LIBERTY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

Christian Education: Eight Essential Elements to Foster

Spiritual Formation and Christlikeness

A Thesis Project Submitted to

The Faculty of Liberty University School of Divinity

In Candidacy for the Degree of

Doctor of Ministry

by

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March 2020

Liberty University School of Divinity

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Thesis Project Topic

THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT

Alice T. O'Neal

Liberty University School of Divinity, 2020

Title: Christian Education: Eight Essential Elements to Foster Spiritual Formation and

Christlikeness

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Effective Christian education in the church setting should be a process that stimulates growth. The problem is that without the provision and engagement in the essential elements of Christian education, believers can attend church for an entire life span and never grow into Christlike maturity. This research project provides a paradigm to foster the demonstration of Christlikeness by the individual maturation toward spiritual formation and the operationalizing of the community of believers as a life-giving organism. The research approach includes the examination of recognized models of Christian education, spiritual formation, and Christian community development. Additionally, pastors of fifteen churches in eastern North Carolina of each congregational size–mega, large, medium, and small–are surveyed regarding the model of Christian education used.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

The following chapters summarize and evaluate the research conducted and provide a detailed application for ministry. Effective Christian education in the church setting should be a process that stimulates growth. The problem is that believers can attend church for an entire life span and never grow into Christlike maturity.[1] This research project provides a paradigm to foster the demonstration of Christlikeness by individual maturation toward spiritual formation and the operationalization of the community of believers as a life-giving organism. Key terms used in the project include Christian education, Christlikeness, disciple, discipleship, spiritual formation, and Christian community. The context of Christian education relative to this project is provided as a component of the church ministry often referred to interchangeably as a Christian education ministry. Notably, the scope of this project does not examine Christian education provided in a school context, where the focus of education is on the accomplishment of academic standardized goals, outcomes, and objectives. Thus, this project addresses Christian education that involves the impartation of foundational Christian doctrine and principles.

The term Christlikeness may be used synonymously in reference to Christian maturity. Christlikeness encompasses imitating and exhibiting behavioral and verbal actions/responses that are consistent with what Jesus would do if He were (you) the individual in that situation. Disciple and discipleship in this project refer to an individual (disciple) who has made a decision to be a follower of Jesus Christ and is engaged in an ongoing process (discipleship) to learn how to be His follower. This project defines spiritual formation as the process of spiritual change that the

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[1] Alan Andrews, ed., *The Kingdom Life: A Practical Theology of Discipleship and Spiritual Formation* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2010), 8.

follower of Jesus Christ undergoes. This concept of spiritual formation is highly associated with

the term transformation and is often used interchangeably. Both terms denote the process of the

follower becoming increasingly more like the teacher, Jesus Christ.[2] Last, the Christian

community is defined as a group of persons of like faith and purpose with whom the follower is

interpersonally connected.

Statement of Limitations

A topic related to the aim of this project that is not relative to this work is the quality of

the context in which the ministry of the delivery of biblical/Christian information occurs. Thus,

the level of nurturing qualities of the community is relevant to the quality of the followers'

discipleship experience. The environment of the community is comparable to a family system.

Notably, a high correlation has been observed between families in which parental leadership is

dysfunctional and children who demonstrate aberrant behavior patterns in the present and/or

future. Another factor that limits effective Christian education is when the maintenance of the

program becomes the mission, focus, and priority rather than the needs of the individuals being

served.[3] The individual's health status is a variable that may pose limitations to an individual's

level of engagement in the education and formation process designed to foster change toward

Christlikeness. Consequently, when an individual has unaddressed physical, mental, and

emotional health needs, this may become an impediment to receiving the full benefits of his/her

Christian education experience.

Theoretical Basis

The topic of this project is based on a literature review that indicates that there is a broad

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[2] Ronald T. Habermas, *Introduction to Christian Education and Formation: A Lifelong Plan for Christ-Centered Restoration* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 11.

[3] "Programs/Strategies in Christian Education Ministry," Christian Education Ministry Resources & Training, accessed December 6, 2015, http://mintools.com/christian-education-6.htm.

relationship of theoretical foundation with contributions from theological, historical, and philosophical perspectives. Additionally, relationship factors related to the project's topic were observed in the social sciences, for example, sociology, anthropology, psychology, and education.[4] However, the relevant information integrated from these secular fields of study is evaluated by biblical principles and teachings for congruence with the Christian faith. Thus, from a theological perspective, a biblical foundation should be the premise for all theories and practices employed in the effort of Christian education.

Notably, the historical foundations of Christian education and spiritual formation emanate from the Old Testament Scripture with the early history of the Israelites. The family was the primary institution of society and therefore the context in which education and spiritual training transpired. An overview of the Scriptures demonstrates the biblical foundational support and advocacy for spiritual education and formation throughout the Bible. These witnesses are observed in biblical historical writings, wisdom literature, prophetic literature, and New Testament writings. Regarding the theological foundations relevant to the topic of this project, the premise is that Christian aspects guide the thought and practice. The nature of the theological aspects is reflected in these four distinctive theological elements: "biblical authority, the necessity of conversion, the redemptive work of Christ, and personal piety."[5]

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[4] Michael J. Anthony, ed., *Introducing Christian Education: Foundations for the Twenty-first Century* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 14.

