengthening the spirit/inner person as pointed out in the following Scriptures: 2 Corinthians 4:16; Ephesians 3:16; and Romans 7:22–23. After reading the Bible chapters that dealt with strengthening the inner person, along with the literature review, spiritual disciplines were selected that were practiced in the Bible as well as other spiritual disciplines that may not have been explicitly mentioned in the Bible.

The guided journal in such a way that it was designed to be an independent study (see Appendix F), which consisted of six components. They were as follows: Scripture; devotional; questions for reflection; Scripture—fill-in-the-blank; prayer; and YouTube videos in alignment with the daily devotional Scripture or reading. Access to the videos was provided as a link or QR code.

Scriptures were selected that went along with the spiritual discipline that was to be practiced for that day. The devotional was either a selected reading or article that

coincided with the spiritual discipline. The reflection questions were designed to help the volunteer process the information that was read. After the reflection component, the volunteer had to fill in the blank which was the Scripture that was presented at the beginning of the daily study. This exercise helped the volunteer retain Scripture and to enforce the correlation between the devotional and reflection questions.

There was a prayer component. The prayer at the end of each day for the guided journal was pre-written to reinforce the spiritual discipline that the volunteers were practicing.

Social media in the current technological age is important; therefore, selected YouTube videos were included to reinforce the spiritual discipline. A QR code and a link were provided so the volunteers could scan the code to prompt the selected video.

The following disciplines were identified with the understanding that spiritual disciplines can be a variety of activities that draw an individual closer to God. For this project, 21 items were focused on. First is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, followed by receiving the Holy Spirit. Next are the benefits of receiving the Holy Spirit and practicing the presence of God.

The spiritual disciplines include prayer and fasting, reading the Bible, the art of worship, and journaling. As well, at dying daily to self, the health message, and faith were looked at. There was also discipleship of the mind, spiritual warfare, spiritual authority, discipleship, and evangelism. The last five spiritual disciplines are forgiveness, random acts of kindness (RAK), getting past the past, emotionally healthy spirituality, and the power of confession.

The volunteers were excited about being part of the program. Once the program started, others heard about the program and wanted to be a part. Moreover, the first elder of the Berean Seventh-day Adventist Church recommended that the whole church go through the program.

### **Step Two Realized: Volunteer Selection Process**

The Berean church board voted unanimously to support the project. Once the project was approved by the board, the selection process of volunteers began. The investigator attempted to select a diverse group of volunteers for the project. However, he was limited to his current context, which excluded certain ethnic groups. Given this reality, volunteers from different socio-economic backgrounds, different educational levels, different age groups, different genders, and individuals who were single as well as those who were married, were selected. At the implementation of the project, the oldest volunteer was 90 and the youngest volunteer was 21. The volunteers consisted of an individual who was married, three college-age students, a male elder, and two single females.

### **Step Three Realized: Contact Volunteers**

After selected the volunteers, it was time to approach them with this proposition. When this project began face-to-face meetings with the volunteers was planned. At the time the selection process for the volunteers began, the world was hit with the Covid-19 pandemic. This was a concern; however, the pandemic did not prevent the project from



being implemented. Volunteers were initially contacted through texts, email, phone calls, and Zoom conferencing calls.

This mode of communication proved vital in staying in contact with the volunteers. The volunteers were excited about having face-to-face meetings as well, but due to the current pandemic and social distancing protocols, safety was paramount. Preventing Covid-19 risk became a top priority during the project. As the rationale for the altered mode of communication was explained to the volunteers, the volunteers understood and adhered to the necessary communication protocols. Thankfully, not only did all seven selected volunteers verbally agree upon participation in the project but were accepting of the change in the mode of communication.

#### **Step Four Realized: Volunteers Signed Consent Form**

The next step was for the volunteers to sign the Informed Consent Form that explained the project and details risks to the participating volunteers and the investigator. This form has technical language and was a requirement of the Andrew University Institutional Review Board. Volunteers were requested to read it and sign.

Each volunteer was sent a copy of the signed Informed Consent Form for their records. This form was approved by Andrews University Institutional Review Board. All seven prospective volunteers agreed to participate and sign the Informed Consent Form. Once the volunteers signed the consent form and returned them, the next step was to begin the implementation of the project by giving the volunteers a pre-assessment questionnaire.

### **Step Five Realized: Volunteers Took a Pre-Assessment**

Pre- and post-assessment questionnaires were developed in advance to measure how practicing selected spiritual disciplines impacted their lives (see Appendices A and B). The pre-assessment questionnaire was used to gain general knowledge the volunteers had before going through the guided journal. This tool was also used as a framework to give the researcher insight into the general background knowledge the volunteers had concerning spiritual disciplines.

It was acknowledged beforehand that this instrument would only show knowledge gained; therefore, the volunteers were asked to journal their experiences. The volunteers would journal their experiences through the practice of spiritual disciplines and chronicle any divine appointments that had since their commencing of the project.

Afterward, the volunteers would complete the journal daily. Following their experiences, volunteers took a post-assessment questionnaire. The juxtaposition of the pre- and post-assessment questionnaires was used to see the increase in the following areas: Spiritual growth; knowledge of the spiritual disciplines; increase of awareness of the move of the Holy Spirit in the volunteer's lives; increase in the activity of selected spiritual disciplines; and if the practice of these spiritual disciplines translated into church growth

Pre- and post-assessment questionnaires were used to note if there were an increase in awareness of divine appointments as pointed out by Evans (2020). The researcher went through the book, *Life-Changing Divine Appointments* by Tony Evans and explained to the volunteers what a divine appointment should look like. Evans defines divine appointments in the following way, “A divine appointment is a Spirit-

guided intersection of people's lives for God's purpose" (p. 4). The spiritual disciple of looking for and being ready for life-changing divine appointments was an example of how a person practices one's spirituality for the benefit of others.

Spiritual disciples inform and empower the inner person/spirit man. Once the inner man/ person is empowered through the practice of Spiritual Disciplines, then there will be an outward manifestation of fruits of the Spirit as seen in the book of Galatians 5:22-23 and gifts of the Spirit which is noted in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, Ephesians 4:7-13, Isaiah 11:2-3, Romans 12:3-8, Romans 12:6, and 2 Peter 1:3.

### **Step Six Realized: Met with Volunteers**

The project was designed to be an independent study activity. However, the researcher met with the seven volunteers to answer any questions that they had and to clarify any topics that may have been unclear. The meetings occurred on a bi-weekly basis in a small group format. This was seen as a way to capitalize on the examiner's time but also allowed for peer growth and support. The feedback showed that each spiritual discipline activity was written in such a way that each volunteer was able to comprehend the concept, thereby increasing their readiness to take part.

Through these bi-weekly meetings, it was discovered that even though the project was designed to be an independent study, there was added value in meeting with the volunteers. As the researcher met with the volunteers in this small group setting, the role of the researcher was transformed into a mentor/coach relationship. During those bi-weekly interactions via Zoom, the volunteers were more engaged than they had been doing the project independently. Moreover, the online meetings allowed for those away at

college to be able to interact more with others. The in-person meetings would have proven more difficult with the three college students with this dynamic. These interactions also served as a safe space for the volunteers to share other things that were going on in their lives. Experientially, the small group coaching/mentor meetings expanded participant fulfillment greater than originally expected.

### **Step Seven Realized: Objective**

Not only did the researcher want to positively impact the volunteers from the Houston Berean Seventh-day Adventist Church, but he wanted to create a tool that could be duplicated and used in any church setting to increase the practice of spiritual disciplines. It was believed that the guided journal would be effective in increasing the practice of spiritual disciplines in a church setting if those practices are done regularly. An added benefit to the success of the project was the addition of a mentor or coach. This was not part of the original plan; however, the project revealed that the mentor/coach added another dimension to the project and proved to be beneficial.

### **Step Eight Realized: Project Expectations**

The foundation of the project was based on the premise that there is a symbiotic relationship between the Holy Spirit and the practice of spiritual disciplines. One informs the other. The Holy Spirit is present during the practice of spiritual disciplines which in turn allows the individual who practices those disciplines to have a greater relationship with God through the power of the Holy Spirit.

There was a correlation between the practice of spiritual disciplines and the personal spiritual growth of the volunteers which became evident in examining the anonymous survey given to the volunteers (see Appendix D). Of the seven selected volunteers, six of them practiced spiritual disciplines continually. The person who did not practice those spiritual disciplines did not show much improvement in the selected areas.

The practice of spiritual disciplines among the volunteers increased once the volunteers went through the 21-day guided journal. The researcher, therefore, became excited about the possibility that the practice of these disciplines would have a positive impact on church growth if a congregation would go through this program. Overall, church growth was connected with the high value of personal discipleship growth, which is a fulfillment of the Great Commission of Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20.

The researcher believed that this trend will be the same once a church congregation goes through this 21-day guided journal. As mentioned in Chapter One, the NCD (Natural Church Development) survey was administered to the congregation of the Houston Berean Seventh-day Adventist Church. The NCD (see Appendix G) showed that the Berean Seventh-day Adventist Church scored high in several areas such as '*gift-based ministry*' and '*passionate spirituality*' as well as other areas.

The NCD assessment showed that the minimum factor was Holistic Small Groups. Although not previously planned, the 21-day guided journal will be the perfect tool to help Berean increase the minimum factor of Holistic Small Groups. Even though it was not the intent to use a small group model for the project, the researcher acknowledges that value was added in meeting with the volunteers to discuss the guided journal was discovered. During these meetings with the volunteers, it became evident to

the researcher that this small group model was beneficial for the spiritual growth of the volunteers as they went through the guided journal. With this epiphany, the investigator looked for previous research done that affirmed this model. He found that there is evidence that a church can use their strengths to move from minimum factors in the NCD to maximum factors. Schwarz (2006) shares that churches need to “Use current strength to work on minimum factors” (p. 59). Therefore, the researcher sought to leverage the maximum factor of Passionate Spirituality to improve upon the minimum factor of Holistic Small Groups.

In the case of the Berean Seventh-day Adventist Church, it is believed that once the church goes through the 21-day guided journal in a small group setting, that all the numbers will increase. Overall, church maturity increased with the high value of personal discipleship growth, which is a fulfillment of the Great Commission of Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20. Going beyond this project's original intent, the researcher would encourage those who grow spiritually through the 21-day guided journal experience, to lead others in the same guided journal. This involves intentionally inviting friends into the group who are not church members.

### **Step Nine Realized: Post-Assessment**

A post-assessment questionnaire was developed to measure the spiritual maturation of the selected individuals. The pre-assessment questionnaire was compared to the post-assessment questionnaire to gain insight as to the spiritual maturation of the selected individuals. It was noted that the practice of spiritual disciplines increased for those volunteers who consistently went through the 21-day guided journal. Even the

individual who was not consistent in their practice of spiritual showed some level of increase. (see Appendix D).

Particular attention was paid to the following areas to see if there were an increase after the volunteers went through the guided journal: Tithe and Offering, worship, small group involvement, prayer, reading the Bible, church attendance, personal devotional time, and witnessing. These areas were selected because they were related to the practice of spiritual disciplines.

An anonymous survey through the online survey tool, surveymonkey.com, was developed. This survey tool allowed the volunteers who went through the guided journal to answer seven questions anonymously that pertained to the guided journal. This method of anonymity was ideal so the volunteers could be free to answer the questions without being identified (see Appendix C).

The questions developed for the online survey tool showed the impact that going through the guided journal had on the seven volunteers referred to as 'Respondents' on the survey. It was noted that even if the individual did not practice the spiritual disciplines constantly, that there was an increase in the practice of different spiritual disciplines. The online survey consisted of seven questions that were designed by the researcher, as seen in Appendix C.

The survey was texted and emailed to each volunteer. Once the volunteer received the survey, they clicked on the link and answered the questions. There were five options for each question: Increased, decreased, stayed the same, other, and none of the above.

Valuable insights were gained by allowing the volunteers to answer the questions online anonymously. Question one dealt with the 'Tithe and offering giving' According

to the results, five of the respondents' 'Tithe and Offering' giving stayed the same. One of the respondents giving increased and one recorded that they gave from their gross.

Question two dealt with "personal worship time." Six of the seven respondents indicated that their personal worship time increased. One of the volunteers indicated that their personal worship time "*became more meaningful.*" These results were exciting because they indicated that the guided journal helped the volunteers grow spiritually.

Question three dealt with prayer. Results indicated that out of the seven volunteers, four of them increased their prayer time while for three of them their prayer time remained the same. Once again, this was exciting because it is believed that prayers are a major component in personal spiritual growth and church growth. Question four dealt with Bible study time. The survey revealed that two respondents' Bible study time did increase. One of the respondents' Bible study times decreased, and four of the respondents' Bible study time stayed the same. Question five dealt with church attendance, whether online or in-person. The survey indicated that one respondent's church attendance decreased, two respondents' church attendance stayed the same, and four respondents' church attendance increased.

Question six dealt with the Holy Spirit. The researcher wanted to know if the respondents felt that they had gained a deeper understanding and relationship with the Holy Spirit. When the results were examined, every one of the respondents indicated that their understanding and relationship with the Holy Spirit did increase. This spoke volumes because of the firm belief that it is the Holy Spirit and the relationship with the Holy Spirit that is foundational for personal spiritual growth and church growth.



The researcher wanted to know the probability that the respondents would recommend the 21-day guided journal to others. All of the respondents answered in the affirmative that they would recommend others to go through the 21-day guided journal. The respondents answered either 'very likely' or 'extremely likely'.

After analyzing the results of the survey, the following conclusions came about. First, practicing spiritual disciplines did have a positive impact on the majority of volunteers. Next, there was a significant increase in selected spiritual disciplines for those volunteers who practiced them consistently. Third, practicing spiritual disciplines can translate to practical disciplines like tithing and offering giving and prayer. And last, after going through the guided journal the volunteers would highly recommend that others go through the 21-day guided journal.

### **Conclusion**

The study revealed some interesting dynamics as they relate to the practice of spiritual disciplines. For example, even though the guided journal was designed to be an independent study, it was found that a small group model with a coach or leader was beneficial in practicing spiritual disciplines. The small group model was not part of the original plan for the implementation of the project. Furthermore, although the plan consisted of in-person meetings, the online meetings were an encouragement to all participants. Indeed, it became apparent that as the volunteers interacted in the small group, it allowed their social needs to be met via the online interaction.

