FINISHING WELL: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF SPIRITUAL
TRANSFORMATION IN RETIREMENT-AGE EVANGELICAL MEN

by

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FINISHING WELL: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF SPIRITUAL
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By

Johnny Justin Baker

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ABSTRACT

FINISHING WELL: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF SPIRITUAL
TRANSFORMATION IN RETIREMENT-AGE EVANGELICAL MEN

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The baby boomers comprise a large segment of the United States population (78 million) but many of them are without spiritual resources to finish well in life. However, there are a few Evangelical men who have experienced spiritual transformation in retirement-age and have discovered the resources for security and significance in the spiritual dimension. Through a qualitative research design the stories of eight participants gave richness and depth to this study. These men described how they and others were impacted by the transformation experience. They discarded superficial forms of cultural Christianity to embrace authentic intrinsic change. The spiritual transformation experience, triggered by one or more precursors, was evidenced by a life-style of ubiquitous characteristics such as service to others, forgiveness, humility, enhanced bible study and prayer, reduction of worry, and hatred for sin. This research gave understanding of the phenomenon to the participants and others who were questing meaning and purpose in life.

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Chapter One

Overview

Research in the United States showed Easterners were more sensitive and open to spiritual experience than Westerners (Thomas, 1994), women more than men (Stark, 2002), black men more than white men (Chatters, et al., 1992; Krause, 2002b), and younger men more than older men (Robinson, 1994). It is, therefore, a true phenomenon when an older North American Caucasian man experiences spiritual transformation. This study focused on such men who, while in their retirement years, experienced spiritual transformation.   In order to understand and aptly communicate their experiences, this research examined the dynamics of personal story and insight about radical change, so that the participants, as well as others, might profit from the sharing of their experiences.

Background of the Problem

Even though the senior adult population (the "baby boomers", born between the end of World War II, 1946, and 1964) is burgeoning, it is rare to discover a retirement age man who has experienced authentic spiritual transformation in the evangelical context. Not only have few experienced this phenomenon, but only a minute amount of literature addressed the foundational spiritual needs of this age bracket of men (McFadden, 1995).

Scholarship was introduced to spiritual transformation through the writings of William James. To James (1902, 1994), religious experience was broad enough to define as "the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine" (p. 44). Within this broad definition, however, the reductionistic core of evangelicalism was found in the concept of a personal relational experience with eternal God (Zimbauer & Pargament, 1998). Because spiritual transformation was personal, intrinsic, and existential, care was taken to itemize the specific components of the transformation.

After James' (1902, 1994) research, little was written about spiritual transformation and aging until the proliferation of research on religion and aging by federal agencies, such as the Institute on Aging and the Fetzer Institute, and the John D. Templeton Foundation (Emmonds & Paloutzian, 2003). Then, with the exception of writers like Allport (1950, 1961), Hill (1955), Scroggs and Douglas (1967), and Maslow (1971, 1976), after several decades of relative rest, researchers began a discipline that lasted for the next 30 years, which included literature on spiritual transformation (Roof, 1999, Smith, 2005).

According to McFadden (1995): "Only in the last two decades has research on religion and the aging increased in scope, mainly because of the use of multi-dimensional measures, national probability samples, and more sophisticated designs and analysis" (p. 171). However, studies have generally focused on the religious contributions to physical health, mental health, and coping for older adults,

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without attention to late life spiritual experiences (McFadden, 1995). Most research

on retirement age individuals centered on finances, work involvement (Trafford,

2004a), physical and mental health (personality, emotion, and cognition) (Tan,

2003), interpersonal relations, living arrangements, leisure activities, and

volunteering (Stark, 2002), with only a marginal mention of religion by researchers

(Wink & James, 2006). Because the research on spiritual transformation that

concerns itself with intrinsic existential processes was scant, this present research

added insight to the literature on spiritual transformation in retirement-age

evangelical men.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to add to the literature base on spiritual

transformation in retirement-age evangelical men. Research indicated that even

among mainline Protestantism the boomers in the mid 20th century began to

embrace the values of science and modernism to the neglect of God as they

socialized into adult religious life without exploring transcendent spiritual

experience and now were without spiritual resources and beliefs that provide

meaning (Marler & Hadaway, 2002).

Robinson (1994) concluded that a younger group of men (n=10, age 30-44

years old) were more reflective, incorporated ambiguity, and wrestled with

generative issues of life and faith, while the older group of men (n=10, ages 45-60)

with little exception, opted for "stasis" if not "stagnation". Many of the baby

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boomers were empty spiritually. Some were searching for security and significance in life and desired a meaningful spiritual experience (McGee, 1990).

This research at hand was designed to allow retirement age evangelical men, who had experienced spiritual transformation, to report their understandings of and experience with the components of the existential transformation. They related what the experience was like and how it had impacted their lives. They identified specific factors that existed in the transformation experience and described the impact of this transformation on their lives. These insightful descriptions were compared and contrasted with other evangelical men who had experienced a spiritual transformation during the retirement years. The researcher collated, compared, and contrasted these stories in order to discover meaningful themes that were used to describe the experience and its impact on the lives of the participants.

This research aimed at helping both those who were seekers as well as those who had experienced spiritual transformation to benefit from the clear transmission and understanding of the experience, in ways associated with personal relationships and spiritual development. Furthermore, individuals in this unique life-stage tended to make strategic decisions in the mid-course connection between career and retirement. These plans included financial, health, and social structures, but did not consider planning for spiritual matters even in the face of mortality (James & Wink, 2006). From a longitudinal study, James and Wink (2006) concluded: "Overall participants appeared to take the transition to the postretirement period in their stride and viewed life in the 'Third Age' as just another normative stage in the

adult life cycle, and one that did not require any particular psychological

adjustments such as life review" (p. 6). In spite of the lack of spiritual awareness,

some retirement-age people were seeking and questing toward new experiences

with God (Schultz & Sandage, 2006). These individuals comprised the focal point of

this research.

James and Wink (2006) gave a persuasive rationale for research with the

baby boomers. Unlike life 150 years ago in America, the average person today views

old age as beginning at 80. Because of healthcare advances, Social Security, and

company pensions, many retirees can enjoy a very productive two decades or more

after work. However, what Kuypers and Bengton (1973) referred to as a "social

breakdown syndrome", Riley, Kahn, and Toner (1994) called a "structural lag" (as

cited in James & Wink, 2006, p. 1). This lag implied that the American culture was

behind on rising to meet the needs of the baby boomers on several levels of concern,

especially the spiritual arena.

The research on spiritual development and transformation lagged behind

even this current state of the baby boomers as almost non-existent in regards to

evangelical retirement-age men (Riley, Kahn, & Toner, 1994). More specifically,

among the Evangelical community there was a lack of guidelines on clear

expectations, appropriate roles, reference groups, and spiritual guidance (Lovelace,

1988, Marler & Hadaway, 2002). In reality, most church organizations focused on

extrinsic worship opportunities and fun-filled activities for senior adults without

real emphasis on the intrinsic needs and developmental processes at work (Willard,

2005, Robinson, 1994, Roof, 1999). Yet the "third age" was for some a longer period of time than childhood (the first age), or young adulthood (the second age), ending only at debilitation and death (the fourth age) (James & Wink, 2006). The modern baby boomers desired a sense of belonging, purpose, and an opportunity to do something of significance, and as such merited the appropriate attention, especially on spiritual matters (Barna, 1995).

This present research acknowledged the challenge to compare and contrast the "being" (spiritual transformation) from the "doing" (service and ministry) i.e., the intrinsic from the extrinsic. Trafford (2004b) stated that older adults searched for ways to make the rest of their active lives meaningful, but without the institutional structures to help them. This research sought to give description and understanding to their transitions in order to assist them to find well-being and integrity in the face of absentee guidance elsewhere.

Research Questions

The research questions emerged from the purpose of the study – to understand the dynamics of spiritual transformation in retirement-age evangelical men. The specific research questions framing this research were:

1.) How do retirement-age evangelical men describe their experiences of spiritual transformation?

2.) What significant factors do they identify as contributing to their transformation experience?

3.) How do they describe the impact of spiritual transformation on their lives?

4.) How do their descriptions of personal experiences compare and contrast?

The Role of the Researcher

From the perspective of one who has been an Evangelical pastor, missionary, counselor, and teacher for 45 years, I marveled at the rare experience of a few senior age men who have experienced radical spiritual transformation, only to reflect on the similar experience of my own father. My dad was a hardworking moral man who at 16 married my mom (she turned 15 on their wedding day), with the life goals of working hard and raising a family in the Christian tradition of Southern Baptists. My dad was an enigma. His life-style was fueled by the twin demands of familial and socio-economic factors that produced huge amounts of stress. Although he was sometimes very loving and kind, he was often loud, abusive, and punitive in his relationship to family.

I sometimes went to school with black and blue bruises from a thrashing with a leather belt from a barber's chair, unable to dress out for physical education class because of the shame. Moreover, the deeper abuse came from the verbal cussing and cursing toward everyone who frustrated dad's will. He was a "man of unclean lips dwelling among a people of unclean lips" (Isaiah 6) as he led the work crews of his construction business.

As a young pastor, there was a sense of shame that my dad was so profane in the midst of frequent "Baker fits." He added to my discomfort during that epoch by

being extremely prejudiced toward Afro-Americans, using the "N-word" frequently to cast condescension and disdain toward those of a different race.

During his retirement years, however, my dad began to experience an unmistakable change that manifested itself in a kinder, gentler, and more loving individual who built relationships of respect among many individuals and displayed the very character of God in love, acceptance, and forgiveness. His personal pursuit of holiness led my father to stop the use of profanity totally, ask forgiveness for the abusive years, seek reconciliation with others, discover a passion for reading and studying the Bible, develop an effective prayer life, and erase the lines of racial prejudice to build relationships with blacks and advocate their rights as a member of a local school board. His attitudes toward "those hypocrites in the church" changed to a humble understanding of grace for the element of human imperfection and he began to discover the joy of serving others in Christ's name. He became a different person.

It would only be speculation to try to explain the timing of his dramatic change. But the phenomena has propelled me into this research in hope of discovering for myself, as well as all those in a similar stage of life as my dad, the dynamics of a spiritual transformation which changed a man from the inside out. Further, since I am a retirement age evangelical white male, I wanted to understand the dynamics of spiritual transformation in order to propagate an emphasis on counseling which would target this age group.

Limitations

Although the results of qualitative research are not generalizable to a population, there was still merit in the study of common themes, which formed a life rubric for all retirement-age evangelical men to consider and to compare to their own particular needs. This milieu offered insight for millions of baby boomers.

The research at hand limited participants in number, gender, age, and faith tradition. These limitations pointed to the need for investigation in this specific area of lived experience. Also, younger men and women who have not reached that age level completed almost all of the published writings on the subject of retirement-age phenomenon. This created a situation of impossible empathy and generated sterile or skewed conclusions about what the experiences were like. Because of this dynamic factor, the ages of both the researcher and the participants lent credibility to the findings in peer review.

The selection of participants on the basis of personal recommendation relied upon individual judgment of intangible spiritual qualities and the public knowledge of external characteristics of the participants. Moreover, both of these dimensions were subject to distortion in interpretation and depended upon extrinsic factors to designate intrinsic change. However, trustworthiness emerged in the form of the commonality of the indicators of spiritual transformation.

Variables such as personality, socio-economic status, skill level, and intelligence formed the description of individual responses to research questions.

This made theme identification more of a challenge for the coder and researcher.

Again, the ubiquitous themes pointed to conclusions about the experiences.

Definitions

For the sake of clarification, the terms "spiritual transformation",

"retirement-age men", and "evangelical men" were defined and used in this study as

follows:

Spiritual Transformation

The Spiritual Transformation Scientific Research Program (STP, 2011) said:

Spiritual transformations are dramatic changes in world and self-views, purposes, religious beliefs, attitudes, and behavior. These changes are often linked to discrete experiences that can occur gradually or over relatively short periods of time. This change occurs within three contexts: a) As an intensified devotion within the same religious structure, b) a shift from no spiritual commitment to a devout spiritual life, or c) a change from one faith tradition to another. (STP, 2011)

For the purposes of this research, the existential and intrinsic qualities of

spiritual life (STP context b) were the focus of the phenomenon. Starnski (2003)

affirmed this functional definition: "Spiritual transformation as [a] phenomenon

looks at the feelings, acts, and experiences of people in an existential fashion" (p.

428).

Van Manen (1990) defined phenomenology as "the systematic attempt to

uncover and describe the structures, the internal meaning structures, of lived

experience" (p. 10). The reflexive re-living and reflection about a meaningful

experience unearths the essence of the event and allows for an interpretation of the phenomenon (Van Manen, 1990).

Retirement-Age Men

Individuals are invited to join the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP Bulletin, 2011) at age 50, since at that age many are able to begin either retirement from a first employment or the transition to a second job after an initial career. Of the 78 million baby boomers in the United States, about 10,000 per day turn 65 years of age. Some who turn 65 this year will live to be 83, and many will see their 90s (AARP Bulletin, 2011). Notably, even the sacrificial system of the Old Testament specified retirement from service for the Levite at age 50 (Numbers 4:47). Thus, retirement age has been stretched at both the beginning and the ending points to include a larger, healthier, and more vibrant people group than has ever existed. Consequently, it was appropriate for this study to examine men who were 50 years of age and older, who were in a retirement life-style, a slower pace of life which was often characterized by introspection and meaningful planning for finishing well.

Evangelical Men

Webster's Dictionary (2008) gave five meanings for the word "evangelical". The definition which most accurately described our usage was: "Emphasizing salvation by faith in the atoning death of Jesus Christ through personal conversion, the authority of Scripture, and the importance of preaching as contrasted with ritual"; also, "of relating to, or being in agreement with the Christian gospel

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especially as it is presented in the four gospels" ("Evangelical," 2008). This

definition underlay the usage of "evangelical" in the research at hand.

In its simplistic reductionistic definition, "evangelical" can mean one who

believes, practices, and proclaims the evangel, or gospel. A more tongue in cheek

definition was given by Read (in Malony & Southard, 1992): The word evangelical

"vaguely refers to the kind of Christians who speak freely about their relationship to

the Lord, support evangelistic campaigns, talk about conversion and re-birth, are

unafraid to open their mouths in prayer, and are inclined to settle all questions with

a text from the Scripture" (p. 138). An evangelical freely talks of personal salvation,

conversion, and re-birth experiences that are intrinsic and existential to the

exclusion of dogmas that emphasize works, church membership, or academic or

ritualistic faith. An evangelical would not concede debate about denial of the

existence of personal discipline, better education, psychology, or social involvement

as cures for the sin problem of every person. Read (1992) clarified that the gospel

was not a religious program to bring one closer to God. It announced man's need to

draw near to God and allowed Him to cleanse the soul by grace and connect the

heart to love for God and others. "For by grace you have been saved" (Ephesians

2:8,9).

Significance of the Study

It was the hope and expectation of this researcher that the emphasis on

spiritual transformation would provide an ambiance within existing structures, like

the church, for a focused ministry on retirement-age men who were in need of guidance as they quested for spiritual development. Given the enormous expenditure on senior adult ministry by the average church, especially trips, eating out, fun activities, and worship time (Barna, 1995), it would be feasible to redirect funds and energy toward spiritual maturation and personal encounters that had eternal significance.

The literature produced by this research should have signaled didactic and practical purposes for many who sought a richer experience with God. The pedagogical nature of this research could have propelled additional study into more widespread application of the conclusions generated by a myopic look into the experience of personal transformation, with a ripple effect toward complementary conclusions. The research at hand initiated further investigation (literature) in an unfolding search for data to assist a huge and growing segment of the American population. The foundational hope of this research lay in the expectancy of a good productive outcome for retirement-age evangelical men who are questing a richer, more meaningful "final chapter" to their lives. Finally, it would be expected that this data would be useful to evangelical men worldwide as it crossed cultural and ethnic boundaries through translation and practice.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

James (1902, 1994) identified specific elements of spiritual transformation: prayer, communion, service, joy, dispelled fear, enthusiasm, intimacy, freedom, and

dependence on God. These characteristics were ubiquitous and recognizable elements of spiritual transformation, and served as conceptual and theoretical frameworks and reference points for the study. There were certain manifestations of spiritual transformation that tended to cluster around a genuine spiritual experience, which were evident to those who were acquainted with the individual. These elements served as overt markers to the nature of spiritual transformation and the possibility of relating the experiences.

James (1902, 1994) noticed clusters of characteristics in the lives of his subjects, which formed a conceptual backdrop for understanding the experience. As the story of others became James' story, he shared it with those who entered into the experiences with meaningful bonding as those experiences of spiritual transformation were identified. James' conceptual framework established a baseline for more intrinsic conclusions, which followed from the research. Thus, his work formed a foundation for a deeper and wider examination of spiritual transformation by researchers who wrote, almost a century later, from a more clinical perspective on the constructs of spiritual transformation which contrasted to a more intrinsic and existential set of characteristics for the baby boomer generation.

Prayer

"Prayer is the essential, existential experience of solitude with the divine" (James, 1902, 1994, p. 44). Research indicated that "prayer is the single most common act preceding quantum change, occurring one third of the time" (Mahoney

& Pargament, 2004, p. 490). Drumwright (2001) reminded us that the practice of prayer is the natural outcome of a personal passion for God and His glory. Without this central heartfelt encounter with God, there would be no spiritual progress.

Communion

"Communion with the divine establishes the spiritual relation of transaction and value that propels the religious life and conduct of the individual" (James, 1902, 1994, p. 44). Solitude and silence set the stage for spiritual connection to occur and transformed the respondent from the inside outward. Communion implied a personal relationship rather than a formal ritual. The idea of walking with God was conveyed in the context of intimacy in the connection between Eternal God and man (John 15; Galatians 5). The first man, Adam, walked with God in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3) in primal communion. Though broken as a result of the Fall of man, this communion was restored by God through personal faith and encounter provided by Jesus Christ (John 17:3). The "imago dei" implied the reality of ongoing communication between God and His children

Intimacy

"The demeanor of the believer entails something solemn, serious, and tender" (James, 1902, 1994, p. 44). Intimacy and alterity have been proposed as relational pathways toward spiritual transformation (Sandage, Jensen, & Jass, 2008). Intimacy was defined as "the process of being in touch with or knowing oneself in the presence of a partner; alterity is the developmental form of relating to the differentness of others" (Sandage, Jensen, & Jass, 2008, p. 185). The integration of

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these two terms indicated both a positive and negative aspect of intimacy. In the

biblical account of Jesus' encounter with a Samaritan woman, He used both intimacy

and alterity to produce spiritual transformation (John 4: 7-30). Alterity was

symbolized by differences in gender, ethnicity, and social relationships. This barrier

was quickly crossed by Jesus to result in spiritual intimacy because the woman was

seeking or questing intimacy with God. Her life was transformed, as evidenced by

the missionary witness that followed (John 4: 28, 29). Crossing the barriers that

divide man and God or man and man was therapeutic and sponsoring of intimacy.

Consequently, questing for God on a heart level resulted in the closest and most

personal encounter.

Service

      "The service of the Highest is never felt as a yoke" (James, 1902, 1994, p. 48).

The term "elder" was associated, in both the Old Testament and New Testament,

with service (Arnold, 1996). Even when Levites retired from service in the

tabernacle, at age 50, they continued to assist younger priests (Numbers 8: 24-26).

Zachariah was old but continued service in the Temple (Luke 1:18-25). The concept

of ending work and enjoying leisure in retirement was not found in Scripture,

perhaps because of the associated joy of serving God. In like fashion, retirement-age

men who have admired or longed for significance may have found completion in a

life of service to God and their fellow man. Uniquely, there may have even existed a

sense of "catching up" with God or redeeming lost opportunity for meaningful

spiritual involvement. For example, Klodt (2006) left a Fortune 500 company to

pursue a calling to a ministry of assisting individuals to find delight and fulfillment

in the God-intentioned activities of service via a leap of personal faith in Christ.

Joy and Dispelled Fear

Spiritual transformation is "A happy state of mind where fear is positively

expunged and washed away" (James, 1902, 1994, p. 54). A longitudinal study

investigated the relationship between religiousness and the fear of death and dying

in late adulthood (Wink & Scott, 2005):

> Firmness of beliefs and practices, not religiousness, per se, buffered against
> death anxiety in the elderly. The research also indicated that intrinsic
> religious belief (e.g. personal experience with God) buffered against fear of
> death when extrinsic religious involvement (e.g. church attendance) did not.
> (p. 207)

Further, fear of death was mediated by a perception that life was meaningful

(Tomer & Eliason, 2000). Without the fear of death, one was free to quest that

which brought meaning and purpose to life.

Enthusiasm and Freedom

Spiritual transformation exhibited "A new sphere of power that produced an

added dimension of emotion, an enthusiastic temper of espousal and a new reach of

freedom" (James, 1902, 1994, p. 55). The etymological basis of "enthusiasm" meant

"God in us" and implied a life giving, sustaining joy that yielded freedom from the

tyranny of restraint. The power which was discovered through spiritual

transformation yielded an ever-increasing connection with God. Crabb (1997)

spoke of "intangible nutrients which are received from God and passed back and

forth between believers in such a manner that the church replaces professional

healers of soulish diseases" (p. xii). This enthusiasm produced an "iron sharpening iron" (Proverbs 27:17) effect between individuals, thus providing a platform for sharing the experience of spiritual transformation in a meaningful manner.

Dependence on God

James (1902, 1994) described spiritual transformation as: "A helpless and sacrificial attitude of dependence on God" (p. 55). Reorientation to God's will instead of self will was liberating because it freed the individual from the impossible burden of trying to be invincible and all powerful when he or she really felt weak, insecure, and doubtful (Rambo, 1993). Through spiritual transformation, the shift away from self-reliance to dependence on God displayed the paradoxical nature of finding personal freedom through surrender to God. This change was always both public and noteworthy.

Organization of the Remaining Chapters

Chapter Two describes the literature review, beginning with the material on spiritual transformation, then continuing to retirement-age, and concluding with evangelical men, only to emphasize the absence of literature on the dissertation topic of spiritual transformation in retirement-age men.

Chapter Three outlines the methods that were used to conduct the research. The qualitative research design proposed used the phenomenological approach of securing the data of lived experience. The process of selecting participants, the

measures used in the verification of experience, the procedures for the collection of data, and the analysis of the thematic material collected are described in detail.

Chapter Four includes the findings of the data collection and analysis. The research questions resurfaced as a reference for a summary of all the findings.

Chapter Five includes a summary of the previous chapters: the problem, the literature review, the methodology, and the findings. The researcher then drew conclusions based on the data. Finally, the researcher made recommendations about future research and the application of the findings.

Summary

Just as James (1902, 1994) identified extrinsic and intrinsic markers of spiritual transformation, shared his findings with others, and built upon the process of public and private transmission of the experiences, the research at hand explored the in-depth intrinsic and existential factors of spiritual transformation in the similar hope that common themes would emerge and prove useful for the understanding and propagation of the spiritual experience, especially for retirement-age evangelical men. Moreover, it was both possible and noteworthy for retirement-age evangelical men to describe their experiences of spiritual transformation and identify significant factors that existed in the experience.

Chapter Two: The Literature Review

There were specific underlying purposes that guided this literature review. The material on spiritual transformation was vast and indicated that in recent decades much research and thought has been devoted to the subject (Starnski, 2003; Schultz & Sandage, 2006; Cohen, Gruber, & Keltner, 2010; Corey, 2005). This researcher desired to investigate the scope of the literature to ascertain if some writings on spiritual transformation addressed retirement-age evangelical men or which areas merited more attention (Pan, 2004).

The literature review proceeded from the general perspective of spiritual transformation to a narrow focus on the spiritual transformation of retirement-age evangelical men. Because "discursive text" is a crafting of the most germane data into a study intermittently to "create conceptual bridges between idiosyncratic experience and broader conceptual meanings" (Piantanida & Garman, 2009, p. 89), throughout this literature search, the researcher wove the knowledge base, historical perspective, stated rationale, personal point of view, and concerns together in order to establish a rationale for the proposed research study.

This chapter focuses on the literature review and the philosophical constructs associated with spiritual transformation in retirement-age evangelical men. This literature review began with a general search of writing about spiritual transformation only to find a preponderance of material on the subject: Thomas (1994), Robinson (1994), McGee (1990), Plaskow (1980), Pargament (1997), Thomas (1997), Collins (1991), Adams (1986), Allinson (1989), Starnski (2003),

Emmonds and Paloutzian (2003), Schultz and Sandage (2006), Sandage, et al. (2010), Mahoney and Pargament (2004), Wilson (2001), Cohen, Gruber, and Keltner (2010), Welwood (2000), Koss-Chioino and Kefner (2006), Paloutzian (2005), Barton (2006), Smith (2005, 2006), Corey (2005), Kruiken, et al. (2006), Wall, Cumela, and Darden (2003), Sandage, Jankowski, and Link (2010), Bray (2010), Tan (2003), Willard (2005), Crabb (1997), Forcehimes (2004), Lifeway Research (2007), Sandage, Jensen, and Jass (2008), and Slife and Scott (2001).