[5] Robert W. Pazmino, *Foundational Issues in Christian Education: An Introduction in Evangelical Perspective*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 57–58.

Statement of the Methodology

The research approach includes the examination of recognized models of Christian education, spiritual formation, and Christian community development. Thus, the works of esteemed authors in these fields are examined. The study evaluates various approaches and frameworks in the literature on the related topics of Christian education, spiritual formation, and Christian community development. Based on the empirical data examined, the project presents supporting evidence for effective measures of elements of Christian education. The project creates an opportunity to collect research findings by developing and employing a survey instrument to examine the model or approach to Christian education used by select congregations/Christian communities. The pastors of fifteen churches in eastern North Carolina of various sizes–mega, large, moderate, and small–are the participants selected for the survey.

Chapters 2–4 of this thesis summarize the research conducted and delineate the application for ministry: chapter 2 discusses the research process and the subsequent findings; chapter 3 discusses the findings of the research relevant to the premise of the project; and chapter 4, the final chapter, addresses the application of the findings, provides a summary of the major arguments made, explicates the conclusive statement regarding the solution to the problem addressed, and discusses the opportunities for further development of this project.

Literature Review

Introduction to Christian Education and Formation: A Lifelong Plan for Christ-Centered Restoration, by Dr. Ronald T. Habermas, describes the concepts of Christian education and spiritual formation in regard to an approach that blends the two traditions. Based on the relevance of this project's topic, he argues that the synthesis of the chief factors of the Christian education tradition with godly spiritual formation precepts highlights two qualities: humility and

teachability. Habermas also argues that these two qualities are essential elements for Christian maturation and kingdom pursuits. The text affirms that God's ultimate plan includes full restoration for every part of Creation, for all Christians, and for each individual Christian. The text argues that education formation is a lifelong process. The text contains discussions on anthropological and theological findings and social, cognitive, and spiritual developmental theories and is relevant to the theoretical basis of this project topic. Last, the text regarding emulating Jesus in His roles as a master teacher, faithful learner, son of man, great physician, and submissive servant may be relevant to the essential elements of spiritual growth and formation.

Alan Andrews is the general editor of *The Kingdom Life: A Practical Theology of Discipleship and Spiritual Formation*. This text is relevant to this project's topic because it indicates that spiritual formation is the product of the interaction of three essential factors: sound personal growth, the healthy formation of a community, and participation in a strong mission. The text further establishes that an understanding of the simplicity and complexities of the gospel and kingdom principles is foundational to these essential factors of spiritual formation. Another relevant factor of this text is its discussion of how the church community is developing the identity of a spiritual-formation church that affirms that spiritual formation is a process and not a particular technique or program. Conclusively, this text postulates guiding principles that can be adopted by a range of church communities—each with their distinctive culture and character.

Paul Pettit is the editor of *Foundations of Spiritual Formation: A Community Approach to Becoming Like Christ*. This text collaborates the argument that spiritual formation is not defined as one approach to verbal and behavioral actions and is neither the spiritual formation of the work nor associated with a specific denomination. The text discusses that the element of change is inherent and foundational to the process of spiritual formation. Additionally, a related element to

this project's topic that the text explicates is that change in the believer transpires in the context of the community wherein the individual has interpersonal connections and is usually not accomplished in a solitary context. The text concurs with the concept of Christlikeness being the result of change that initially occurs inwardly and is demonstrated by the individual responding increasingly more like Christ. Overall, the text has relevance in its quality as a primer regarding the concept of spiritual formation. In conclusion, Petit highlights four concepts that he and the team of writers deem as significant elements related to Christian growth.

Israel Galindo wrote the article "Methods of Christian Education toward Christian Spiritual Formation." Relevance to this research topic is initially established in the main idea of the article, that is, sustained spiritual development is contingent upon believers being educated in accordance with Christian principles. Galindo encourages the reformation of non-transformational practices that have been common in the context of church Christian education settings. Thus, defining and screening for what Galindo describes as "non-transformational practices" was a significant factor of interest while conducting the research for this project. [6] He accentuates that spiritual formation is a holistic matter by discussing that it should encompass the application of modern psychologies, educational research, appropriate theological frameworks, and congruent methodologies.[7] This argument is noteworthy and relevant to this researcher's evaluation of the paradigm for Christian education recommended by this project.

The relevance of the article by Paul Bramer, "Introduction to the Special Focus: Spiritual Formation and Christian Education," is that it prompts this researcher to consider the complementary factors of spiritual formation and Christian education. Bramer's argument entails the perception that Christian education and spiritual formation often flow as parallel and

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[6] Israel Galindo, "Methods of Christian Education toward Christian Spiritual Formation," *Review & Expositor* 98, no. 3 (2001): 411, accessed October 7, 2015, ATLASerials, Religion Collection, EBSCOhost.
[7] Ibid.

overlapping streams.[8] This perception challenges this researcher to examine the defining factors of each of these concepts and to determine their relevance to the final recommendations of this project. The author affirms a shift in perspective subsequent to the Reformation in Protestantism, regarding accountability for spiritual reformation development.[9] This perspective holds that all Christians, including laity and ministerial Christians, are responsible for their pursuit of godliness. Thus, this perspective is relevant to the evaluation of the outcome solution's applicability to all Christians in this research.