Not only did the volunteers discuss the concepts in the guided journal, but they were able to share about events that were going on in their lives. Implementing the

project using the small group model became therapeutic for the volunteers and investigator since face-to-face interaction was prohibited due to the pandemic and three of the volunteers were in college. Due to the pandemic and social distancing protocols, the meetings happened via Zoom.

Having the volunteers do a personal journal during the project was beneficial. The volunteers were able to document how the practice of spiritual disciplines impacted their lives and had discussions about that during the bi-weekly meetings. The volunteers were also able to chronicle the occurrences of divine appointments in their journals.

After the analyzing the results, it was clear that the practice of the spiritual disciplines did increase with the volunteers when there was a formatted plan to discuss the selected spiritual disciplines. During the post-interview with the volunteers, six out of the seven volunteers stated that they did see an increase in spiritual disciplines as they practiced them. The one volunteer who did not see an increase in spiritual disciplines was because they did not attend the bi-weekly meetings or due to the guided journal regularly. This realization was enlightening. However, all seven of the volunteers mentioned that the program was beneficial on some level and should be done with the congregation as a whole.

The investigator approached the project from the perspective that as individuals practiced spiritual disciplines that the church would grow as a result. Results from the pre- and post-assessments and 21-day guided journal entries showed a significant increase in their spiritual growth after they practiced the selected spiritual disciplines.

## CHAPTER 6

### PROJECT EVALUATION AND LEARNINGS

This chapter goes through how the data from the intervention listed in Chapter 5 was evaluated and interpreted, along with a report of the resulting conclusions and outcomes. It also discloses how the examiner has been transformed as a ministry professional and proposes conclusions and recommendations relating to the effectiveness of the practice of spiritual disciplines.

#### **Overview of the Initiative**

The researcher sought to create a program that would increase spiritual maturity through the practice of spiritual disciplines. Seven individuals were selected to participate with a 21-day guided journal that was created by the investigator before the project was implemented to help the selected volunteers practice particular spiritual disciplines. The selected individuals were given pre- and post-assessment questionnaires to see if their practice of spiritual disciplines increased. The selected individuals also participated in an anonymous survey at the end of the project to measure the impact of going through the guided journal had on their spiritual growth as well as to get unbiased feedback on the project.

The investigator first noted in his theological reflection how churches grew in Scripture. Next, he focused on literature that dealt with church growth models, the role of

the Holy Spirit in helping believers and seekers become spiritually mature. Then he implemented a plan to address the alarming reality of church decline by collaborating with selected individuals who practiced spiritual disciplines. Finally, he measured the impact on that the practice of spiritual disciplines had on selected individuals.

### **Summary of Theological Conclusions**

In addition to the conclusions reached from the intervention data in Chapter Five, a summary of the theological, theoretical, and methodological conclusions reached in Chapters Two, Three, and Four prepared the foundational premise for overarching conclusions.

#### **Chapter Two**

A close analysis of the data revealed that there is a plethora of information in the Bible that affirms that the practice of spiritual disciplines is the foundational element as it relates to spiritual maturity. Scriptures affirm that the practice of spiritual disciplines is mandatory for the growth, health, and spiritual maturity of a seeker, believer, and church members. In the book of Acts, one notes the phenomenal growth of the church through the power of the Holy Spirit. Before believers received the Holy Spirit, they practiced spiritual disciplines such as prayer, humility, and confessions. Scripture affirms that prior to receiving the power of the Holy Spirit, the disciples were afraid. But after they received the Holy Spirit, they became bold in their witnessing. Before Saul (who became Paul in the book of Acts) encountered God on the road to Damascus, he was on a mission to decimate the Christian church by killing and imprisoning those who followed Jesus.

But after the encounter, Paul, like the disciples and others who received the Holy Spirit, became a powerful witness for Jesus Christ even until death. They were also able to perform miracles, signs, and wonders through the power of the Holy Spirit. This came after they practiced spiritual disciplines.

The positive influence of the practice of spiritual disciplines was also accentuated in Old Testament literature. David prayed and worshipped, Esther fasted, Noah and Abraham and many others walked by faith and not by sight, the walls of Jericho came down because of the discipline of obedience. Delving into the biblical text that demonstrated the power and use of spiritual disciplines invigorated the investigator as this was tantamount to what the initiative was attempting to ascertain.

### Chapter Three

There was an amazing amount of literature on prayer, fasting, repentance, living a surrendered life, and other spiritual disciplines that are found in the Bible. He was amazed to note that there were other authors who affirmed and wrote extensively that spiritual disciplines can be more than prayer, fasting, and the other spiritual disciplines noted in the Bible. ~~through statistical analysis~~. It was found that there were timeless books that address the need to practice spiritual disciplines and how those disciplines impacted spiritual maturity along with church growth.

For example, Burrill (2014) relates a story of two churches. They both went through the methodology of getting individuals to come to their church through an evangelistic meeting. However, one church had a successful meeting while the other had a meeting that was not successful. Burrill explains that one church not only had the

methodology but also had the Holy Spirit. Burrill talks about the manifestation of the Holy Spirit but does not deal with the correlation of spiritual disciplines regarding spiritual maturity. He does mention how the Natural Church Development survey is an effective tool in measuring the health of a church and areas where the church can grow.

Research affirms that the church that had a successful meeting was prepared to receive the new believers. The church that did not have a successful meeting was not prepared. The church that did not have a successful meeting did not cultivate the ground or prepare the members. This preparation looks like creating an experience where new believers can see the practice of spiritual disciples through the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in fruits of the spirit, gifts of the Spirit, and administration of the Holy Spirit.

Cymbala (1997) relates the story of how God blessed his church—the Brooklyn Tabernacle Church—that is known for the Brooklyn Tabernacle choir. Burrill (1996) gives transformative information for church growth. But, once again, there was no statistical analysis done on impact of the practice of spiritual disciplines on church growth.

The Holy Spirit is the primary agent for transformation and church growth. Throughout history it can be seen how the Holy Spirit was active in the lives of individuals who surrendered to God. For example, research shows that similar to the book of Acts, the Holy Spirit was responsible for church growth throughout history.

This can be seen in the 1700s with Johnathan Edwards and George Whitefield. It is seen again in the 1800s with Dwight L. Moody, Maria Woodworth-Etter (1844-1924), and Aimee Semple McPherson (1890-1944). In the 1900s, THE Azusa Street Revival

with William J. Seymour and Lucy Farrow; Billy Graham, Oral Roberts, and Kathryn Kuhlman show this too.

## Chapter Four

After delving into the theological and theoretical foundation for this initiative, a strategy was constructed and implemented to increase church growth through the practice of spiritual disciplines. The foundational premise was to see how the practice of spiritual disciplines impacted the selected individuals and how those practices impacted their personal spiritual lives and if those practices would translate into spiritual maturity. This undertaking is outlined in the following 10 phases: Creation of guided journal; board approval to implement program at church; volunteer selection process; explanation and signing of informed consent form by volunteer; pre-assessment questionnaire; meeting with volunteers; objective; project expectations, post-assessment questionnaire; and last but not least, the conclusion.

The above sequence of phases was necessary to get the optimal results. Each phase was contingent about the completion of the previous phase. The primary objective was to create a plan that could be replicated. It is noteworthy to state that during phase six meetings were done via Zoom due to the pandemic.

### **Method of Evaluation**

The principal mode of evaluation was quantitative as it relates to measuring the impact of practicing spiritual disciplines for spiritual maturity. It was predetermined that the best way to ascertain effectiveness, although not comprehensive in scope, was to

create a tool to measure the increase and effectiveness of individuals who practice spiritual disciplines. This was the primary objective of the initiative. To accurately measure that impact of the practice of spiritual disciplines with the selected volunteer, there needed to be pre- and post- questionnaires and a survey. These proved to be affective tools use to create a statistical analysis needed to measure the impact of the practice of spiritual disciplines for the volunteers.

### **Interpretation and Conclusions of Data (Chapter 5)**

There were two realities that were not initially factored in. First, the project was meant to be an independent study project in which the researcher would meet with the individuals on a one-on-one basis and the volunteers would work independently. However, due to the pandemic the researcher had to meet with the volunteers via Zoom. The researcher discovered the value of meeting with the volunteers in a small group setting via Zoom. The volunteers still worked independently to practice spiritual disciplines, but there was an amazing reward in meeting with the volunteers in a small group setting. The volunteers were able to discuss their successes and challenges. Through these conversations, the volunteers were able to grow spiritually as well.

### **Other Outcomes of the Intervention**

Even though the bulk of the research was done during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, the volunteers were able to continue the project via Zoom. Meeting with the volunteers via Zoom seemed to create a valuable community in which the volunteers were able to dialogue about the project, but more importantly, created a safe space in



which the volunteers were able to dialogue about other issues that concerned them or their mental health. Once again, the value of a small group was seen.

### **Overarching Conclusions**

Will the practice of spiritual disciplines successfully increase spiritual maturity that will result in church growth in Seventh-day Adventist Christian churches or other faith traditions in the United States? The positive impact that these practices have on church growth is inconclusive since there were a limited sample of individuals. However, research did indicate that those volunteers who actively implemented the selected spiritual discipline practices noticed an increase in those areas they practiced. They also become more sensitive the moving and manifestation of the Holy Spirit.

Church growth experts attest to the fact that it is the Holy Spirit that is responsible for spiritual maturity of a believer. Once church members demonstrate spiritual maturity on the corporate level, that the manifestation will be seen in organic church growth.

Methodologies are needed for organizational purposes, but biblical texts as well as literature shows that spiritual maturity is solely dependent upon the power of the Holy Spirit. The project was designed for individuals to practice those disciplines to draw closer to God as well as see the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in a believer's personal life. It is concluded that if a congregation, conference, or individual practices those spiritual disciplines on a consistent basis, churches will grow organically.

### **Personal Transformation**

In addition to the impact that the implementation had on the seven volunteers, the researcher must mention the impact that this project had on his personal. Whereas this initiative endeavored to increase spiritual maturity through the practice of spiritual disciplines with the volunteers, it positively impacted the investigator himself.

Growing up in the Methodist faith tradition, with a father as a pastor, the Bible was always at the center of the personal life, family, and church life of the researcher. But what is interesting was that the idea of practicing spiritual disciplines for spiritual maturity was never a topic of discussion. There is an unwritten assumption that a believer will grow automatically by attending church services. Research is conclusive that spiritual maturity is an intentional activity empowered by the Holy Spirit.

The researcher discovered the power of practicing spiritual disciplines in his personal life was professionally and personally beneficial. He was also empowered as a ministry professional to look deeper into creating a church culture that emphasized the practice of spiritual disciplines for spiritual maturity.

Secondly, the frequent meetings with the volunteers showed the researcher that it is a benefit to small groups and to coaching/mentoring. The researcher had not factored this into the equation prior to the implementation of the project, but became personally committed to each volunteer practicing and spiritually growing through the practice of spiritual disciplines. He was shocked to see that six out of the seven volunteers were committed to the completion of the project. The volunteers and the investigator developed a bond in which they still stay in contact with each other. Early on, the need for relationship and a healthy community was realized.

Lastly, the researcher found immense value in being a project facilitator, mentor, and even coach. Having the opportunity to coach and/or mentor individuals in the practice of spiritual disciplines, the power of the Holy Spirit was sensed working through the implementation of the project. The Holy Spirit guided him to create the 21-day guided journal and the assessment questions and eventually to even author a book on the practice

of spiritual disciplines and create a study guide to accompany the book to help believers practice disciplines. The researcher became more sensitive to the need and power of the Holy Spirit in his life and the lives of believers. More importantly, the researcher saw that there is great need for churches, conferences in any denomination to be intentional in the practice of spiritual disciplines.

Personally, the researcher was convicted about his relationship with God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit to the point that he will do more in his personal life to practice spiritual disciplines. Many churches of today are not operating in the power and authority that the church of the book of Acts operated in. Many church leaders are leaning more on methodologies and other man-made systems instead of moving in the power of the Holy Spirit. For it is the power of the Holy Spirit that brings spiritual maturity and will give individuals the power to operate in miracles, signs, and wonders as demonstrated in the book of Acts.

### **Strategic Recommendations for Church Organizations**

The literature review noted a dearth of information in statistical analysis regarding the impact that the practice of spiritual disciplines had on spiritual maturity. This research proved that there is an increase in the practice of spiritual disciplines of the individuals who participated in the 21-day guided journal. However, a more realistic timeline would be 6-12 months since spiritual maturity is a process.

A pastor or church leader should administer the NCD before going through the guided journal. Then continue to practice other spiritual disciplines and put systems in place for church members to continue practicing those disciplines. Therefore, it is

recommended that along with tools like the NCD (Natural Church Development), that entities like NADEI (North American Division Evangelism Institute) get a grant to research the correlation impact that the practice of spiritual disciplines have on church growth.

Second, church leaders at every level need to critically explore the benefits and paramount need to practice spiritual disciplines. The seriousness of the matter was accentuated by the fact that research indicates that in this postmodern age, individuals are asking questions that can be answered if the church would get serious about believers becoming spiritually mature through the practice of spiritual disciplines. The practice of spiritual disciplines can be seen throughout the Bible. However, the practice of these disciplines are many times not at the forefront of the life of a church member or believer. Prayer, fasting and other disciplines may be practiced by a believer but there was a time when these disciplines were so integrated into the life of the church the church had life through the practice of those disciplines. Church leaders were intentional about making sure the ethos of the church was centered around Christ and the practice of spiritual disciplines. Research shows that the integration of the practice of spiritual disciplines in every faucet of the church is lacking.

Therefore, it is urged for local, conference, union, division, and General Conference leaders to intentionally engage in the practice of spiritual disciplines on all levels of the church. the following considerations for the respective levels of the Seventh-day Adventist Church as well as others who wish to engage accordingly are set forth as follows.

## Local Church

It is recommended that the pastor of the local church, along with church leadership, should take time to review the 21-day guided journal. Once the pastor has done that, they should go through the 21-day guided journal along with the elders' board then the church board. Once this has happened, they should create a strategic to present the plan to the church body. After going through this project, it is highly recommended going through the project in a small group setting.

It is recommended that each local congregation take the NCD (Natural Church Development) survey prior to implementing the 21-day guided journal and for a year continue to practice spiritual disciplines and put in place systems that will allow church members to mature spiritually; then after a year, the church should retake the NCD to see the impact practicing spiritual disciplines had had on the congregation.