Then, the literature review examined the material focused on retirement-age men, with an outlook to men 50 years and older. Consequently, much literature was found, especially in light of the baby boomers coming of age: AARP (2011), Chatters, Levin, and Taylor (1992), Gilleard (2009), Gladwell (2005), Harris (2008), Hauermas, Stoneking, Meador, and Cloutier (2003), Hughes (2001), Klodt (2006), Krause (2002a, 2002b), O'Connor and Vallerand (2001), Pinches (2003), Tomer and Eliason (2000), Trafford (2004,a,b), Wink and James (2006), and Wink and Scott (2005), Barna (1995).

Next, the literature review focused on evangelical men, only to find a smaller body of writing that was primarily predicated on the evangelical men's movement of the 90's: Edger (2011), Eldredge (2001), Farrar (2003), Gallagher (2000), Getz (2004), Gilbert (2003), Hughes (2001), Martinkas (2008), Wilcox (2011), and Weber (1999).

Finally, the literature review looked for material that reflected research on spiritual transformation in retirement-age evangelical men only to find a vacuum

that needed to be filled. Consequently, this vacuum left this researcher with a

passion to discover the phenomenon.

The review of the literature looked at the works of authors like James (1902,

1994) and Starbuck (1897) who pioneered the study of spiritual transformation

around the turn of the 20th century, to gain a foundational look at a rubric, which

represented the constructs of later research on the topic. These modern constructs

compared and contrasted with James' characteristics of spiritual transformation to

indicate deeper psychological and philosophical levels of understanding.

Spiritual Transformation

Overview

This research grounded spiritual transformation in the evangelical faith

tradition. However, much of the literature reviewed addressed the global

considerations of a more generalizable spirituality. For example: There were

traditions of passing beliefs and values from one generation to the next with

attention given to the young, and dreaming as catalyst foundation for spiritual

transformation (Kruiken, et al., 2006). Also, much of the literature on this subject

reflected the mystical experiences of various religions or disciplines such as

Buddhism, psychotherapy, Chung Tzu, Taoism, Shaman, and New Age. (E.g.

Welwood, 2000; Allinson, 1989). Other literature on spiritual transformation aimed

at its correlation with healing (Koss-Chioino & Kefner, 2006), organizations such as

Alcoholics Anonymous (Forcehimes, 2004), and community (Winter, 1989) without specific reference to the personal existential dimension of spiritual transformation.

The psychology of spiritual transformation was addressed by researchers who examined the impact of conversion on psychological well being (Kirkpatrick, 1997; Pitt, 1991). The psychology of conversion was the most popular subject within the scope of spiritual transformation (Rambo, 1992; Hill, 1955). Beginning as early as Starbuck (1897, 1914), there have been more than 500 publications dealing with the psychological dynamics of spiritual transformation (Scroggs & Douglas, 1967). However, no researchers examined the implications of conversion for senior evangelical men and none scrutinized the authentic intrinsic and transformational dimensions of spiritual transformation for them.

Hall (1917) was one of the earliest researchers who examined the intrinsic dimension of spiritual conversion through the lens of psychology. He argued that each person had a spiritual dimension (the image of God) that was activated by God's love to create altruistic and strong loving relationships (In Malony & Southard, 1992). According to Hall (1917), "transforming faith does not happen by appeal to rational arguments about Jesus, by moral example, or by fear but by the gospel story of God's love that evokes a personal response of love for God and others" (In Malony & Southard, 1992, p. 2).

Studies of the psychological aspects of spiritual conversion have examined the psyche of the individual in regards to the inner dynamics of personality, self-esteem, and matrix of transformation (Rambo, 1993). Although a close look at the

cycles of transformation may have been helpful in a clinical setting, this research

purpose included an understanding of the phenomenon which was ubiquitously

stated, shared, and reproduced by retirement-age individuals on various academic

levels. These dynamics were not ignored in the present research.

Rambo (in Malony & Southard, 1992) acknowledged the existence of quick

conversion experiences but stated, "Religious change is usually a process involving a

complex interweave of personal, social, cultural, and religious forces" (p. 159).

Although he skillfully outlined the various approaches of psychological investigation

of spiritual transformation, Rambo (1992) "assumes that there is no fundamental

difference empirically between the conversion process to Christianity and

conversion to Islam or Buddhism" (Malony & Southard, 1992, p. 161). This

assertion evaded the specific characteristics of the research at hand and pointed to a

need for a more specific rubric for understanding evangelical spiritual

transformation.

Negative change could also occur among those who experience spiritual

transformation. Some research had given attention to the loss of faith and apostasy

(Roof, 1997). Although this may have been an honest statement of reality, it was

outside the scope of this research topic. Nevertheless, it was not ignored as a

possible result of spiritual transformation.

Other research, which had yielded data not directly applicable to this present

study, looked at the sociological aspects of religious transformation in terms of the

impact of one generation to the next (Wurthnow, 1999). Wurthnow's (1999)

studies focused on a much wider age span than this present area of concern and parameters outside of the Christian faith.

James (1902, 1994) underscored the dramatic aspect of spiritual transformation: "Whenever one aim grows so stable to expel definitively its previous rivals from the individual's life, we tend to speak of the phenomenon and perhaps to wonder at it, as a 'transformation'" (p. 45). That was to say, the direction of an individual's life changed dramatically and authentically to single hearted devotion to God. Waltzlawick, Weakland, and Fisch (1974) identified such dramatic spiritual transformation: "the process of Biblical change as transformation, a change in the way of being, that is called second-order change" (p. 408). Thomas and Sosin (2011) stated: "From a biblical point of view second order change comes from conversion and from exercising ourselves toward godliness (1 Timothy 4:7)" (p. 408).

In regard to the nature of spiritual transformation, this research looked beyond the event in the person's life to also examine the process that occurred in the wake of the experience, not just the experience itself. Although "being" often preceded "doing" in sequence and significance, behavior was an indicator of change which could be identified and studied in sequential stages.

Developmental Stages of Spiritual Transformation

Collins (1991) suggested stages of development for spiritual transformation: Awakening, purgation, illumination, and transformation. Awakening involved seeing the possibility of the transformed self beyond the previous suffering and

despair. Purgation referred to the purification of the old worldview to incorporate

new disciplines of spiritual life. Illumination referred to the glimpse of a new order

of reality which the person embraced and therein found stability. Transformation

was the ongoing process of living out the new reality (Thomas, 1994).

Adams (1986) posed another model of spiritual transformation around the

four-step biblical model of nouthetic counseling. For Adams, evangelism was the

event which enabled the individual to embark on the voyage of transformation

which began with conversion. He stated: "The regenerate person becomes more

and more like Christ. This process is gradual, often irregular, and requires not only

putting off old, sinful ways, but adopting new, righteous ones according to biblical

standards" (Adams, 1986, p. 14). Whereas conversion altered one's destiny,

sanctification altered one's character, intrinsic values, and experience of life (Adams,

1986).

Adams (1986) outlined the four-step process of change: Teaching,

Conviction, Correction, and Disciplined Training in Righteousness. Teaching implied

that the individual who had experienced a spiritual conversion event came up

against the truth where he refined and adjusted standards according to a maturing

faith. Conviction was given by the Holy Spirit and brought conviction about the need

for change. Correction was the positive provision for the negative reproof whereby,

following the "godly sorrow" of repentance from the previously improper original

condition, the person replaced what was "put off" with that which should be "put

on." Finally, Disciplined Training in Righteousness involved training in a pro-active life style of daily accountability to God (Adams, 1986).

Others, such as Wilson (2001), aligned with an evangelical model of spiritual transformation which implied progressive change after conversion. Wilson stated: "Change begins with identifying and cleaning out the weeds of deception, loosening the soil with honesty and then sow the seeds of truth" (p. 87). Changing choices was at the heart of the transformation process, which was theorized as: New Choices + Consistent Practice = Change. Wilson (2001) stated: "What we live with, we learn, and what we learn, we practice. What we practice, we become, and what we become has consequences" (p. 86).

All evangelical models of transformation and change reviewed emphasized the individual's responsibility to desire change and act in faith toward God, but acknowledged that the power to enact the change came from God. Because the direction of change, by nature, was either toward God or away from Him, change was moral (Adams, 1986) and occurred at different rates, depending upon the individual's openness to change.

Elements of Spiritual Transformation

Speed. Research has determined that the end result of transformation was relatively the same for either fiat or gradual conversion and concluded that the speed was not as important as the changes brought about by the process (Zimbauer & Pargament, 1998). In a study of elderly men who matured later in life after having a younger adult mystical experience, Thomas (1997) concluded that spiritual

transformation was a process that might involve longitudinal development to achieve. It sometimes required time and proper conditions for spiritual insight and understanding to be integrated into a life after a spiritual experience has occurred (Doblin, 1991). This transformation process might take months or years for the effects of the mystical experience to "seep in" and produce understanding (Thomas, 1997). Thomas and Sosin (2011) described progressive transformation: "putting off the old harmful attitudes and behaviors (Ephesians 4:20-27) is not an event/destination, but a process" (p. 408). This sanctification process required careful interpretation to correctly identify components of the experience and allow the close examination of personal relationships.

Connectedness. When applied to spiritual transformation Connectedness had an outward, inward, and upward dimension. When one was connected to self, he knew the peace of a purposeful existence, and meaning permeated his life. The upward or vertical component of healthy relationships implied a connection to God that resulted in a horizontal or outward relationship to others (Bellingham, et al., 1989). These three dimensions were dynamically inter-related so as to reflect Trinitarian significance as a senior age evangelical evaluated his performance of life in its twilight stage. Excellence in this discipline came as a direct result of spiritual transformation. Crabb (1997) stated that when we got a taste of Christ delighting in us, this knowledge equipped us to delight in others. The goodness that God placed in us was acknowledged in others through a vital connection of friendships, and this unique relationship, born of introspection and energized by God, propelled us into

the deepest forms of loving and caring. Consequently, this inward look exposed the intrinsic dynamics of the experience of spiritual transformation.

Personality. Paloutzian (2005) concluded that spiritual transformation had little effect on the Big Five traits (experience, conscientious, extroverted, agreeable, neurotic), but resulted in profound change in goals, feelings, attitudes, and behaviors. Meaning and purpose, personal identity, and security seemed to be the areas of personhood most greatly affected by spiritual transformation. Consequently, the literature on personality was not germane to this qualitative study because it had relevance to the areas of more psychologically oriented concerns. The focus of this research lay with spiritual dimensions of existentialism which were often experienced prior to the transformational event.

Precursors/relational events. Social communion seemed to play a significant role in the readiness of an individual to find help in time of need in the Sacred (Feldman, 2005). Having a system of friends, family, or fellows to fall back on in times of stress seemed to be essential for successful coping (Pargament, 1997). Research further pointed to stressful events increasing the likelihood of conversion experiences (Mahoney & Pargament, 2004). Personal loss, intrapsychic conflict, and degenerating interpersonal relationships were among the list of stressors which preceded spiritual transformation. In such time of need a social network formed the foundation on which an individual stood to reach for God. St. John of the Cross (1990) and Allport (1961) agreed that passing through dark times of stress, distress, and doubt could be useful in the spiritual development and spiritual transformation

of individuals. A positive correlation often existed between vibrant faith and religious doubt (Krause & Ellison, 2009). Openness to God, however, which was conditioned by spiritual disciplines like prayer, meditation, and Scripture reading, seemed to be a pathway to the Divine (Mahoney & Pargament, 2004).

The existence of the pre-awakening could not be ignored as a significant factor in spiritual transformation. James (in Thomas, 1997) described the "sick soul" that was "inclined to the more intimately pessimistic persuasion" that was given to "religious melancholy" (pp. 117, 124, 126). James (1902, 1994) declared emotional events to be significant in precipitating mental rearrangements.

Evangelicals referred to the pre-existent (pre-counseling) condition before a spiritual transformation as "pre-conversion," where the human heart was closed, set against God, and in need of radical transformation (Adams, 1986). In this state, man needed to confess and abandon self-centeredness in favor of obeying and following God. Evangelism implied a spiritual transformation of the individual by God's grace and power (Ephesians 2:8,9). The person seeking change was dissatisfied with where he was and desired a better future. The felt need for change motivated the seeker in the direction of sanctification (Wilson, 2001).

Barton (2006) suggested that spiritual transformation could be invited by conditioning disciplines such as longing, a heart-felt desire for change, solitude, Scripture reading, prayer, introspection, healthy practices, and regular rest. The suggestion was that one who was questing could do his part to meet the God of transformation. The source of power remained in God alone, however.

Religious coping. Religious coping helped older people toward self-

protection, in the face of mortality, by providing a secure relationship with the

divine and also enabling them to enter into life, with its threats and insecurities,

with more assurance of safety (McFadden, 1995). The greater the person's spiritual

background, the more intense the transformation experience seemed.

The Triggers of Spiritual Transformation

Ultimately, some researchers have looked at the conversion experience itself

(Rambo, 1993; Malony & Southard, 1992; Paloutzian, 2005; Pitt, 1991; Starbuck,

1897; Read, 1992), to examine causality, characteristics, and consequences. Trigger

events have been analyzed as to the cause of transformation (Malony & Southard,

1992). Because of this, the study at hand sought to examine the experience in light

of individual change characterized by a turning point, whether fiat or gradual in

nature, in the hope that understanding would come for the transformed one as well

as the subsequent others who were affected by the change. Various

theoretical/philosophical constructs characterized this dramatic change for the

baby boomer generation (Barna, 1995).

Pride. Mahoney and Pargament (2004) argued that "the trigger of spiritual

conversion from the classical Christian views was an experience that challenged

false pride" (p. 484). When the individual realized that "the world doesn't revolve

around him," he began to release toxic thoughts, destructive patterns of living, and

selfish motivation in favor of allowing God to be central to everything. This act of

the will was transforming in relationships between individuals and in the relationship with God (Plaskow, 1980).

The context of a person's life influenced the outcome and ongoing experience of spiritual transformation. Mahoney and Pargament (2004) contrasted the experiences of traditional religious experience to conclude that the prideful self, at the center of one's life in the traditional model, was replaced with God at the center when conversion occurred. In the Christian tradition, "the old has passed away, behold, the new has come" (1 Corinthians 5:17). This conversion experience was referred to as being "born again" (John 3:3).

Questing. Schultz and Sandage (2006) pointed to spiritual seeking, the process of existential questing and journeying toward new spiritual experiences and understandings beyond or within the formal boundaries of religious institutions, as a key component in spiritual transformation. There has been a movement since the 1950's in North America away from "spiritual dwelling," an attachment to a particular community and tradition, to spiritual seeking (Wuthnow, 1998). This trend might explain in part the openness toward existential reality among the elderly who moved from emptiness to purposeful existence over a period of decades. Also, this "spiritual dwelling", which more accurately characterized James' (1902) attributes of spiritual transformation, and "questing" would describe the intrinsic and existential constructs of modern retirement- age men.

According to Schultz and Sandage (2006), "Spiritual seeking or questing involves the process of deconstructing prior forms of relational spirituality and

exploring new constructions of spiritual experience" (p. 2). This process could be

prompted by dissonance or crisis or through more gradual forms of developmental

transition (Schultz & Sandage, 2006).

Sandage, Jensen, and Jass (2008) identified the progression path from

spiritual dwelling to spiritual seeking by defining spiritual transformation as

"profound qualitative or second-order changes in the ways a person relates to God"

(p. 193). First-order change related to one's current matrix of relational strategies

while second-order change involved a more complex and creative way of relating to

God and others. This ongoing process of transformation was contrasted to Christian

traditions, which viewed spiritual transformation as a single event such as

conversion.

Spiritual dwelling might involve a system of familiar practices and people,

which led to boredom, disappointment, and dissatisfaction as an older person

reached for a more meaningful life. Some of the elderly risked intensified anxiety

through a heightened desire to find purpose for life and some worthwhile

endeavors. Out of this "holy dissatisfaction" the individual might begin seeking new

ways to pray and worship, and asking authentic questions that resulted in new

relationships and new mental paradigms (Sandage, Jensen, and Jass, 2008).

Much has been written about the positive value of religious experience such

as loss of all worry, certainty of salvation, a sense of newness, and knowing new

truths (James, 1902/1994; Starbuck, 1897). There was a need for the literature to

also reflect the fact that transformation could be highly frightening, arousing, and disillusioning with unmet needs for meaning (Cohen, Gruber, & Keltner, 2010).

Fear of death. Naturally, thoughts of mortality invaded the cognitive process of the elderly. It was normal for older adults to draw near to God as they entered the final chapter of life. Wink and James (2006), however, dispelled some common assumptions with research which indicated that personal faith or religion did not automatically serve as buffers against the fear of death: "Fear of death tended to be low among Third Agers who were either high or low in religiousness, as long as these individuals showed a consistency between their religious practices and beliefs" (p. 312). In other words, consistency of beliefs and practices was the most important buffer against fear of death. They also found that fear of death tended to decrease with age (Wink & James, 2006). This diminished fear of death had significant implications for the examination of spiritual transformation in retirement age men.

Summary

Beginning as early as Hall (1917), James (1902, 1994), and Starbuck (1897), the literature on spiritual transformation examined the extrinsic and intrinsic dimensions of conversion through the lens of psychology and theology. Later research suggested developmental stages of the spiritual transformation process (Collins, 1991, Adams, 1986, Wilson, 2001) which could be examined in the search for understanding of the phenomenon. Various elements of spiritual

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transformation, such as speed, connectedness, personality, precursors/relational events, and religious coping provided a backdrop for comparing and contrasting individual stories of those who had experienced spiritual transformation. Finally, certain triggers of the experience, such as pride, questing, and fear of death, emerged as possible causal factors, characteristics, and consequences of spiritual transformation.

Retirement-Age Men and Spiritual Transformation

Gerontologists referred to the young old (65-74) as the "third age", the time between first retirement and the onset of disabling conditions (McFadden, 1995). During this stage of retirement some turned to God for strength and guidance and saw these as two different areas of focus (Krause, 2002a). However, this did not ensure that these individuals would experience spiritual transformation. Often the process of spiritual connection with God was seen through the metaphor of the cross or the crucible and the experience was deemed to be either too demanding or too costly to enter into (Schultz & Sandage, 2006).

According to Gilleard (2009), dying in old age (50-70 years old), as opposed to dying at a younger age, was uncommon except for the clergy and aristocracy in medieval society. The "growing importance of the Christian church, the decline of urban living and its attendant culture of leisure and literacy, and the transformation of kinship into a symbolic family under God" (Gilleard, p. 1065) contributed to a more favorable status for older men who viewed this stage of life as symbolic of

purity and virtue where self-denial and poverty acquired spiritual value and esteemed even the poor elders of society (Mollat, 1986).   In like fashion some modern elderly men began a quest for significance, which led to the experience of spiritual truth and transformation in the face of their mortality.

However, the numbers of retirement age men who experienced spiritual transformation were few. Starbuck (1897) omitted statistics for spiritual transformation in adults over 29 years of age, because the numbers were so small and insignificant to the study. McFadden (1995) Feldman (2005) and Fowler (1981) concurred that very few retirement-age men experienced authentic religious maturity through spiritual transformation.

In the research of Cohen, Gruber, and Keltner (2010), men rated themselves higher than women as having the ability to influence what was happening and higher in control and responsibility. This might have implications for those men who did not seize religious experience during retirement because of the fear of losing control, a common trend in senior men (Vallerand, O'Connor & Hamel, 1995).

The "third age" caption and its discourse began in France as a title for organizations for the elderly over a decade ago but little had inspired research in the United States (Wink & James, 2006). The third age began when active career and parenting ended.

Further, Hess and Markson (1994) noted the same emphasis on health, self-control, and wealth that had existed among the aging for the past 150 years: "Unable to influence decay, dependence, and death with moral and spiritual

significance, our culture dreams of abolishing biological aging" (p. 33). From this innate frustration, some have turned to God and/or spiritual experience to find quality of life in a transcendent meaningful relationship with the Almighty. Money, health, and independence have not automatically secured dignity, security, and integrity for the baby boomers. In some there was a thirst for the metaphysical that could not be satisfied outside of filling the God-shaped void in the soul (Frankl, 2006).

Trafford (2004b) identified the early old age as a "renaissance inserted somewhere after middle age, but before old age" (p. xvi), where a retired person embraced "my time" to contemplate eternity, seize new opportunities, and discover wholeness. Others have called retirement age the second adolescence because so many in this age began to explore the formerly unexplored areas of interest with curiosity and adventure (Roof, 1993).

This age had a "down side," however. Trafford (2004b) talked of "my time" in a very self-centered and self-serving way, after failed marriages, ended careers, or death of a spouse, where one claimed retirement for self. This served as problem thinking for retirement-age evangelical men who sought to finish well by a life of service to God and others. For them, life must be filled with meaningful work for the Kingdom of God. This existential finish began, for a select number, with a spiritual transformational experience that few other men shared. The probability of a spiritual transformation experience for retirement-age men, according to statistics, was very small (McFadden, 1995; Feldman, 2005; Fowler,1981).

Smith (2005) noted the age range as to spiritual/religious changes: 19.7%, under 18 when it happened; 41.3%, 18-29; 14.3%, 30-39; 12.3%, 50-64; and 2.2% were 65+. His study indicated that "few first-time spiritual/religious changes occur in later-life" (Smith, 2005, p. 7). Smith (2005) also reported: "61% of spiritual conversions happen by age 29 and relatively few individuals experience spiritual transformation after age 50" (p. 15).

Stafford (2011), president of Compassion International, stated: "85% of all converts to Christianity are converted between the ages 4 and 14. If a person is not converted by age 20, there is only a 6% probability that he will ever experience spiritual transformation." Further, studies by Lifeway Research indicated the following statistics about baptism distribution by age of 345,941 individuals during 2007: 1.1%, birth-5; 13.2%, 6-8; 17.8%, 9-11; 22%, 12-17; 16.2%, 18-29; 25.4%, 30-59; and 4.3%, 60+ (Lifeway, 2007).

Given the fact that variables were at work in each of these data systems, there was general correlation for the deduction that very few retirement-age men experienced life-changing spiritual transformation. Some of these end-of-life variables were psychological. As Gilbert (2003) stated: "There is a correlation with how one has experienced one's consciously lived life and the unconscious processes that surface at the end of one's life" (p. 13). It was inferred that a man who has lived a life of relative peace and satisfaction would come to old age with a sense of accomplishment and face death with peace as well. The contrary was also evident:

A man whose life was lived in turmoil and anxiety might see no sense of accomplishment and tranquility as he neared death.

According to Jung, Psychologists and Psychotherapists declared that resolving developmental tasks assisted the elderly with growth and transition with integrity rather than despair (Gilbert, 2003). Those who tended to focus on death and disability seemed to expedite the speed of those experiences which they feared. Others who found new tasks and challenges, including the potential for growth in wisdom and spiritual development, tended to retard the perceived advance of death (Gilbert, 2003).

Karl Jung stated that old age was about psychological transformation (Corey, 2005): "Individuation" was the process that affected inner growth toward maturity, authenticity, self-actualization, and integrity (p. 74). Freedom from becoming, or becoming one's self, could be linked to the process of transformation towards the end of late life. Jung identified the truth that the ego's willingness to accept inner guidance and relinquish control brought freedom (Corey, 2005). It might be that the retirement years were maximized for evangelical men when they quested for a more mature standing with God, became free to be one's self, and relinquished self-control to the God who transforms.

Boomers began to exit the church during the 1960s and continued to do so into the mid 1990s as they rebelled against tradition, institution, and the status quo. Barna (1995) concluded: "Churches promised more than they delivered . . . The Boomers did not find the relationships, worldview, or personal benefits they had

expected" (p. 48). Their opinion that the church was irrelevant led many of them to

begin a quest for more intrinsic, existential, and inter-personal experiences.

Some gerontology literature on aging men (Meijer et al., 2009) reported that

while women began to seek independence and autonomy during the middle years

into retirement age, men sought meaning and intimacy with family and others as

they grew older. Given that the new old began at 80, some men reached out for "one

last chance at happiness" during retirement years, as they built more intimate

relationships with partner, friends, or family. A longitudinal study, conducted from

1993 to 2005, by Laura Carstensen (Stanford University, 2010), reported that as

adults aged they were more emotionally balanced and able to regulate their highly

emotional problems, thus becoming happier as they grew older. "Socio-emotional

selectivity" was a scientific reference to say that people invested in what was most

important to them when time was limited. This might explain, in part, why such a

small number of retirement-age men sought spiritual transformation, since

happiness might exist without any degree or form of spiritual awareness.

Therefore, there might not be a conscious need for spiritual transformation since

the newly experienced happy state satisfied the retirement-age man. Slettehaugh

(1995) indicated the psychological changes that occurred in men with age:

- Decreased focus on career and other extra familial roles
- Increased focus on family
- Challenge to men's role as leader and protector of the family
- Increased need for affirmation and acceptance
- Irritation or resentment with aging, especially with physical change
- Increased awareness of death, sense of own mortality

- Middle age men report concerns with self-improvement and personal accomplishment, but older men appear more satisfied with their current lives.
- Decline in memory over mid-life which remains stable after about 52 years
- Decline in abstraction and concentration after age 60 (p. 13)

Just as the absence of ability to think in the abstract limited the very young from exploring the spiritual (Lifeway Research, 2007; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990), this same decline in abstraction and concentration for retirement-age men might impede or destroy questing for spiritual experience, especially if they were content with their present state.