"Principles of Christian Education" is an article in a monograph series from Calvin College, with Dr. Robert Keeley as the contact person. This work focuses on topics related to the school setting, which is an agent engaged in providing Christian education. This article is relevant to this project's topic because of the expediency of having the cognizance of challenges and/or limitations that confront the other agents that are providers of Christian education, the school, and home. Awareness of the issues posed in the other agencies allows the researcher to evaluate the level of impact that may be imposed on the agent of the church in its role of Christian education toward the outcome of spiritual formation and Christlikeness. For example, this article discusses the element of growing secularism, which is defined as "the absence of biblical truth as a normative for thinking and acting" as being a weakness of the school Christian education agency.[10] Consequently, the growing prevalence of secularism in daily life is a threat to and challenge for the church and merits being addressed in the process of spiritual formation.

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[8] Paul Bramer, "Guest Editorial Introduction to the Special Focus: Spiritual Formation and Christian Education," *Christian Education Journal* 7, no. 2 (Fall, 2010): 337, accessed October 7, 2015, http://ezproxy.liberty.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/757072876?accountid=12085.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Robert Keeley, "Principles of Christian Education," Calvin College Education Department, Calvin College Monograph Series, accessed August 24, 2015, http://www.calvin.edu/academic/education/news/publications/monoweb/cejpri.htm.

The dissertation by Fred H. Smith, "Measuring Quality Church Growth," is relevant to this project because he develops an instrument for measuring the level of spiritual quality in a church. Smith's hypothesis argues that measuring spiritual quality is a valid endeavor that can be performed effectively. The project offers insights into problems encountered when focusing on quality versus quantity of church growth. This discussion provides guidance for this researcher in regard to areas that may need consideration in the development of the instruments for this project. Another area of caution gleaned from Smith is the challenge of screening for subjectivity in the development and use of the research instruments for this project. Smith uses the analogy that a church that fails the spiritual growth examination fails in performance and is potentially dangerous to the persons that it serves. This analogy is relevant to this project's topic in regard to individuals who fail to exhibit spiritual maturity and Christlikeness. The review of the elements in the instrument developed by Smith may be used by this researcher to evaluate any correlations with the paradigm developed by this researcher's project.

The Christian Education Ministry Resources and Training website is relevant to this project primarily because of its data on the limitations and challenges that may be encountered in the pursuit of providing Christian education ministry. The information provided has been a stimulus for ideas and assisted this researcher in being proactive in addressing these topics, as indicated in the project's development.

Living into the Life of Jesus: The Formation of Christian Character, by Klaus Issler, explicates that the process of spiritual formation entails changing the flow of the inner heart.[11] Thus, the text establishes that spiritual formation is not brought to fruition by adhering to a defined set of rules of conduct. This text offers more than defining factors and elements regarding

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[11] Klaus Issler, *Living into the Life of Jesus: The Formation of Christian Character* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 12.

spiritual formation. Issler highlights the necessity of having an intense relationship with Jesus and developing a reliance on divine resources to foster transformation in the believer's character. Therefore, regarding relevance to this project's topic, Issler additionally discusses that Jesus engaged in a process of formation from childhood to later adulthood. The text describes that it was through a process that Jesus learned obedience. Thus, Issler's text supports the expectation that Cristian education should foster spiritual growth toward maturity and the demonstration of Christlikeness. Jesus' humanity allowed Him to be a perfect example for humankind of walking in obedience based on the nature of his inner self and His interaction with divine resources.

Bill Donahue, author of *The Irresistible Community: An Invitation to Life Together*, offers information that establishes community as a primary factor in the process of spiritual growth toward Christlikeness. Using the setting of the last supper, Donahue demonstrates elements of the significance of community by employing the symbols of the table, towel, and truth, to reinforce how the evolution of oneness and connectively transpires in a community. This text is relevant to this project's topic in regard to its celebration of community as a necessary host in which significant life change occurs. Donahue highlights the teaching and modeling of Jesus in relationships, which is His plan and will for the body of Christ to function, grow, and develop the fruit of righteousness as a community that experiences and demonstrates the life of Christ.

Foundational Issues in Christian Education: An Introduction in Evangelical Perspective, by Robert W. Pazmino, is a relevant source because this text contains a comprehensive review of theoretical data that pertains to the research topic. The target audience for this text is primarily Christian educators who are evangelical in theological orientation. The text encourages and provides the tools for the Christian educator to be oriented and knowledgeable in the biblical insights foundational for theory and practice. Pazmino argues that Christians must integrate

insights from other disciplines while continually esteeming the enduring authority of the Scriptures. Thus, the text offers an examination of the disciplines that contribute to developing an integrated, holistic approach to Christian education. Notably, the text offers value because it provides data that demonstrate the relationship between the research topic and other disciplines.

Jack L. Seymour and Donald E. Miller, editors of *Theological Approaches to Christian Education*, provide a resource that assists providers of education in a Christian education context, which the authors also reference as religious education. The text presents discussions on the embracement of agendas and social outcomes fundamental to the education community and relevant to the call of theology. The text argues that the dialogue of education and society is resolved by the community's response and experience with transcendence.[12] The text supports the significance of community in their description of the range of response to transcendence, the Holy One. These responses involve how individuals are changed, what they are called to do and be, and how they live together as children of God, and together, how they shape meanings and structure.[13] This text adds value to this researcher's literature review in that it raises additional topics to be considered regarding the theological approaches to Christian education.