Those who participate in the 21-day guided journal should also take a pre- and post-assessment questionnaire to gauge how the practice of spiritual disciplines benefited them.

## Conferences

Conference leadership should empower and local church leaders to be proactive in the practice of spiritual disciplines. This can be done by purchasing a guided journal for each pastor.

Conference leadership should set the tone for the practice of spiritual disciplines by acquiring the 21-day guided journal and going through the journal. Then the leadership should remind the pastors of the importance of practicing spiritual disciplines

in worker's meetings or other settings. Conferences should implement a plan to do a seminar at camp meeting that focuses on the practice of spiritual disciplines.

Conferences would benefit by investing in their pastors and workers by with literature or resources that focus on the practice of spiritual disciplines that lead to spiritual maturity. It is recommended that the conference indicate churches that are in decline or plateaued and invest in resources that deal with spiritual growth for the church and leaders through the practice of spiritual disciplines.

A conference leader or other church leader could undertake a study on how the level of spirituality for the local congregation and increase through the practice of spiritual disciplines. They could initiate a project to measure the correlation of member maturity (i.e., discipleship) and church attendance through the practice of spiritual disciplines. A project could implement a plan to develop member maturity and measure the impact on church attendance, giving, and foster a sense of belonging. Once this is done, a valuable tool to measure church is through an assessment tool like Natural Church Development. Before and after project implementation, responses from specific questions of the NCD survey may be utilized and concentrated on.

The local church should use the 21-day guided journal to foster relationships with non-Adventist believers by creating small groups. The guided journal can be done in the home, restaurant, beach, etc. The idea is to foster community and create a safe space for individuals to have a sense of belonging and grow spiritually.

## Union, Division, and General Conference

Unions and divisions may consider creating evangelistic campaign that focuses on the practice of spiritual disciplines in conjunction with local conferences.

Unions, divisions, and the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists would serve God's mission well by appointing focused leadership that understands and implements the practice of spiritual disciplines which lead to spiritual maturity. Strategic and intentional application of the practice of spiritual disciplines on all levels should be taken into the consideration with the utmost importance.

## Seminaries and Schools of Religion

Seminaries and schools of religion will benefit by creating a curriculum that focuses on the intentional practice of spiritual disciplines for spiritual maturity. It is a spiritual imperative that seminaries and schools of religion implement this course as a solution to combat the downward spiritual in society where increased individuals believe in God but not in organized religion. Also, in this climate it is imperative that seminars and schools of religion give prepare the leaders of tomorrow by giving them spiritual tools to have their ministry become successful.

Finally, because of this project, the researcher plans to turn the information into a book, seminar, and sermons about the benefits of the practice of spiritual discipline.

## Believers

A program was intentionally designed so that any church member, believer, or seeker who wanted to mature spiritually could practice and who wanted to experience the

~~see the~~ manifestation of the Holy Spirit in their lives could follow. Therefore, language that would be inclusive to other faith traditions was intentionally used. The project was designed with the following in mind. First, to increase spiritual maturation in believers. Next, to see the manifestation of the Holy Spirit on a regular basis. Next, there was hope that this would help a believer or seeker draw closer to God. And last to prepare believers for the soon return of Jesus Christ.

### **Final Conclusions**

This researcher set out to create a program to measure whether the practice of spiritual disciplines increased spiritual maturity through the power of the Holy Spirit with seven selected volunteers. The post assessments show that when a church member, believer or seeker actively practices spiritual disciplines, there will be an increase in spiritual maturity. It is surmised that if a congregation will go through the 21-day guided journal, it will begin a journey to spiritual maturity for the congregation. It must be noted and reiterated that spiritual maturity is an ongoing process and may even continue until Jesus Christ returns. The research affirmed that for those individuals who actively engaged the 21-day guided journal and implemented those spiritual discipline in their daily lives, there was a significant increase in the practice and spiritual disciplines with a recognition of the manifestation of the Holy Spirit.



APPENDIX A  
PRE-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Your recorded answers are based on your personal insight into the workings of the Holy Spirit. Please answer each question without seeking assistance, Bible, google or any other oversight assistance. These questions are designed to evaluate your general knowledge about the Holy Spirit.

1. What do you know about the Holy Spirit?
2. Can you list any books of the Bible where you noticed the workings of the Holy Spirit besides the book of Acts?
3. Do you think we need the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in our lives? Why or why not?
4. List the fruit(s) of the Holy Spirit?
5. List the gift(s) of the Holy Spirit?
6. What does it mean to you to “Walk in the Spirit”?
7. Do you know of any benefits of having the Holy Spirit? (If yes, list those benefits)
8. List the symbols of the Holy Spirit?
9. What role(s) does the Holy Spirit play in Salvation?
10. What role(s) does the Holy Spirit play in Evangelism?
11. Do you think the Holy Spirit will impact your prayer life? (Why or why not)
12. Has anyone spoke to about being filled with the Holy Spirit?
13. Have you taken in seminars or courses about the role of the Holy Spirit in a person’s life?

14. How do you think your church can benefit by having the knowledge of the working of the Holy Spirit?

15. Do you believe God is still doing miracles, signs, and wonders?

16. What miracles have you seen in your life?

APPENDIX B  
POST-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What did you learn about the Holy Spirit that you did not know prior to starting this project?
2. Since starting this project what have you learned about yourself and the Holy Spirit?
3. Since starting the project have you seen any miracles in your life? Unexpected ways God showed up in your life? Explain
4. Since starting the project did you learn anything new about yourself and your relationship with God? Explain
5. Did you have any Divine Appointments-This are occurrences where God sent someone your way to be a blessing to you are God used you to be a blessing to someone else
6. Since starting the project did you noticed that you have more boldness to make decisions about living for God or trusting God more?
7. Since starting the project have you seen the Holy Spirit move in your personal life or public life including your church, school, work, etc.?
8. Would you recommend others to be part of this project? Explain answer.
9. How can this project help others?
10. What concept can you keep applying to your life that you learned from being a part of this project?
11. List any benefits you can think of being filled with the Holy Spirit?
12. Did you make fasting and praying a part of your spiritual journey? If so, please explain what happen during and after you fasted and prayed?

13. Did your prayer life increase while being part of this project? Explain.

APPENDIX C  
ONLINE SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. After completing the guided journal, how would you describe your tithe and offering giving?
2. After going through the guided, did your personal worship time increase?
3. How would you describe your prayer time after going through the guided journal?
4. How would you describe the amount of time you spend studying the Bible after going through the guided journal?
5. How would you describe your church attendance (online or in-person) since going through the guided journal?
6. After going through the guided journal; how would you describe your understanding and relationship with the Holy Spirit?
7. How likely are you to recommend this program to other individuals?



APPENDIX D  
SURVEY RESULTS

*\*\*Information collected anonymously by SurveyMonkey.com\*\**

| <b>Respondents</b> | <b>Question #1<br/>Tithe and Offering Giving</b> | <b>Question #2<br/>Personal Worship</b> | <b>Question #3<br/>Prayer Time</b> | <b>Question #4<br/>Bible Study</b> | <b>Question #5<br/>Church Attendance</b> | <b>Question #6<br/>Holy Spirit</b> | <b>Question #7<br/>Recommendation to others</b> |
|--------------------|--|---|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|---|
| <b>R1</b>          | Stayed the same                                  | Yes                                     | Stayed the same                    | Stayed the same                    | Decreased                                | Increased                          | Very Likely                                     |
| <b>R2</b>          | Give from Gross                                  | Worship more meaningful                 | Stayed the same                    | Stayed the same                    | Stayed the same                          | Increased                          | Very Likely                                     |
| <b>R3</b>          | Stayed the same                                  | Yes                                     | Increased                          | Decreased                          | Increased                                | Increased                          | Extremely Likely                                |
| <b>R4</b>          | Stayed the same                                  | Yes                                     | Increased                          | Stayed the same                    | Increased                                | Increased                          | Very Likely                                     |
| <b>R5</b>          | Stayed the same                                  | Yes                                     | Increased                          | Increased                          | Increased                                | Increased                          | Extremely Likely                                |
| <b>R6</b>          | Increased  | Yes                                     | Stayed the same                    | Increased                          | Increased                                | Increased                          | Very Likely                                     |
| <b>R7</b>          | Stayed the same                                  | Yes                                     | Increased                          | Stayed the same                    | Stayed the same                          | Stayed the same                    | Very Likely                                     |

APPENDIX E  
GOLDEN TRIANGLE

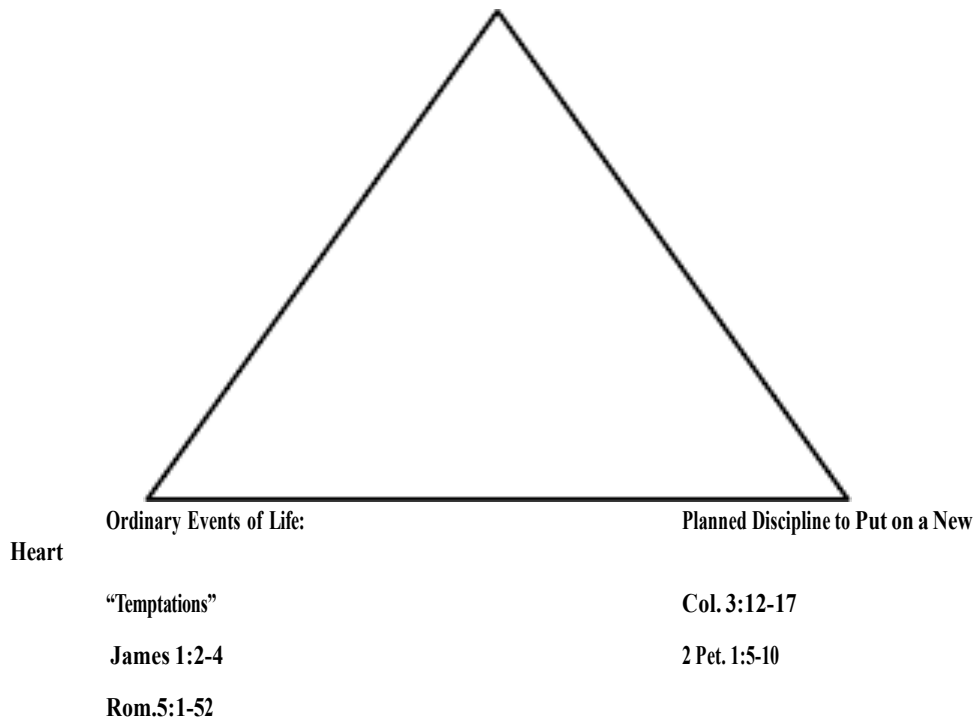
The “Golden Triangle” of

Spiritual Growth

The Action of the Holy

Spirit

John 3:5 Rom. 8:10-13 Gal. 5:22-26



*Adapted from: Dallas Willard’s book  
Divine Conspiracy p. 347*

The image is designed to suggest the correlation in practical life of the factors that can certainly lead to the transformation of the inner self into Christlikeness. The trials of daily life and our activities specially planned for transformation are placed at the bottom to indicate that where the transformation is actually carried out in our real life, where we dwell with God and our neighbors. And at the level of real life, the role of what is imposed upon us (“trials”) goes hand in hand with our choices as to what we do with ourselves.

APPENDIX F  
GUIDED JOURNAL

# **21-day Guided Journal**

**by**

**Robert W. Norwood**

## Introduction

\*\*\*\*\*Come Holy Spirit\*\*\*\*\*

Come, Holy Spirit, save me from myself,  
And speak to me each day as friend to friend,  
My comfort be in sorrow, pain, and woe,  
From hurtful, lurking foes defend.

Come, Holy Spirit, dwell within my heart;  
Guide thou my feet to unscaled heights above.  
And every impulse of my being thrill  
With holy, pure, and matchless love.

Come, Holy Spirit, with Thy power entrust.  
Else would my toil and labor be in vain;  
For whitening fields, the reapers now invite.  
As lowly bends the ripening grain.

Come, Holy Spirit, fire my soul with zeal,  
Consuming every trace of selfish dross,  
That I may lead my brother lost in sin  
To Calvary's bleeding cleansing cross

-B.M. GRAN

## Guided Journal

### Day 1

#### Outpouring of the Holy Spirit

*"In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams."* (Acts 2:17)

When Jesus was gathering the dozen men about Him through whom He would found the Christian church, He did not seek them in the venerable schools of the rabbis, or the exclusive circle of the Sanhedrin. He did not send to Greece, the center of philosophy and culture for His disciples. Nor did He go to Rome, the home of legislative genius and military prowess, to find His apostles. *No, He trod the shining shores of Galilee, and selected humble men whose hearts were big enough to admit the Lord of glory, men who would finally be willing to be nothing that Christ might be everything; men through whom the Holy Spirit could work, unhampered by human sophistry, selfishness, or superiority.*

(Coming of the Comforter: LeRoy E. Froom, pg. 83)

#### Reflection Questions

1. What does the passage tell you about Holy Spirit?
2. In your own words, what kind of men did Jesus choose?
3. What does it mean to you to be called by Jesus?
4. Why do you think Jesus choose those individuals?
5. What hope for us can be found in the individuals Jesus choose to be his disciples/apostles?

#### Deeper in Scripture

In the \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ says, I will pour out my \_\_\_\_\_ on all people. Your sons and daughters will \_\_\_\_\_, your young men will see \_\_\_\_\_, your old men will dream \_\_\_\_\_.



## **Prayer**

Holy Spirit you are welcome here. Guide me, protect me, and fill me with your presence and power. Amen

## Guided Journal

### Day 2

#### Have you Received the Holy Spirit?

**Listen to the song before and after this study.**



#### Lord Prepare Me

*\*I do not own the rights to this song\**

*1. And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples,*

*2 He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. (Acts 19:1-2)*

About twenty years after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, this incident took place. During his journey, Paul came to Ephesus and found in the Christian church some disciples in whom he observed that there was something lacking in their belief or experience. Accordingly, he asked them the question, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” Their reply was that they had not even heard of the Holy Spirit. They had been baptized by disciples of John the Baptist with the baptism of repentance, with a view to faith in Jesus as One who was to come, but they were still unacquainted with the great event of the outpouring of the Spirit or the significance of it...”