For many seniors, simplicity brought a slower and more introspective life-style (Kimble & McFadden, 2003; Schachter-Sharlomi & Miller, 1995). Buchholz (1997) stated that aloneness (not loneliness) was an important factor in the development, growth, and maturation of the individual where human relationships were contemplated. Hauermas, et al. (2003) described those who "learn to travel light" as taking special delight in relationships and where "limitedness" was called a virtue rather than a curse (p. 212). The implications of this dynamic were staggering: The elderly often found the serendipity of hearing God as a result of the search for those things which were simply profound and delighting in them (Frankl, 2006). Consequently, out of this discovery deepening relationships were formed with God and others. They learned to live out God's intentional life of integrity: "He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8).

The value of a simpler, slower life-style did not cease with intrinsic

existential considerations. Hauermas, et al. (2003) stated that virtue of delight

shared led to an action. By taking the closer, more profound look at life, seniors

were enabled to see more clearly what should be done to enhance the quality of

relationships. Rowe (1987) declared that "slowing down may be a way of speeding

up" (p. 38). The development of empathy was also an outcome of this magnified

look at life where the aging person began, out of his limitations, to feel concern and

understanding for others based upon his own increasing limitations (Fischer, 1998).

This closer look engendered insightful awareness of the felt needs of others and

spurred one toward personal assistance to the needy. An uncommon focus on the

weather, for instance, might be a reflection of caring for the physical comfort of

others and the required action for them to be adequately cared for.

Summary

The literature on spiritual transformation in retirement-age men revealed

that some men in this age bracket did not embrace spirituality either (1) because

they considered it too costly or difficult, (2) because they were satisfied and happy

within their personal experience/perspective of life (Krause, 2002a, Schultz &

Sandage, 2006), or (3) because they did not care to relinquish control of life (Cohen,

Gruber, and Keltner, 2010). However, others were reaching out to find meaning and

purpose for life beyond the expectations of the physical world in the freedom of

relinquishing control to God (Corey, 2005). The slower pace of life allowed

retirement-age men to introspect and listen for internal self-talk/God-talk, for direction in the cognitive, psychological, and spiritual aspects of nearing death (Gilbert, 2003). Exposure to Scripture, loving relationships, and spiritual guidance, such as was found within the context of Evangelicalism, allowed the questing individual to connect with guidance from God and translate newly found existential truth into personal relationships (Crabb, 1997).

Evangelical Men and Spiritual Transformation

Much of the literature on evangelical men focused on self-help information to address various types of addiction (Hart, 1994; Gallagher, 2000; Martinkas, 2008; Edgar, 2011) and fatherhood/husband roles (Wilcox, 2011). A plethora of articles, books, and websites existed to guide evangelical men on church-denomination related issues of discipleship for men (Morley, 1997, Hughes, 2001, McCartney, 1993, Farrar, 2003, Eldredge, 2001). Though they served a worthy purpose, these works did not address the dynamics of individual spiritual transformation in a caustic and focused manner. This emphasis had led to distraction from studies on personal transformation experiences on a heart level.

Though the increase of studies on spirituality had included evangelicals, most that had been written on the subject also included Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran, Reformed, Anabaptist, Wesleyan, Jungian, liberationist, and liberal traditions (Lovelace, 1988). Through this generalizable look at spiritual transformation in

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many dimensions, Lovelace (1988) argued that the modern evangelical had "watered down" the import of spiritual transformation to lessen the emphasis on holiness and sanctification, in favor of emotional acts of worship.

Therefore, the evangelical model must be carefully delineated for this present research so as to scrutinize authentic, real, and honest experiences of the inner person with the Living God. Smith (2005) affirmed this authentic occurrence by listing the overt effects for evangelical men who have undergone radical change: 38% reported being closer to God, more spiritual, dedicating their lives to Christ, and engaging/re-engaging with faith; 17% were becoming better people by improving their character or behavior; 15% gained a better appreciation of life; 6% made positive family-related developments. Others gained hope and love, became open-minded, and gained meaning and purpose for their lives. In other words, these respondents demonstrated a substantial and notable change in their life-styles. Smith (2005) further noted that 72.1% of subjects from fundamentalist/evangelical denominations reported transformational spiritual experiences which were life changing as opposed to the other subjects who were from moderate denominations and did not use such words as "born-again" to describe their experiences.

With the advent of Promise Keepers (1990), a national organization for emphasis on evangelical men and their relationships, spiritual transformation became the focus of mass meetings for men in various locations. Bill McCartney, then head coach for the University of Colorado football team, with friend Dave Wardell, athletic director for the school, began to organize Promise Keeper Rallies in

football stadiums throughout the United States and write challenges for men to experience God and assume their God-appointed place as leaders in the home, church, business, and society (McCartney, 1993). With this focus came a flood of literature aimed at the spiritual experience of men (Eldredge, 2001; Weber, 1999).

Along with an emphasis on spiritual experience came a greater understanding of what it meant to be an evangelical man. A deluge of authors (Bill Bright, Edwin Cole, James Dobson, Tony Evans, Bill McCartney, Luis Palau, Randy Phillips, and Sam Smalley) combined writing skills to challenge evangelical men toward a personal experience with God that would result in transformed lives (Hayford, 1999). In spite of this wave of literature, however, little research has been done on the spiritual transformational experience of evangelical men from a scholarly perspective.

According to some evangelicals, "Conversion is a process. Being born-again is something which keeps happening as the new life keeps pouring and transforming the believer" (Read, 1992, p. 142). The Christian experience was a growth process, called sanctification, in which the initial decision to follow Christ (justification, regeneration) was linked to a life-style of faith relationships that were characterized by ongoing love, acceptance, and forgiveness.

It was noteworthy that evangelicals, commonly associated with revivals, awakenings, and dramatic first conversion experiences, saw those personal experiences of salvation as the gateway to a lifelong experience with God. Maslow (1971) argued from his research that almost everyone had "peak experiences", but

only certain persons made use of them. Worthnow (in Thomas, 1997) concluded

from a survey that over 80% of the respondents had a peak spiritual experience but

only a small percentage of those had been changed by the experience. For the

research at hand, transformation referred to real genuine encounters with God that

were life changing in scope and consequences.

Spiritual Transformation in Retirement-Age Evangelical Men

The literature base on the focused study at hand was virtually non-existent,

calling for research and writing that would whet the appetite of future investigators

who longed for understanding and transmission of the phenomenon. Moreover, this

research was aimed at such a scholarly end.

Summary

The literature review indicated that the difference between the experiences

of retirement-age men and retirement-age evangelical men could be classified by

the spiritual transformation, or lack thereof, as delineated in worldview, personal

relationships, and existential dimensions. Spiritual transformation produced

qualities of life such as love, acceptance, and forgiveness, which enhanced the baby

boomers' experience of old age and allowed them to finish well. The virtuous

reversal of an emphasis on "doing" to one of "being" enabled them to cease serving

the gods of capitalism, hedonism, and secularism to begin a life of serving others

(Pinches, 2003) in the final chapter of their life books.

The area of spiritual experience among the elderly had been under-studied because the data were often less convenient to collect for older evangelical men than for adolescents or young adults (Sandage, et al., 2010). Because of these limitations, an examination of personal experience was merited and highly valued in order to understand and transmit the dynamics of spiritual transformation in retirement-age evangelical men.

Trafford (2004a) reminded us that those who age well were ones who developed their creativity, found ways to serve and help others, and built strong relationships that yielded a sense of purposeful connection with others and bred perceived self-worth and well-being. This realized state was evident to others.

Past studies had focused on the social, psychological, economic, and philosophical aspects of retirement-age men to the neglect of the spiritual transformation experiences. The literature on evangelical men likewise addressed familial, ecclesiastical, moral, and relational aspects of spirituality without a focus on the specific dynamics of spiritual transformation among older men. The absence of literature about spiritual transformation in retirement-age evangelical men neither adequately nor justly correlated to the need of the millions who fell into this unique category among the baby boomers. This need was so sharply before us that we could not fail to look closer and deeper into the dynamics that comprised this special subset of men.

A qualitative research design allowed the researcher to examine and describe intrinsic experiences that would otherwise remain inside of the individual.

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Especially since a man who had experienced true spiritual transformation yearned

to share it with others, this researcher hoped to enable many such men to

conceptualize and verbalize their experiences to others in a meaningfully effective

manner.

Chapter Three: Methods

Research Design

Given that the individual knows himself more profoundly than anyone else, it is imperative that he be allowed to tell his story without outside persuasion, input, or counsel. Then, too, since phenomenological research describes the meaningful lived experiences for several individuals and focused on their common ground of experience (Creswell, 2007), it was the logical choice for examining the research at hand: the spiritual transformation of retirement-age evangelical men. Van Manen (1990) referred to the study of the essence of experience, not just the explanation of it, as the heart of phenomenology. Moustakas (1994) described Heuristic Inquiry as focus on understanding the human experience apart from outside voices: "Only the co-researcher's experiences with the phenomenon are considered, not how history, art, politics, or other human enterprises account for and explain the meanings of the experience" (p. 19).

Some argue that in order to arrive at the essence of an encounter the researcher must bracket out his own experiences from those of the participants, if possible (Moustakas, 1994). Van Manen (1990) stated this process was impossible to accomplish and removed the researcher from the text. As well, Moustakas (1994) stated: "Despite practice, some entities are simply not "bracketable.". . . On the other hand, I believe that with intensive work, prejudices and unhealthy attachments that create false notions of truth and reality, can be bracketed and put out of action" (p. 90). The challenge was for the researcher to abstain from eisegesis, i.e., reading

perception, meaning, judgment, and interpretation into the text, and allow the text to speak for itself (exegesis). Consequently, this researcher, to the degree possible, withheld interjection of his personal life experiences, judgments, and presuppositions from the process of data collection of the interviews of the participants, until his insights would serve useful in the final analysis of the research.

Piantanida and Garman (2009) viewed the researcher as an "instrument of inquiry" who experiences the phenomenon under investigation and "much like a tuning fork, resonates with exquisite sensitivity to the subtle vibrations of encountered experiences" (p. 59). For this scenario to materialize in the process, the researcher brought his worldview, personal experience, value system, and hermeneutic into the interpretive and summary phases of the research. In this way the researcher joined the participant in the lived experience.

The lenses through which the researcher interpreted the meaning of the experiences, described by the participants was shaped by many variables: "Gender, sexual orientation, race, socioeconomic status, political ideology, professional experience, personal history, and worldview" (Piantanida & Garman, 2009, p. 64). This researcher was a white male, 65 years old (retirement-age), married for 44 years, conservative in politics and faith, an evangelical missionary/ pastor/ counselor/ teacher whose worldview was biblical. Knowing this background informed biases and the desire for personal persuasion to not rule in the interpretive process. The aim of the researcher was toward careful reflection in the

active listening process of transcribing interviews and collating them for meaningful interpretation to the didactic process. Reduction required a repeated process of "looking and describing" as the researcher remained "completely open, receptive, and naïve in listening to and hearing research participants describe their experience of the phenomenon being investigated"(Moustakas, 1994, p. 22).

Selection of Participants

Since the focus of this phenomenological qualitative research was the spiritual transformation of retirement-age evangelical men, eight men, ages 50 and above, were targeted as possible participants. The inclusion process ceased when data saturation or redundancy of thematic information was reached in the interview process, i.e., the story themes from the participants became repetitious or overlapped. Participants met the criterion for inclusion by gender, age, theological persuasion and the recognition of a lived spiritual transformation experience. The participant and the referring individual indicated the time frame for the person's experience of spiritual transformation.

Participants were chosen through third party referrals, knowledge by the researcher and the snowball effect of subject acquisition, i.e., one person identified someone else who has had a similar experience. A person who knew him well referred each participant. A referral form (Appendix A) was mailed to each referring person to complete and return to the researcher via US Postal Service. A pastor, an associational Director of Missions, a senior adult minister, a student, and

a relative were the types of individuals who referenced a participant who had publically and privately demonstrated an experience of radical spiritual transformation during retirement age. This researcher knew of two individuals who met criterion for this research, as well as being obviously open about their experiences. All participants gave informed consent (Appendix B) to their involvement, including the participation in one or more personal interviews about their experiences, which was audio recorded. Informed consent included the description of risks, nature and benefits of the research, confidentiality, answers to participants' questions, compensation, personal rights, and attestations/signatures (Cone & Foster, 2006). Participants were also involved in a church of the evangelical faith tradition, as identified by the referring person.

Further, a measure of each participant's spiritual experience was verified through a T-Score of 59 or below on the Remuda Spiritual Assessment Questionnaire (Wall, Cumella, & Darden, 2003), indicating spiritual well being. Since all participants were selected through identification by others as having experienced a spiritual transformation during retirement-age, the purposeful sampling included criterion, typical case, and theory based factors (Creswell, 2007). Selecting individuals who met the criterion listed above assured quality control. The typical case type of sampling examined that which was normal. Throughout the examination of the collected data the researcher looked for common themes that existed in the participants in order to interpret, understand, and normalize their meaning for others. Theory based sampling looked through the lens of theoretical

constructs in order to elaborate on the specific dynamics of the lived experience under scrutiny.

Verification of candidacy for the participants included the administration of the Remuda Spiritual Assessment Questionnaire (RSAQ) (Wall, Cumella, & Darden, 2003), a self-report 41-item questionnaire (Appendix C) providing a comprehensive assessment of spirituality. This instrument had a greater likelihood of validating personal experience than could be accomplished via a quick phone call or face-to-face interview only could accomplish. Moreover, the RSAQ brought affirmation to the person's qualification for inclusion in the study. It was short and easy to administer, yet represented a broad scope of beliefs and experiences while addressing psychometric reliability and validity (See Appendix D). The authors of the inventory have used language easily understood by retirement-age evangelicals, such as the "Bible", "Jesus Christ", and "church", which have familiar meanings. The RSAQ indicated spiritual wellness in terms of "intimacy with God", "meaningful spiritual practices", "a clear spiritual identity", "the experience of joy", "a desire to grow spiritually", and "a faith as a source of strength" as items in the spiritual index. Consequently, the RSAQ was aptly suited to qualify the participants' selection for the research by the positive components of spiritual transformation. This instrument identified both extrinsic and intrinsic factors, which accompanied spiritual transformation and maturity. This research verified that there was positive evidence of spiritual maturity, which contrasted the pre-experience to the post-experience life-style, through the relating of the personal story, the referral forms,

and the scores of the RSAQ. (See Appendix E). Permission to use published material

was granted (Appendix F).

The recommendation of these participants by individuals who knew them

well was further evidence of their inclusion in the study. In addition, a public

knowledge of the individual's spiritual transformation was indication of his

experience both within and without the local church setting. The referring persons

gave the spiritual attributes of each participant as indicators of his personal

transformation, as described on the referral form which they completed.

Data Collection

After approval of the proposal by the Institutional Review Board of Liberty

University, the researcher initiated a contact by Internet with those who had been

identified as prospective participants in the research at hand (See Appendix G) and

agreement to participate in the research was secured. The interview was scheduled

in the residence of, or a place convenient for and chosen by the participant, in order

to reduce anxiety about the experience by being in a familiar environment

(Creswell, 2007). Privacy and seclusion were provided for the sake of recording and

confidentiality (Moustakas, 1994).

The informed consent was administered upon arrival at the location of the

interview. All questions about the interview were answered and the interviewer

neither disclosed more than the participant needed to know nor made assumptions

about the outcome. The RSAQ was administered as the last item of the interview

process.

The researcher traveled for the interview with each of the participants as

close to the same date as possible. The interview was voice recorded for later

transcription. A professional transcriptionist was paid for her services and the

transcription was mailed to each participant (member checking) for his approval of

the verbatim content before it was used in the text of the dissertation. The names of

the participants were not shared with the transcriptionist. Consequently, they were

identified by a pseudonym. The interviewer followed standardized instruction for

the interview questioning (See Interview Guide, Appendix G). The voice and written

records of the interviews are kept in a locked file in the office of the researcher and

will be for a period of three years, after which they will be erased and/or destroyed.

Data Processing and Analysis

Creswell (2007) stated: "The process of data collection, data analysis, and

report writing are not distinct steps in the process – they are interrelated and often

go on simultaneously in the research project" (p. 150). Much of qualitative analysis

was intuition, hunch, and impression: The adaptive unconscious did an excellent job

of sizing up the world through rapid cognition (Gladwell, 2005). Moustakas (1994)

stated: "The most significant understandings that I have come to I have not achieved

from books or from others, but initially, at least from my own direct perceptions,

observations, and intuitions" (p. 41). However, data management was structured so

as to be reproducible and systematized. Giorgi (In Moustakas, 1994) identified two

levels of description:

> Level I; The original data is (are) comprised of naïve descriptions obtained through open-ended questions and dialogue and Level II; The researcher describes the structures of the experience based on reflective analysis and interpretation of the research participants account or story. (p. 69)

A good overview then allowed the researcher to begin the sorting of the data

into memos, notes, and key concepts. Creswell (2007) suggested that the next step

would be interpretation as the coding process began: "This is the heart of the

qualitative data analysis" (p. 151). Themes began to emerge in the literature review.

A set of approximately six codes was initially used to subdivide into 25-30

categories, from which five themes emerged.

Classifying began after coding with the emergence of these five themes.

Reduction was essential as large quantities of data were grouped and sized

downward into manageable themes. Interpretation of data began next, as an

attempt to understand what had been collected from the participants' interviews.

Worldview became significant as the context of the participants' experiences was

interpreted by the researcher through organizational rubrics.

Finally, the data were packaged for presentation in the form of graphs,

charts, symbolic depictions, or tables. Moustakas (in Creswell, 2007) presented

specific steps of analysis and representation:

- First, the researcher describes personal experiences with the phenomenon

   under study ("bracketing")

- Develop a list of significant statements ("harmonization of the data")

- Group significant statements into larger units (themes)

- Write a description of "what" the participants experienced ("textual
  description")

- Write a description of "how" the experience happened ("structural description")

- Finally, write a composite description using both textual and structural
  descriptions ("essence") (p. 159).

Theme Analysis

Themes reoccurred within the transcribed text. According to Van Manen

(1990), "Theme analysis refers to the process of recovering the theme or themes

that are embodied and dramatized in the evolving meanings and imagery of the

work" (p. 78). The acquired knowledge on the subject, personal background,

worldview, conceptual framework, and theological reflection of the researcher came

to bear on the identification and interpretation of the themes. Van Manen (1990)

reminded us that themes were not just categorical statements but rather unfolding

lived experience with the text of another person's experience. In this process the

specific existential themes of the participants were shadowed against a backdrop of

a more grandiose universal pattern. In a sense, the common thematic threads of

"spiritual transformation", "evangelical", and "retirement-age men" compared each

of the participants.

Major themes gave way to subthemes through the comparative and reflective

work of description. A theme was a focal piece of the total lived experience. Van

Manen (1990) capsulized the idea of theme: "Theme is the process of insightful

invention, discovery, and disclosure" (p. 88). After individual stories were analyzed, including biographical data, then a composite description of the common ground of all participants in the group was formed. Lastly, a creative synthesis was made by the researcher. Although the research was significant, no experience was ever totally explored, exhausted, or interpreted in the research process. This reminded everyone of the dynamic nature of lived experience and the possibility of future research on the topic.

<div align="center">Trustworthiness</div>

Credibility

Credibility was heightened by the degree to which the intrinsic and extrinsic markers of spiritual transformation, described in the conceptual framework of James (1902, 1994), such as prayer, communion, intimacy, service, joy and dispelled fear, enthusiasm and freedom, and dependence on God, correlated with the themes and sub-themes of the present research. Though 100 years apart, each study portrayed the reality of the richness of spiritual transformation, i.e. each one was describing real life. Further, the intra-group correlation of the eight participants of the present study demonstrated a high degree of agreement through the themes and sub-themes of the spiritual transformation experience. The credibility of the participants' descriptions was indicated by a T-score of 59 or below on the Remuda Spiritual Assessment Questionnaire, which indicated spiritual maturity or well-being.

Dependability

Dependability was ensured by methods which included consistent selection, administration, and interpretation of the data associated with the participant interviews. All eight men were initially chosen by personal third party referral through written references (Appendix A), and RSAQ scores (Appendix I), approached via e-mail for inclusion in the research (Appendix G), and given the same interview questions (Appendix G) without leading from the researcher. Each participant chose the location and date of the interview. Heuristic inquiry, guided by the writings of Moustakas (1994), VanManen (1990), and Piantanida & Garman (2009), enabled the effective data collection process for the phenomenological qualitative research. The same 11 questions were given to each participant and the responses were recorded and transcribed with identical methods.

Transferability was ensured by the context defined by parameters of the study, i.e. spiritual transformation in retirement-age Evangelical men. The frame of reference remained consistent as the participants, coming from four different states and eight different settings, used similar jargon associated with the Evangelical Church tradition to describe their experiences. Thus, this research could be reproduced in another group of Evangelical men who in retirement age experienced spiritual transformation.

Ethical Issues

The researcher was guided by integrity as he related to the participants, empathizing with each one and taking great caution to relate to him with sensitivity, respect, and care. Further, the researcher did not impose personal biases or convictions on the interview process but acted as an analytical recorder/interviewer. According to the

informed consent (Appendix B), pseudonyms were used to guard confidentiality. Also, the recordings were kept in a locked file in the secure office of the researcher. The written data were password protected on the hard drive of the researcher's computer. Informed consent promised the participant that he could quit the interview process at any time and an understanding of the nature and results were provided to each participant. The risks were explained as being no more than he would encounter in normal life and member checking was provided to all participants after the transcription for their approval. The researcher's contact information was available throughout the study

Summary

The word picture which best allowed this researcher to manage theme analysis lay with the example of reading a novel (Van Manen, 1990): "When we read a book we enter into it... begin to care for the people...experience action without having to act, and... exit the world created by the word" (p. 91). Consequently, the story of each participant was assimilated by the researcher through the lens of his experiences and perspective so as to enter into the life of the storyteller (Milacci (2003). Milacci (2003) described how a trustworthy and credible biography was produced by the researcher for each participant which was "constructed from and grounded in my experiences, interactions, conversations, etcetera, with him" (p. 76). In like fashion, this researcher anticipated the vicarious connection of sharing the lived experiences of retirement-age evangelical men who have had authentic spiritual transformation. Themes were discovered as the research was accomplished, and as such, it remained dynamic and alive.

Chapter Four: Findings

Restatement of the Purpose

This research provided a venue for retirement-age evangelical men, who have experienced spiritual transformation, to describe and better understand the components of their experiences in such a way as to add to the literature base on the subject (Marler & Hadaway, 2000; McGee, 1990). Participants related what their individual experiences were like and how these experiences changed their lives. Moreover, they identified specific factors, which they believed contributed to the transformation and how these factors were formative in the experience. These descriptions were compared and contrasted in such a manner that common themes and sub-themes emerged to yield meaning from otherwise nondescript events.

In addition, this study aimed at enabling and enhancing both those men who had experienced spiritual transformation in retirement age and those who were seeking a meaningful existence to share clear and insightful data leading to better choices, based upon the lived experiences of the participants of this research. In the Evangelical Christian community, there was a dearth of spiritual guidance (Lovelace, 1988; Marler & Hadaway, 2002) for retirement-age men who searched for assistance in the needs and developmental processes of their age group (Willard, 2005; Roof, 1999).

Many Baby Boomers quested significance and security but did not find viable help with meaningful answers to questions related to intrinsic issues of being (McFadden, 1995). This study sought to assist them to discover appropriate and significant connections with reality and truth which lead to a life-style of integrity.

Introduction

According to Piantanida and Garman (2009), "The specific genre of qualitative research, like various forms of ballgames and literary works, embodies its own set of conventions" (p. 73). Consequently, narrative descriptions elicited and guided by open-ended interview questions are used within this research for the creation of a text which is the expression of phenomenological experiences of the participants, as understood by the researcher. Van Manen (1990) suggested that the researcher be allowed much tolerance to create the research text that was designed around the specific milieu of the experiences of the participants. Thus, the research was a product of the participants' and researcher's joint effort.

The process of text construction should include at least four types of text: raw text, experiential text, discursive text, and theoretic text (Piantanida & Garman, 2009). Raw text included the information received from questions of Who? What? When? How? and Why? The context of the phenomenon was described. Experiential texts emerged from the raw data to suggest those aspects/themes, which most richly indicate the issues of the phenomenon. Discursive text allowed the researcher to discard raw data, which was extraneous to the research questions in favor of the most germane aspects of the study (Piantanida & Garman, 2009). This process proved to be most difficult for the researcher since a large percentage of the data was significant in the construction of the story. In the theoretic text the researcher began to interpret the phenomenon and gave meaning to the themes and sub-themes associated with the understanding, conclusions, and the applications of the research, as the essence of the text began to emerge (Creswell, 2007). At this point the researcher was not only making sense of the data but he was

forming insightful logical syllogisms grounded in the reality associated with a specific worldview.

By "attending," isolating and giving focus to specifics, the researcher made the phenomena meaningful (Riessman, 1993, p. 9). Not only did the researcher believe that the phenomenon under study had significance but he was equally persuaded that others would recognize the value of the stated conclusions and applications, which emerged. Van Manen (1990) states, "In drawing up personal descriptions of lived experiences, the phenomenologist knows that one's own experiences are also the possible experiences of others" (p. 54). Thus, the shared lived experiences approximated generalizability to some degree.

In the process of the participant sharing his story, the researcher recording/transcribing the experiences, and another person reading the research, the interpretations became representations limited by language, personal perspective, and other incomplete human aspects (Van Manen, 1990, Riessman, 1993). The challenge remained one of entering and exiting another person's story with the least amount of distortion and communicating another's experience with the highest degree of accuracy.