Introducing Christian Education Foundations for the Twenty- first Century, with Michael J. Anthony as the general editor, focuses on addressing the challenge posed by humanistic perspectives to the process of educating believers according to the unadulterated truth of God's Word, the Bible. In this text, the authors focus on the Christian education process and that everyone is complete in Christ (Col. 1:28) and not on minor details such as the methodology of delivery.[14] This text is relevant to the research topic and provides additional data that supplies a

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[12] Jack L. Seymour and Donald E. Miller, eds., *Theological Approaches to Christian Education* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 9.

[13] Ibid., 9.

[14] Anthony, *Introducing Christian Education*, 14.

broad foundation of theological, historical, philosophical bases for Christian education ministry.

Karen B. Tye wrote *Basics of Christian Education*. Tye's text is well described by its title in that it discusses basic factors that pertain to the process of Christian education. The text discusses the concept of Christian education; the purpose of education; the context that addresses what knowledge is necessary; who are the participants, and which processes and methods should be applied to educate effectively. Additionally, the text presents principles for the intentional assessment and evaluation of the performance level of the ministry. Last, an overview of the hindrances that pose challenges to the process of Christian education is addressed. This text contributes to the topic of research in this thesis as a source that provides baseline data for basic elements of the project. The defining factors in this text facilitated the development of the research tool and the communication with the participants regarding the project.

Christian Education in the Small Church, by Donald L. Griggs and Judy McKay Walther, provides data that gives support and guidance to address the needs of individuals who lead Christian education ministry in small churches. The text offers sound theory, effective methods, and practical ideas and suggestions designed for the small church. The data from this text assisted this researcher in evaluating unique factors of small churches that are pertinent to the paradigm proposed by this project.

Jeffrey P. Greenman and George Kalantzis are the editors of *Life in the Spirit: Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective*. This text addresses the theological foundational perspective of the concept of spiritual formation. The text recognizes that the evangelical Protestant community has invested in and produced extensive work on spiritual disciplines but has not often examined what constitutes spiritual formation development. Thus, this text addresses the fundamental biblical questions regarding the purpose of spiritual formation, why

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individuals should pursue it, where spiritual formation fits in doctrinal terms, and what

theological persuasions must be influential individually and corporately to facilitate spiritual

formation.[15] This text contributes data on theological perspectives of the concept of spiritual

formation, which—according to this researcher's review of literature—has not been addressed.

Thus, this text provides more relevant theoretical data related to this project's topic.

Scripture Review

Colossians 1:28 establishes that the basic, overarching goal of Christian education is that

every person experiences the transformational power of the gospel while becoming fully mature

in Christ. The intent of Paul's ministry is that the proclaimed gospel would be heard not solely by

principle on an intellectual level but on a level that would also stimulate effective work in the

human spirit, heart, and mind toward the outcome of becoming Christlike.[16]

Galatians 4:19 affirms that the intended outcome is for the believers to be like Christ by

means of the working of the gospel. Paul uses an analogy that compares a mother's pains of

laboring until the child is born to his pains of travailing in his ministering the gospel with deep

desire and endurance until Christ is formed in the believers or "until they take the shape of

Christ."[17] This Scripture also addresses spiritual formation.

Galatians 2:19-20 clearly explicates that living a "cruciform" life is the outcome of being

conformed to the likeness of Christ, the one who was crucified.[18] This verse provides witness to

the findings regarding the nature of spiritual formation being a process that occurs from the inside

out and not by adherence to external rules of conduct.

Galatians 5:16-26 is relevant to the thesis topic in that it describes the characteristics of the

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[15] Jeffrey P. Greenman and George Kalantzis, eds., *Life in the Spirit: Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 11.

[16] Ibid., 9.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

believer who is living a crucified life and walking in the spirit. This passage provides a measurement or criteria for determining if the individual and the community of believers are corporately demonstrating the fruit of righteousness, an indicator of spiritual maturity.

The research findings and the postulates of the project indicate that developmental progressive change is expected for the followers of Christ and is called spiritual formation. 2 Corinthians 3:18 supports this concept in that Paul's admonishment in the Scripture is, in essence, a description of the formation process. The Scripture speaks of the follower being transformed or changed into the image of Christ successively.

The Scripture text in Romans 8:29 provides the enlightenment that it is God's will for the followers of Christ to become like Him. The term conform in this verse is indicative of the spiritual formation process toward the goal of Christlikeness, which is the basic topic of this research project. Thus, the confirmation from the Word of God that the project subject is in agreement with what God desires and wills for His sons and daughters is the highest affirmation above all other sources.

Notably, the Scripture Romans 12:2 is stated in the imperative. The verse begins with instructions, and then, a what-to-do component instructs the follower to be transformed by renewing his/her mind. Thus, this verse supports the project because it delivers a Scripture-based command to engage in change (transformation) through "Christian education," which is essentially a process of renewing the mind.

Colossians 1:9-10 is relevant to this project's topic in that it provides instructions consistent with the findings in the literature on the plans, progression of activities, and behaviors that foster and are indicative of spiritual maturation. For example, this text instructs the follower to be filled with the knowledge of His will, walk as if worthy of the Lord, be fruitful in every

good work, and increase their knowledge of God.

John 15:1-8 demonstrates the necessity of a personal, intimate relationship with the Lord to experience spiritual health and growth. Thus, this Scripture provides a foundation for this project because it highlights the essential element of having connections with the Lord and the Christian community.