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit is essential, “For a healthy Christian life, it is indispensable that we be fully conscious that we have received the Holy Spirit to dwell in us. Had it been, otherwise, Paul would have never asked the question, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” These disciples were recognized as believers. This position, however, was not enough for them. The disciples who walked with the Lord Jesus on earth were also true believers, yet He commanded them not to rest satisfied until they had received the Holy Spirit from Himself in heaven.” (Andrew Murray, *Experiencing the Holy Spirit*. Pg. 13-15)

### **Reflection Questions**

1. Do you know if you are filled with the Holy Spirit? Why or why not?
2. Has anyone asked you if were filled with the Holy Spirit? If so, explain your response? If not, what would you say?
3. Why do you think it is essential for the Christian life be filled with the Holy Spirit?
4. What does it mean to you when the passage says, “He commanded them not to rest satisfied until they had received the Holy Spirit?”
5. List any benefits you can think of being filled with the Holy Spirit?

Reflect on “*If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?*” (Luke 11:13) What does this mean to you?

### **Deeper in Scripture**

He said unto them, Have ye \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any \_\_\_\_\_.

### **Prayer**

God, you said that all we must do is ask to be filled with Holy Spirit. Lord, fill me with your Holy Spirit in the name of Jesus Amen.

## Guided Journal

### Day 3

#### Benefits of Receiving the Holy Spirit



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wzli\\_BGIBY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wzli_BGIBY)

YouTube

*5 Incredible things that happen when the Holy Spirit enters you.*

**My speech and my preaching were not with persuasive word of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. (1 Corinthians 2:4-5)**

The life that the Lord has prepared for His people is a life of victory. It is not victory to such an extent that there will be no temptation to evil or inclination to sin. But there is to be victory of such a kind that the indwelling power of the Spirit who fills us, the presence of the indwelling Savior, will keep sin in subjection as the light subdues the darkness.

Yet to what a small extent we see power for victory over sin in the church! Even among earnest Christians we see untruthfulness and lack of honor, pride and esteem, selfishness, and lack of love. How little are the traces of the image of Jesus-obedience, humility, love, and entire surrender to the will of God—even among the people of God! The truth is that we have become so accustomed to the confession of sin and unfaithfulness, of disobedience and backsliding, that it is no longer regarded as a matter of shame....

Let every sin, whether in ourselves or others, serve as a call to notice how much the Spirit of God is lacking among us. Let ever instance of failure in the fear of the Lord, in love holiness, and entire surrender to the will of God, urge us to call on God to bring His Spirit to full dominion over the church once more. (**Andrew Murray, *Experiencing the Holy Spirit*, pages 45-46**)

### **Reflection Questions**

1. The life that the Lord has prepared for his people is a life of \_\_\_\_\_?
2. What does victory look like to you?
3. What areas of your life would you like victory over?
4. How would you like the Holy Spirit to move in your church, family, and personal life?
5. How would your life look to have complete victory in every area of your life?

### **Deeper in Scripture**

My \_\_\_\_\_ and my \_\_\_\_\_ were not with persuasive word of \_\_\_\_\_, but in demonstration of the \_\_\_\_\_ and of \_\_\_\_\_, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the \_\_\_\_\_ God..(1 Corinthians 2:4-5)

### **Prayer**

Lord, I am praying victory in Jesus Christ over every area of my life. God send your Holy Spirit to guide me and help me in the areas of my life where I am struggling to surrender to the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## Guided Journal

### Day 4

## Prayer and Fasting

### Scripture

*So, He said to them, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting." (Mark 9:29 NKJV)*

**Read: Mark 9:17-29**

### Answer the following questions:

1. Why couldn't the disciples help the man's son?
2. How does the man's issue apply to today's church?
3. What can we learn from the interaction between the man, Jesus's response, and Jesus' disciples?
4. If someone would bring their family member to you. Would you be able be Jesus or the disciples? **Explain your answer.**
5. How was Jesus able to help the man but not the disciples? Read Luke 3:22
6. Why do you think it is important to Fast and Pray?

### Deeper in Scripture

**So, He said to them, "This kind can come out by nothing but \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_."**

### Prayer

Jesus help me to follow you every day and to become more like you in word and deed.  
Lord, you said in your word. Greater things will we do because you will go to your father and send the comforter (The Holy Spirit). Jesus fill me now with your Holy Spirit. Amen

## Guided Journal

### Day 5

#### Reading the Bible



*“But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.” (James 1:6)*

#### Reading

Prayer is the way we speak to God. We pray because this is way we communicate with God. Prayer is not only speaking to God but also listening. Speaking to God should be like we are speaking to our best friend. When we pray, we must believe that God is listening and will answer our prayers. In prayer, we say “Not my will, but your will be done.” The key to answered prayer is praying according to the will of God and in accordance with His Word. Prayer is not seeking our own will but seeking to align ourselves with the will of God more fully. The Bible tells us, “Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” (Romans 8:26)

#### Questions

1. How has God answered your prayers in the past?
2. Read Luke 11:11-13?
3. When was the last time you asked to be filled with the Holy Spirit?

4. Do you or have your written your answered prayers in a prayer journal?
5. list at least three prayers God has answered in the last 2 months.
6. What are some hindrances to prayer?

**Fill in the blank**

But when you \_\_\_\_\_, you must \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, because the one who \_\_\_\_\_ is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. (James 1:6)

**Deeper in Scripture**

But when you \_\_\_\_\_, you \_\_\_\_\_ and not \_\_\_\_\_, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ by the \_\_\_\_\_. (James 1:6)

**Prayer**

\*\*Father, I thank you for the opportunity to pray. God continue to give me discernment and understand as I read your word to become who you called me to be. Amen\*\*



## Guided Journal

### Day 6

#### The Art of Worship



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ui0DIGJDYxI>

YouTube

*\*Listen to the video before you begin\**

#### Scripture

**Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. (John 4:20-24)**

#### Reading

Worship is the single most important event in the life of the Christian, for everything in Christianity centers on worship. The health and vitality of the believer rises and falls on the quality of his or her worship experience. Worship, according to Revelation 14:6-12, is the commemoration of creation and the celebration of the gospel. It is the believer's response to the mercy and goodness of God through the act of adoration, reverence, thanksgiving, obedience, and submission.

Christians worship because of what God has done, is doing, and will do through His Son, Jesus Christ, and through the His Spirit. The chief aim of Christian worship is to glorify God, to praise Him. Therefore, worship is one of the most important activities of the believer and the church. If the church fails in worship, it will also stumble in its mission and degenerate into nothing but a social club with some spiritual bent. (Kidder, *Majesty: Experiencing Authentic Worship*, p. 9)

### **Reflection Questions**

1. What does Worship look like to you? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Reflect on what it would look like to worship God in Spirit and in Truth?
3. The author said, “worship is the single most important event in the life of a Christian,” What does that mean to you? \_\_\_\_\_
4. List 5 things God has done for you in the last month or two months.
5. What can you do to be more intentional with your worship to God?
6. What does worship mean to you? \_\_\_\_\_

### **Deeper in Scripture**

Our fathers \_\_\_\_\_ in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to \_\_\_\_\_. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_. Ye \_\_\_\_\_ ye know not what: we know what we \_\_\_\_\_: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true \_\_\_\_\_ shall \_\_\_\_\_ the Father in \_\_\_\_\_ and in \_\_\_\_\_: for the Father \_\_\_\_\_ such to \_\_\_\_\_ him. God is a Spirit: and they that \_\_\_\_\_ him must \_\_\_\_\_ him in spirit and in truth

### **Prayer**

Father my prayer is to worship you in Spirit and in Truth. Show me Lord if I have not been worshipping you the way you want me to, please show me how. If you are pleased with my worship show me how to increase my worship of you God.

## Guided Journal

Day 7

### Journaling

#### Scripture

**And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. (Habakkuk 2:2)**

#### Benefits of Journaling

##### **1. Writing is an Act of Obedience.**

The Word of the Lord in Habakkuk 2:2 instructs us to write the vision. Writing the vision is obedience to what God has asked us to do. The simple act of doing what the Word of God says shifts us from being a passive, laid-back hearer to an active, engaged doer. Acting on God's instruction puts us in a position to receive His best.

##### **2. Brings Clarity**

Writing also brings a sense of clarity to our thoughts. Clarity is important because it provides focus.

Instead of wandering aimlessly, writing allows us to zero in on our heart's desire. Putting pen to paper brings our desire center stage.

Once focus is achieved, it is much easier to make plans to bring the desire to pass. Moving the idea from your mind to paper creates a physical representation of what is to come.

God is pleased when we write in faith. Although we may not fully understand how God's process works, He helps us fill in the gaps as we trust him and are obedient in small steps.

**Hebrews 11:1 says Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Your writing, by faith, is the material that your future victory is made of!**

##### **3. Helps us to not Forget.**

Writing also helps you to remember what is important. When things are difficult, revisiting the vision will help you stay the course. Writing down the vision spoken to you by God will be a visual reminder of your future win.

(Lamica Bennett, Jan <https://teamjesusmag.com/the-writing-season-how-to-write-the-vision-and-make-it-plain>, January 2021)

### **Journaling**

1. Do you have a journal? Yes, or no?
2. If you have a journal. How often do you write in it? If not purchase a journal and begin an incredible journey with the Lord
3. What to write in your journal. Examples: the type of life you want to have. What you can do better. What God is doing in your life.
4. Write your prayer request in your journal. (If you do not have a journal (yet) a notebook or regular paper will do)
5. Write your answered prayers in your journal.

### **Deeper in Scripture**

And the \_\_\_\_\_ answered me, and said, \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ and make it \_\_\_\_\_ upon tables, that he may run that \_\_\_\_\_ it.

### **Prayer**

Lord you are a prayer answering God. Lord, as I write in my journal. I am asking that you bless the vision that you have given me. I am asking that you help me write the vision make it plain and may it glorify you. Amen

## **Guided Journal**

### **Day 8**

#### **Dying Daily to Self**

##### **Scripture**

For through the law, I died to the law so that I might live for God. 20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:19-20)

##### **Reading**

Paul explains to the Galatians the process of dying to self as one in which he has been “crucified with Christ,” and now Paul no longer lives, but Christ lives in him. Paul’s old life, with its propensity to sin and to follow the ways of the world, is dead, and the new Paul is the dwelling place of Christ who lives in and through him. This does not mean that when we “die to self” we become inactive or insensible, nor do we feel ourselves to be dead. Rather, dying to self means that the things of the old life are put to death, most especially the sinful ways and lifestyles we once engaged in. “Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires” (Galatians 5:24). Where we once pursued selfish pleasures, we now pursue, with equal passion, that which pleases God.

Dying to self is never portrayed in Scripture as something optional in the Christian life. It is the reality of the new birth; no one can come to Christ unless he is willing to see his old life crucified with Christ and begin to live anew in obedience to Him. Jesus describes lukewarm followers who try to live partly in the old life and partly in the new as those whom He will spit out (Revelation 3:15–16). That lukewarm condition that the church of Laodicea experienced is the same condition that is seen in many of today’s churches. similar Being “lukewarm” is a symptom of unwillingness to die to self and live for Christ. Death to self is not an option for Christians; it is a choice that leads to eternal life.

([www.gotquestions.com](http://www.gotquestions.com), What does the Bible mean by “dying to self”  
<https://www.gotquestions.org/dying-to-self.html>)

##### **Reflection Questions**

1. Why do you think believers need to die to self?
2. What areas in your life do you think you need to die to?

3. Why do we need to be obedient Christ and die to self?
4. Imagine having a conversation with God. How would you answer this question:  
Why didn't you pick up your cross and follow my son Jesus Christ?
5. List five ways you can keep yourself from being a lukewarm believer.

### **Deeper in Scripture**

For through the law I died to the law so that \_\_\_\_\_ might \_\_\_\_\_ for  
 \_\_\_\_\_. I have been \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_ and I no longer  
 live, but \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_ me. The  
 \_\_\_\_\_ I now live in the body, I live by \_\_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_, who loved me and gave himself for \_\_\_\_\_.

### **Prayer**

Father in the name of Jesus, I want to die to all sin that comes to weigh me down. God,  
 help me be a new creation in Jesus Christ. Lord, help me to walk and live in the Holy  
 Spirit. Amen

## Guided Journal

### Day 9

#### Practice the Presence of God



#### Scripture

Emanuel means God is with Us!

O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In his hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also. The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land. O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker. (Psalm 95:1-6)

#### Reading

The Bible reminds the believer that there is fullness of joy in the Presence of the Lord (Psalms 16:11). It is exciting to know that humans can experience that joy. However, the quest seems impossible to get into the presence of the Lord and stay in His Presence. The questions believers may wrestle is, “How does a believer get into the presence of the Lord and “How does a believer stay in the presence of the Lord?” The answer for each or found in the Bible. In order for a believer to get into the presence of the Lord they can do the following: repent of any sins, ask God to be fill you with the Holy Spirit, read the Bible, pray, share the gospel message, get out in nature, associate with fellow believers, turn away from any conversations, TV shows, actions that do not glorify God.

There are benefits with being in the presence of the Lord: protection, peace, od leads, guides, and directs us as we spend time with Him, the fire and power of His presence melts away every mountain; every obstacle and hindrance before us, and every satanic plan for our lives, believers are transformed into the likeness of Christ in God’s presence. His presence refines and redefines a believer’s character, a believer fears and insecurities, our pains and burdens are lifted, are taken away as we come into God’s presence.

#### Reflection Questions

1. What have been your experience(s) with the being in the presence of the Lord?
2. What would your life be like living in the presence of the Lord?
3. What conversations, TV shows, or actions is the Holy Spirit telling you to give up?

4. For one week write down/monitor the time you spend on watching TV, social media, texting and compare it with the time you spend reading the Bible and practicing or spiritual disciplines.
5. When was the last to ask for the infilling of the Holy Spirit?

### **Deeper in Scripture**

O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_ and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. For the \_\_\_\_\_ is a \_\_\_\_\_, and a great \_\_\_\_\_. In his hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also. The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land. O come, let us worship and bow down: let us \_\_\_\_\_ before the \_\_\_\_\_ our \_\_\_\_\_.