Clearly, the researcher's persona emerged as this research was constructed. However, there was a concrete collaboration between the researcher and the participants as they connected to share experiences. For this reason it was imperative to identify the participants in the study. Thus, the identification and introduction of the participants is the purpose of the next section.

Portraits of the Participants

Common Characteristics of Participants

This study included eight men: Lonnie, Tim, Jim, Ted, Wally, Jonathan, Kane, and Bob (Appendix H). Pseudonyms were used to provide confidentiality. In this section, the eight participants were presented from the researcher's perspective (Riessman, 1993) beginning with brief biographical sketches gleaned from the data of the shared experiences from the personal interviews. Initially, it was noteworthy to identify a few common significant characteristics shared by the participants.

First, all eight participants met the "spiritual well-being" category of the Remuda Spiritual Assessment Questionnaire (RSAQ) by scoring a T score of 59 or less (Appendix I). This indicated the presence of a mature individual who demonstrated both intrinsic and extrinsic qualities of a spiritually healthy person, thus providing a rationale for his inclusion in this study of spiritual transformation. In terms of the total spirituality index, "Scores below 59 indicate overall spiritual well being including positive spiritual attitudes, beliefs, and experiences" (see Appendix E, Table 12). The Current Spirituality scale for these men indicated "the presence of intimacy with God and supportive spiritual relationships, meaningful spiritual practices, faith as a source of strength, a clear spiritual identity, the experience of spiritual joy, and a desire to continually grow spiritually" (Appendix E, Table 12).

Additionally, aside from the inclusion criterion of "retirement-age, evangelical men" seven participants were from the "South" in the United States; the eighth participant, Kane, had familial roots in California. This heritage connected them to the "Bible Belt" where it was assumed that Evangelicals were plenteous. With the exception

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of Bob, the men were exposed, in varying degrees, to a church environment in the developmental years of childhood and adolescence. As was shown, this connection became germane to the transformation experience for these participants. Moreover, all eight men were very eager to share their stories both privately and publically. Jonathan, Bob, and Kane chose to be interviewed at the researcher's residence as quickly as possible and expressed eagerness to read the findings. Finally, all readily revealed the most intimate details of their stories with transparency. All but one (Ted) have been divorced and/or remarried and all were blue-collar middle class Americans. As was shown, these ubiquitous characteristics underlay many of the common themes and sub-themes which emerged from the research and served as invaluable background data for coming conclusions.

The next section provides brief individual biographical sketches of the eight participants in hopes of connecting the reader to the research in a personal way (Van Manen, 1990). As the stories of the eight men were compared and contrasted, common themes appeared and since they were connected to the individual participants, yielded rich associations and conclusions about the phenomenal nature of the study.

Individual Biographical Sketches of the Participants

Lonnie

Lonnie is Caucasian, 61 years old and contemplating retirement. Although he was exposed to church off and on as a child, he lived a life of juvenile delinquency as an adolescent. He married without having a college degree and with his wife, had two children. However, when the children were young, Lonnie's first wife died of leukemia.

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Lonnie later remarried a lady with two children of her own and became absorbed in providing for the extended family as a hard-working plant employee. The deep convictions which he carried about morality and politics, which were generated from cultural, social, and family of origin influences, sensitized him, at age 59, to search for solutions to the current social problems in America, beyond that which man could offer. He described this concern:

> I was wrapped up in what was going on in this country with government, and the I call it the "watering down, watering down of the gospel." And our kids, the kids that you see and the people you deal with have no respect for themselves or the country, or anything. Everybody's just pretty much out for themselves. . . and a lack of respect for the military. . . I was worried about these things.

Out of his frustration, Lonnie reached out to what he believed to be a Source of help in God. At the time of the interview, he had initiated plans for full retirement that would provide well for his financial needs. He had carried moral and political convictions for most of his adult life and he was very connected to Christ and the local church.

Tim

Tim is Caucasian, 63 years old and retired. He was raised in a family that exhibited both a high work ethic and a high commitment to Judeo-Christian values through participation in a local church. He made a public profession of faith (the public decision which yields membership in the church), joined the church, and was baptized at 10 years of age. During college, however, he moved away from those values to embrace a more secular and hedonistic life-style. He was loosely associated with a church during his early adult years, which saw two divorced marriages and a rebellious son that will not speak to him to this day. This pain and rejection has caused Tim intense grief and sorrow. Tim married his present (third) wife and recently retired from a career in law

enforcement. An adulterous affair, and subsequent fall-out, caused him to look to God

for rescue at age 60. He described his decision in this manner:

> So I came to this point that I had to accept either living life for the Lord and
> giving up everything else, or continue the way I was. And I made the decision
> that I needed to confess my sins openly, ask forgiveness from my wife, from my
> church, from God; and the result would be in God's hands.

Tim acted on his convictions and began the transformation process. He lived

comfortably with financial resources in abundance. He and his wife remained very

committed to a local church.

Jim

Jim is a 70 year old Caucasian man who grew up in a religious home that saw a

lot of conflict and power struggle. He joined the church as a child and was associated

with it until he graduated from high school. After one semester of college he enlisted in

the U.S. Marine Corp, in part to escape parental authority. He became hardened to life as

a Marine and after one four year term of service he resigned to later become a police

officer, from which he ultimately retired. Jim was, by his own admission, a good man

who demonstrated the extrinsic qualities of a churchman but did not have the intrinsic

characteristics that follow spiritual transformation. Consequently, he was ordained as a

deacon in a local church, married and raised three children. However, because of a

workaholic life-style, he did not build a marriage. When the last child left home, he and

his wife of 36 years, divorced. He remarried and remained loosely connected to the local

church. After several years of marriage, he buried both the first and second wives, who

died of a similar type of brain tumor. This experience became a catalyst for spiritual

transformation at age 67. Jim described his surrender to God in this way:

> He (God) took my first wife and it's no doubt in my mind that my selfishness is what . . . he was trying to get my attention. . . . I said, "Lord, you've got to take over. I can't do this. After all this time, I realize that and I'm ready if you'll just do it. Now I'm not going to make a move unless it's with your guidance."

This personal surrender led the way to the transformation process that followed. At the time of the interview Jim lived alone and was comfortably fixed for the retirement years. He remained very committed to the local church.

Ted

Ted is a 70 year old Caucasian man who was raised in a pastor's home where he made a profession of faith (the public decision which yields membership in the church) as a child and was very involved in the church for the duration of his life. He married a deeply committed Christian woman who gave birth to and joined him in raising three children. Ted served on boards and committees of the local church while building a very successful career as an educator in the public school system. By his own admission, he remained distant from the more spiritual aspects of church life, having the outward appearance of religion without the inner relationship to God. The conviction of personal sin (lostness) led him to reach out to God for salvation at age 67. At the time of the interview, he, and his wife, remained in the work force, committed to the local church, and were contemplating retirement.

Wally

Wally is a 72 year old Caucasian man who was taken to church as a child but became an alcoholic as a young adult, following the pattern of most of his family. This addiction led to the divorce from his first wife after 14 years of marriage. He then married a lady who was a registered nurse, ardent in her faith commitment to God and the

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church. She attempted unsuccessfully to lead Wally to accept Christ as Savior for 23

years before he experienced the spiritual transformation at age 64. The death of a close

friend hurled him into a search for an authentic relationship with God. Wally described

the manner in which he followed his wife's lead, the day after his friend's death, to

accept Christ as his Personal Savior:

> I started going to church with her, and the morning of August the first, 2004,
> when I made my final walk to the altar and accepted the Lord as my Savior.
> That's when my life turned around . . . . But I was 64 when I finally said, "Hey,
> I've showed out enough during my lifetime, it is time to get my life straightened
> up and start working for the Lord instead of working against Him."

Wally found the "something better" that he was searching for that day. At the time of the

interview he had been sober for several years and continued to work maintenance in a

responsible position in a local factory. He was contemplating retirement. He continued

to serve the Lord through his local church.

Jonathan

Jonathan is a 62 year old Caucasian man who was a first generation Christian who

"dabbled in church" as a child and adolescent. Although he had no immediate family

role models for Christianity, he read the Bible on occasion. He described his early adult

years as a "train wreck" which was filled with "grief and things of the flesh." He married

his present wife after two former marriages ended in divorce. He became extremely

wealthy but "never experienced joy." He turned to God for help in finding happiness,

meaning, and purpose in life, in a fiat type of personal conversion at age 55. At the time

of the interview, he had been retired since age 53 and lived a very comfortable and

philanthropic life of faithful service to others through a local church.

Kane

Kane is a 54 year old Caucasian male who was raised in a Christian Science home where the church interpreted the Scripture and emphasized the material world as an illusion. When his daughter's health problem caused him to question the church's teaching against medical science, he began to quest for a personal relationship with God. He lost all of his wealth in the health crisis. His marriage of 33 years dissolved as the children reached adulthood. His estranged wife in California left him to grieve and search for help in the spiritual realm as he passed the winter alone in Wyoming. An immersion into Scripture, prayer, and meditation led him to a spiritual transformation at age 52. Kane described his salvation experience in summary fashion:

> In Alpine, which was just south of Jackson Hole . . . we had had a heavy snow, 26 feet of snow at one time . . . I lost 60 pounds, I wrote poetry, I read the Bible, I Got closer to God. I went back to California, and that is when I got saved. I really was encouraged by that, though I really didn't know what it meant at the time.

Kane discovered the more full implications of that experience in subsequent growth experiences. At the time of the interview Kane was living in the basement of a friend's house and working in free-lance construction as he finished a Bible school degree. He had plans to establish a program of evangelism in Cincinnati. He remained very committed to the local church and he worked odd jobs to put himself through school.

Bob

Bob is a 60 year old Caucasian man who did not have the experience of growing up in a Christian home. Church was not emphasized but personal accomplishment was. He was trained in land survey but worked in a factory for much of his adult life. He became an alcoholic and entered drug rehabilitation programs two times (2000 and 2003)

before being treated at the Elam Home Drug Rehabilitation Program, a ministry of

Thomas Road Baptist Church, Lynchburg, Virginia, in 2007. He married his present wife

in 1996, after a divorce from his first wife. He brought two children into the present

union and his wife brought two children from a former union. His spiritual

transformation came as a result of gratitude to God for deliverance from alcoholism and

bondage at age 58. Bob described his conversion experience in this way:

> As I look back on it, I am amazed how He (God) kept me, He kept me there and
> didn't let me kill myself through car accidents . . . but for the grace of God it
> could have happened to me. But He didn't let me kill or maim somebody . . . . In
> the Elam Home a gentleman walked me through the Romans Road . . . and I was
> able to listen to him . . . I came to the end of myself.

 Bob began a process of spiritual transformation with this initial conversion event.

At the time of the interview, Bob had been free from alcohol and drugs for about five

years and was actively leading in a local church and a Christian Program for alcohol and

drug recovery. He was financially secure.

Editorial Note:

A ninth participant was interviewed in his residence and though he met criterion

by being a retirement-age Evangelical man who had experienced spiritual transformation,

the researcher discovered the participant's inability to effectively verbalize personal

experiences on a cognitive level because of Parkinson's disease. Further, what he could

relate was without depth of understanding. His story was too succinct: E.g. "I realized

that I was a sinner. I asked Jesus to forgive my sin and I know that I will go to heaven

when I die." Also, though he was very willing to be interviewed, his wife assisted him

with recall and verbalization of his story. His experience and his life were greatly

appreciated.

Summary

Riessman (1993) states: "Individuals become the autobiographical narratives by which they tell about their lives. These private constructions typically mesh with a community of life stories, "deep structures" about the nature of life itself" (p. 2). The autobiographical data of the eight participants of this research meshed to produce a platform from which to get a glimpse into real life: common themes and sub-themes which described the phenomenon of spiritual transformation in retirement-age men.

The following themes and sub-themes described the research with these eight men which allowed them to understand and report the dynamics of an existential spiritual transformation. They identified specific factors that existed in the transformation experience and described the impact upon their lives and the lives of others. The results were compared and contrasted, as well as collated, in order to find meaningful themes and sub-themes associated with their personal relationships and spiritual development. When compared, the participants' experiences reflected common themes in five areas: Spiritual Transformation as a Process and Fiat Experience, Recognition of God's Initiative Role in Spiritual Transformation, General Influences on Spiritual Transformation, Specific Precursors to Spiritual Transformation, and Evidences of Spiritual Transformation. These five themes, along with seven sub-themes (see Appendix J), comprised the content of the remaining portion of this chapter as they provided information associated with each theme of Spiritual Transformation and served as responses to each of the Research Questions.

Theme One: Spiritual Transformation as a Process and Fiat Experience

The Spiritual Transformation as a Process and Fiat Experience theme stood alone in the research without sub-themes, because of the personal nature of each participant's story and the subsequent connection of the prior conversion experience to the later spiritual transformation. The combination and connection of the two experiences reflected the importance of both experiences being compared and contrasted for understanding and depth of discovery.

All of the participants experienced a "fiat" (sudden) conversion experience, followed by baptism, prior to their spiritual transformation experience. This secondary experience with God was associated with the first or earlier event in dynamic ways. In four cases (Wally, Jonathan, Kane, and Bob) the participant had made a "public profession of faith" (an act leading to church membership) from two to four years prior to growing in spiritual maturity (i.e. transformation). For four participants (Lonnie, Tim, Jim, and Ted) the spiritual transformation came many years (40 years of more) after the childhood profession of faith. However, this previous decision had significance for the later-life transformation.

Lonnie expressed the significance of both types of spiritual experience:

I've known Him (God) since I was 10 years old. . . .He showed me His face in a Sunday School teacher. I came to Christ because I wanted Him to feel good about me. I confessed faith in Christ my whole life . . . but even Satan is a believer. I do know that I had my salvation . . . . But He told me a long time ago, when we first got started with this, that we're not running a sprint, we're running a marathon.

Lonnie was baptized at age 10 but did not grow in his faith until much later. He began to search for God at age 59 which began the spiritual transformation process.

Wally also experienced both a fiat decision to follow Christ, after the sudden death of his friend, and the process which followed: "That Sunday I went to the altar and accepted the Lord as my Christ and my . . . my Savior." There was, however, a four-year process between 2000, when he quit drinking at age 60, and 2004, when he accepted the Lord and began the process of spiritual transformation. During those four years he was searching for God and growing in His grace. The journey continues for Wally.

Jim was baptized as a child in the Baptist Church. He had early memories of sensing God's presence, even at the age of eight when he was "delivered" from bullies: "I remember the Lord being beside me, the Holy Spirit, the Comforter being there with me." From those early childhood experiences he continued in the process of sanctification: "My experience has taken place over a longer period of time than I understand most people have in that I cannot give you a date, an hour, and a minute when Jesus Christ became my most Important Master." At age 67 he began to experience a real spiritual transformation after the death of his second wife.

Tim made a profession of faith at age 10 and was baptized. At age 62, however, he referred to the real transformation experience during a Life Action Crusade:

> I don't know whether it was conversion. I just refer to it as surrender to God. I remember feeling the call of the Holy Spirit to come forward but I was never nurtured in the faith in a way that would let me grow spiritually from that moment. Now, life didn't change immediately . . . I expected to feel an immediate release, an immediate joy, if you will. And it didn't happen. My pastor explained that this was going to be a long process. The confession – forgiveness process went on for about three months until I felt clean before God.

The intrinsic characteristics of spiritual transformation began to flourish in Tim as he developed a hunger for God from that experience. He continues in the process.

Ted made a profession of faith at age 10 at a church camp, was baptized

subsequently, and spent all of his life thereafter in the church context. However, he asked

God to save him on July 26, 2009, at age 67. While reading Tim Tebow's testimony from

the Sports Illustrated Magazine in the bathroom at 11 p.m., he became convicted of his

need for an authentic relationship with God. He immediately woke his wife and told her:

"I've just asked God in my heart and He has saved me. Life began – the transformation

process."

Kane grew up in a Christian Science home where he was exposed to Bible

reading, prayer, church attendance, and healings but he had no exposure to an emphasis

on more intrinsic and authentic aspects of Christian experience. On Easter Sunday, 2007,

at the age of 50 he was converted:

> I went to church and got saved . . . . I really didn't know what it meant at the
> time. So it had been a year and a half or so since, since my salvation, that I really
> started. . . . And that was when change started. I really started to get hungry for
> the Lord. . . and God was working. I mean I didn't know Him, but I knew about
> Him, but I knew how to pray to Him a little bit, and I knew how to . . . you know,
> read the Bible a little bit, and knew that He was a powerful omnipresent force . . .
> The Holy Spirit was not actively working inside of me, that I could recognize
> until a year and a half later . . . . It's when the Holy Spirit starts to work in you it
> just becomes alive and you can't get enough.

In contrast to these stories, Bob described his spiritual transformation as process,

without the benefit of a childhood decision: "My spiritual transformation came, has come

in a gradual way. There've been no light bulb moments, really . . . but that's just

happened in the last two years. I never had a light switch moment." In 2003 Bob made a

public decision to accept Christ as personal Savior. For the past four years, since age, 56,

Bob had been in spiritual transformation mode. However, the past two years had brought

dramatic spiritual growth to his life as he continued to grow in the process of

sanctification.

Jonathan experienced a fiat spiritual conversion while driving his truck on Route 29, near Schuyler, Virginia, in 2002. He described the experience:

> On my way to Richmond, I was traveling in my red truck. And I was listening to teaching, and worship on the radio, as I was prone to do on my way. And I can remember the moment that I surrendered my heart. And I just told the Lord that I gave up and that I loved Him. And I can remember the experience then of this awareness, or this . . . wasn't emotion. It was an awareness of love that poured into me, that beyond my imagination . . .

Although Jonathan's spiritual conversion experience came at a point in time, he had begun the searching process the summer prior, in the context of a Bible study in his wife's church. The pastor also witnessed to Jonathan and he became a "God chaser", looking for answers to spiritual questions. This quest for eternal salvation ended when he made the surrender to God on Route 29, February, 2002. He stated: "When I surrendered my heart to the Lord, was when I changed permanently, forever."

Seven of the eight men (excluding Bob), even Kane, who grew up in a Christian Science home, recognized the benefit of childhood and adolescent exposure to a church environment or a Christian family of origin. The language (jargon) of the church was used by them to describe their experiences and an enhanced understanding of the Christian experience was enjoyed through introspection as each participant reflected on the influence of the church.

The Spiritual Transformation experience overshadowed the previous public decision in church for all of the eight participants. Each participant described a fiat decision to follow Christ, followed by a process of questing and searching for truth associated with spiritual development and transformation. Their descriptions were consistent with the findings of others (Moody & Carroll, 1997), whose research indicated

spiritual passages of the soul which began with a conversion experience and proceeded to ongoing processes of spiritual growth. The participants stated that regardless of the timing of the fiat decision, their present relationship to God was what really mattered to them above any other facet of the experience.

Theme Two: Recognition of God's Initiative Role in Spiritual Transformation

It was serendipitous to discover that all of the participants, when they began to quest (search, hunger) for God, perceived that God had already initiated a pursuit of them. Notably, the fact of this common experience was in juxtaposition to the humanistic belief which emphasized man's initiative in spiritual transformation (Moody & Carroll, 1997). This belief that God was drawing them to Himself instilled faith, confidence, and reassurance that He was willing to accept them and establish a personal relationship with them.

This theme, the Recognition of God's Initiative Role in Spiritual Transformation, did not develop sub-themes but rather, like the first theme, was subject to the individual perspectives of the participants. Each one described God's sovereign acts in different words and from different perspectives, yet with similar overarching theological reflection.

Lonnie described his experience as God's initiative as he drove down the road:

God just came in real close to me. But I was just thinking about everything that was going on, and I came to tears. And about that time God just pulled in real close, and He told me everything was going to be O.K. . . that He was in control.

On another occasion Lonnie spoke of God's movement in terms of the Holy Spirit:

The Holy Spirit just started, started moving with me . . . But you know just to watch God has really been, like I said, It's a miracle to watch Him give me the abilities to handle the situation. . . . God came into me and caressed me and told me that He was still in charge. I started seeking Him then. And He just blessed that. God moved me to start coming towards Him. I knew that God was touching me. I needed to get up and do something.

In fact, every description which Lonnie gave of spiritual transformation was preceded with a statement about God taking the initiative in the process.

Jim used similar words to describe God's initiative in his spiritual transformation:

God says, "I knew you before creation." And I don't know of anything that that could mean except, we were somehow in the spiritual realm with God before creation. When I realized that Jesus Christ was right there pleading with me to listen to Him. The Master, the Creator, was pleading with me to let Him show me how to do this. I don't think I was seeking Him . . . . I really didn't think I needed Him . . . . Now I think, I take the Bible literally to say that Christians, followers of Jesus Christ, lovers of God, are chosen. I don't understand all that I know about that right now, but I'm trying to find out more.

Tim recalled "being spoken to by the Holy Spirit" during a Life Action Crusade in 2006 at which time he began the spiritual transformation:

I needed to follow everything the Holy Spirit was telling me. I don't think a person can come to this type of understanding on their own. I think a person has to be guided by the Holy Spirit. I don't believe that they can change on their own.

Later, Tim described his fervent prayer for a wayward son: "I pray for God all the time to work in his heart the way He worked in mine, to send the Holy Spirit to change his heart . . . ." Almost every description of Tim's experience referenced God's initiative.

Likewise, Ted, in describing his after-retirement experience in the hospital said:

It was like God getting to me. Well, you know, that was God, just waking me up . . . . And you know, I look back now, and I think God really spared me to let me see . . . . You know, I don't know why He gives you so many chances. But in my case, He does. And I don't, I wasn't looking for God . . . .

Kane expressed a very theologically oriented description of his spiritual

transformation experience as having been from God:

> I had a lot of questions. It was God working on me. God is a loving and long-suffering God, right? Who would put up with us, and yeah. Can you argue with God's timing? Absolutely not. Can't argue with it. It's an absolute blessing. You're trying . . . striving . . . until He draws you, until He knows you, you don't have the relationship. I was seeking God and there was no way that I was going to find God until God drew me. And He did it in His perfect timing.

Kane's choice of words reminded us that he was studying in Bible school at the time and chose words/jargon that reflected his theological studies, but were very accurate in description.

Bob described the conviction that God, out of His sovereign love, protected him and initiated the plan for his life:

> But there was something inside of me now that God didn't let my heart be hardened. Many many people, when they live through their fifties, I guess their heart does become hardened. I read in the Bible . . . And for those He foreknew . . . I didn't go to death with a hard heart.

Speaking about Dr. Sim's (a professor) influence on his life, Bob said:

> But I see now that God put him in my way. He put him in my way. And I couldn't believe that that happened to people. They'd say, "Well, God has done this for you, and He's done that for me . . . . I didn't understand . . . I thought we determined our own destiny, and so on, and so forth . . . " God sees. He says "He never wastes a wound." And I see it now, but it was such a puzzle for me for a long time. I look back on it now and I'm amazed at how He kept me and didn't let me kill myself through car accidents. He allowed me to come to saving grace . . . God knows what He is doing. He didn't sit up there in heaven one day when Bob was saved at Elam Home (a drug rehabilitation facility) and say, "Gosh, I never thought Bob was going to be saved." It's just God can never be surprised. He knows this.

Jonathan sensed the sovereign initiative of God profoundly in his transformation experience. He spoke of the "spiritual hunger" which led to conversion:

> I became a "God chaser". . . . Not realizing that God had already took care of that, because He put this hunger for the Word of God in my heart. . . not realizing that God was being very kind and generous to me, by grace, giving me

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that hunger. . . . He engaged me. I didn't engage Him. I was always restless for
something. I know that was the Lord stirring my heart, but I didn't know it at
the time. . . God had put a hunger in my heart with all those Bible studies . . . and
I had a veneer put over my heart and God had to penetrate that through His Word.
God used that young pastor to draw me, to refocus me.

Jonathan, more than any other participant in the study, referred to a deep sense of God's

sovereign initiative in the transformation event in every phase of the experience. Wally

said, "You know He worked, the Holy Spirit was telling me . . . working in my life and I

would not give up." He recognized God's initiative in his personal salvation.

Although these descriptions of spiritual transformation were different, they

indicated the common interpretation that God took the initiative in the process and each

of them had an opportunity to respond in acceptable ways associated with faith in God.

This realization contrasted to a more humanistic interpretation about man's initiative in

finding God. Therefore, it was a significant aspect of the transformation experience

which had overarching relevance to the other themes of the research.

Theme Three: General Influences on Spiritual Transformation

All of the participants indicated that other people and institutions assisted them to

find a meaningful relationship to God and begin spiritual transformation. God chose to

use individuals to accomplish His work on earth, according to Scripture (Ephesians 2:8-

10). Therefore, it was only logical that friends, spouses, family, and ministers would

have influence on the spiritual transformation event.   Sub-themes associated with this

theme, General Influences on Spiritual Transformation, were: Personal Influences

(Friends, Spouse, Family of Origin, Personal Evangelism) and Ecclesiastical Influences

(Local Church, Scripture, Christian Media, Prayer). These ubiquitous influences were readily identified and valued by the participants as factors which grounded their experiences in a spiritual context, even though some of them were shared by the world at large. Further, they served as a framework for the more specific precursors which precipitated a turn in God's direction and served as strengths for the experience of transformation.