1 Corinthians 3:7 supports the project by affirming that it is the working of the Spirit who does an inward operation in the follower that stimulates change and spiritual growth. Observantly, this Scripture confirms a process that is a component of formation. However, the text specifically declares that only God can make things grow or multiply.

Hebrews 6:1 instructs believers to move beyond the elementary teachings on Christ, to progress toward maturity. Thus, this project uses the instructions of this text as a foundational witness to the will of God and an expectation for believers to experience continual growth to obtain Christlike maturity.

I Peter 2:2 provides instructions for the new believer to desire and to crave the sincere milk of the word, which is the substance that causes the individual to grow in his/her salvation and spiritual life. The text makes an analogy with a newborn baby who desires milk, which is the substance that nourishes a baby's physical life and natural growth. This Scripture provides a foundation for the primary premise of the project: Effective Christian education is essential to spiritual growth.

The Old Testament provides witness to the necessity of teaching the Word to the people of God and the upcoming generations. Thus, the project finds an endorsement of Christian education practices described in Deuteronomy 6:1-2 and 4-9. The Scripture delineates the desired outcome,

which includes Christlike behaviors such as to love, fear, obey, and serve God.[19]

Psalm 78:1-8 is another Old Testament witness to the concept of Christian education and delineates an expectation that it be provided in a successive generational context; however, this requires intergenerational relationships that are viable and nurturing.[20] Thus, this Scripture supports the concepts in the project regarding the continual provision of Christian education and the Christian community.

The Scripture passage in Nehemiah 8:1-18 demonstrates that when the Word of God is clearly proclaimed and expounded, people can individually and corporately respond to the biblical teachings and follow Jesus' example of pleasing God in all things. This passage provides reinforcement for each of the main concepts in the project, including Christian education, spiritual formation, Christlikeness, and the Christian community.

Observantly, in chapter 1, the introduction, the researcher stated the problem and the accomplishments of the project and identified limitations related to the topic but deemed irrelevant. Next, a broad theoretical foundation was determined, and based on that and the literature review, the researcher determined that the topic of this project is of current relevance and is an original contribution to the field of ministry. Concisely, the researcher delineated the Old Testament and New Testament Scripture verses and passages that frame the biblical context and corroborate the thesis topic. Progressively, chapter 2 describes the applied research approach; the sample and its scope; and the survey content, findings, and indicators.

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[19] Pazmino, *Foundational Issues in Christian Education*, 21.
[20] Ibid., 29–30.

Chapter 2: Pastoral Investigation

Description of the Applied Research Approach

The project's applied research approach was designed to investigate the associated ramifications of the premise that effective Christian education in a church setting should be a process that stimulates growth. Thus, the objective of the project was to investigate the premise of the declaration that without the provision and volitional engagement in the essential elements, believers could attend church for an entire life span and never grow into Christlike maturity.

Therefore, the project's applied research was designed to obtain a delineation of the Christian education models and/or activities presently used by churches to foster spiritual formation and Christlikeness. The research approach also obtained information on the participants' perceived effectiveness of their employed Christian education practices toward effecting the outcome of spiritual maturity and Christlikeness. The project's research design investigated the working definition held by the research participants of the key terms used in this project. As aforementioned, the key terms used in the project include Christian education, Christlikeness, disciple, discipleship, spiritual formation, and Christian community. A working knowledge of the concepts as defined by these key terms is essential to effective ministry that stimulates spiritual growth in a church setting.

The project's applied research approach involved conducting one-to-one interview sessions with fifteen pastors. Each participant's answers were recorded by audiotaping, and the researcher wrote notes on the responses while the participants were speaking. The participants recorded responses were transcribed and interpreted by the researcher.

Description and Scope of the Study Sample

The study participants were pastors who have served in a pastoral role in their present church for at least five years. The participants lead churches in eastern North Carolina of each congregational size: mega, large, medium, and small. The selection of the participants was diverse in gender, age, and ethnic background. Specifically, the ethnic backgrounds included African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic. Additionally, the sample was inclusive and representative of a variety of Protestant churches and their associations classified as denominational (i.e., Baptist, Methodist, Pentecostal, and Presbyterian) and nondenominational. Collectively based on the estimated number of worshipers on Sundays, the responses and input of the fifteen pastor participants represented approximately 9,000 worshipers. Notably, the orientation of the perspectives of the pastor participants in the project embodied a range of pastoral leadership roles (i.e., elder, bishop, lead pastor, and associate pastor) with service tenure of five years up to more than thirty years in the present church ministry assignment.

Delineation of the Survey Content, Findings, and Indicators

The intent of the initial survey question—"What is your definition of Christian education?"—was to determine the participants' baseline understanding of the concept of Christian education because the researcher's premise is that Christian education is an essential process that involves the impartation of foundational Christian doctrine and principles.

Figure 1 Survey Question 1: What is your definition of Christian education?