### **Prayer**

Father, I thank you that I can be in your presence daily. Lord, help me to practice living in your presence. I know in your presence there is fullness of joy, peace, prosperity, and protection. Lord, I am asking for that you help me live in your presence. Amen



## Guided Journal

### Day 10

#### Health Message



*\*I do not own the rights to the is information\**

(Your Health is Your Wealth)

#### Scripture

And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. (Genesis 1:29)

#### Reading

To know what the best foods are, we must study God's original plan for man's diet. He who created man and who understands his needs appointed Adam his food. "Behold," He said, "I have given you every herb yielding seed, ... and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for food." Upon leaving Eden to gain his livelihood by tilling the earth under the curse of sin, man received permission to eat also "the herb of the field."

(Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Diets and Foods*, p. 63)

New Start is an acronym for: Nutrition, Exercise, Water, Sunshine, Temperance, Air, Rest, Time with Christ. God intended for all his creation to be healthy. We have now come to a point in the world is catching on and implementing God's original plan for health. Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. We must take care of the temple by being mindful and intentional of what we consume. Doctors are now showing the benefits of a plant-based diet and lifestyle.

#### Reflection Questions

1. What are the benefits of eating healthy?
2. What are the benefits of exercise?

3. How is being healthy related to evangelism?
4. What can you do to help others understand the importance of living a healthy life?
5. How much water should a person drink daily?

**Deeper in Scripture**

And \_\_\_\_\_, Behold, I have given you every \_\_\_\_\_, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for \_\_\_\_\_.(Genesis 1:29)

**Prayer**

God help me to keep my body your temple healthy. Through implementing the New Start program in my life. Amen

## **Guided Journal**

### **Day 11**

#### **Faith**

#### **Scripture**

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he, that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. (Hebrews 11:6)

#### **Reading**

Many in Christianity today use the words faith and belief interchangeably. But is there a difference between these words in the Bible? They are synonymous, and sometimes they are translated from the same Greek word. The only time the word belief appears in the New King James Version of the Bible, it is translated from *pistis*, the word for faith (2 Thessalonians 2:13).

But the word believe can carry a different shade of meaning. The apostle James wrote in his epistle about what he called dead faith. Dead faith is when one believes in God but does not obey His commandments. James wrote, “You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?” (James 2:19-20, emphasis added).

Here believe is translated from a related Greek word, *pisteuo*. James contrasts simple belief with living faith. As Christians, we must strive for living faith—belief in God demonstrated by good works according to His laws and commandments. If we simply believe in Jesus Christ, believe that God exists and believe that He is the Creator God, we are on the same level of belief as the demons! But if our belief in these things inspires us to be obedient to God and changes the way we live our life, then we truly have faith and will be considered faithful if we consistently increase and grow in our relationship with God.

(Jim Haeffele, *What Is Faith?* <https://lifehopeandtruth.com/change/faith/what-is-faith/>)

#### **Reflection Questions**

1. In your opinion, what is the difference between faith and belief?
2. Why is faith important your walk with God?
3. Describe a time where you had to walk by faith and not by sight?
4. Why is faith in God and believing the commandments of God important?
5. How can you increase your faith?

**Deeper in Scripture**

But \_\_\_\_\_ it is \_\_\_\_\_ to please him: for he that cometh  
to \_\_\_\_\_ must \_\_\_\_\_ that he is, and that he is a \_\_\_\_\_ of them that  
\_\_\_\_\_. (Hebrews 11:6)

**Prayer**

Father helps me increase my faith in you Lord. Whatever area in my life where I am  
struggling to trust you with help me to give it over to you. Amen

## Guided Journal

### Day 12

#### Discipleship of the Mind



#### Scripture

Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing, and perfect will. (Romans 12:2)

#### Reading

The world may tell us that the mind is what the brain does, but God tells us that the brain will do what the mind tells it to do. And when your spirit, under the leading of the Holy Spirit, controls your soul, then the gold standard of thinking is achieved. This is very different perspective from the traditional view which tells us we are machines that just need parts changed and chemicals are added. Choices are real; you are free to make choices about how you focus your attention, and this affects how the chemicals and wiring of your brain change and function.

(Dr. Caroline Leaf, *Switch on Your Brain*, p. 66)

#### Reflection Questions

1. Your mind and brain are different. What makes up the mind?
2. The mind is made up a person's emotions, will, circumstances, and spirit? How important is it to have the mind of Christ?
3. Good thinking = good choices = healthy thoughts; toxic thinking = toxic choices = toxic thoughts (Deuteronomy 30:19). How has your thoughts impacted your choices?
4. Reflect on the world today. How would having the mind of Christ change the current situation?

5. How does a person's mindset impact their blessings from God and their relationship with God?

**Deeper in Scripture**

\_\_\_\_\_ to the \_\_\_\_\_ of this \_\_\_\_\_ but be \_\_\_\_\_ by the \_\_\_\_\_ of your \_\_\_\_\_. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing, and perfect will. (Romans 12:2)

**Prayer**

Father in the name of Jesus, I am humbly asking you to bless me with the mind of Christ so I can do your will. God, help me to surrender to you daily so I can be all you call me to be in the name of Jesus. Amen

## Guided Journal

### Day 13

### Spiritual Warfare

#### Scripture

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. (*Ephesians 6:12*)

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. (*2 Corinthians 10:4-5*)

#### Reading

Everyone has the right to exercise their will—their power of choice— even those possessed/controlled by demons. The means by which we can overcome the wicked one is that by which Christ overcame, —the power of the word. God does not control our minds without our consent; but if we desire to know and to do His will, His promises are ours: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." "If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching." John 8:32; 7:17, R. V. Through faith in these promises, every man may be delivered from the snares of error and the control of sin. Every man is free to choose what power he will have to rule over him. None have fallen so low, none are so vile, but that they can find deliverance in Christ.

The weakest and demon-possessed are not beyond the reach of God. How reassuring it is to know that we who seek a relationship with God are not left to the power of Satan or to the infirmity of our own nature. God sends His angels to hold in check the forces of evil to allow everyone a chance at receiving the light of the gospel: I saw evil angels contending for souls, and angels of God resisting them. The conflict was severe. Evil angels were crowding about them, corrupting the atmosphere with their poisonous influence, and stupefying their sensibilities. Holy angels were anxiously watching these souls and were waiting to drive back Satan's host. But it is not the work of good angels to control minds against the will of the individuals. If they yield to the enemy, and make no effort to resist him, then the angels of God can do but little more than hold in check the host of Satan, that they should not destroy, until further light is given to those in peril, to move them to arouse and look to Heaven for help. Jesus will not commission holy angels to extricate those who make no effort to help themselves.

(Yvon Caza, *Engaging the spirits: An Adventist's Perspective on Fighting Spiritual Battles*)

### **Reflection Questions**

1. What does it mean to you to put on the full armor of God?
2. How can we fight and invisible agent?
3. Can you reflect on times where you knew God was protecting against Satan?
4. Write down the armor of God and their purpose. (Ephesians 6: 10-18) Why is important to keep on the full armor of God?
5. How can you help others understand that we are all in a spiritual battle?

### **Deeper in Scripture**

For we do not \_\_\_\_\_ against \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, but against \_\_\_\_\_, against \_\_\_\_\_, against the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ of this age, against \_\_\_\_\_ hosts of \_\_\_\_\_ in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6:12)

### **Prayer**

God I am asking that you help me put on and keep on the full armor of God. So, I can stand amid this spiritual warfare. I decree and declare victory of my situation and any attacks of the enemy in the name of Jesus. Amen



## **Guided Journal**

### **Day 14**

#### **Spiritual Authority**

##### **Scripture**

But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases. (Psalms 115:3)

##### **Reading**

There are two important matters in the universe: trusting in God's salvation and obeying His authority. Trust and obey! Let us know that there are two principles in the universe: the principle of God's authority and the principle of Satanic rebellion. We cannot serve God and simultaneously go the way of rebellion by having a rebellious spirit, Satan laughs when a rebellious person preaches the word, for in that person is dwelling satanic principle. The principle of service must be authority. Are we going to obey God's authority or not? We who serve God must have this basic understanding of authority. Anyone who has once experienced an electric shock knows thereafter that he cannot be careless with electricity. Likewise, a person who has once been smitten by God's authority from then on has his eyes open to judge what is lawless both in himself and in others.

(Watchman Nee, Spiritual Authority, pgs. 16-17)

##### **Reflection Questions**

1. Read Joshua 24:15. Reflect on what it says and describe what looks like for you.
2. Satanic Rebellion is real. How can a Christian rebel against God?
3. Read 2 Corinthians 4:4. How can a believer tell the difference between God's voice and Satan's voice?
4. Have you practiced bringing your thoughts into captivity? What do you think that means?
5. Obedience to the word of God is better than sacrifice. Why do you think it is so hard to be obedient to God's word? Explain.

##### **Deeper in Scripture**

But our \_\_\_\_\_ is in the \_\_\_\_\_ He does whatever He pleases. (Psalms 115:3)

### **Prayer**

God all authority is in your hand. Please remind me that you are in control no matter what I may be going through. You are the Alpha and the Omega. The beginning and the end.  
Amen

## **Guided Journal**

### **Day 15**

### **Discipleship**

#### **Scripture**

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? (Matthew 16:24-26)

#### **Reading**

Discipleship is the process of becoming like Jesus by spending time with Jesus. Discipleship classes alone will not do it. Religious forms will not replace the personal relationship between disciple and Teacher that is the heart of discipleship.

According to Jesus, discipleship involves self-denial and sacrifice. It is not for those seeking popularity or selfish pursuits. Jesus said that the gate is narrow, and the way is difficult for those who follow Him (see Matthew 7:14). He reminds us, “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you” (John 15:18). The true disciple will face opposition for standing out from the crowds.

#### **Reflection Questions**

1. List benefits of being a disciple of Jesus Christ? Read Psalms 103)
2. What are some of the oppositions you think you will face being a disciple of Jesus Christ?
3. What does self-denial and sacrifice look like for you?
4. Read steps to Christ. What did the Holy Spirit tell you?
5. How can you help someone else become a disciple of Jesus Christ?

### **Deeper in Scripture**

Then \_\_\_\_\_ to his \_\_\_\_\_, “Whoever wants to be my \_\_\_\_\_ must \_\_\_\_\_ and take up their c\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ . For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to \_\_\_\_\_ the whole \_\_\_\_\_-, yet forfeit their \_\_\_\_\_? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?”

### **Prayer**

Father in the name of Jesus. Show me the areas of my life that I need to surrender to you so I can be a disciple of Jesus Christ. Forgive me of any sins of omission or commission. Amen

## **Guided Journal**

### **Day 16**

#### **Evangelism**

##### **Scripture**

And Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying, “All power is given unto Me in Heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” Amen. (Matthew 28:18-20)

##### **Reading**

What feeds into the church and help it to grow is what we call evangelism. The word “evangelism” does not appear in the New Testament, although the word “evangelist” occurs three time (Acts 21:8; Ephesians 4:11; 2 Tim. 4:50). The evangelist is one who announces glad tidings or good news. Evangelism is both communicating the gospel so that a person understands it and persuading that individual to respond to the message.

At the heart of evangelism lies Jesus’ command to all His followers in all ages and places to “go therefore and make disciples of all the nation” (Matt. 28:19, 20 NKJV). Therefore, evangelism is an eagerness to win others for the Kingdom of God by leading them to believe in Jesus Christ. It is bringing to someone the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the realization that every human being is guilty of sin and in danger of being eternally lost. (Kidder, *The Big Four: Secrets to a Thriving Church Family*, p. 23)

##### **Reflection Questions**

1. How can you be witness to someone about Christ?
2. Reflect on ways you can tell someone about Jesus Christ? Explain what that will look like.
3. Why is evangelism important to you?
4. Reflect on family and friends who need Christ. How would you witness to them?
5. Give five reasons you should be a witness to family, friends, and strangers?

### **Deeper in Scripture**

And Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying, "All power is given unto Me in Heaven and on earth. \_\_\_\_\_ ye therefore and teach \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ them in the name of the \_\_\_\_\_, and of the \_\_\_\_\_, and of the \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ them to \_\_\_\_\_ things whatsoever I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always, even unto the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_.

### **Prayer**

God, I need your help to be an impactful and effective witness for you. Lord, fill me now with your Holy Spirit so I have the boldness to win men and women, boys, and girls to the kingdom of God. Amen

## **Guided Journal**

### **Day 17**

### **Forgiveness**

#### **Scripture**

**For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. (Matthew 6:14-15)**

#### **Reading**

Archbishop Tutu and Reverend Tutu define forgiveness as “a conscious, deliberate decision to release feelings of resentment or vengeance toward a person or group who has harmed you, regardless of whether they actually deserve your forgiveness.” They also make sure to describe what forgiveness is not: forgiveness, they write, is not condoning or forgetting the harmful actions of others. While we often consider forgiveness as an act of releasing others from judgement or punishment, it is an act that frees ourselves from the anger and hatred that can entangle us with those who have harmed us.

God reminds us that we should forgive. Who should we forgive? We should forgive ourselves and others. Is it easy? No! Is it worth it? Yes! Forgiveness does a couple of things. It releases the offender and it also release the person who was offended by the action. Too often Christians walk around in self-made prisons of unforgiveness. The Bible says in Matthew 6:14-15, “For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your father will not forgive your sins.” We are missing many blessings by walking around in unforgiveness.

#### **Reflection Questions**

1. How does unforgiveness affect our health?
2. Why should a person and especially a Christian practice forgiveness?
3. Is there ever a time when one should not practice forgiveness? Explain your answer.
4. Why is forgives important for a Christian to go to heaven?
5. What did Jesus say in Luke 23:34 and how would that look in your life?