These general influences on the transformation process appeared as factors at various times chronologically in the experience of the participants (See Appendix H). Wally, Jonathan, Kane, and Bob, came under the influence of these factors for two to four years prior to a real spiritual transformation. Wally stopped drinking and started attending church with his wife for four years prior to the spiritual transformation. Bob began to associate with the Elam Home for months prior to spiritual transformation. Tim and his wife began a serious study of the Scripture in an organized Church-related study program prior to the transformation event. Even so, these same influences which preceded and occurred during the process of spiritual transformation became enhanced disciplines after the spiritual transformation event began. In this sense, the influences upon the lives of the participants and the effects of the experiences were closely associated continuations of the same types of spiritual experiences.

Personal Influences

Friends

Lonnie, Wally, Ted, Kane and Bob indicated the role of friends in assisting them to enter into the spiritual transformation experience. For example, Lonnie spoke of the

influence of two significant friends in his life:

> Joe started nudging me toward God. We bowled together. Glen showed
> me that in evangelism you get 13% of a home when you win a child; 47% when
> you win a wife; and 93% when you win a father. This is the guy that God used to
> nudge me to get me started moving towards Him.

Lonnie made an interesting observation that it was God who initiated the process but He

used Glen as a "tool" to leverage Lonnie in His (God's) direction.

> Wally described the efforts of Blakely to "win him to Christ:"
>
> Blakely would faithfully come to my house on Tuesday nights and we would
> talk about the Lord sometimes and sometimes we would talk about football. He
> constantly wanted me to talk about salvation. And that is one of the biggest
> factors. We buried him on July 31, and that man made such an impression on
> me and I accepted the Lord the next day, August 1.

Blakely's death was an immense factor in the beginning of spiritual questing for Wally.

He aimed his life at imitation of Blakely from that time forward.

> Ted attended church all of his life, growing up in a pastor's home and making a

public decision for Christ at an early age. It was the evangelistic efforts of some within

the church, however, that turned him toward an authentic relationship with God:

> Every time he (his pastor friend) would preach it looked like he was talking to me.
> I heard the question, "If you die tonight, where would you spend eternity?" I had
> heard that question a thousand times. . . . And it was on the written page.   And
> it was like it just jumped out at me.

The aforementioned article by Tim Tebow, a personal friend, used the same question to

arrest Ted's attention and point up his need for a true relationship to God through Christ.

When Kane mentioned his real experience of salvation, he refered to a couple of

friends who "planted the seeds. They were people that I worked with and you could just

see the goodness in them, and you know the Christian influence." It was their Christian

influence and character that witnessed truth to Kane.

Bob gave credit to a professor and several friends who brought him to a point of decision:

> And Dr. Sims at Lynchburg University. If it wasn't for him, I don't know where I would be today. . . . And a few people like John Smith, and of course Jerry, Scooter Stone too, and Charlie. They have been real important people in my life, that's just happened in the last two years (pseudonyms used here).

Bob described ways in which these men testified to him and assisted him to begin a quest for authenticity. These men formed a very tight group of friends who assised each other in spiritual growth.

Spouse

Because of the close physical, emotional, and relational bonds of marriage, it was not surprising that six of the participants placed high importance on the influence of their spouses on the transformation experience. Lonnie, Wally, Tim, Ted, Bob, and Jonathan spoke of the influence of their spouses on their life-changing decision

Lonnie mentioned: "My wife of 25 years nudged me toward God."

Wally echoed this same truth: "For 23 years my wife kept trying to lead me to the Lord. She didn't give up on me." She was mentioned often in the telling of his story, as the most consistent and highest human influence on his life.

Tim mentioned the forgiveness which his wife gave him after an adulterous affair, as being so significant as to represent a turning point for him: "We began to be closer than we had ever imagined possible." She joined him in a "plunge" experience of a three year intensive Bible Survey Course which catapulted them into a life-style of Bible study and Christian teaching.

Ted described his wife as a life-long witness to the genuine Christian experience.

She led him to pray the "sinner's prayer" at the side of their bed on the night of his

transformation experience. Ted said:

> And that's probably what hurt me the most. Because I knew I had a wife
> that supported me in everything that I had done, and if she knew some of the
> things I had done . . . but you know what, she didn't want to hear those
> things, she just said, "I forgive you."

Ted's wife assisted him emotionally and spiritually to turn away from an old life and

embrace a new quest with God without the restrictions which would have been there.

Bob gave credit to his wife for the ability to continue with the initial decision

which he made to pursue God:

> Secular recovery, where they don't do anything but give a higher power credit,
> did not work for me, but I had met my wife about that time, my wife, Susan,
> and it was being with her really, that over the next six years it took before I
> accepted Christ as my Personal Savior.

Jonathan credited his wife for the beginning phase of the transformation

experience as he described her insistence on dating a spiritual man:

> I was courting my third wife (present wife) . . . She made it clear to me that I
> wasn't going to be able to do any courting unless somehow I was a spiritual man.
> So I tell you in the flesh, I was enticed a little bit. The Lord used my wife to get
> my attention . . . . I started attending Bible studies at the pastor's house . . . But I
> was drawn to my present wife, Betty, because she had this peace and this joy and
> this full . . . full . . . She was not empty!

For these six participants, their relationship with their spouse proved to be significant, in

several dimensions, for the later transformation experience. Also, the influence of the

spouse was associated with familial dimensions of love and care in the family of origin.

Family of Origin

Although several of the men mentioned the positive effect of family of origin on

their lives parenthetically, Jim and Ted gave special attention to the arena of the home for

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the base teachings about God that were foundational for a later personal discovery of

Him.

Jim remembered the Evangelical home life as he began the search for God:

I can actually recall conversations with Granny and Pa that had told me times like this would happen. Every night my dad would lay in the bed after all the lights were turned out and he would pray out loud. And my mother never lost sight of the Lord. Even when she was nailing my legs with a switch, sometimes tears would be coming out of her eyes . . . The same way the Lord must have tears in His eyes when He is sending something my way to try to correct my thinking, my life-style.

Ted grew up in a pastor's home. He made a profession of faith at age 10 at

church camp, and was baptized in his home church. Because his family of origin was so

steeped in Christian disciplines, when Ted told his elderly dad and mom about his

spiritual transformation in retirement years, they responded in disbelief. The doubt gave

way to the acceptance of reality, however, as they realized the authentic nature of the

event. Their ultimate response to him "gave permission" to proceed with spiritual

development during the retirement years.

Personal Evangelism

There seemed to be inherent clout in the person who was doing the evangelization

(presentation of the gospel), as indicated by the value that individuals placed on sports

figures, movie stars, or entertainers who shared a Christian testimony. Notably, Ted was

favorably impressed by Tim Tebow's testimony in a magazine. It served as a catalyst for

the conversion experience.

Wally was witnessed to by a dear friend until the day of his death. This so

impacted his life until Wally made a public profession of faith in church the very next

day.

Kane had family and friends who witnessed to him regularly:

> My sister and brother-in-law were Christians, and they were witnessing to me on a pretty regular basis. So, . . . I could see where they were going. But I was real resistant and I fought it. But they had a lot of influence on my life.

Kane later became very close to these two individuals as he found a meaningful relationship to God. Their example of personal evangelism marked his life of service to others, especially through personal love relationships.

> Bob responded to a direct witness by a person at the Elam Home:

> At the Elam Home, I had a gentleman ask me, he said, "Do you know where you're going to go after you die?" I said, "Sir, no, I really don't. I really don't know where I'm going to go." I said, "What. . . I know that you're trying to convert me or something." Well, he was very stabilizing. He walked me through the Roman Road, and because I was at such a low point emotionally and physically, I was able to listen to him, and consider things that I absolutely had never done before. I was baptized about five days later . . . . and I was trying to do good.

> Jonathan described a conversation with a young pastor that began the search for truth:

> He sat down beside me and he said, "Jonathan, do you have a personal Relationship with Jesus Christ?" I said, "Yes," but I lied. I went home and I thought about it, and I said, "I don't know what he is talking about." "Personal relationship with Jesus Christ?" So that started the whole process.

This single event began the search for an authentic relationship with Jesus Christ. It was noteworthy to consider the timing of a positive response to the gospel, in retirement age, when a negative or superficial response had been given for decades.

Ecclesiastical Influences

Attending Church

Although the participants had varying experiences with local church participation,

in general they found support, fellowship, affirmation, and challenge within their connections to church. Lonnie found personal conviction of sin while he was searching for God: "There's a couple things that have been mentioned (by the Pastor in his message) and it's just like lights went off within me." This preaching ministry gave challenge and strength to his floundering life.

Tim went before the church to confess the sin of adultery and ask for forgiveness. He found forgiveness and an ongoing fellowship of believers which served as a catalyst for his spiritual development. Ted also went before the local church to share his new found faith in Christ: "It took me about 35 minutes to get through because I cried all the time. But it was a life-changing experience. . . ." The honest public confession of having lived an entire life of deception was liberating to Ted and enabled him to move beyond the shame, embarrassment, and confusion to the newly found walk with God. The church understood and more than one person related a similar story about his own life. This seemed to add encouragement and grace to the experience.

Kane gave perhaps the most unexpected and extent word of appreciation to the local church – both Evangelical and Christian Science in his case:

> Easter Sunday service, 2007, had 7000 in attendance at Reality Church. I went a few times and started downloading sermons and liked what I heard. During the two year period of searching, in Jackson Hole, I attended church. The pastor was pretty good and I needed direction. I listened to him regularly. Even the Christian Science church was foundational in the spiritual transformation experience. At least I read the Bible, at least I had church structure in my life. We tithed, we dressed up and went to church you know, family ties and that kind of stuff. Those things are all important. I experienced healing in Christian Science. I broke my knee and was healed without drugs or surgery. I was 50 years old and had never had a pain reliever or a shot.

Kane's testimony gave credence to the hypothesis that the structure of the church

disciplines had value when it came to the experience of spiritual transformation, even if the doctrine was not biblically sound. The individual, later in life, may embrace the truth and be able to enter into the already experienced disciplines of the faith with greater facility. The local church was a significant influence in the stories of all the men.

Scripture

All eight participants entered into a study of the Bible at some point after their fiat transformation experience. This discipline came, in part, from the influence of home, church, and other people. However, each man described a deep longing from within for God's Word which came with the transformation experience and impacted his life perhaps more than any other effect. The starting point for this serious study of Scripture varied within the participants of the study.

Upon coming to Christ, Lonnie immediately "started listening to Bible sermons on tape and on Christian radio stations. I knew enough about God to shut off the world and do nothing but study His Word and meditate with Him." Lonnie described this experience as something which came naturally without the insistence or instruction of someone else.

Jim became an ardent student of the Bible. He described his hunger for the Word:

> The most important manual for doing a job is one Book. And I definitely definitely never spent enough time in the Operational Manual, the Bible. All the answers are there. . . . If you don't understand something, you ask Him and He'll show you . . . . I'm astounded every day when I read that Book . . . . And nobody's ever found an error in it. It always tells you how to complete the task.

Jim's exposure to Scripture through the church was invaluable to undergird his newfound quest for truth. At one time, prior to the transformation experience, he had been ordained

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a deacon in the Baptist Church and went through a period of serious Bible study only to fall away from the practice and return to a more secular life-style. He had more biblical background than most of the participants in the study.

Tim became a very serious student of the Bible as the searching for God began. He, and his wife, completed a three-year college level course on Biblical Studies. This serious study catapulted them into teaching roles within their local church. Tim continues to be an avid reader of self-help Christian books and Bible Commentaries. He had traveled to the Holy Lands and had attended various Bible Conferences on a national level. He continued to grow in the quest for truth.

Ted had studied the Bible in the local church setting for years. However, he had not taken Scripture seriously and did not apply its principles to daily life. Being an educator, he had studied the Bible on an academic level only. After the fiat spiritual experience, he began to hunger for biblical truth with the end result of not only spiritual excellence, to the same degree that he had excelled as an educator, but also for the purpose of excellence in Christian life-style.

Kane passed the long winter alone in Wyoming. During that time of searching, he discovered the Word of God. He related:

> But what happened during that time is that I would come home and I would just get into the Bible and just really, really . . . . I was just pulled in by it. I was just . . . . I had a real hunger for it. And that was really when the change started. So it had been a year and a half or so since my, since my salvation, that it really started.

With those words, Kane tied the experience of serious Bible study to the beginning of the spiritual transformation. He began to "hear" God speak to the personal issues of his life.

Jonathan described his hunger for the Word in these terms:

I'm hungry for the Word of God. I am opening my Bible and I'm showing Pastor Johnnie that my Bible is torn apart; It's really torn apart in Ephesians. I'm showing him my torn up Bible; I'm proud of it . . . This is not my first Bible. This is about my third Bible. I am really big in seeking the Lord through His Word. I read the Word and then I go to my garden and meditate on it. I love the Word of God.

Jonathan reflected what each of the participants had expressed about an intrinsic love of and devotion to the Scriptures as the guide for life. This "guidebook" became central to his spiritual development.

Christian Media

Lonnie, Jim, Tim, Ted and Kane found assistance for spiritual questing in Christian literature, music, and recorded sermons and Bible lessons. Lonnie could not read the self-help books fast enough. He valued Steve Farrar, Glen Wagner, Sarah Young, Charles Swindoll and others who spoke to the existential side of the Christian experience. His focus had become one of "Christlikeness" as he quested for knowledge about God.

Jim began to read a vast array of Christian authors who addressed the "deeper life" of authentic Christianity. He became keenly aware of the shallowness of some Christian material to address only the "veneer" of life to the neglect of heartfelt need and intrinsic areas of concern for the developing believer.

Tim was deeply moved on January 6, 2006, as he viewed the film, "The Passion of the Christ." He stated: "Christ was being beaten for me. I just remember wanting to cry out for them to stop!" Also, the book, *The Purpose Driven Life,* by Rick Warren helped Tim in the quest for understanding his need as related to God's purpose. Other Christian literature had been regularly consumed by Tim in a deep thirst for knowledge.

He related that he felt that he was "catching up." Ironically, it was a single piece of music that moved Tim's heart toward God:

> After a three month period of confessing sin and receiving forgiveness, the Holy Spirit tapped me on the shoulder and said, "Listen to this song for you." The name of the song was "Calvary Answers for Me." And when I heard this song, this joy that I had been expecting, that I had really felt maybe wouldn't come, did.

Knowing a celebrity enhanced the impact of Christian literature. Ted was reading an article by Tim Tebow, an outstanding Christian football player, in Sports Illustrated Magazine, when he was convicted of the need for conversion. After this event he read self-help books for Christian men that aided his spiritual development.

Kane identified testimonies on YouTube that helped him develop spiritually: "'I am Second' is sports figures, movie actors who sit down and give their testimonies. They are just powerful!"

Several, like Tim, had expressed a combination of Christian literature, Bible reading, music, sermons, testimonies and prayers that had combined to impact their lives in the face of their questing. Some of these influences had been more meaningful than others, given the specific interest of the participant.

Prayer

All of the participants mentioned their awareness of others who prayed for them. Several knew that parents, siblings, and friends were praying and believed in the power of prayer. However, the major emphasis on prayer described the development of a personal prayer life.

Ted, at the time of his salvation event, said to his wife: "I really do not know how to pray." She responded, "Yes you do, too." Ted said:

I don't. But I remember that I got down on my knees on the side of the bed on the floor, and I was bawling. I just asked God to forgive me for everything I have done. It was probably the sweetest experience that I've had outside of getting saved, is having my son pray for me when I told him of the experience.

Jonathan described his relationship to God as a prayer connection:

I spent a lot of time out in the garden talking to the Lord. . . I am really big about talking to the Lord in my garden, or on my back porch. I talk to Him all the time. I just don't pray; I talk all the time.

Jonathan also described a mission trip to Burma where, on three separate occasions, he had a supernatural experience in prayer:

It was spiritual awareness. It was like God was standing right beside me. It was such an awareness and pleasing thing to me. I would give anything I've got now to have it one more time. It was just a strong, strong presence of the Lord. And so I was asked to pray. I opened my mouth and God was there . . . strong.

Jonathan referred to this experience as a plum line reference for his personal prayer for the remainder of his life on earth.

Jim also described a personal chat time with God all through the day as he was working on construction or just spending time alone. Prayer was incorporated into every aspect of the decision-making process for his life and ministry.

The participants certainly believed in and practiced prayer to a high degree but it was almost taken for granted that one would pray as he searched/quested for God and grew thereafter in His grace. The implication that prayer was "caught rather than taught" was strong in all of the participant's stories.

The general influences on spiritual transformation, identified by the eight participants, formed a foundation for the specific precursors which would follow and these foundations are tied dynamically to the precursors of the transformation experiences in varying degrees. The following theme identifies specific precursors which

preceded the phenomenal individual participant's turn toward God for existential

concerns.

Theme Four: Specific Precursors to Spiritual Transformation

Events, individuals, and situations influenced each of these participants in such a

way as to change their perspective on life and death. Each man responded to these

intrinsic and extrinsic precursors in different ways yet with a similar outcome of turning

in the direction of God for help. Sub-themes associated with Specific Precursors to

Spiritual Transformation are: Social Dynamics: Frustration and Anger over the Status

Quo, and Existential Dynamics (Personal Emptiness, Personal Losses, Spiritual

Conviction, and End of Life Evaluation). These sub-themes reflected specific events,

which served as "wake-up calls" to the individual prior to the spiritual transformation and

described the associated development of need for change, which drove the participant

toward God. None of the participants experienced all of these precursors; however,

specific precursors were shared by multiple participants.

Social Dynamics: Frustration and Anger over the Status Quo

An unexpected outcome of the research was the reporting of dissatisfaction over

the present moral, political, and spiritual climate in America as a precursor to spiritual

transformation. Although these feelings were unique to three men, the dissatisfaction,

hopelessness, and frustration was so intense as to turn Lonnie, Jim, and Wally toward the

divine for answers and solutions. Lonnie described his feelings about the current milieu:

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> I was wrapped up in what was going on in this country. I call it the "watered-down, watering-down of the gospel." And our kids, the kids that you see and the people you deal with have no respect for themselves or the country, or anything. Everybody's just pretty much out for themselves . . . . and I was worried about these things. . . . I wasn't searching for God, I was frustrated with everything that was going on in this country.

Lonnie's frustration over the present climate in America reflected a greater dissatisfaction with life and a feeling of hopelessness. From this emotional state, he began searching for something to bring stability and security to his life.

Jim was also frustrated over the same social milieu. His frustration, like that of Lonnie, reflected his anger and sadness about his own life and shadowed a deeper personal pain associated with the terminal condition of his wife. He describes the situation where he nursed his dying wife:

> When my wife got down so sick and I finally realized that she was going to die from her ailment, I began to look back and say, "Well, what have I done that was in strict accordance with the laws of God? How had I followed Jesus?" And I realized over a period of, I don't know, a few days I guess, thinking back, that I hadn't done anything according to Christ's teachings.

This introspective "soul searching" led Jim into a more extensive review of his life and eventually to the spiritual transformation. He was very outspoken and critical of government, society, the church, and the moral climate in America until he began to turn toward God and seek understanding and resolution of the inner insecurity.

Wally also expressed dissatisfaction with the condition of the country and his personal situation while he was tied to alcoholism. He commented: "I used to get depressed about the situation that we are having." This sense of hopelessness fueled the greater realization of personal emptiness and turned him toward the One who could help.

Existential Dynamics

Personal Emptiness

For several of the men (Wally, Tim, Kane, Bob, and Jonathan), the feelings of

frustration about life were connected to a sense of emptiness within. Wally said: "I just

kept thinking, you know, there's got to be something better than what I'm doing."

Tim described his personal emptiness as a search for personal improvement:

I was studying. I was trying to, I was trying to do something, but I didn't really
know that I knew what I was trying to do, other than gain knowledge. I was
looking for a way to be a better person, than really searching for holiness and
righteousness.

Kane's sense of emptiness was tied to aloneness and loneliness. He described the

experience of passing the winter in Jackson Hole, Wyoming alone: "I was alone over

there. I spent one winter in Wyoming by myself, and that was really difficult."

Ironically, being alone allowed him to start the spiritual quest that naturally emerged out

of a spiritual hunger.

Bob reached out of personal emptiness to look for something beyond himself:

I said, I need something other than myself to believe in. I've seen how well that
worked for me over the years. Had to be my way and in my time . . . . I spent
a number of decades in and out of depressive issues, emotional depression . . .
and, as I look back on it, I had no beliefs . . . I was looking for something to
base my life on. And I wasn't sure if it was God or not.

Jonathan described a personal emptiness that led to a search:

And I was always restless for something. I just felt . . . I did not have a fullness
of life. I would get happy, and then I would get empty again. But I was drawn
to my wife because she had this peace and joy and this full . . . she was not
empty. I had been empty all of my life. I had happiness sometimes but really
not joy. . . and no peace.

The cycle of happiness and then emptiness led him to desire more from life. Realizing

man's inability to provide his needs, he reached out to God. The remaining three participants who did not address personal emptiness focused on more extrinsic precursors such as death/grieving, divorce/adultery, accidents, and addictions as significant factors in spiritual transformation.

Personal Losses

Tim, Kane, and Jim identified adultery and/or divorce as a precursor to questing spiritual transformation. Tim remembered his adulterous affair and subsequent forgiveness/restoration, as a turning point in his relationship to God. He connected the forgiveness which he received from his spouse and the church to the nature and character of God (i.e., God's forgiveness). Kane identified the separation (estrangement) from his wife as a precipitant in his quest for God. The attitude of abandonment from his wife turned him in the direction of a search for acceptance. Jim was deeply hurt by the divorce of his first wife, after 36 years of marriage. She instituted the divorce and immediately began to see another man. The feelings of rejection and abandonment were so deeply felt that he began to look for acceptance by someone that could offer absolute love, acceptance and forgiveness. This search led to the spiritual quest for God. All of the other participants, though they did not point to divorce and adultery as precursors to spiritual transformation, described their divorces, adulterous affairs, and remarriage, as symptoms of a life-style without God at the center. They expressed regret that moral and emotional stability was not present in the former life.

The death of a loved one became a factor in the spiritual transformation for Wally and Jim. Wally was so moved by the death of his best friend, Blakely, that he made a public profession of faith in church the next day and began a "sobering" quest for God.

Jim's quest for God was tied dynamically to the divorce of the first wife, and subsequently the death of both the first and second wives within the same year. He grieved with the children from both marriages and sought consolation, meaning, and direction from the "life shaking" experiences. This was a noteworthy occurrence, since Jim had been a very independent and self-sufficient person until that time. For Jim the illness of his wife was "prolonged death" with involved extended periods of agony and personal grief.

Four of the participants in this study experienced personal sickness that initiated the look in God's direction. Ted had various "trouble/rescue" events: A heart catheterization, a serious car wreck and injury, and a 39-day life-threatening hospital stay with pneumonia and strep. These events, although they were rebound experiences, began the process of spiritual transformation. The turning point for Kane's spiritual transformation was associated with the sickness of his daughter. This turning point marked the beginning of the quest for God as Kane turned his back on Christian Science and made his own way spiritually. He began to discover God's healing for his daughter as well as for himself. Bob related thoughts about his deteriorating health, which could possibly impact his future experience of life: "My health is not as good as it used to be and I could get pretty depressed about that. There could be changes in the future . . . in the immediate future down the line that disables me." These kinds of thoughts, as indicated by Bob, kept him dependent and close to the Lord.

Two of the participants, Wally and Ted, indicated that auto accidents played a part in their spiritual transformation process. Wally had multiple alcohol related accidents without serious injury to either himself or the occupants of the other vehicles.

He expressed gratitude to God for sparing them from death and/or injury. Ted experienced a major auto accident which resulted in a broken hip and leg shortly before the spiritual transformation process began. He stated that the "near brush with death" caused him to think again about the uncertainty of life and death. The theological reflection which emanated from deliverance from death and injury in these accidents was tied to the recognition of God's sovereign initiative in the spiritual transformation process.

Two of the men, Bob and Wally, identified alcohol/drug addiction as a factor in their life-change. Bob went in and out of drug rehabilitation for many years until he was finally "delivered" from the addiction. He gave God the credit for the release from bondage and expressed his thankfulness in movement toward God. For over 30 years Wally was an alcoholic. He quit drinking in 2000 but delayed spiritual conversion until 2004. Again, out of a grateful heart he began to express faith toward God and allow God to work in his life. The spiritual transformation began at that point.

Spiritual Conviction

The spiritual hunger that drove Ted came as a result of having a strict conservative church and home background that fueled the conviction about the need for salvation. He said: "One of these days, God's not going to . . . I'm not going to have the opportunity to turn around. And I really got scared about going to hell. Because I knew I was." The reality of heaven and hell was instilled in Ted from childhood through the context of the local church.

Wally and Bob also reflected on their limited knowledge of the gospel to propel them toward a decision, based upon a sensed personal need for salvation. After their

initial decision, they each quickly developed convictions about sanctification which

drove them toward spiritual development. This quick link was truly noteworthy because

neither Wally nor Bob had a very strong background in the church.

End of Life Evaluation

Self-evaluation allowed five of the participants, Wally, Ted, Tim, Bob and

Jonathan, to think deeply about their mortality in light of their age. This process of

introspection was a precursor to the spiritual transformation event. Wally described this

process in his life:

> I was getting older and my health was getting, you know, where I was losing . . .
> My life is short . . . It is a very common response of people in our age. We're
> closer to heaven than we've ever been.