Participant response	Defined as the provision of instruction and supportive teaching	Defined as the process of making disciples and/or executing the Great Commission	Affirmed that Christian education is essential for spiritual growth and development

Percentage of responses to question	53%	47%	100%

Overall, one hundred percent of the participants' responses indicated that Christian education is an essential process that involves teaching and training of Christian doctrine and principles based on the Scriptures and is necessary for ascertaining spiritual life, growth, and maturation. Fifty-three percent of the pastors similarly defined Christian education as the essential provision of instruction and supportive teaching that enlightens the believer on how to live in a godly manner and to grow in the employment of faith principles. The other forty-seven percent of the participants defined Christian education as synonymous with the process of making disciples and/or executing the Great Commission. Hereby, these respondents affirmed Christian education as being an essential disciple-making process by which the Christian/disciple experiences growth and maturation, which is demonstrated by the disciple becoming equipped to pursue making other disciples. A subcomponent of question 1 asked the participants to "Please describe the model of Christian education used and/or Christian education ministry activities conducted in your church." The rationale for this question was to gain information on the Christian education models, approaches, and/or activities currently used in the churches to foster spiritual maturity. This information would support the researcher in identifying and determining any indicators for recommendations for enhancements in the Christian education models used.

Figure 2 Survey Question 1a: Please describe the model of Christian education used and/or

Christian education ministry activities conducted in your church.

Participants' responses	Described utilizing an approach to Christian education that was described as a traditional model	Described utilizing an additional component to a traditional model which is the provision of the opportunities for engagement in relational small groups	Affirmed that providing consistent opportunities for Christian education is essential for fostering progressive spiritual development toward maturity
Percent of responses to the question	73%	27%	100%

Seventy-three percent of the participants employed an approach to Christian education that they described as a traditional model. The activities described as components of this model were deemed by the participants to be scripturally focused and guided regarding the content. The Christian education activities defined were as follows: public Sunday morning worship services with a teaching/training/preaching approach; weekly Sunday school classes; and Bible studies or Christian training groups homogeneous in age and social developmental, homogenous or heterogeneous in gender, and/or relative to special interests or life changes. Twenty-seven percent of the participants' responses identified an additional component for the provision of the opportunities for engagement in relational small groups as an essential Christian education ministry approach toward fostering progressive spiritual development toward maturity. Collectively, all participants affirmed that providing consistent opportunities for the believer to engage in Christian education ministry experiences and activities is essential for fostering progressive spiritual development toward maturity.

The process of spiritual change that the follower of Jesus Christ undergoes toward

growing to become more and more like the teacher, Jesus Christ, is defined as spiritual

formation.[21] The question "What is spiritual formation?" was included to determine the

participants' understanding of this concept and its relevance to Christian education in regard to

the pursuit or stagnation of spiritual maturity.

Figure 3 Survey Question 2: What is spiritual formation?

Participants' responses	Described spiritual formation as being highly associated with the process of discipleship and that in essence, it is the tool and/or the process by which believers are equipped to be effective disciples of Christ, which is the goal of Christian education	Described spiritual formation as a process of the image of Christ being formed in the believer that begins at salvation and is nurtured to spiritual maturity as they become progressively disciplined in behaviors and practices that cultivate Christian spiritual life
Percent of responses to the question	27%	73%

Spiritual formation was described by twenty-seven percent of the survey participants as being

highly associated with the process of discipleship. In essence, these participants deemed spiritual

formation as the tool and/or the process by which believers are equipped to be effective disciples

of Christ, which is the goal of Christian education. The remaining seventy-three percent

described spiritual formation as the process of the image of Christ being formed in the believer

that begins at salvation and is nurtured to spiritual maturity as they become progressively

disciplined in behaviors and practices that cultivate Christian spiritual life. Two differences

dominate among the perspectives of pastors, relative to their explanations of spiritual formation;

nevertheless, there was one hundred percent agreement that engagement in spiritual formation is

essential to cultivate the nurturance and development of spiritual maturity and to remedy the lack

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[21] Habermas, *Introduction to Christian Education and Formation*.

spiritual of growth.

Christlikeness is deemed as the ultimate outcome of spiritual development and maturity. Thus, in essence, Christian maturity is synonymous with Christlikeness. Therefore, survey question 3 "What is Christlikeness?" was asked to determine the participants' baseline definition and understanding of this key term relative to the project's explanation of this concept.

Figure 4 Survey Question 3: What is Christlikeness?

Participants' responses	Described Christlikeness as consistently emulating and reflecting Christ in thought, word, behavior, the believers' functions and relations with themselves and others.
Percent of responses to the question	100%

In summation, one hundred percent of the participants defined Christlikeness as consistently emulating and reflecting Christ in thought, word, behavior, and the believers' functions and relations with themselves and others. The participants' descriptions of what is Christlikeness were congruent with the project's definition of this term. Thus, the survey responses affirmed that Christlikeness is synonymous with Christian maturity. Additionally, Christlikeness encompasses imitating and exhibiting behavioral and verbal actions/responses that are consistent with what Jesus would do if He were (you) the individual in that situation.

Survey question 4 asked "Is there a relationship between spiritual formation and Christlikeness?" In the follow-up to each participant's response of *yes* or *no*, the participant was asked to describe his/her perspective of what the relationship was or why there was not a relationship between the two. The rationale for including this question in the survey was to affirm the pastors' perceptions of spiritual formation as stimulated by the Christian education ministry of the church as being a process and not a precise technique or specific program.

Figure 5 Survey Question 4: Is there a relationship between spiritual formation and Christlikeness?
    a. If yes, please describe what it is?
    b. If no, please describe why not?