### **Deeper in Scripture**

For if you \_\_\_\_\_ other \_\_\_\_\_ when they \_\_\_\_\_ against \_\_\_\_\_, your heavenly Father will also \_\_\_\_\_ you. But if you do not \_\_\_\_\_ others their \_\_\_\_\_, your \_\_\_\_\_ will not \_\_\_\_\_ your \_\_\_\_\_.  
(Matthew 6:14-15)

### **Prayer**

Lord, I need your help to practice forgiveness daily. Lord, it is not easy, but I know that I can do all things through Christ Jesus who strengthens me. God, I thank you in advance for filling me with the Holy Spirit so I can practice forgives. Amen



## **Guided Journal**

### **Day 18**

#### **RAK: Random Acts of Kindness**

##### **Scripture**

**Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. (Hebrews 13:1-2)**

##### **Reading**

**Random Acts of Kindness is self-explanatory. It is the idea of being nice to family, friends, and strangers. It is the notion that we can build up the kingdom of God by doing altruistic deeds for individuals. Doing something that is unexpected. Here are some ideas for you to get started:**

- 1. Leave money on a vending machine for someone**
- 2. Bake cookies for the elderly**
- 3. Serve at a homeless shelter**
- 4. Do a 5k for a worthy cause**
- 5. Help at a veterinarian office**
- 6. Pick up litter on the beach**
- 7. Let someone go in front of you in line**
- 8. Give a stranger a compliment**
- 9. Make dinner for a family in need**
- 10. Insert coins into someone's parking meter**
- 11. Buy flowers to hand out on the street**
- 12. Leave letters of encouragement on people's cars**
- 13. Pay for someone's gas**
- 14. Hand out gift cards at the park**

##### **Reflection Questions**

- 1. Reflect on what kind of world would this been if more people practiced RAK?**
- 2. Reflect on ways you can practice RAK?**
- 3. List ways you have practiced RAK.**

4. How can practicing RAK advance the Kingdom of God?
5. List scriptures where RAK was practiced?

**Deeper in Scripture**

Let \_\_\_\_\_ love \_\_\_\_\_. Be not forgetful to entertain \_\_\_\_\_: for thereby some have \_\_\_\_\_ unawares. (Hebrews 13:1-2)

**Prayer**

God, I come to you today. Lord I am asking that you show me ways to practice RAK in my home, church, and community. We are reminded that when we entertain strangers, we may be entertaining angels. God help practice RAK on a regular basis. Amen

## Guided Journal

### Day 19

#### Getting Passed the Past

##### Scripture

**“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it. I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland. (Isaiah 43:18-19)**

##### Reading

The Israelites were stuck in the wilderness for 40 years because they could not see God’s vision for their lives. They thought of everything in terms of their past. In fact, they complained to Moses that they wanted to go back to Egypt and return to a life of slavery because that is what they knew. Can you imagine?

But God wanted them to get a new vision—a land flowing with milk and honey.

If you want to see change happen in your life, you must get a vision that goes beyond what you have already seen and experienced. A good place to look for that vision is in the thousands of promises contained in God’s Word. Through obedience to His Word, you can claim each one of them for yourself.

Surrendered people obey God even when it does not seem to make sense. Abraham followed God without knowing where it would take him. Hannah waited on God’s timing without knowing when she would have a child. Mary expected a miracle without understanding the mystery that was taking place inside her. Joseph trusted God’s plan without knowing why he found himself in difficult circumstances.

Each of these people we read about in the Bible surrendered to God, and the result of their surrender was a victorious fulfillment of God’s promises.

We must learn to encourage ourselves in the Word. That is what David did in Psalm 27:13–14. Even in the midst of his troubles he said, “I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord” (NIV).

Our hope should not be based on what we can see or what is in our past. Rather, it should be based on the Word of God and His promises for our lives.

Give everything to God—your past regrets, your present problems, your future ambitions, your fears, your dreams, your weaknesses, your habits, your hurts, your hang-ups. Allow Jesus to take the driver’s seat and then take your hands off the wheel. Do not be afraid; nothing that is under His control can ever be out of control. When you are surrendered to Christ, you can manage anything life throws at you.

God is always doing something new. Use spiritual discernment to follow His plan and stop following your own thoughts and feelings. Glance at your circumstance but spend more time focusing on Jesus. He is the author and finisher of your faith.

(Michael Woods, *Stepping Forward*:  
<https://victoriouslivingmagazine.com/2019/04/surrender-your-past/>)

### **Reflection Questions**

1. Reflect on the time(s) you followed your own thoughts instead of God's. What did you learn?
2. What dreams has God given you? Write them down then ask God to show you how to bring them to fruition.
3. Reflect on the story of the Israelites. Have you done anything similar in your life? Reflect and explain.
4. Have you had time when you had to wait on God when it did not make sense? Reflect on what happened and would you change how you responded?
5. Have you ever complained or been tempted to complain about a situation? How can you keep yourself from complaining in the future?

### **Deeper in Scripture**

“\_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ things; do \_\_\_\_\_ on the \_\_\_\_\_. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it. I am \_\_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_\_ and streams in the wasteland. (Isaiah 43:18-19)

### **Prayer**

Father in the name of Jesus. I need your help. Please God, help me let go of the past. Any hurts, any relationships, anything that is keep me from entering the promised that you have designed for me. Amen

## **Guided Journal**

### **Day 20**

#### **Emotional Healthy Spirituality**

##### **Scripture**

**“Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.” (3 John 1:2)**

##### **Reading**

“Christian spirituality, without an integration of emotional health, can be deadly to yourself, your relationship with God, and the people around you.”

“A person can grow emotionally healthy without Christ. In fact, I can think of a number of non-Christian people who are more loving, balanced, and civil than many church members I know (including myself). At the same time, a person can be deeply committed to contemplative spirituality, even to the point of taking a monastic vow, and remain emotionally unaware and socially maladjusted. How can this be? Few Christians committed to contemplative spirituality integrate the inner working of emotional health. At the same time few people committed to emotional health integrate contemplative spirituality.

(Scazzero, Emotionally Healthy Spirituality, p. 211)

##### **Reflection Question**

###### **1. What is Emotional Healthy Spirituality?**

Emotionally healthy spirituality is a concept articulated by Peter Scazzero. He reasons that a large part of a believer’s life lies untouched by Jesus Christ. He believes that most current discipleship methods and spiritual formation outlines only tackle some of what is below the surface in a believer’s life. “The problem is that a large portion...remains untouched by Jesus Christ until there is a serious engagement with what I call ‘emotionally healthy spirituality’ unseen” (p. 17).

###### **2. What areas of your life do you need Jesus to Touch?**

###### **3. How do you think being an emotional healthy person will help you?**

###### **4. What have you seen in our life or church where individual demonstrated that you are they were emotionally unhealthy?**

###### **5. The Holy Spirit helps individuals to become spiritually emotionally. Have you prayed for the Holy Spirit to help you in that area? If not, why?**

**Deeper in Scripture**

**“Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest \_\_\_\_\_ and be  
in \_\_\_\_\_, even as thy \_\_\_\_\_.” (3 John 1:2)**

**Prayer**

God, I want to thank you for helping me become an emotionally mature Christian. Lord, you are the potter, and I am the clay. Mold me into the person you want me to be. Amen

## **Guided Journal**

### **Day 21**

#### **Power of Confession**

##### **Scripture**

**“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)**

##### **Reading**

Confessing our sins is a necessary and godly practice that helps us to reorient our life to God and live in fellowship with other believers.

In 1 John 1:9, the Apostle John teaches the early church the importance of confession. He addresses his letter to people who claim to have fellowship with God, yet are living in sin, “If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth” (1 John 1:6). Throughout his writing the Apostle John calls the church to walk in the light, as God is in the light, by aligning faith and practice through confession and repentance.

John writes the letter of 1 John to help new believers experience the spiritual fellowship that comes when one’s faith and actions are in harmony with God’s will. Like the Apostle Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, John teaches new believers how to repent when sin creeps into the church, pointing the people back to faith in Jesus, the Son of God, who purifies us from all sin. “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

<https://www.biblelyfe.com/blog/benefits-of-confession-1-john-1-9>

##### **Reflection Questions**

1. Why is it important to confess our sins?
2. Why do you think confession is important in the Christian walk with Christ?
3. Is there a difference between confession and repentance? Explain your answer.
4. What can you do to align your life with the will of God?
5. Reread 1 John 1:9 and put yourself in the text. Reflect on how that will look to you? Explain

**Deeper in Scripture**

If \_\_\_\_\_ our \_\_\_\_\_, he is faithful and just to \_\_\_\_\_ us our \_\_\_\_\_ and to \_\_\_\_\_ us from all \_\_\_\_\_. (1 John 1:9)

**Prayer**

**Father in the name of Jesus. I come to you confessing my personal and public sins. Forgive me of my sins of omission and commission. Lord, help me get the victory in any area that does not bring you glory. Amen**



APPENDIX G  
NCD RESULTS



# NCD Profile *plus*

Quality Characteristic Analysis & Trends  
for the Natural Church Development Journey of



## Berean SDA Church

Feb-19

Pastor for 1 year: Robert Norwood

| Profile | Date   | Minimum Factor           | Maximum Factor             | Min - Max Difference | Average |
|---------|--------|--------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|---------|
| 1       | Feb-19 | 52 Holistic small groups | 79 Passionate spirituality | 27                   | 67      |



## How to use Profile Plus

### 1. Essential reading to use Profile Plus effectively

#### 1.1 Why this resource?

Your church is a dynamic, living organism whose health is constantly changing. All actions in your church at every point in time, especially decisions by leadership, result in the church's health improving or declining. No matter how healthy your church is, there are always areas for improvement. Profile Plus provides a comprehensive and clear picture of church life so you can track that dynamic change and stay focused on current and emerging health issues.

Growing the church is a partnership with God. Profile Plus helps you fulfill your role of identifying existing and potential barriers to health. Regular, accurate identification of barriers, and taking effective steps to remove them, maximizes the potential for ongoing growth.

#### 1.2 The Profile Plus numbers

The statistical scale for all Profile Plus graphs is the same as the one used for the basic profile graph of the eight quality characteristics. The results are standardized scores, not percentages, based upon a standardization for your country that is updated annually. The result for each question can be directly compared with the results for all other questions. The statistical model is as follows.

- The "average" church will score 50; above 50 means above average health and below 50 means below average health.
- 70% of churches score between 35 and 65.
- Scoring 65 or higher puts your church in the top 15% of churches. This shows a high degree of health.
- Scoring 35 or less places your church in the lowest 15% of churches.
- It is possible to get less than zero and more than 100.

#### 1.3 Recognise strengths and weaknesses are relative

For a proper perspective on the health of individual scores, you must compare them with the results for the rest of the country and not just the other results in your profile. Do this using the scale on the left side of the page (see 1.2 above).

For example, you may score 43 for "New Christians find friends in our church quickly" while all other results for need-oriented evangelism are over 55. On this comparison alone, you may conclude: "We are no good at helping new Christians find friends". A comparison with the rest of the country shows such a conclusion to be untrue.

#### 1.4 Negatively-phrased questions

All questions on the Profile Plus graphs are taken directly from the questionnaire. However, the questionnaire includes some negatively-phrased questions to achieve statistical accuracy. The graphed results for these questions have been reversed on the Profile Plus graphs so that they can be compared directly with the graphed results of positively-phrased questions. Negatively-phrased questions are identified by a (neg).

In reading these results, you may wish to rephrase the question by adding a "not" (or equivalent phrasing). If that is too difficult, remember this: the higher the result, the healthier it is.

#### 1.5 Avoid trying to do your own calculations

It is not possible to average the results for questions related to a characteristic and generate the overall result for that characteristic. For the results do not include the contributive weightings of each question towards the overall result for a characteristic.



### 1.6 Accuracy

Completed profiles are regularly added to the database in your country and a new national standardization is issued by the Institute for NCD every year. This ensures the ongoing statistical accuracy of all detailed analyses.

The anonymity of the survey process also contributes to accuracy because respondents feel that they can say exactly what they think.

### 2. Getting the Most from Profile Plus

The principal function of Profile Plus is to help you accurately identify existing and potential barriers impeding healthy growth.

#### 2.1 Where to begin

The most helpful information regarding the key health issues is found on the following five pages:

- Cover page - containing summary information
- 'Quality Characteristic Current Profile'
- '[Minimum Factor] Current Profile'
- 'Current Highest 10'
- 'Current Lowest 10'

Having focused on the principle issues raised in these pages, particularly with respect to the minimum factor, the other graphs can be used to bring further insight into the information found in the above five pages and for addressing other specific ministry areas.

#### 2.2 Suggested method of interpretation

The following is a proven method for interpretation. It involves placing individual results within the context of the whole profile and identifying unique issues by exploring connections between questions.

1. *Look within a quality characteristic.* Examine the results for a quality characteristic and ask questions such as:

- "Why is this result high and that result high?"
- "Why is this result low and that result low?"
- "Why is this result low but that result high?"

2. *Look across quality characteristics.* Use these same questions to draw connections between results across quality characteristics, revealing issues and barriers not evident from looking at each quality characteristic on its own. (The graph 'Current Lowest 10' is helpful here.)

3. *Look for trends.* If the church has done two or more profiles, additional graphs are provided showing historical trends. These comparative graphs highlight:

- the immediate impact of actions taken to remove specific barriers;
- longer term barriers (e.g. cultural factors) not clearly evident in a single profile; and
- potential or emerging barriers.

4. *Look for strengths.* The 'Current Highest 10' graph highlights the ten areas where the church is healthiest. Celebrate these and consider them in plans to address the minimum factor.

#### 2.3 All activity impacts health

If you have done two or more profiles, Profile Plus shows you the effect on the church's health of all activity in the church since the previous profile, whether you actively addressed the minimum factor issues or not. The colored dots on the Current Lowest 10 page are especially helpful in this regard as they highlight areas that are recurring challenges on your consecutive results.



### 3.1 Copyright

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NCD questions © NCD International

### 3.2 Presenting this report publicly

You may screen this report directly through a data projector. Open the file in Acrobat Reader, select the 'View' menu, then 'Full Screen'. Use the up and down arrows on your keyboard to select the desired graphs.

### 3.3 Confidentiality

This report may only be used by the church whose data it contains or by the denominational leaders or the NCD coach who requested it on behalf of the church. Its contents are not to be revealed publicly without the express permission of the church concerned.

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### 3.5 Publication of NCD questions

This report is based on the NCD Survey questions devised and compiled by the Institute for Natural Church Development International, also known as NCD International. These questions may not be reproduced in any form outside of this report.

### 3.6 Decisions based on this report

The church whose data appears in this report has sole responsibility for:

- ensuring that the most up-to-date Profile Plus report is being used;
- determining who has access to it;
- ensuring that all who do have access read its contents accurately;
- all conclusions drawn from the report; and
- the consequences of actions taken as a result of drawing those conclusions.

### 4. Questions?

If you have any questions, contact 1. your NCD Coach or 2. the person in your denomination or movement who has responsibility for NCD or 3. the person who supplied you with the NCD Survey results.