Ted heard the repeated question from several sources, "If you die tonight, where

will you spend eternity?" His focus moved to eternity and the brevity of life. He

continued: "But I read the obituary columns now because that, you know, people dying is

our age. You know, and I've lost a lot of friends lately." Ted began to absorb the reality

of death as reflected around him and he made the application of that reality to his life.

Tim described his thoughts about life and death in similar terms:

> I realized that life was going to come to an end and that, you know, the old thing
> of "He who dies with the most toys wins" wasn't what the Bible said was going
> to happen. Our purpose here on earth is to live for God and to enjoy God and let
> Him lead my life.

Bob reflected much thought about this subject as he described his personal

cognition:

> A lot of people who come to this understanding in their latter years, they've
> been looking desperately for stuff all their life. And maybe they're getting to
> a point where they just don't have but so many years left on this planet. And
> it's the wisdom of being allowed to be older, hopefully will make you, you

know, will help you take these things seriously that they need to be taken. I thought that I just didn't have any more time and God just had given me so many, so many chances. And I didn't think I had a whole lot more left. I thought I'd seen through my nine lives, so to speak.

Jonathan, also, reflected on a concern about death: "I had been seeking . . . I was getting older so I was concerned about death. . . What was going to happen at death?"

It was noteworthy that even though it is common for retirement-age men to reflect on their mortality, not all of the participants in this study made an issue of that as the focal point of their thought processes (Lonnie, Jim, and Kane did not). This end of life evaluation was commonly included along with other significant factors in the spiritual transformation process and should not be given more value than other precursors. However, end of life evaluation served as a reference point for all of the participants.

Theme Five: Evidences of Spiritual Transformation

When a person had truly experienced Spiritual Transformation there were specific attributes which marked his life that are not only recognizable by the individual but also by family, friends, and associates. Some of these attributes were very observable by others (e.g. service to others and sensitivity to others), while some were extremely personal (e.g. humility, trust in God for the future, reduction/loss of worry, hatred for sin, and forgiveness). Some of the attributes in men who had experienced spiritual transformation were both deeply significant "changes of the heart" and very publically observable characteristics (e.g., study of the Bible, and prayer life). Sub-themes associated with Evidence of Spiritual Transformation are: Spiritual Disciplines (Service to Others, Study of the Bible, Forgiveness, Humility, and Enhanced Prayer Life),

Worldview Perspective (Awareness of the Kingdom), and Intrinsic Values (Sensitivity to Individuals, Preference for Informal Heartfelt Worship, Shift in Priorities, Reduction/Loss of Worry and Fear, Trust in God for the Future, Hatred for Sin, and Embrace of Authenticity). These sub-themes served as personal markers of spiritual transformation and, public indicators to the life-change.

Spiritual Disciplines

Service to Others

All participants experienced an obvious connection between the change that occurred in their sensitivity to individuals and the outcome of serving others. The participants' spiritual transformation was a dynamic change from the intrinsic to the extrinsic dimensions of life. All of the men told of the drive to serve others, which they believed issued naturally from the intrinsic nature of the transformation.

Lonnie for example began teaching a men's Bible class and leading in personal evangelism activities through the local church. Wally started spending more time with his family and started paying more attention to the needs of his wife. He also became more socially involved with activities such as the Horseshoe Club. Thus, much of his service was aimed in the direction of family and friends.

Jim, from a background in building, became a member of a Christian Builders organization (CBC) that constructs church buildings free of charge for needy situations. He traveled extensively, via motor home, with a crew of 20 individuals to locales within the United States. He delighted in helping others.

Ted began to see others in need and help them. He became passionately

concerned with individuals. To a woman in despair about her child he said, "We got to do something about that." He commented, "I have just seen the compassion that I have now for caring about other people." Ted's wife saw him as "a completely different man" because of the manner in which he treats others.

From the questing, God spoke to Kane about service to others: "And the Lord said, Go to the inner city, rent movie theatres and preach my Word." His focus then was on personal need and he heard God directing him toward meeting the expressed needs of others, especially through evangelism.

Bob found a way to serve others through Freedom Ministries, a Christian rehabilitation service. He was also very involved in personal evangelism efforts through his local church. His focus was on the needs of others.

Jonathan entered into teaching in the local church as well as long-term mentoring relationships to men who were searching as in his earlier struggle. He worked with others as if he were "making up for lost time."

Wally and Tim began service to others in the context of the church. Wally worked with children and adolescents and Tim began teaching discipleship classes in his local church setting. They expressed a desire to serve others "out of a love for God." Thus, the transformation experience was characterized not by self-effort but by the power of God changing the individual from the inside and teaching him to live an others-centered life-style instead of being egocentric.

Study of the Bible

All eight participants began an ardent study of the Bible that permeated every aspect of their lives and influenced future decisions. At the outset of the spiritual

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transformation process Lonnie began constant study of the Bible, focusing on the books

of Romans, Jeremiah, and the Gospels. He said:

> Before I was so milk-fed for so many years and nowadays I pick up the Bible
> and when I read it, I don't just hold it there in my hands to read it. I caress it.
> I take my lower hand and put it up on top of it.

This description of Bible study was not to be misunderstood as Lonnie thinking of the

Book as sacrosanct, but rather, it reflected his immense love for the Bible as it ministered

help and healing to him. The Bible was given the highest value in his life.

Jim began a plunge into Bible study, which was enhanced by cataract surgery that

enabled him to read much better. He was interested in every subject from Bible doctrine

to applied ethics and he shared biblical truth freely in conversation with others.

Tim began an intense discipline of formal study of the Bible through a college-

level survey course that lasted for three years. Beyond that he continued to do personal

reading and study of the Scriptures on a very intense level and saw it as paramount in the

disciplines of the Christian faith.

Ted contrasted his value of the Bible before and after conversion:

> Before if Lucy suggested Bible reading, I'd say, "O.K., but I'd read it. Did you
> ever read the Bible, or read a couple of verses and then not remember what you
> read? They didn't have any meaning to me. Now, I believe the Bible more and
> more than I've ever believed it before.

Ted's confession underlay the reality that only when a person has experienced spiritual

transformation can he understand spiritual truth and love to be taught through the Bible.

Kane expressed the same "hunger" for God's Word. He began a diploma course

at Liberty University and continued to be very disciplined in his study of the Word. He

delighted in an insatiable discovery of doctrinal truth.

Bob, Jonathan, and Wally expressed a tremendous respect for the Bible and reported entering into a discipline of both individual and corporate study. Although they referred to the Scriptures in more general terms than the other participants, they reflected a depth of understanding about the significance of God's Word to their personal spiritual growth.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness was an earmark of spiritual transformation, as indicated by Wally, Jim, Tim, and Ted. Wally was liberated by the forgiveness, which he received from others:

> Forgiving. I had a few enemies. They were people I really didn't care for. But I went and apologized to two of them after I accepted the Lord. And asked them to forgive me for what I had done in the past years. And you know, they said they forgave me.

Jim sought out individuals that he had offended and gained forgiveness and/or reconciliation. Ted also found forgiveness from God and others both privately and publically. Tim wanted to consummate the act of forgiveness publically in order to have a "clear conscience." He found forgiveness from his wife for an adulterous affair of eight years prior. He described his thoughts as he contemplated the need to receive forgiveness:

> I knew in my heart that if I were to tell her about this indiscretion, that first of all it would break her heart. But secondly, it would end our marriage and it would destroy the life that I had tried to build up to this point. . . . I needed to follow what the Holy Spirit was telling me.

With Tim, as well as others in this study, there was a connection between the grace which was received through forgiveness from another person and the reality of God's grace. This correlation facilitated the questing process and underscored the reality that the Holy

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Spirit enables the process of forgiveness (Worthington, 2005).

Humility

The loss of a prideful life-style seemed to precede other characteristics of spiritual transformation for some of the participants. Lonnie moved from self-exaltation to God-exaltation. He said: "I stopped trying to show everyone that I was the best." Ted moved beyond "P-R-I-D-E" to a humble acceptance of his place among equals/peers. Tim abandoned the desire to be recognized and praised for his personal accomplishments as a policeman. He stated: "I now serve the Lord without any desire for recognition. I took all those trophies and put them in boxes and stored them out in the storage room. I didn't give Him credit for them, but I give Him credit now." This change was noted by his wife and others who commented on the remarkable transition, which had happened concerning the former desire for personal recognition. Jonathan remarked that God was still working on his pride about the things of life and he continued to be shaped away from sinful pride to a life of humility. Wally, Jim, and Kane mentioned parenthetically that their prideful selves had kept them from relating to family and friends out of love and respect.

Enhanced Prayer Life

All eight of the participants mentioned praying as a part of their experience but only three, Wally, Kane, and Jim, emphasized the significance of the change in the efficacy of their prayers. Wally contrasted his prayer life, before and after: "Before, about the only time I prayed was when I needed something. Now, I thank Him for what He has already done for me."

Kane also described a change in his prayer life:

We can catch ourselves, we're convicted by it, and then we can pray it through

. . . Now I catch myself, when I see a horrible accident with an ambulance going somewhere, I'm praying. I'm not thinking.

It was Jim, however, that pointed to intrinsic qualities of prayer that manifested in the way that he prayed:

> I used to pray, 'O.K., Lord, I need you for a minute. Come out of my pocket and give me a hand here' . . . . I wanted something, real quick and I wanted it in my own understanding. . . I was basically selfish. Now, It's my prayer every day, Lord, let me do something to help someone else . . . I talk to Him daily, hourly, It's actually eye opening . . . It's almost spooky. I can ask even the minute things, even working on the job, even down to fitting pieces of material together, making certain cuts, just the open in the back of my mind. Do I need to back off with it? Is this right? And I'll be dogged, He'll tell me.

Intimacy in prayer seemed to be a significant manifestation in the lives of the men as they experienced another level of talking to God: A relationship was enhanced and every facet of the spiritual transformation was touched by the effect of prayer.

Worldview Perspective: Awareness of the Kingdom

Ted expressed openly what other participants insinuated about the transformation experience opening their eyes toward the existence of the Kingdom of God, not just church or religion. He stated:

> And I really wish we'd get off this Baptist and "You got to be a Baptist, and you got to be this," and just say, "Listen, I believe the Word of God from front to back." Some Baptists are going to hell. We got Baptists going to be surprised that when they get to heaven, that there's going to be some black folks up there, you know, and Asian or whatever.

This awareness was associated with the sensitivity to the personal needs of individuals and indicated a willingness to embrace anyone who has come to God through authentic spiritual transformation. An emphasis was made here on spirituality, as opposed to Bible doctrine which might characterize the local church, and focused in the direction of the

Universal Church of the ages, with a global perspective. Kane began to see the

"Universal church" through the lives of individuals that impacted society. He said: "But

in light of the World Series, I found Josh Hamilton and Pujols both did the "I am second"

testimonies and they are just powerful!" He acknowledged that individuals other than

those in his local church environment, comprise the "redeemed of the ages."

Intrinsic Values

Sensitivity to Individuals

Lonnie, Wally, Ted, and Jim referenced a dramatic change of attitude, which was

observed in the contrast of the way that they related to people before and after the

spiritual transformation. Lonnie confessed: "I watched myself go from not caring to

compassionate. The love of God kind of came into me and I wanted to give it out."

Wally echoed a very similar change in attitude: "Before I didn't care if I pleased

people or what. But now that I've come to the Lord, I'm supposed to look out for my

brother." The evidence of this change was substantiated through other areas of his

interview. He began a life of caring for his wife, increasing his social life through the

horseshoe club, and serving the elderly in nursing homes.

Jim described the inner process of personalization after his spiritual

transformation experience:

> But the people that I do come in contact with, and work with, and meet, I look
> at them different. They're not just people. I don't look at them now to see what
> they're doing wrong . . . . I see them as God's children, of which I'm one, and
> they are also.

Ted was changed in his perspective on people through the forgiveness and

reconciliation process of his conversion experience. He described this change:

> The number one thing that stood out there in my life as I look, is P-R-I-D-E.
> I have a lot more patience now. Instead of saying, "I'll get back to you." I
> say, "I have time, Come on in."

Each of these men began to relate to people as individuals and treat them as they would want to be treated. This change, for all eight participants, was also reflected in the referrals given in the context of this study.

Preference for Informal Heartfelt Worship

Along with the expanded borders of freedom to explore God's truth, as through general revelation, and coupled with a recognition of the Universal Church, there also came an openness to discover non-traditional worship which spoke to the heart.

Jim described the worship experiences of the Builders for Christ:

> The CBC is our church. Every morning at 10 o'clock, from ten til eleven,
> we have a devotional. And then of course on Sunday, wherever we are at,
> we go worship with whoever the people we're building the church building
> for. And the things of the Lord are discussed all the time as we go over to
> somebody's motor home, or have coffee outside or whatever.

Tim connected with worship which was "authentic and full of praise music." He became a real fan of gospel music groups such as the Gaithers and he followed other groups on their concert tours. There was a thirst for music, which spoke to the inner man.

Lonnie described the change, which took place within him relative to worship:

> When you go to church; when you go there, not just to be going, but to go to
> worship and understand who you're worshipping, that's the biggest change that
> I have had. I don't go for the welling up of tears in my eyes . . . but it is a
> blessing to go to church and hear God's Word and for His Spirit to blend with
> my spirit to let me know that He's talking to me directly . . . . Before I sat there
> like a cold fish in the pew and now I need a three ring binder for my notes that
> keep piling up.

Kane experienced informal worship through a closeness to God in the wilderness as he observed a moose that came daily to stay with him as he completed the construction

of a house in the snow. To Kane the moose symbolized God's presence and personal

attention.

After the spiritual transformation began Ted found meaning in worship

experiences which spoke to the heart with real time connection to God. He began to be

passionate about authentic praise which came from the inner man.

These men searched for worship experiences, which "spoke to the heart" and

enabled them to connect with God through praise. To them, some of the more formal

worship did not satisfy a need for personal connection to God.

Shift in Priorities

The shift in priorities marked one of the most significant manifestations of the

spiritual change for all eight of the participants. Lonnie described the shift of priorities:

> Golf was my god before I started this . . . .And when God touched me, I set those clubs aside and I didn't pick them up for about three or four weeks. And I never did, never have gone back to it with the same zeal that I had to start with, because it's just not the main thing.

Wally moved from being a drunk introvert who did not care for his family to

assuming responsibility as the leader of his home and he became involved in social

activities such as Horseshoe Throwing, in order to be involved with people and have a

platform for evangelism.

Jim described his priority shift:

> I always thought that was the most important thing, provide for your family. And I came to find out that's the least important, because I don't provide anything. God provides. I can do nothing without Him.

Tim learned to make God the priority of his life:

> And I made a decision that it was more important for me to have the Lord in my life than it would be to have anything else. I sought out what I thought was best

for me with little concern for the leadership of the Lord . . . . Now, I serve Him with no desire for recognition.

Ted mirrored Tim's explanation of the priority shift: "Accolades and honors just don't mean anything to me anymore."

Kane exchanged priorities; racing exchanged for God:

Almost every weekday was racing, track days, going to events and so it was definitely my idol . . . and motorcycle racing. . . my whole life focused on that. So I've put all of that on the altar and sold all of my bikes . . . That's the most drastic change that I've made . . . and I've traded that for service.

Bob removed himself from the equation and put God in first place:

It got me out of myself and showed me that what I used to think was important is not important. . . . I am amazed that I can see how I can actually help people now. I can begin this last lap of my life in a much better way.

Jonathan described a shift away from former priorities to a new set of priorities:

Prior to salvation, I was worldly focused. It was about who had the most toys and I had a lot of them. . . . and since my salvation experience, it's how much you send up eternally. This life doesn't really matter to me anymore. It's what you can do in the Kingdom.

Although they used different words to describe the experience, the participants told of a radical shift in priorities from the earthly perspective to the heavenly realm. The priority shift was process as God revealed His more perfect will for each man.

Reduction/Loss of Worry and Fear

Lonnie described a reduction of worry about the issues of life. He stated: "I'm doing my Bible study and everything else like that, but I'm not worried about the things around me."

Tim stated that God had given him peace in the place of worry about the future and his relationship to his estranged son: "I think that God has given me a peace to let

Him handle it. I don't know how He's going to do it in that it's something I don't

understand."

Jim mentioned that the fear of death has subsided because of the assurance of

salvation: "The Bible says He is going to be teaching us wonders throughout eternity. . . .

Our soul, our self, what makes me me, is going to be here after this life. . . . We are

immortal now."

Wally too was focused on the calm which God had given him in knowing that he

is safe with the Lord:

> I used to fear death, but I don't now. I just know that one of these days we all got
> to go home. And that was one of the things I used to fear, a lot, but death doesn't
> scare me anymore, because I just, I know that I've got an eternal home.

The reduced/lost sense of worry and fear about present world conditions or future

inheritance came as a result of the transformation experience itself and met a basic

spiritual need for security.

Trust in God for the Future

The uncertainty of the immediate future became a matter of faith as each

participant leaned on the understanding that God has a plan for each life. Lonnie

explained it this way: "I don't know exactly what He has for me right this second. . . .

God is preparing me for something. He hasn't shown me the direction of that yet."

Kane was attending Liberty University in preparation for the fulfillment of the

calling of God for an evangelistic ministry in Cincinnati where he will rent theatres and

hold evangelistic meetings. He said: "My future is directed by the Lord, one hundred per

cent. . . . My plan is based on my calling."

Tim, likewise, had plans, which are based on trust in God:

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I want to find my place in a new church that my wife and I have joined. I want to grow closer to the Lord. I want to have a more loving relationship with my wife, my family. I want to be able to help raise my grandchildren and my great grand children to know the Lord. And I'm looking forward to the Rapture.

Each of the men felt that God had called him to godly living and a type of service/ministry, which would coincide to His plan for life. The future included both life on planet earth and eternity in heaven with God. Both dimensions were anticipated with joy.

Hatred for Sin

Each of the participants became extremely sensitive to sin and could no longer take it casually. Lonnie abandoned computer porn, unethical business practices, and certain addictions when God touched him.

Wally used to run with alcoholics. Now he said: "I cannot be around those people and drink." Many of his friends deserted him when he became a Christian. He also stopped cussing immediately.

Kane also had a problem with profanity. He stated: "I had a very short temper before and propensity to take the Lord's Name in vain, swear. Casual, just casual drinking . . . Not now."

Ceasing the use of profanity came "naturally" when Ted came to Christ:

But it was a very changing experience . I know because I haven't even tried to stop using profanity. It just quit! I mean, I just don't. I don't know the last time I have. And it's just not there.

Other overt sins such as adultery, use of alcohol, abusive practices, pornography, and lying were laid aside by all of the participants, strengthened by their new relationship with God. Sins of the heart were also passing away as refinement of each person

continued in the transformation process.

Embrace of Authenticity

The participants characterized their new walk with God as "authentic". In

contrast, they referred to the "Christian life" which they had known from the time of their

first encounter with God as "Cultural Christianity." Lonnie was clearest in his

description of the contrast between the two life-styles:

> I'm more interested in trying to take a cultural Christian and making him a more
> authentic one than anything else. Because you know, we've all been . . . there's
> so many cultural Christians around. That's the reason why we are in the boat
> we're in now.

Jonathan had strong words to use in the rejection of hypocritical Christians:

> But people frustrate me that do church work. Because they are self-centered
> and they don't have empathy for people. And they're lukewarm. I don't
> want to be around pew-sitters. I want to be around people that do Kingdom
> work, real Christians. Hypocrites were the very ones that kept me out of
> church for fifty years. I didn't understand the difference between a tare and
> a real piece of wheat. I think that I was mostly around tares.

The theology associated with understanding the relationship between a first

decision for God and a life-changing spiritual transformation will be discussed in chapter

five. Regardless of the hermeneutical differences among participants, they all were ready

and willing to discard "Cultural Christianity" for the authentic real personal relationship

with God, which was formed through spiritual transformation.

Summary

A comparison and contrast of the descriptions of personal experience of spiritual

transformation by the eight participants has been examined throughout the text of the five

major themes discussed heretofore. Additional comments are made in chapter five as

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conclusions unfold the richness of these associations between these eight men.

Some participants were not searching for God but rather "happiness," "something better," "something beyond me," "relief from the pain," or "meaning in life." Others described their quest as a "search for God" or "a hunger for God." However, the various objects of the search, described in this research, were all discovered in finding God through the spiritual transformation experience. I.e., the discovery of a personal relationship with God brought "happiness," "something better," "something beyond me," "relief from the pain," and "meaning in life."

The next and final chapter discusses the conclusions, implications for practice, implications for research, recommendations, and limitations of the study. It also offers suggestions for practical application to the local church setting.

Chapter Five: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary

Within the vast numbers of baby boomers (78 million), there exists only a small group of men who have experienced spiritual transformation during retirement-age (McFadden, 1995; Feldman, 2005; Fowler, 1981; Smith, 2005; Stafford, 2011). This research focused on eight evangelical men who have experienced spiritual transformation during retirement years, and allowed for depth of discovery in the examination of their stories. Through a qualitative research design, the eight participants eagerly described in detail the components of their spiritual transformation by reflecting with the researcher upon the impact of the experiences on their lives and the lives of others.

The spiritual transformation experience for these participants was binary in nature: It was an intensely unique and personal encounter with God but it was also ubiquitous in comparison to the stories of the others. The commonly shared characteristics of the participants enabled their stories to become the researcher's story. Thus, conclusions were drawn through the sieve of my personal experience and rewritten to become the story of the reader. Every effort was taken to reduce distortion of data in the storytelling process.

Themes and sub-themes emerged as rich evidence of the spiritual transformation experience. This data substantiated the references to a deeper and more meaningful change that the participants described as common experiences. Consequently, the researcher in the following sections makes observations and conclusions, which reflect the structural markers for the components of the study.

Further, this chapter presents the findings of the research in relationship to the research questions: (1) How do retirement-age Evangelical men describe their experiences of spiritual transformation? (2) What significant factors do they identify as contributing to the transformation experience? (3) How do they describe the impact of spiritual transformation on their lives? (4) How do their descriptions of personal experiences compare and contrast? The findings are first related to the literature as presented previously in this study. Then, the researcher's conclusions are stated as they pertain to the various elements of the study. Subsequently, recommendations are made for the church and the counseling community that could impact the ongoing needs of retirement-age Evangelical men. Finally, recommendations for future research are presented.

Participant Responses Compared to the Literature

Beginning with James (1902, 1994), the literature on spiritual transformation identified a theoretical and conceptual framework that included specific intrinsic elements, such as prayer, communion, service, joy, dispelled fear, enthusiasm, intimacy, freedom and dependence on God, as markers of spiritual transformation. These clustered characteristics appeared, along with others, through the research at hand. Also, none of the literature on spiritual transformation negated or countered the findings of the present research, but rather, was foundational in understanding the specific triggers and effects of the phenomenon. For example, Hall (1917) examined the intrinsic dimension of spiritual conversion through the lens of psychology and stated that the image of God in each person was activated by God's love (God's initiative). According to Hall (1917),

"transforming faith does not happen by appeal to rational arguments about Jesus, by moral example, or by fear but by the gospel story of God's love that evokes a personal response of love for God and others" (In Malony & Southard, 1992, p.2). His research correlates with the findings of the present research in identifying God as Initiator of a deep spiritual transformation which takes place on an intrinsic level and is a response to the Scriptural truth about the gospel.

Also, Rambo (In Malony & Southard, 1992) enunciated spiritual transformation as process: "Religious change is usually a process involving complex interweave of personal, social, cultural, and religious forces" (p. 159). This also correlated to the findings of the present study. The developmental stages in the models of Collins (1991), Adams (1986), and Wilson (2001), as indicated in the literature review, explained spiritual transformation as progressive change after conversion. This finding described the pattern of the eight participants in the present research who experienced both a fiat and progressive spiritual transformation.

The gerontology literature on retirement-age men (Meijer et al., 2009) indicated that men seek meaning and intimacy with family and others, as they grow older. The eight participants of this study modeled this pattern as though they were scripted for a part in a drama. Some of them sought one last chance at happiness, fulfillment, and intimacy with spouse, friends, family, and God. Likewise, Hauermas, et al. (2003) stated that shared delight led to action. Retirement-age men took a closer look at what should be done and took affirmative action to enhance the quality of relationships. These extrinsic markers were evident in the lives of the participants of this research as they entered into introspection through internal God-talk and self-talk. Some of the literature

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on retirement-age men described the processes by which these men face the end of life and gave understanding to their specific physical, emotional, and spiritual needs (Schachter-Sharlomi & Miller, 1995).   This body of literature was helpful in describing the milieu of the baby boomer men as presented in the present research.

Further, the literature, written by and for evangelical men, though not profoundly focused on the existential dimension of spiritual transformation, was most helpful in the spiritual transformation process for the eight participants, as they quested the closest of relationships with God. For example, as stated in the literature review, "Conversion is a process. Being born-again is something which keeps happening as the new life keeps pouring and transforming the believer" (Read, 1992, p. 142). This growth process, which Evangelicals call sanctification, was evident in the stories of the eight participants.

Finally, the absence of literature on Spiritual Transformation for Retirement-Age Evangelical Men was correlated to the difficulty of finding examples (participants) who understood and subsequently shared their experiences. Therefore, the literature from this study supplied some added information for a much-needed area of research.