Participants' responses	Yes, there is a relationship between spiritual formation and Christlikeness	Described that spiritual formation is the process by which believers grow into and conform to the image of Christ and thereby reflect Christlikeness in their daily lives
Percent of responses to the question	100%	

One hundred percent of the participants affirmed that they held the following perception: There is a direct, contingent relationship between spiritual formation and Christlikeness. Collectively, the participants 'descriptors of the relationship between spiritual formation and Christlikeness included declarations such as spiritual formation is the process by which Christ is being formed in us as we continue to mature; spiritual formation is forming us as spiritual beings, and you cannot be Christlike unless you are in Christ; and spiritual formation is a journey of transformation into an image that is Christlike. Additionally, tools such as praying, studying, meditating, fasting, and worshipping were used in spiritual formation and cause an individual to become more like Him. Thus, the participants' perceptions of the relationship between spiritual formation and Christlikeness were congruent with a descriptor delineated by Alan Andrews, that is, "spiritual formation involves a radical internal change in which the spiritual heart directs the transformation of the entire person to reflect Jesus Christ."[22]

"How do you measure or determine Christlikeness?" is survey question 5. Based on the factor that the premise of this project encompasses addressing the insufficient growth toward Christlike maturity, this question was included to acquire a baseline of what the pastors consider to be the evidence or indicators of spiritual growth and maturity among their congregants.

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[22] Andrews, *The Kingdom Life*, 20.

Figure 6 Survey Question 5: How do you measure or determine Christlikeness?

Participants' responses	Described that Christlikeness/spiritual maturity is measured by the congregant's engagement in making disciples by involvement in evangelism, community outreach, and/or missions opportunities	Described that Christlikeness/spiritual maturity is measured by the congregant's demonstration and observation of the fruit of the spirit in their life	Described that Christlikeness/spiritual maturity is measured by the congregant's character and behavior traits in their daily walk. How the person progressively handles the challenges and vicissitudes of life was deemed as a strong indicator
Percent of responses to the question	7%	33%	60%

The researcher observed that the term "spiritual maturity" was used interchangeably and/or highly correlated with the term Christlikeness as the participants elucidated their persuasions regarding measuring Christlikeness among the congregants. This reference and use of the terms "spiritual maturity" and "Christlikeness" synonymously are consistent with the project's definitions and employment of these terms as they relate to the indicators of spiritual growth or nongrowth among the congregants. In summary, the tally of the responses to survey question 5 reflected three categories of baseline descriptors. Notably, seven percent of the participants described that Christlikeness/spiritual maturity is measured by the congregant's engagement in making disciples by involvement in evangelism, community outreach, and/or missions opportunities. Thirty-three percent described that Christlikeness/spiritual maturity is measured by the congregant's demonstration and observation of the fruit of the spirit in the person's life. Last, sixty percent described that Christlikeness/spiritual maturity is measured by the congregant's character and behavior traits in the person's daily walk. Thus, the manner with which a person progressively handles the challenges and vicissitudes of life was deemed a strong indicator.

Sequel survey question 6 asked, "What is the measure or evidence of spiritual formation?" The rationale for including this question was the need to acquire a baseline measure in light of the projected outcome of this research, to establish the essential elements that foster spiritual formation among congregants.

Figure 7 Survey Question 6: What is the measure or evidence of spiritual formation?

Participants' responses	Described as the pursuit of Christlikeness and the demonstration of the fruit of repentance and fruit of the spirit	Described as spiritual maturity and producing effectively according to placement in the body of believers and as disciples	Described as a changed life, consistency, and willful engagement in the spiritual disciplines	Described as a lifestyle of being a doer of and living by the word in a manner that Christ is reflected	No response	Described as a desire to do the will of God, to listen to His voice, and obey His Word
Percent of responses to the question	27%	13%	33%	20%	7%	93%

The responses to survey questions 5 and 6 were overall very similar, with slight modifications in the factors used in measurement or evidence of spiritual formation. Notably, several participants made direct references to previous responses relative to their descriptions of indicators for Christlikeness. Twenty-seven percent of the participants described the measure or evidence of spiritual formation as the pursuit of Christlikeness and the demonstration of the fruit of repentance and fruit of the spirit. The responses of thirteen percent of the pastors encompassed a more corporate perspective in that the indicators addressed spiritual maturity and being effective according to each member's ministry placement in the body of believers and as disciples active in evangelism and disciple making. Particularly, a changed life, consistency, and willful engagement in the spiritual disciplines were the primary indicators of spiritual formation for

thirty-three percent of the pastors. The fourth descriptor was the shared perspective of twenty

percent of the participants and delineated as a lifestyle of being a doer of and living by the Word

in a manner such that the image of Christ is reflected. One participant did not respond to question

6. Notably, the other fourteen participants, that is, ninety-three percent, described that having a

desire to do the will of God, to listen to His voice, and obey His Word are critical factors for

spiritual formation and are major factors and contingencies that are determinants of spiritual

growth and maturity. Subsequently, this perspective expressed by the participants is congruent

with the premise of this project, that is, the level of engagement by the individual is a

contingency related to spiritual growth. Moreover, Herb Miller in his discussion on how spiritual

growth occurs corroborates that although spiritual growth is a gift from God, people do not

become God-like without the volition of the human will and demonstration of consistent

commitment to hear, listen, and act when God speaks.[23]

 Question 7 asked "What is necessary or what are the essential elements necessary for a

person to develop spiritual maturity or Christlikeness?" The rationale for this question, as was

the rationale for survey question six, was that the information was extremely relevant to the topic

of the project in regard to the proposal of essential factors for the stimulation of spiritual growth.