If this is not possible, contact the NCD National Partner in your country. Contact details can be found on the NCD International web site – [www.ncdnet.org](http://www.ncdnet.org)

At this web site you will also find:

- additional information about NCD resources, research and coaching
- NCD news, videos and case studies from around the world
- answers to frequently asked questions about NCD
- eNCDine - the Natural Church Development online magazine

For further information and discussion: [www.coloryourworld.org/ncdsurvey](http://www.coloryourworld.org/ncdsurvey)

Please do not directly contact the authors of Profile Plus or the Institute for NCD International. If your questions cannot be answered at the local level, they will be passed on by your NCD National Partner.

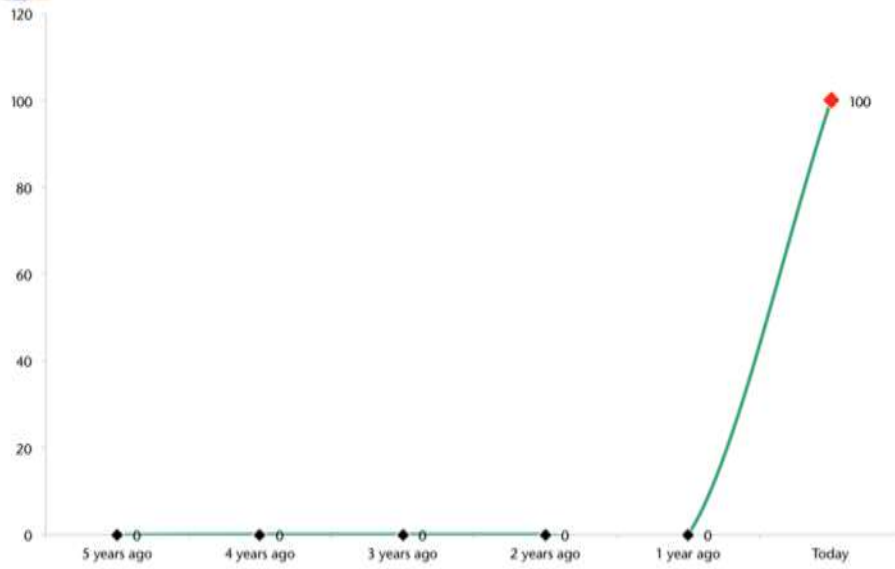
Should you require more than a brief consultation on the contents of this report, please be prepared to negotiate a fee for the services provided.

We trust that you and your church will be blessed as you use this NCD tool for releasing the potential for healthy, sustainable, 'all by itself' growth.

Christoph Schalk – Institute for NCD International  
Ian Campbell & Adam Johnstone – NCD Australia



## Adult Attendance Growth



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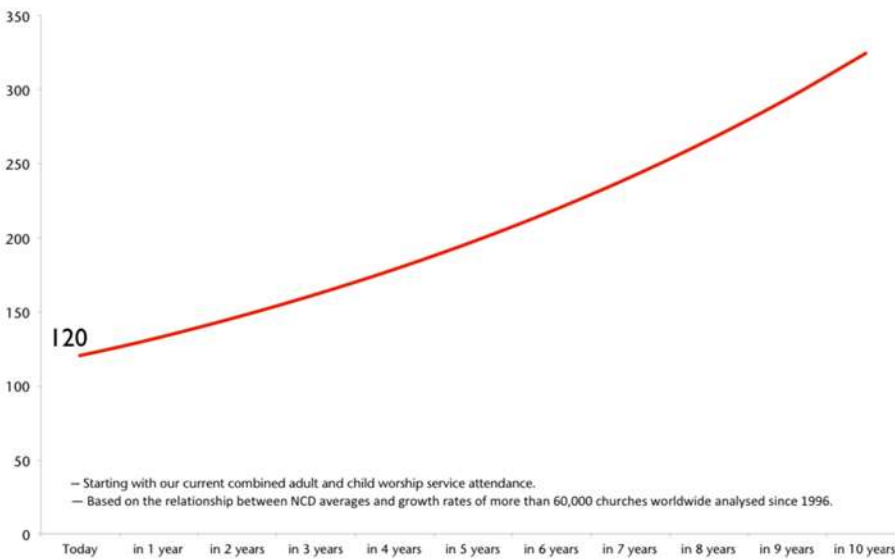
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## Projected attendance growth

Based on our current survey average

— Current Profile



— Starting with our current combined adult and child worship service attendance.  
— Based on the relationship between NCD averages and growth rates of more than 60,000 churches worldwide analysed since 1996.

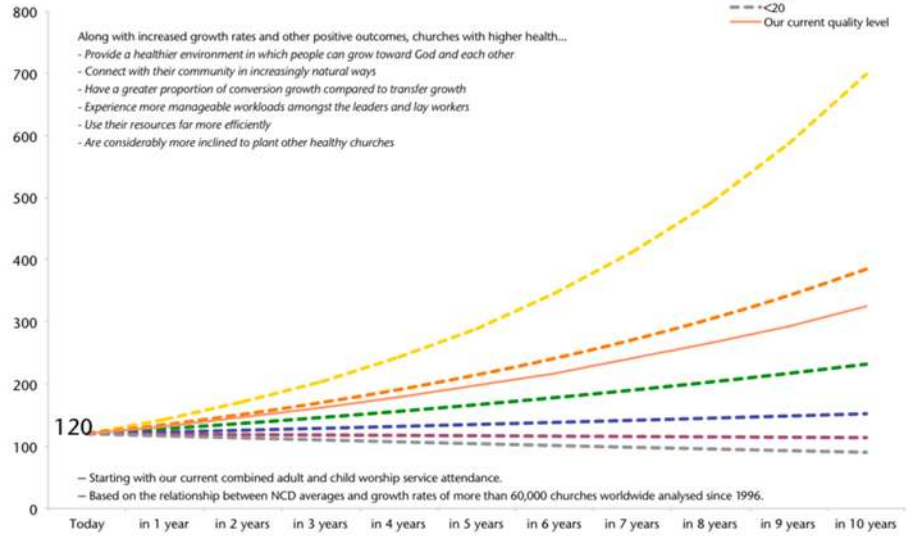
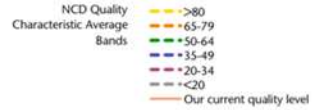
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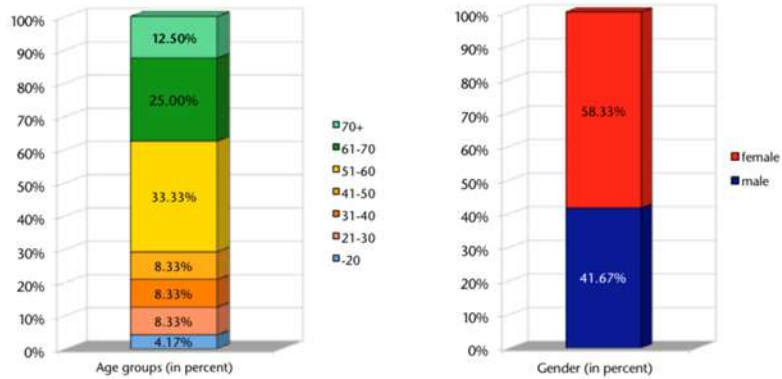
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## Possibility growth projection

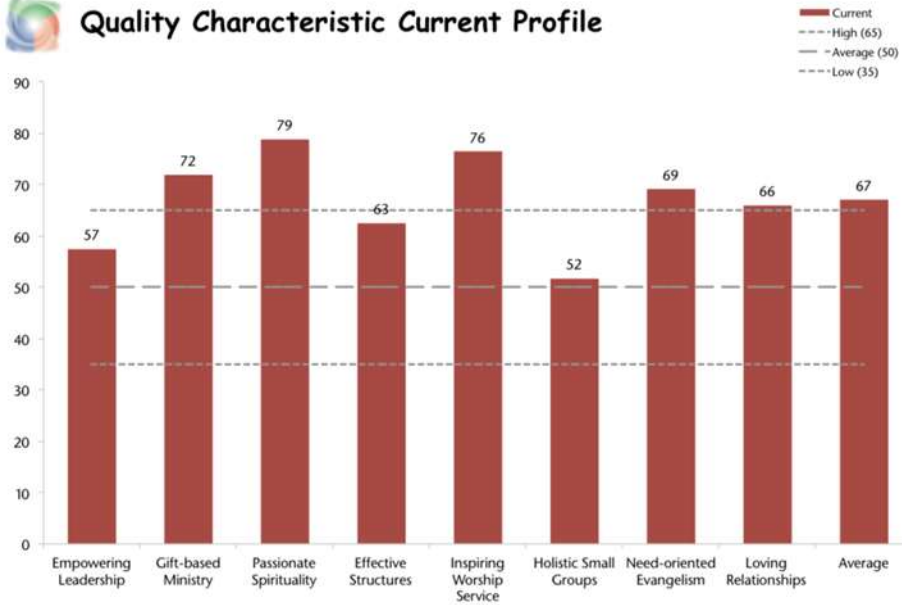


## Survey Participants by Age Groups and Gender

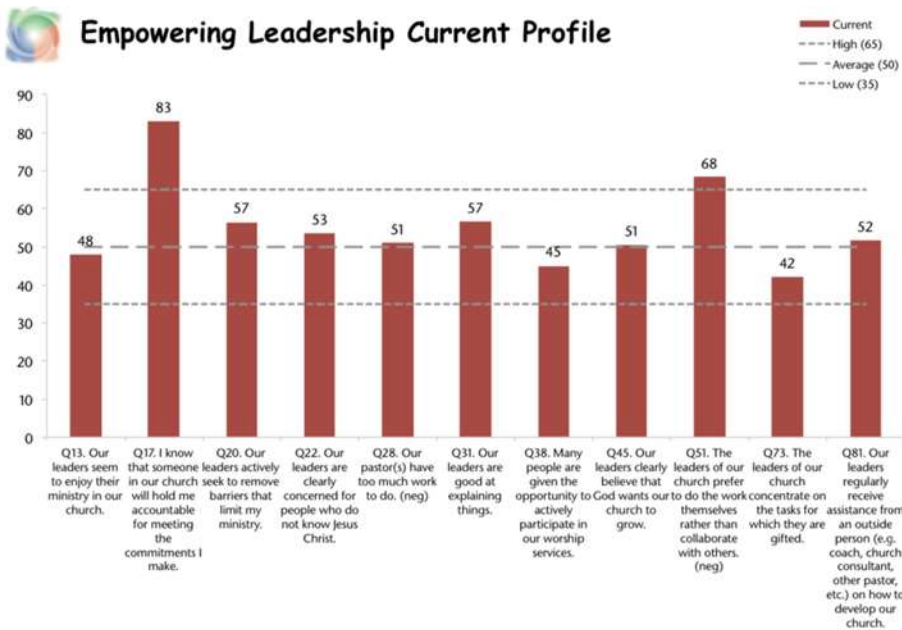




## Quality Characteristic Current Profile

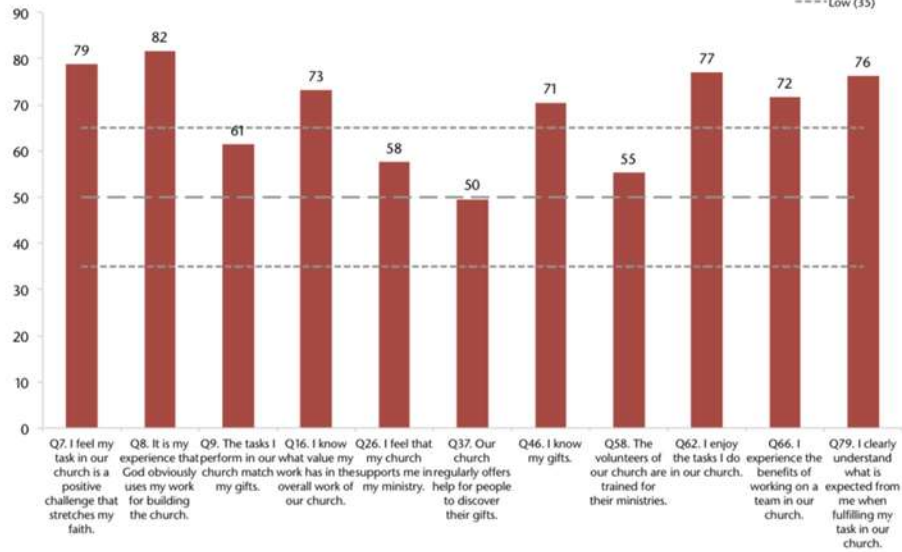


## Empowering Leadership Current Profile





## Gift-based Ministry Current Profile



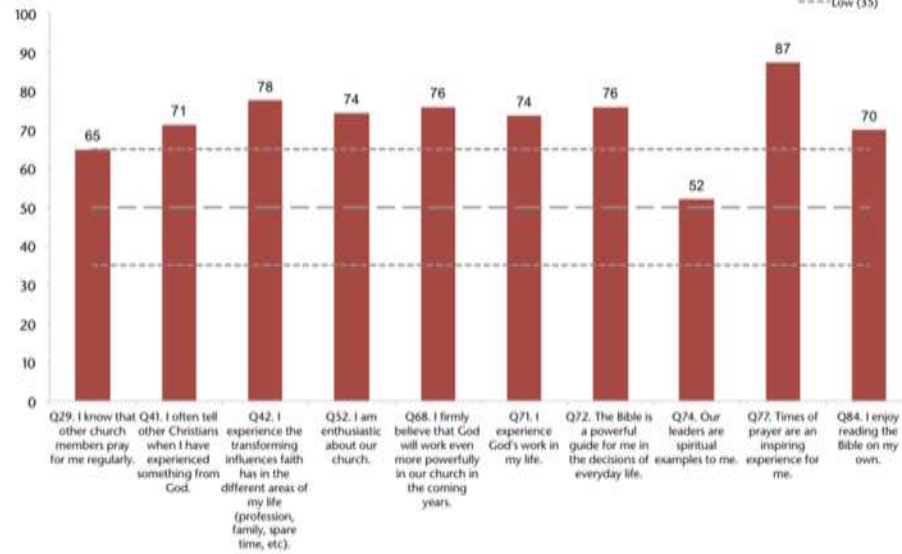
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## Passionate Spirituality Current Profile