Conclusions

Spiritual Transformation is a Life-Changing Supernatural Existential Experience

The findings of this study indicated that Spiritual Transformation in Retirement-Age Evangelical Men is a God-initiated, God- empowered, life changing existential experience which produces the highest level of spiritual development. All eight of the participants in this research experienced a phenomenal spiritual transformation of faith, which only a select few retirement-age men have come to know (Feldman, 2005; Fowler,

1981; Wurthnow in Thomas, 1997). Their experiences transgressed some popular

models of spiritual development, e.g. Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Stages, Robert Peck's

Expanded Categories, or Daniel Levinson's Eras (Vogei, L.J., in Kimble, McFadden,

Ellor, & Seeber, 1995), by moving rapidly from an early stage of development to a zenith

level that was accessed by faith and associated with the experiences of others. Fowler

(1981) stated:

> Faith is a universal human attribute that transcends the relativity of religious
> belief systems . . . . Faith connotes the alignment of the heart and will that
> represents a person's way of seeing himself – or herself in relation to others
> against a background of shared meaning and purpose. (pp. 3,4)

Fowler (1981) described faith development in six stages from stage one, "the childhood

stage," to stage six, "the religious maturity stage," which, according to Fowler, very few

selected individuals experienced. This mature stage was characterized by a "new

reclaiming and reworking" of their pasts, an openness to the "deeper self," and wisdom

(p. 197). Consequently, each participant in this research experienced not only spiritual

growth, but also phenomenal growth on a deeply intrinsic level, previously not

experienced.

Gratitude to God was tied to the spiritual transformation process as each of the

participants valued the experience as a gift from a gracious God. Hoekema (1987) stated:

"It is most important for us to realize that sanctification is not something that we do by

ourselves, with our own efforts and in our own strength. Sanctification is not a human

activity, but a divine gift" (p. 70). This fact was associated with the statements of the

participants about God's initiation of the spiritual transformation phenomena. Each man

made a personal response to the movement of God in his life.

Each participant was awakened to the need for submission to God and personal

growth by different specific precursors: personal emptiness, sickness, grief, divorce, etc.

These events turned the individual toward God only for him to come to the realization

that God had already initiated a pursuit of him. The Scripture confirmed this

acknowledgment: "We are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" (I

Peter 1:2; Romans 8:28, 29). Each participant described how God began and enabled the

process of spiritual transformation by using phrases like "He pulled in close to me," "God

began to show me . . ." or "God started speaking to me" to describe this movement from

God to the individual. This realization generated thanksgiving and motivated the person

toward a faith response to God.

This unsolicited comment about God's initiation of the spiritual transformation

process was significant for at least two reasons: First, these participants were from an

evangelical background, where the free will of man was often emphasized. In light of the

present debate within the Christian church over God's election (Calvinism,

predestination) versus man's choice (Armenianism, free will) (Grudem, 1994), it was

noteworthy that all eight participants related awareness that God had been the "Primary

Mover" in the phenomenon. This awareness did not come from their evangelical

backgrounds; rather, it came from the intrinsic dynamics of the spiritual transformation.

Second, this aspect of their stories indicated a very personal connection with God by

which He could reveal His truth, i.e., they were open to and capable of receiving

instruction from God.

From a thankful and responsive heart, each man became submissive to God's will.

Each participant began to obey the specific admonitions from God: e.g. "Stop being

conformed to this world but instead be transformed by the renewing of your minds"

(Romans 12:2). Individuals in this study began to forsake sin for holy living and began

the renewal of the mind by concentrated study of the Bible. They began to "perfect

holiness out of a reverence for God" (II Corinthians 7:1). Obedience to God became an

extrinsic marker of the intrinsic transformation experience.

Spiritual Transformation Includes Both a Fiat Conversion Experience and an Ongoing
Process

An additional finding of this research explained that even though all eight

participants experienced a fiat conversion experience, only four of them had the

experience in childhood. In one sense, the "profession of faith" and baptism were helpful

to the later spiritual transformation experience, in that security and stability were

established for later life development, i.e. Security of the believer is a cardinal doctrine in

Baptist Churches, which assures the individual that once he is saved, salvation cannot be

lost (The Baptist Faith and Message, 2000). On the other side of the issue, however, the

childhood decision could inoculate the adult from having an authentic spiritual

experience in that he might lean on academic and overt facts, such as profession of faith,

baptism, or church membership, to blindly assume security and significance from the

early decision without sensing true personal need. This may account, in part, for the

passing of 40 to 50 years for some participants before a true transformation experience

took place.

A more accurate evaluation of the relationship between a previous spiritual

decision and the spiritual transformation experienced later in life could best be

understood through the lens of applied theology. From Scripture, the fiat (instantaneous)

salvation decision was associated with "justification" (regeneration), the once and for all

act of God where He pronounced the believer "innocent" and "righteous" because of the

personal acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior (Grudem, 1994). This event was positional

in nature (Romans 6).

In contrast, sanctification referred to both the definitive act of being set

aside/apart for God, and the process of continuing a holy life (Grudem, 1994). The Bible

presents both a definitive sanctification and a progressive sanctification as normative for

the Christian experience (Colossians 3:9,10; I John 1:8). The recorded transformation

experiences, as stated by the eight participants, bore the mark of both dimensions of

sanctification. Hoekema (1987) stated:

> Positionally, each believer has entered into a new life in Christ. Experientially,
> however, there is a constant need for the believer to put off sin, and put on
> Christ. Putting to death of those sinful practices, which can only be done by the
> strength of the Spirit, involves the strenuous and lifelong activity of the believer.
> (p. 76)

Therefore, the initial decision to follow Christ, regardless of the person's age, and

the subsequent spiritual transformation experience, were dramatically connected. The

spiritual transformation experiences of the participants came after an initial decision to

follow Christ, when by faith the individual grasped the positional "oneness" with Christ's

death and resurrection and began to value the relationship with God. The process of

"reckoning (counting) yourself dead to sin but alive to Christ" (I Corinthians 1:2; 6:11;

Colossians 3:1) was foundational to sanctification. The phrase, "Those sanctified in

Christ" (I Corinthians 1:2) denoted completed action (Greek verb tense) with continuing

results. Moreover, progressive sanctification was a lifelong process that dealt with the

present reality of sin in the life of the believer (Romans 8:13; Colossians 3:3; II

Corinthians 7:1; I John 3:3; Colossians 3:9, 10, II Peter 3:18; Romans 12:2). All eight participants reflected an experience of awareness of their personal standing before God and seized the God-given opportunity to enter into a personal relationship with Him.

Various General Influences Mark Spiritual Transformation

A third conclusion drawn from this study focused on the many influential factors in the transformation experience. The local church and the individual's family of origin provided a foundation for spiritual transformation. The jargon of the church had utility and influence as each participant attempted to verbalize the subjective aspects of the experience. Terms like "salvation," "Lordship," "surrender," "repentance," "conviction," "sin," "grace," "forgiveness," "Holy Spirit," and "pride" carried specific import from the Evangelical Church tradition and facilitated the description of the spiritual transformation experience.

The disciplines of the church, as either observed or practiced before the spiritual transformation experience, gave a point of reference to the understanding of the life-changing events of this study. Neither bible study, prayer, church attendance, singing, confession of sin, nor personal testimonies were totally unfamiliar practices to the participant as he engaged God in relationship. However, the perceived authenticity of his experience moved each man to go beyond the "normal experience" of many in the church context, to discover a more intimate and meaningful connection to God. Therefore, formal worship, insincere and shallow relationships, and hypocrisy were discarded in favor of the surreptitiously real discoveries of personal encounter with God. Yet, Bob, without a church background, found a very meaningful spiritual transformation experience. This exceptional case leads the researcher to conclude that God begins to

transform the individual from his present milieu and graciously develops the inner man without prejudice.

According to the participants, the most significant influence on the experience was the Scripture. The term "God's Word", descriptive of the Bible, characterized the dynamic of God "speaking to individuals" through the Book. What was known by initial salvation experience as the Bible, became extremely valued as "God's Written and Living Word" through the spiritual transformation process. All eight men began not just Scripture reading, but serious study of the Bible as if they were "reading for their lives" or "cramming for the final exam." Even though some of the participants had been influenced by Bible reading/study prior to the spiritual transformation, afterward they were enhanced in their commitment to these disciplines associated with the Scripture. Before the experience bible reading and study were either non-existent or mediocre at best. Afterward, the Bible "came alive" with practical instruction for living. Bible studies became a regular discipline to men who "couldn't get enough of truth."

Each of them became a quick study as he fed a hunger and quenched a thirst with the Word. Thus, God's Word was at the center of the transformation experience. Christian literature and music assisted the person to grow spiritually because these mediums use the Scripture as the basis for their lyrics and content. They are an extension of bible study that points the person toward worship.

Specific Precursors Trigger Spiritual Transformation

A fourth conclusion identified specific precursors as triggers for spiritual transformation. Loder (1989) explained that dynamic spiritual growth can take place through transformation. He believed that an individual could transcend or "leap ahead"

by passing stages of faith development in "normal sequence" (p. 141). Transformation usually centered around conflicts which began questioning of old ways of thinking, openness to a search for resolution, and adopting new insightful ways of thinking which nourished the soul and yielded a deeper and more meaningful life (Loder, 1989). The conflicts described in the present research were either of an internal nature, such as anxiety produced by end of life evaluation, external stimuli such as auto accidents, or a combination of the two dimensions, such as divorce (Moody & Carroll, 1997). These conflicts were identified as precursors by all participants and were associated with the process of questing resolution of the stress or a deeper meaning and purpose for life. This process of questing and discovering resolution of life's painful issues characterized the experiences of the eight participants of this study.

Interestingly, frustration and anger over the status quo was an unanticipated but unignorable precursor in this study. Out of what they described as deep frustration over the moral and political climate in America, three of the men began to look for "something better" and "something which would help the situation." The feeling of helplessness and hopelessness fueled their need to reach out to God for help, believing that He was able to do more than man could do. This frustration, and subsequent search for help from God, reflected a theistic worldview (Grudem, 1994) in which God is "imminent" (involved in the affairs of individuals on planet earth) and demonstrated omnipotence in the ability to help man with his problems. This belief was present in all of the participants as they responded in faith to God's gracious initiative, by questing for God.

Man's limitation, as precursor for spiritual transformation, was also acknowledged in the face of terminal illness, adultery, divorce, death, and personal

emptiness. Since no human was able to satisfy the needs associated with intensely intrapersonal stress, the individual looked upward toward God and discovered ultimate help with his situation. A sense of immense gratitude was formative in the quest for God after deliverance from accidents and addictions. Wally, after acknowledging God's gracious deliverance from multiple auto accidents associated with his addiction to alcohol, began to ask himself, "What have I done for God?" This began an inner search for God and a faith commitment of service to Him.

Although the most predictable precursor for spiritual transformation may have been "End of Life Evaluation," it was not an overshadowing factor of the experience. Only five of the men mentioned it, per se, as a focal point of their stories. The implication: An examination of mortality might be no more significant as a trigger for spiritual transformation than the other precursors, which were identified. Also, there was something to be said about the inherent unwillingness to face the eventuality of death, i.e. people tended to believe that they would just keep living even though death was a looming reality. Consequently, this reality might have been buffered by psychological constructs.

In conjunction with this observation, it was noteworthy that most of the participants reflected on the reasons for God's delay until retirement-age for the phenomenon to occur. Several identified the lack of mature and adequate cognitive-emotive-social skills to deal with such an experience at an earlier age. Also, the perspective on life, as viewed from the senior adult years, was enhanced by longevity, giving a clearer and more comprehensive view. Consequently, their comments ranged from "I couldn't have handled this as a young person" to "The experience would have

lacked depth and meaning for me." Hindsight was 20/20! The retirement age offered a depth of understanding and wise decision making ability not present in youth.

Extrinsic and Intrinsic Evidences Portray Spiritual Transformation

A final conclusion of this research indicated that the evidence of spiritual transformation was displayed in personal relationships. The spouse of one participant, Tim, commented, "He has become a different man." Five of the participants said they became more sensitive to the needs of others. This acknowledged realization was demonstrated by a new life of service to others. Without the spiritual transformation, service to others was "the last thing on their minds" as they lived an egocentric life-style. It was noteworthy that each participant began to focus his attention and care on others, not because of external stimuli or ulterior motives, but from a heart-felt God-directed impulse toward loving caring relationships. This care-giving focus was made outside of the local church as the global church, the Kingdom of God, was acknowledged, and "outsiders" were seen as the object of God's care.

Forgiveness was given and received on both a vertical and horizontal dimension as pride abated, humility flourished, and sanctification became a life-style. Each man, having received absolute forgiveness from God, began the act of forgiving others as he moved from "forgiven to forgiving" (Adams, 1994). Forgiveness was dynamically bound to sin and grace and caused hypersensitivity to the "Golden Rule" of treating others the way one would want to be treated. Because forgiveness was impossible without the power of God, the participants demonstrated the depth of spiritual transformation in the acts of giving and receiving forgiveness (Worthington, 2005).

A desire for authenticity undergirded the search for meaningful worship

experiences, rebuke of hypocrisy, and a shift in priorities away from the mundane, materialistic, and hedonistic to those experiences, which had eternal value. The desire to "not be fake" permeated the life-style of these participants who identified a former life as "cultural Christianity" and aspired to experience "real life" on every level.

The spiritual transformation experience spread in concentric circles of influence to family, friends, and others. When Ted gave his testimony in a local church, three individuals said, "I am now where you were before this experience." This rapport opened the way for Ted to engage them on the deepest level and created an entre into their inner selves that would have otherwise gone unnoticed. The implications of spiritual transformation were far reaching in scope.

Personal evangelism was a natural outcome of the transformation experience for two reasons: First, someone had shared the gospel with most of these men and consequently, served as an example of what they should be giving to others. Also, personal witnessing was a natural overflow of the "good news," a deluge of information about an experience, which they could not keep to themselves. Further, personal evangelism efforts were recognized as being the summa bonem of service to others by having eternal consequences.

Throughout the interviews there seemed to be a high sense of value placed upon friendship, marriage, and other intimate relationships. The desire for dynamic connections was apparently enhanced toward the end of life, to the point of being viewed as "king size" in significance. This extreme value, when placed on relationships, foreshadowed the coming ideas of anticipated eternity, which God has placed in man's heart (I John 2:25), and set him up for richer and deeper personal connections.

Recommendations

Many of the baby boomers are coming to retirement without the spiritual

resources to finish well (McFadden, 1995). The church has sometimes assisted those

men who experience spiritual transformation to find direction and strength for the end of

their course. But, in reality, most local churches aim Senior Adult Programs at

entertainment, dining, travel, and meetings without a real focus on intrinsic spiritual

development. The rationale behind this omission seems to be grounded in the adage,

"You can't teach an old dog new tricks." However, this research indicated that many

retirement-age men were searching for God or "something better" for their lives and

would welcome assistance in finding an authentic experience of faith in God. Thus, the

following recommendations are given, first for the Evangelical Church at large and then

for the Christian counseling community.

Recommendations for the Church

Recommendations for the church would first include a continued emphasis on

personal evangelism, since several of the men in this study connected their spiritual

transformation experience to personal evangelism efforts. The implications of leading a

senior adult man to Christ go far beyond one person to a manifold influence that he might

have on family and friends. Additionally, the church must move beyond the notion that a

childhood profession of faith, church membership, or senior adulthood status

automatically serves to ensure that the person has an authentic relationship with God.

Second, the local church should meet retirement age men at the point of their

spiritual need. A cadre of persons, both professional and lay, should be trained to

identify and monitor the kind of precursors to spiritual transformation that have been

mentioned in this study and mentor/counsel those persons toward the transformation experience. For example, as a man nurses his terminally ill wife the church team could begin to pray, serve, and participate in his life to allow spiritual insight into the reality of the experience, which would supersede the work of such groups as Hospice by aiming the individual toward spiritual questing and transformation.

Third, the church should assist men who have experienced spiritual transformation to sharpen the skills associated with the transmission of their stories. With training, these men could become very effective storytellers that find ready listeners among baby boomers and easily enter into the stories of others because of the common experiences. Senior adults love to tell their stories and would find an ambiance for propagating the experience of spiritual transformation, as evidenced by the eager participation of all the men in this research.

Fourth, because four of the participants passed decades (40-50 years) between a childhood salvation decision and a later spiritual transformation, the church should give great care and attention to the spiritual development dimension for children and adolescents. Intense instruction/orientation should be given children after they make a public decision to follow Christ. Care should be taken to ensure that such a decision by a child was authentic and would be followed by exacting discipleship training.

Finally, throughout the ongoing church life there should be an inherent emphasis on authentic and real Christianity as opposed to any form of "Cultural Christianity." This might imply an overhaul of current leadership, programs, and emphasis within the church that would ensure the ongoing approach to applied theology and authentic living. Authenticity should be an overshadowing theme of the local church and an ongoing focus

for every sector of church life.

Recommendations for Christian Counseling

Given that each of the eight participants in this study had a deep appreciation and respect for the Scripture, it is suggested that these men, if/when they are confronted with mental health or counseling issues, such as depression, anxiety, grief, poor self-esteem, relationship difficulties, or marriage and family concerns, should be treated in the context of Christian Cognitive Behavior Therapy. Moreover, there are many models of Christian theory, which guide the therapeutic process (Adams, 1986; Crabb, 1986; Hart, 2001; Wilson, 2001; Backus & Chapian, 2000; Anderson, 2006; etc.). These models address the identification and removal of "lies, "cognitive distortions," "stinkin thinkin", "weeds of deception," and the subsequent replacement with the truth of God's Word. Behavior is modified, on a heart level, as the belief system is addressed/altered to assist the client to embrace a life-style of telling himself the truth and living out the implications for healthy relationships. These men, who have experienced spiritual transformation, seemed to be best served through Christian Cognitive Behavior Therapy.

However, Christian Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is not the only therapy model for effective change in participants. Psychotherapy research indicates a set of common factors that facilitate change. Although no specific theory is more effective than others, some methods are more effective for particular conditions, i.e., Christian Cognitive Behavior Therapy for men who are sensitized to biblical truth and existential experience.

A 17 item meta-analysis which compared active treatments with each other included patients who had common diagnosis of depression, anxiety disorders, and mixed neurosis. These patients were treated using behavior therapy, cognitive therapy, cognitive-behavior therapy, dynamic therapy, rational-emotive therapy, and drug therapy (Luborsky, et al., 2002). The conclusion upheld clinically-based hypothesis that the outcomes of quantitative comparisons of different active treatments with each other, because of their similar major components, were likely to show "small" and non-significant differences from each other (Rosenzweig, 1936). The application of these findings to the research at hand leads the researcher to conclude that evangelical men, who have experienced spiritual transformation in retirement-age, would be more ready and willing to enter into counseling that was couched in biblical truth, Christian worldview, and jargon of the church, even though other therapies could be effective.

Limitations

The import of these research findings was limited to middle-class Caucasian financially secure Southerners, who had a background in church. Those of other racial, social, financial, geographical, and religious identity might find difficulty with conclusions, not germane to their specific situations. These innate differences correlated with some or all of the participant characteristics within this research. For example, Afro-American men might have more spiritual resources than Caucasian men (Chatters, et al., 1992; Krause, 2002b). These limitations signaled the need for additional research

in specified areas of concern.

<center>Recommendations for Future Research</center>

This research was limited to men. It is expected that there are retirement-age women who may have similar needs that would respond in corresponding ways to their male counterparts. For example, two of the wives of men in this study (Tim and Bob) indicated similar experiences of spiritual transformation that were shared during the experiences of their husbands. The compare/contrast aspect of such a study, when applied to those dynamics of the present study, would probably yield rich insight from the female perspective. Further, the relationship of the corresponding husband and wife spiritual transformation experiences could yield additional insight into the role of the marital relationship on the phenomenon.

Since a connection to family of origin was observed in this study, a probe into the dynamics of Attachment Theory might be appropriate. Unique data could surface to yield associations for God attachment that would ground the spiritual transformation experience to early parent-child relationships. For example, would an over-bearing, distant, punitive father have prevented or delayed an adult quest for a relationship with God? Would an attentive parent have enhanced this search for God?

Since precursors of spiritual transformation were identified for all eight participants in this study, an examination of "the Chastening Hand of God and the Problem of Pain and Suffering" as precursor to spiritual transformation could produce rich data for interpreting the correlation between the "hard knocks" of life and God's formative and sovereign correction. Some problems in life could be cognitively reframed

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for a different outcome and implication for spiritual development could be significant.

The influence of level of education on spiritual transformation could produce interesting correlations associated with the ability to identify intrinsic qualities of spiritual formation. The effect of education level on outcome for spiritual questing could produce useful supplemental data for future research.

Finally, the data from the Remuda Spiritual Assessment Inventory, indicating spiritual well being and maturity in the participants, could be studied as to the correlation between T scores and the quality of the spiritual transformation experience. Would a high score, for example, even though it was within the "well-being" category indicate that the individual struggled more with the sanctification process? Would a pre-test/post-test applied to this study (interview) show a variation in scores? Since each of the participants expressed unusual appreciation for inclusion in the study, has there been a positive effect from the attention/affirmation to the participant personally? Is the interview process itself formative?

Each of the eight participants of this research expressed gratitude for inclusion in the study and indicated a heightened desire to be involved in helping other retirement-age men to experience spiritual transformation. Some of these men were developing a ministry emphasis, to be used in the context of the local church, for assisting others to understand and quest the kind of spiritual transformation which they experienced. The strength of this research lay in the ubiquitous nature of the story to connect with the listener, who shared the common characteristics of retirement-age evangelical men who have experienced spiritual transformation.

Final Summary

This study examined Spiritual Transformation in Retirement-Age Evangelical Men through the recording of the personal interviews of eight participants who met criterion for the research. The stories of their experiences were compared and contrasted to allow the researcher to formulate his story from their descriptions. Chapter One gave the background of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, definitions, the role of the researcher, limitations, significance of the study, and the theoretical and conceptual framework for the study. Chapter Two gave a review of both the present literature base and the absence of exacting literature on the research topic. Chapter Three explained the research method that was used, including the research design, data collection, and analysis procedures. Chapter Four introduced the eight participants and described the findings. Chapter Five unfolded the significance of the findings, recommendations for future study, and the researcher's conclusions. The researcher desired to complement the present literature base with this study and assist further research on Spiritual Transformation in Retirement-Age Evangelical Men.

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Appendix A

Referral Form

Spiritual Transformation in Retirement-Age Evangelical Men

1. Name of referrer (your name)_____

   Address:_____

    Phone:_____E-mail:_____

2. Name of referral:_____.

3. Relationship to the referral_____.

4. How long have you known this person?_____.

5. How well do you know him?

   a. casually

   b. well

   c. very well

6. Have you observed a dramatic spiritual change in this person?_____.

7. Please tell how you became aware of this person's change.

8. Please describe your knowledge/observation of this man before and after his spiritual transformation. (e.g., What was/is he like?)

BEFORE:

When did this change occur?_____.

AFTER:

OTHER COMMENTS;

CONSENT FORM
Spiritual Transformation in Retirement-Age Evangelical Men

A Qualitative Research Project

Johnny J. Baker

Liberty University

The Center for Counseling and Family Studies

You are invited to be in a research study of Spiritual Transformation in Retirement-Age Evangelical Men. You were selected as a possible participant because someone has personal knowledge of a spiritual transformation which has taken place in your life during retirement-age years. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Johnny J. Baker, Teaching Assistant in the Center for Counseling and Family Studies, Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia (Ph.D. student, doctoral dissertation).

Background Information

The purpose of this study is: To understand the dynamics of Spiritual Transformation for Retirement-Age Men. It will assist the participant, as well as others, to understand and transmit the values of spiritual transformation. It will also add to the literature base on Spiritual Transformation in Retirement-Age Men.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

Give written informed consent to your involvement in the research. Be interviewed, at a mutually agreed upon site, for a period of one to two hours in duration, concerning your experience of Spiritual Transformation (a follow-up phone call may be necessary). Take the Remuda Spiritual Assessment Questionnaire. Review the written transcription of the interview and give approval to its accuracy.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study

The study has risks: First, The risks of this research are no more than the participant would encounter in everyday life; Second, If the interview process were to produce an emotional upheaval that interrupted the procedures and the participant could not continue functionally, the interview would be terminated. Further, an exception to absolute confidentiality would be the disclosure by the participant of his involvement in child abuse, child neglect, elder abuse, or intent to harm self or others. This involvement would necessitate disclosure to the appropriate authority to avoid risk to anyone involved.

The benefits to participation are: A greater understanding of the experience of Spiritual Transformation and the enhanced ability to transmit the import of the experience to others.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. The voice recordings will be stored digitally and kept for a period of three years, after which time they will be erased. The written transcribed records, as well as the digital voice recordings, will be stored in the filing cabinet of the primary researcher in his office for three years, and then destroyed. The participant will be identified by a number and his identity will be known only to the primary researcher.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the Liberty University or with any cooperating institution, or with the Center for Counseling and Family Studies of Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Johnny J. Baker. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at 3008 Hill St., unit 202, Lynchburg, VA, Cell: 954-205-9276, or jjbaker3@liberty.edu. Since Johnny J. Baker is a student at Liberty University, you may also contact his Faculty Advisor, Dr. Fred Milacci, telephone: 434-592-4043, or e-mail: fmilacci@liberty.edu. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, Dr. Fernando Garzon, Chair, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1582, Lynchburg, VA 24502 or email at fgarzon@liberty.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature:_____   Date: _____

Signature of parent or guardian:_____   Date: _____

(If minors are involved)

Signature of Investigator:_____   Date: _____

Appendix C

The Remuda Spiritual Assessment Questionnaire (Version 1.0)

INSTRUCTIONS:
Questions 1-27: Below are groups of statements. For each group, circle the number next to the statement that best describes your beliefs and feelings. Circle ONLY ONE statement per group. If more than one statement applies, circle the one <u>most true</u> for you. Read all statements before choosing an answer.