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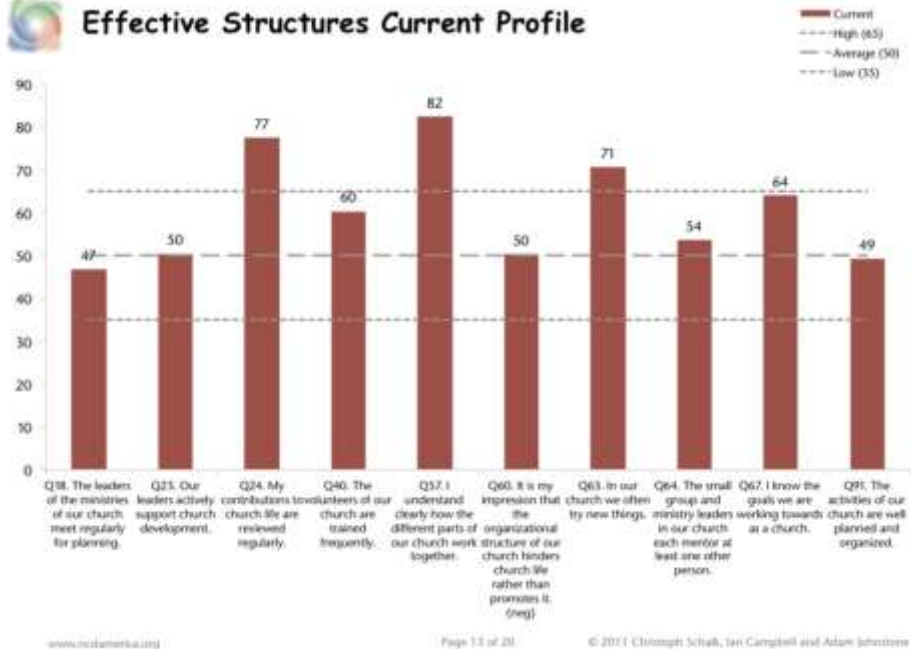
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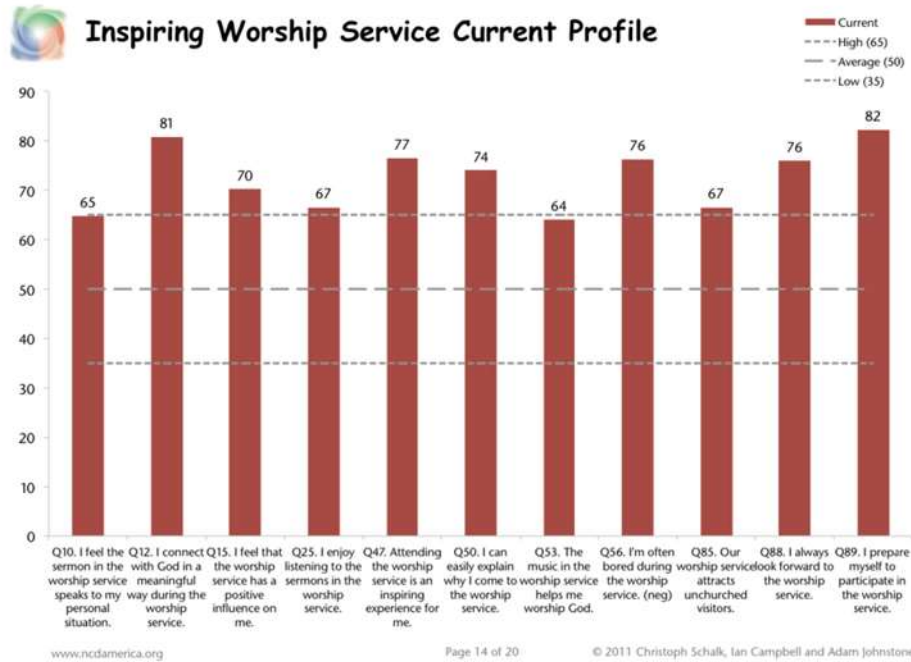




## Effective Structures Current Profile



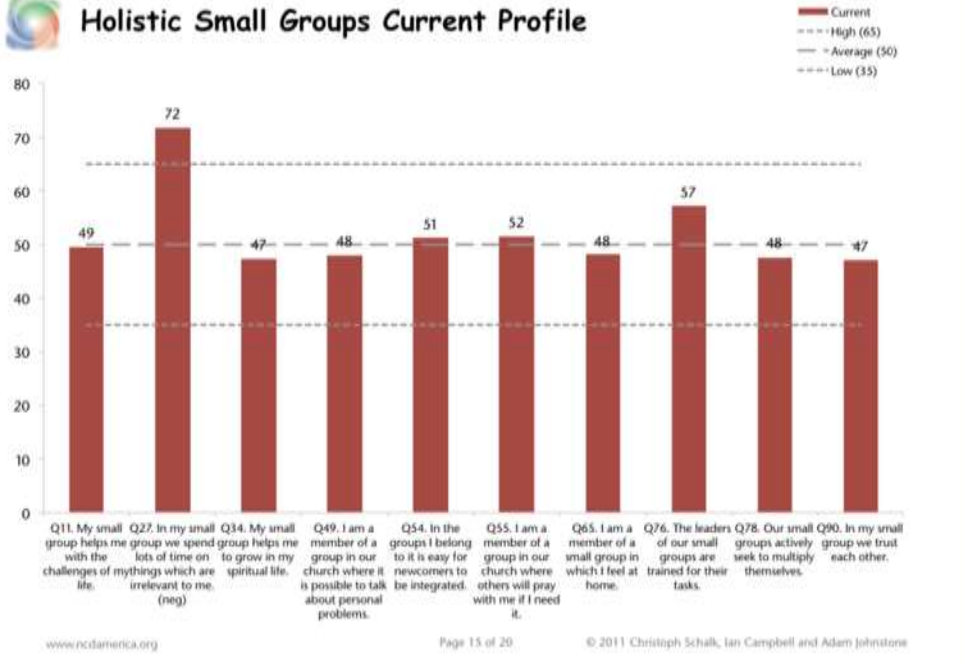
## Inspiring Worship Service Current Profile



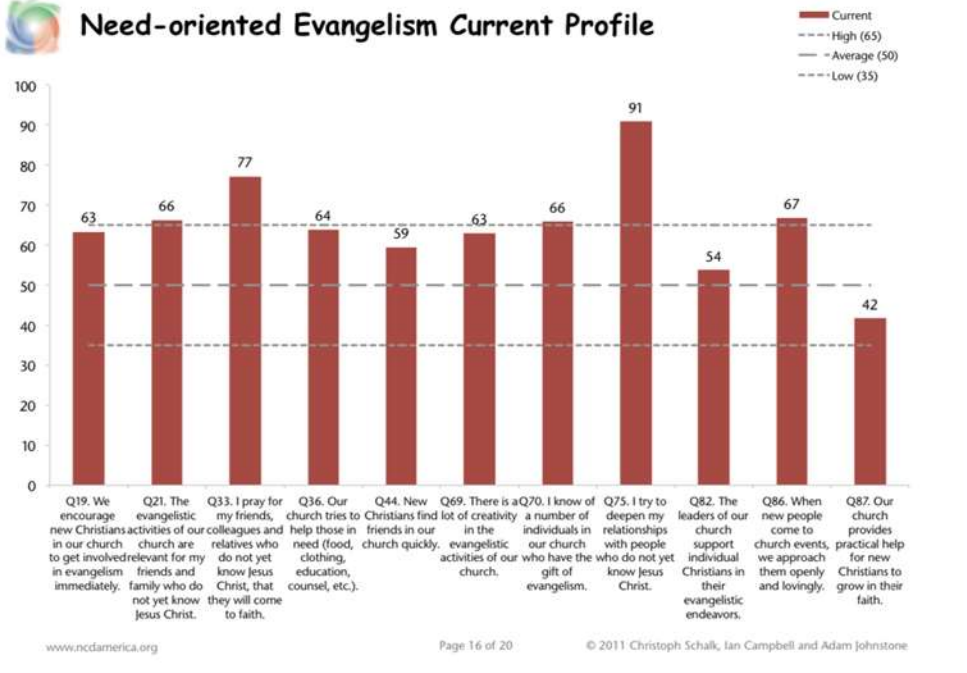




## Holistic Small Groups Current Profile

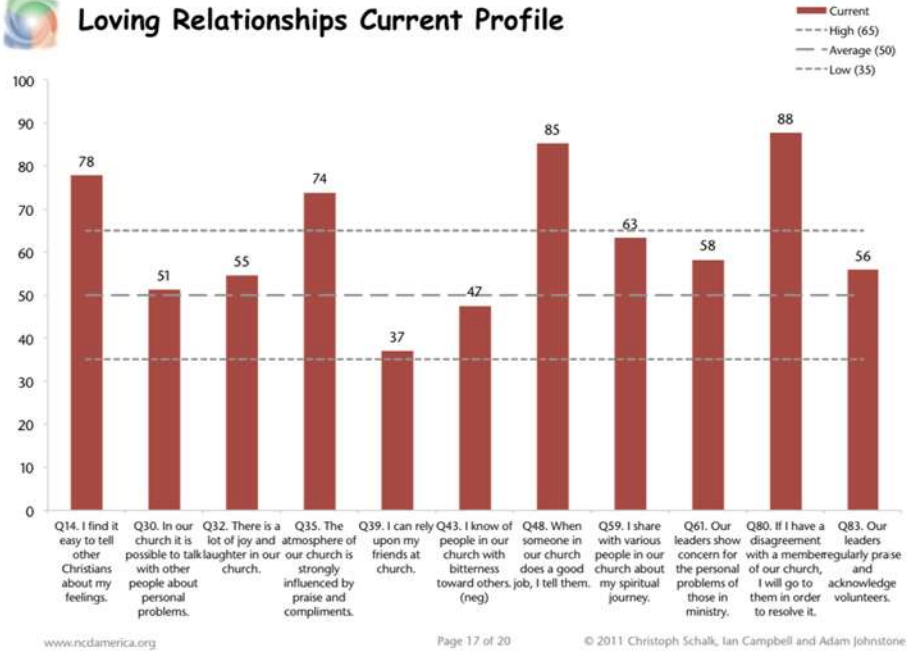


## Need-oriented Evangelism Current Profile

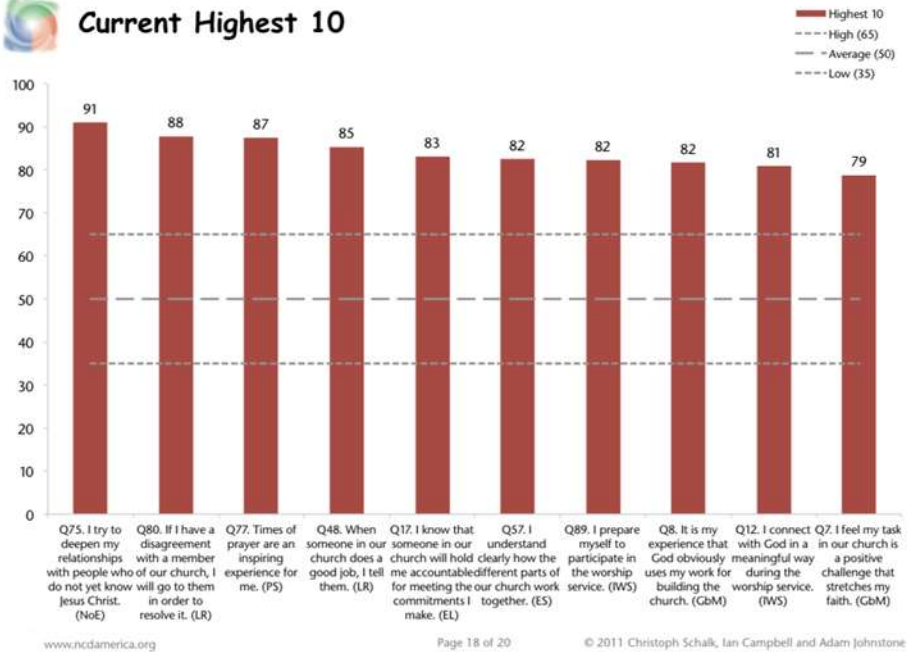




## Loving Relationships Current Profile

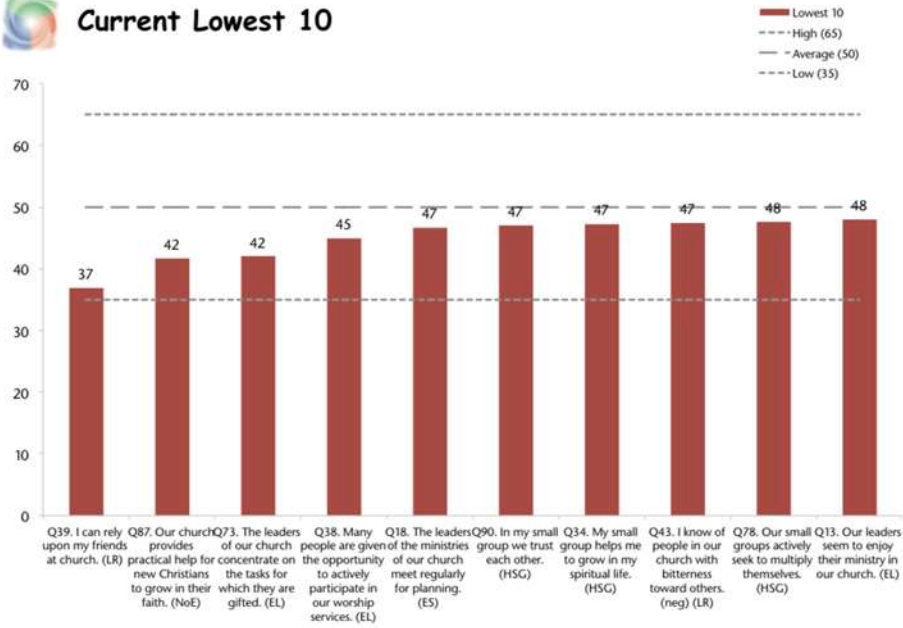


## Current Highest 10





## Current Lowest 10



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2010-2012 Associate Pastor, West End Seventh-day Adventist Church (Atlanta, GA)  
2006-2008 Senior Pastor, Hall's Chapel Christian Methodist Episcopal Church  
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