Questions 28-40: Below are some statements. Please circle the number after each of the statements that indicates whether it is generally true of you, somewhat true of you, or not true of you.

Question 41: It is self explanatory.

1.   0. I believe in a personal God and have a close personal relationship with Him.
      1a. I believe in a personal God, and I used to have a close personal relationship with Him.
      1b. I believe in a personal God, but have never had a close personal relationship with him.
      2. I have begun to doubt that there is such a thing as a personal God.
      3. I no longer believe in a personal God.

2.   0. I know God is loving, and I often feel His love for me in my heart.
      1. I know God is loving, and I know He loves me, but I seldom feel like He loves me.
      2. I know God is loving, but I have a difficult time believing that He loves me.
      3. Even if Jesus is there – there is no way He could love me.

3.   0. I have been taught that Jesus loves me just as I am, and with all my heart I believe that He does love me just as I am.
      1. I have been taught that Jesus loves me as long as I act in a way that is pleasing to Him, but I have come to believe that He loves me just as I am.
      2. I was taught with words that Jesus loves me just as I am, but the underlying message I was given and have absorbed is that I have to live up to certain standards to be truly loved by Him.
      3. Even if Jesus is there – there is no way He could love me.

4.   By and large, the Christians I knew in my childhood and teenage years were:
      0. Loving people who demonstrated God's grace and love.
      1. Just like everyone else.
      2. Legalistic and judgmental.
      3. Abusive and self-righteous.

5.   0. My memories of church when I was young are wonderful memories of warmth and love.
     1. I remember going to church as a child, but I didn't particularly like it.
     2. I did not go to church when I was growing up.
     3. Growing up, I was forced to go to a legalistic church where I felt a great deal of shame.

6.   In times of pain and need:
     0. I have been helped by and felt the love of several people who openly expressed a faith in Jesus Christ.
     1. I have been helped by and felt the love of at least one person who openly expressed a faith in Jesus Christ.
     2. I have never been helped by anyone claiming to have faith in Jesus Christ.
     3. Christians seem like the least likely people to help when you are hurting.

7.   0. I can feel the presence and love of Jesus Christ in my life.
     1. I experienced the love of Jesus Christ once upon a time, but He now seems distant to me.
     2. Thus far in my life, I have never experienced the love of Jesus Christ in a personal way.
     3. Jesus is just not a part of my life, and I doubt if He ever will be.

8.   0. At least one of my parents was a loving Christian who taught me, both by words and by example, about the love and grace of Jesus Christ.
     1. At least one of my parents was a Christian and treated me well, but seldom talked about Jesus.
     2. Neither of my parents was a Christian.
     3. At least one of my parents was a Christian, and yet, I felt like I could never measure up to this parent's standards and expectations.

9.   0. I pray pretty much every day. Prayer is a very important part of my life.
     1. I pray pretty much every day, and sometimes it helps.
     2. I pray pretty much every day, but I almost never get anything out of it.
     3. I believe that prayer is just a waste of time.

10. 0. I have at least one caring/loving person in my life whom I regularly relate to on a spiritual level (for example – I have someone I pray with, or study the Bible with, or talk to about what's going on with me spiritually).
     1. I have someone to whom I sometimes talk about spiritual things.
     2. I do not have people in my life whom I regularly relate to on a spiritual level, but I'm sure it would help if I did have someone.
     3. I have no interest in talking with anyone about spiritual issues.

11. 0. I regularly attend church (or meetings with other Christians) for Bible study,

prayer, and/or worshipping God, and I usually get a great deal out of the meetings.
1. I sometimes attend church (or meetings with other Christians) for Bible study, prayer, and/or worshipping God.
2. I seldom attend church or meetings with other Christians.
3. I have no interest in attending church or any religious meeting.

12.   Churches are:
0. a place where I find comfort and fellowship.
1. okay.
2. filled with hypocrites.

13.   0. I read the Bible almost every day because I love reading about God, and because reading the Bible helps me a great deal in my day to day life.
1. Although I don't read the Bible daily, when I do I usually feel blessed.
2. I never, or almost never, read the Bible.
3. I feel like I should read the Bible and I feel ashamed and guilty when I don't.

14.   0. I love fellowshipping with other Christians.
1. I would like to fellowship with other Christians but recently I can't seem to find a place where I fit in.
2. I have always had a very difficult time relating to people who call themselves Christians.
3. I have absolutely no interest in being with Christians.

15.   0. Even though things get tough sometimes, God has been faithful and true – He has never let me down.
1. There are times when I feel like God has let me down and I get angry with Him, but I know He hasn't really let me down.
2. I can't say that God has let me down, because I have never really trusted Him for anything.
3. Right now I believe that God, if He's even there, has really let me down.

16.   I would describe myself as:
0. A born again Christian.
1a. A Christian.
1b. Curious about Jesus Christ.
2. Having once been a Christian, but now given up on being a Christian.
3. Having absolutely no interest in Jesus Christ.

17.   If Jesus Christ suddenly appeared before me I would feel:
0. ecstatic.
1. shocked.
2. ashamed.

18. I have:
    0. never been abused (physically, sexually, or emotionally) by someone claiming
        to be a Christian.
    1. been mildly abused (physically, sexually, or emotionally) by someone claiming
        to be a Christian.
    2. been severely or repeatedly abused (physically, sexually, or emotionally) by
        someone claiming to be a Christian.

19. Christians who have emotional problems are:
    0. often just as spiritually faithful as any other Christian.
    1. weaker than other Christians, but loved just as much by God.
    2. usually reaping what they have sown.

20. When people talk about the love of Jesus Christ I feel . . .
    0. joyful.
    1. nothing.
    2. shame.

21. Lately . . .
    0. I have found myself having a strong urge to grow closer to God and to spend
        more time with people who love Him.
    1. I have found little change in my spiritual interests.
    2. I have found myself wanting to move away (or stay away) from anything to
        Do with God.

22. I feel . . .
    0. spiritually strong.
    1. uncertain about my spiritual life.
    2. ashamed of who I am.

23. Which statement best describes your Christian life?
    0. Wonderful.
    1a. Good.
    1b. Just okay.
    2. Non-existent.
    3. Full of shame.

24. Listening to music which praises God . . .
    0. lifts my spirits.
    1. is boring.
    2. makes me want to run away.

25. 0. The church I attend demonstrates the grace and love of Jesus Christ.
    1. The church I attend is friendly, but people don't really get to know each
        other all that much.

2. I seldom, if ever, attend church.
3. I go to church where there is a lot of pressure to act in a certain way in order to be accepted and/or loved.

26. Spiritually . . .
   0. I really want to grow more and more like Jesus.
   1. everything is about the same as always.
   2. I feel ashamed, guilty, or unworthy.

27. When I have faced temptations,
   0. I have found that God has usually provided a way out, whether or not I have taken it.
   1. I have sometimes felt all alone and have seen no way out.
   2. I have almost always felt all alone and overwhelmed, and I do not believe that God has provided a way out.

Please circle one response after each statement below:
   0. Not true of me
   1. Somewhat true of me
   2. Very true of me

28. On an emotional level, I feel like – no matter how hard I try – I just cannot please God. *0. Not true of me, 1. Somewhat true of me, 2. Very true of me*

29. I believe I would have very few problems if I could just get right with God. *0. Not true of me, 1. Somewhat true of me, 2. Very true of me*

30. I have been told by people who are important to me that my current problems are due to my sins and/or my lack of faith. *0. Not true of me, 1. Somewhat true of me, 2. Very true of me*

31. I feel like I am a disappointment to God. *0. Not true of me, 1. Somewhat true of me, 2. Very true of me*

32. I believe I would be able to overcome all my problems if I just had more faith. *0. Not true of me, 1. Somewhat true of me, 2. Very true of me*

33. I have promised God over & over that I would stop doing some behavior which I know He is not pleased with. Yet I keep going back and doing the same thing again & again. Because of this, I just cannot believe that I am accepted in God's eyes. *0. Not true of me, 1. Somewhat true of me, 2. Very true of me*

34. I feel like God is fed up with me. *0. Not true of me, 1. Somewhat true of me,*

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2. Very true of me

35.   I know God helps everyone, but I feel so far gone that I feel like I am without hope. *0. Not true of me, 1. Somewhat true of me, 2. Very true of me*

36.   I have been so hurt in life that it is difficult for me to believe there is a loving God who cares about me. *0. Not true of me, 1. Somewhat true of me, 2. Very true of me*

37.   When I am around people who appear to be good Christians I feel ashamed of myself or jealous. *0. Not true of me, 1. Somewhat true of me, 2. Very true of me*

38.   Shame is what I feel most of the time. *0. Not true of me, 1. Somewhat true of me, 2. Very true of me*

39.   Developing my spirit is not as important as developing my body and mind. *0. Not true of me, 1. Somewhat true of me, 2. Very true of me*

40.   I do not devote, nor do I plan to devote, significant time or effort to my spiritual growth. *0. Not true of me, 1. Somewhat true of me, 2. Very true of me*

41.   Please circle the number on the line below that indicates how close to God or far away from God you have felt this past week including today.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Very close		close		far		very far

Appendix D

Psychometric Reliability and Validity of the RSAQ

Reliability

Internal Consistency

The coefficient alpha was computed for the RSAQ in each of two patient samples and the
normative sample. Respective alphas for the three samples were 0.92, 0.93, and 0.86.
These alphas are quite acceptable.

Item total correlations were also calculated, with the item itself deleted from the total. These
corrected item-total correlations for both patient samples were significant beyond the .05
level using a one-tailed test, even after a Bonferroni adjustment (alpha/41) was employed
to control for family-wise error in significance testing. This suggests an adequate degree
of internal consistency.

Test-Retest Stability

An estimate of the stability of the RSAQ over time was based on the responses of the subsample
of the normative sample consisting of 44 subjects who completed the RSAQ
approximately one week following their first completion of the test. The test-retest
correlations for the RSAQ Total Spirituality Index are: Significance (one-tailed) p less
than .001, Test-Retest correlations are RSAQ Total Spirituality Index, .94; Current
Spirituality, .94; Shame and Judgment, .93; and Past Experiences, .92.

Validity

The RSAQ was developed by two licensed doctoral-level psychologists with training and
expertise in spiritual integration into health care. Their training and experiences of the
developers and their colleagues have provided the RSAQ with respectable content,
criterion-related, construct, factorial, convergent, discriminant, and predictive validity.

RSAQ Form A (the Christian version) appears to have very satisfactory reliability. RSAQ Form
A also appears to have clear validity in both community and patient samples of
adolescents and adults.

Appendix E

Administration, Scoring and Interpretation of the RSAQ

General Considerations

Testing Conditions

The RSAQ presents few difficulties in test administration and is designed to be user-friendly. The testing environment should provide the examinee with adequate illumination for reading and be sufficiently quiet to allow for adequate concentration. The test administrator must determine beforehand whether or not a patient can read and understand the items on the RSAQ. RSAQ items should be intelligible by persons with at least a 6th grade education and reading level. The test items may be read aloud by the examiner for persons with reading or concentration difficulties.

Administration Time

The RSAQ typically takes between 10 and 15 minutes to complete. Patients with severe depression, obsessions, anxiety, and psychotic or dissociative symptoms may obviously require more time to complete any testing, including the RSAQ.

Self-Administration

The following self-administration instructions apply to part one of the RSAQ:

> Instructions: Below are groups of statements. For each group, circle the number next to the statement that **best** describes your beliefs & feelings. Circle ONLY ONE statement per group. If more than one statement applies, circle the one *most true* for you. Read all statements *before* choosing an answer.

The following self-administration instructions apply to part two of the RSAQ:

> Instructions: Below are some statements. Please circle the number to the right of the statement that indicates whether it is generally very true of you, somewhat true of you, or not true of you.

Examinees are also directed by verbiage at the beginning of the RSAQ to take either Form A or Form B of the RSAQ, depending upon which of the following statements best describes their spiritual experiences. For Form A:

IMPORTANT: FORM A is for persons who currently have or have had a personal relationship with Jesus Christ at some time in their lives. If you have never had a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, please fill out FORM B instead.

For Form B:

IMPORTANT: FORM B is for persons who have *never* had a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. If you currently have or have had a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, please fill out FORM A instead.

Oral Administration

The RSAQ can be administered orally if the examiner determines the need to do so. In such situations, the following instructions are recommended for part one of the RSAQ:

> **This is a questionnaire about spirituality. There are two versions of this questionnaire. We need to choose the questionnaire that is most likely to reflect your spiritual experiences. Do you now have, or have you ever had, a personal relationship with Jesus Christ?**

For patients who answer "yes," use Form A. For patients who answer "no," use Form B. For those who are not sure, use Form B. Give the examinee a copy of the appropriate form of the RSAQ, and say:

> **Here's a copy of the questionnaire so you can follow along as I read the questions.**

Then proceed to read the following directions:

> **On the questionnaire are groups of statements. I will read a group of statements; then I would like you to choose the one statement in each group that best describes your beliefs and feelings. If more than one statement applies, please choose the one which is *most true* for you.**

Generally, the examiner should continue to read aloud the statements in each group. Sometimes, however, the examinee will read the statements silently and will provide a response before the examiner has read the statements aloud. If the examiner determines that the examinee is alert and understands the statements that s/he is reading silently, then it is prudent to allow the examinee to proceed through the test in this manner. Nevertheless, the examiner should begin to read each group of statements aloud, and allow the examinee to offer a response to each group of statements only when the examinee feels prepared to do so.

The following instructions are recommended for part two of the RSAQ:

> **Now I will read one statement at a time. Please tell me whether the statement is generally very true of you, somewhat true of you, or not true of you.**

Memory and Response Sets

The effects of memory and response sets in the RSAQ have not been studied. However, memory and response set effects may be similar to those described for the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI; Beck, 1967, p. 206), since the structure of the RSAQ was modeled after the BDI. No evidence of memory or response set effects was found for the BDI. However, Hatzenbuehler, Parpal, and Mathews (1983) have reported that repeated administrations yield lower total scores on subsequent administrations. The fixed-ordered presentation of statements such as that used in the RSAQ has also been questioned by Dahlstrom, Brooks, and Peterson (1990), who

recommended that the items within each group be randomized in order to prevent either the first or last statements in each group from being overly endorsed. However, such randomization would likely present problems for examinees, particularly for psychiatric patients, who may have difficulty in following a jumbled order of statements.

Some patients with psychiatric illnesses, such as severe depression or features of borderline personality disorder, may show dichotomous thinking in which everything is categorized as extremely positive or extremely negative. If a patient gives the same rating or nearly the same rating to all RSAQ items, he or she should be told that people seldom experience every symptom with the same degree of severity and that perhaps he or she might want to reconsider some answers.

Scoring

The raw score for the RSAQ Total Spirituality Index is computed by summing the subject's answers for all 41 questions. Likewise, the raw scores for each of the three factors are obtained by multiplying the appropriate factor weights found in Table 9 by the subject's answer to each of the 41 questions and then summing the products for each factor. Once these four raw scores are computed, they are converted into T-scores according to the formula given below. Alternately and more simply, the subject may complete the RSAQ on the computer, or the subject's answers may be entered into the computer using the RSAQ software. The computer will then score the RSAQ and generate a report with interpretive information. In either manual or automated scoring, any test where more than 10 items are left blank must be considered invalid and the score cannot be interpreted.

Normative Data

Norms for the RSAQ Total Spirituality Index and three factors are based on the mean and standard deviation of these four scales within the normative sample of 208 subjects. Table 10 presents these means and standard deviations. Using t-tests, no score differences were found for men and women in the normative sample. Therefore, scores were appropriately combined.

Table 10. RSAQ Means and SDs in the Normative Sample

RSAQ Scale	Mean	Standard Deviation
Total Spirituality Index	13.42	8.86
Current Spirituality	0.44	0.37
Shame & Judgment	0.27	0.37
Past Experiences	0.73	0.70

Because of their wide use and intuitive interpretation, T-scores were chosen to represent the RSAQ Total Spirituality Index and three factors. Using the means and standard deviations above along with the raw RSAQ total and factor scores for any individual patient, T-scores can be calculated as follows:

T = 50 + 10 ((PATIENT SCORE – SCALE MEAN) / SD)

Interpretation of the RSAQ

Interpreting T-Scores

T-scores for the RSAQ Total Spirituality Index and the three factors may be interpreted according to the guidance provided in Tables 11 and 12.

Table 11. Basic Interpretation of RSAQ T-Scores

Spiritual Condition	Statistical Definition	T-Score Range
Spiritual Well-Being	0 thru 1SD above mean	0 – 59
Mild Spiritual Distress	>1SD above mean thru 2SD above mean	60 – 69
Moderate Spiritual Distress	>2SD above mean thru 3SD above mean	70 – 79
Severe Spiritual Distress	>3SD above mean thru 4SD above mean	80 – 89
Extreme Spiritual Distress	>4SD above mean	90 and above

Specifically, T-scores for the RSAQ Total Spirituality Index and three factors may be interpreted as follows:

Table 12. Narrative Interpretation of RSAQ T-Scores

Scale	Interpretation
Total Spirituality Index	Scores below 59 indicate overall spiritual well-being, including positive spiritual attitudes, beliefs, and experiences. Scores 60 and above indicate overall spiritual distress, including negative spiritual attitudes, beliefs, and experiences. The level of spiritual distress may be mild to extreme, according to Table 11.
Current Spirituality	Scores below 59 generally indicate current spiritual well-being, typically including intimacy with God and supportive spiritual relationships, meaningful spiritual practices, faith as a source of strength, a clear spiritual identity, the experience of spiritual joy, and a desire to continually grow spiritually. Scores 60 and above indicate current spiritual distress, typically including distance from and disappointment with God, unsupportive spiritual relationships, meaningless or absent spiritual practices, a lack of spiritual joy, and little interest in growing spiritually. The level of current spiritual distress may be mild to extreme, according to Table 11.
Shame & Judgment	Scores below 59 typically indicate beliefs and experiences of an accepting, generously forgiving, and unconditionally loving God, as well as accepting and supportive relationships with other people. Scores 60 and above typically indicate beliefs and experiences of a judgmental and condemning God who does not easily forgive human frailty or weakness but expects perfect works before offering love, as well as stringent expectations and judgments from other people. The level of experienced shame and judgment may be mild to extreme, according to Table 11.
Past Experiences	Scores below 59 typically indicate childhood experiences of warmth, love, and grace by Christians in one's family and church, and, as a result, a present interest in continuing to explore one's spirituality. Scores 60 and above typically indicate childhood experiences of abuse and self-righteousness by Christians in one's family and church, and, as a result, little present interest in exploring one's spirituality. The level of spiritual abuse and self-righteousness experienced may be mild to extreme, according to Table 11.

Interpreting Individual Question Responses

In addition to using T-scores to interpret the RSAQ Total Spiritual Index and the factors of Current Spirituality, Shame & Judgment, and Past Experiences, the RSAQ was also designed to be used clinically by considering subject responses to each individual question. A question-by-question review of the RSAQ will reveal which specific areas of spirituality subjects may be struggling with. Each question was designed so that it could become a ready part of clinical or pastoral discussion with subjects, allowing troubling beliefs and perceptions to be processed and modified and alternatives to these troubling experiences to be proposed and adopted.

Appendix F

Permission to Use Published Material

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hope   healing   life
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Name: ___Johnny J. Baker_____

Address: _1971 University Blvd._____

               _Lynchburg, VA 24502_____

Date: 04-20-11_____

I am preparing a work to be published for: Liberty University

_____

I ask your permission to include in the above document this material
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Questionnaire (Version 1.0) Professional Manual

Please indicate below whether this material may be used. It will include
appropriate credit line.

Johnny J. Baker
_____
Signature of Requestor

....

(YES) NO   The PERMISSION requested above is hereby granted, royalty
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YES   NO   We want the CREDIT LINE to be in a special form and have so

                    indicated in an enclosure to this letter, or at the bottom of this

                    letter.

By: *Valentina Cuda Risk/PI Mgr*   Date: 4/25/11
      Remuda Ranch
      Risk Management
      928.668.4285

R E M U D A
Hope · Healing · Life Ranch
One East Apache Street, Wickenburg, AZ 85390

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Appendix G

Interview Guide

Initial e-mail Contact

After approval of the proposal by the Institutional Review Board of Liberty University, the researcher will initiate a contact by e-mail with each of the participants who have been identified as prospective subjects for the research at hand. The researcher would use the following format: "Dear sir: My name is Johnny Baker. I am a student at Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA, and a friend of _____ (the referring person). He told me the most remarkable story of your life and how you experienced God's transforming power a short time ago. I am writing a PhD dissertation at Liberty University on 'spiritual transformation in retirement-age evangelical men'. It seems that you have had this same type of experience. Would you allow me to share your experience through an interview in your home or at your choice of a nearby location, at your convenience? I would like to visit with you for one to two hours and record our conversation, and then transcribe it for consideration in my dissertation. I will not use your name or identify you in any specific manner. Since this is a research project, I would like to ask you to sign a consent form detailing exactly what will be expected of you, the nature of my research, and the limitation of our involvement. I will bring this form with me when I visit with you for the interview. Since I have known a few men who, like you, have been touched by God in their retirement years, I can anticipate that your story would be very helpful in assisting other men your age to discover spiritual

transformation. I thank you for the cooperation and I will be in touch soon about a date this fall, when we can sit down and talk face to face. Feel free to contact me by phone if you have questions. My cell is: 954-205-9276. My email address is: jjbaker3@liberty.edu I will be reiterating these instructions/procedures to you very soon. I would like to have your telephone number in order to confirm the details of our encounter. Please prayerfully consider your involvement in my project. May God bless you richly."

Interview Questions

The interview questions will be open ended and allow the participant to fully express his personal experience. These questions will reflect the central research question as well as the secondary questions, reduced to specific analysis. Initial dialogue with the participant may include questions to build rapport. E.g. How long have you lived here? Is this a picture of your children? What church do you attend? etc. Then the lead in question will introduce the subject of the transformation experience: Please describe what a typical day is like for you. These 11 questions will be used:

1.) Since you have had a highly memorable spiritual experience, either during a brief time (like minutes/hours) or over a longer period of time (like months), when you found yourself dramatically and permanently changed, please describe your experience.

2.) Please contrast specific attributes of your life before the dramatic experience to your life now.

3.) What significant factors (e.g. dramatic/stressful events) contributed to the transformation experience?

4.) What has been the most important impact of this experience on your life?

5.) Describe the ripple effect of this experience to your family, church, employment, and retirement?

6.) How has your age been a factor in this experience?

7.) Were you actively seeking God when this happened? If so, describe the manner in which you were questing. Were you searching for something else other than God?

8.) How has your evangelical background been a factor in this transformation?

9.) Describe confirmations from others about your change.

10.) Describe your perspective about the future.

11.) Is there anything further that you would like to say?

A follow-up interview, possibly by phone, will be conducted, if necessary, for clarification of the initial interview or collection of additional data.

Appendix H

Spiritual Decision vs. Spiritual Transformation

	"Salvation" or Prior decision	*Spiritual Transformation began*	*current age*
Lonnie	10	59	61
Tim	10	60	63
Jim	12	67	70
Ted	10	67	70
Wally	60	64	72
Jonathan	53	55	62
Kane	50	52	54
Bob	56	58	60

Appendix I

Remuda Spiritual Assessment Questionnaire

T Scores

T = 50 + 10 (PATIENT SCORE – SCALE MEAN) / SD)

	Raw score	*T Score*
Lonnie	1	35.98
Tim	1	35.98
Jim	2	37.11
Ted	16	52.90
Wally	3	38.23
Jonathan	8	43.88
Kane	5	40.49
Bob	10	46.13

Appendix J

Outline of Themes

Theme One: Spiritual Transformation as a Process and Fiat Experience

Theme Two: Recognition of God's Initiative Role in Spiritual Transformation

Theme Three: General Influences on Spiritual Transformation

> Personal Influences (Friends, Spouse, Family of Origin, Personal Evangelism)

> Ecclesiastical Influences (Attending Church, Scripture, Christian Media,

>> Prayer)

Theme Four: Specific Precursors to Spiritual Transformation

> Social Dynamics: Frustration and Anger Over the status Quo

> Existential Dynamics (Personal Emptiness, Personal Losses,

>> Spiritual Conviction, End of Life Evaluation)

Theme Five: Evidences of Spiritual Transformation

> Spiritual Disciplines (Service to Others, Study of the Bible, Forgiveness,

>> Humility, Enhanced Prayer Life)

> Worldview Perspective: Awareness of the Kingdom

> Intrinsic Values (Sensitivity to Individuals, Preference for Informal Heartfelt

>> Worship, Shift in Priorities, Reduction/Loss of Worry and Fear, Trust

> in God for the Future, Hatred for Sin, Embrace of Authenticity)