Thus, what the pastors considered essential elements or necessary to ascertain spiritual maturity

or Christlikeness supported and provided fundamental guidance to the researcher in determining

the indicators of what is presently deemed essential elements.

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[23] Herb Miller, *Connecting with God: 14 Ways Churches Can Help People Grow Spiritually* (Nashville: Abington Press, 1994), 22–24.

Figure 8 Survey Question 7: What is necessary or what are the essential elements necessary for a person to develop spiritual maturity or Christlikeness?

Participants' responses	Described that the necessary/essential element is for the individual to yield to and to be led by the Holy Spirit	Described that the necessary/essential elements are daily Bible reading and prayer, personal devotion, fellowship among other believers, regular church/worship attendance, and involvement in Christian/ministry service	Described that the necessary/essential elements are the individual having a desire and hunger for a spiritual walk that is expressed by their consistency and be very intentional in regard to engagement in spiritual disciplines and practices
Percent of responses to the question	7%	60%	33%

Seven percent of the participants described that the necessary/essential element is for the individual to yield to and to be led by the Holy Spirit. Thus, this response indicated that the volitional action of the member to yield to the Holy Spirit supports the premise of this research that the believer's growth is relative to the level of engagement in the process and provisions toward the stimulation of spiritual growth. Additionally, Kenneth Boa corroborates this position and describes that one facet of the work of the Holy Spirit entails "progressively to form Christlikeness in the lives of believers. He empowers us to live a new quality life, he purifies and purges as we submit to his authority and control..."[24] Sixty percent of the participants delineated practices that necessitate the willful engagement of the congregant/believer. This group described that the necessary/essential elements are daily Bible reading and prayer, personal devotion, fellowship among other believers, regular church/worship attendance, and involvement

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[24] Kenneth Boa, *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 292.

in Christian/ministry service. The remaining thirty-three percent of the participants described that

the necessary/essential elements are the individual having a desire and hunger for a spiritual walk

that is expressed by their consistency and being very intentional in regard to engagement in

spiritual disciplines and practices. The research of Arnold Cole and Pamela Caudill Ovwigho

corroborates the factors of disengagement in spiritual disciplines such as Bible reading is

correlated with spiritual immaturity. Notably, Cole and Ovwigho report that their research

demonstrated that "those who read the Bible at least four times a week are less likely to engage

in behaviors such as gambling, pornography, getting drunk, and sex outside marriage."[25] The

necessity of engagement by the individual to available spiritual resources and spiritual

disciplines was further reiterated by Cole and Ovwigho because they elucidated that many

believers are lacking spiritually because they do not connect "with God through His word

regularly."[26]

Hence, the researcher has identified what the participants deem to be the necessary or

essential elements necessary for a person to develop spiritual maturity or Christlikeness, and

sequel survey question 8 asks, "How does your ministry develop spiritual maturity among the

members?"

*Figure 9 Survey Question 8: How does your ministry develop spiritual maturity among the
members?*

Participants' responses	Described that the ministry develops spiritual maturity by providing ministry through the teaching/preaching ministry through worship services, children and youth	Described that the ministry develops spiritual maturity by providing ministry through the teaching/preaching ministry through worship services, Bible study, fellowship/connect/discipleship

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[25] Arnold Cole and Pamela Caudill Ovwigho, "Understanding the Bible Engagement Challenge: Scientific Evidence for the Power of 4," December 2009, accessed September 11, 2018, https://bttbfiles.com/web/docs/cbe/Scientific_Evidence_for_the_Power_of_4.pdf, p. 2.

[26] Ibid.

	ministries, Bible study, healing and emotional wellness ministry, special teaching and training on select topics and opportunities for serving	small groups for children through adults, special teaching and training on select topics and opportunities for serving
Percent of responses to the question	73%	27%

The participants' responses to the provision of ministry toward the development of spiritual maturity among the members were very similar (Figure 9). The major distinction was that twenty-seven percent of the participants described that their ministries provide fellowship/connect/discipleship small groups, from young children to adults. The myriad of ministry provisions described by the participants reflected Miller's discussion, in which he explicates that "what the congregation does to help meet the spiritual, psychological, emotional, and relational needs of individuals" is an indicator of its effectiveness in stimulating spiritual growth.[27]

     In the follow-up, survey question 9 asks "What is the evidence that you look for to determine the success of your ministry in developing spiritual maturity or Christlikeness?"

Figure 10 Survey Question 9: What is the evidence that you look for to determine the success of your ministry in developing spiritual maturity or Christlikeness?

Participants' responses	The evidence of ministry success is congregants become disciples who make other disciples	The evidence of ministry success is congregants demonstrating the fruit of repentance and life change, particularly in obedience to the Word; handling challenges and vicissitudes of life in a productive manner, caring/supportive fellowship/interactions with others; and taking ownership of and genuinely participating in ministry service
Percent of responses to the question	13%	87%

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[27] Miller, *Connecting with God*, 23.

The evidence of ministry success as described by thirteen percent of the participants was that

congregants become disciples who make other disciples. The remaining eighty-seven percent of

the participants described the evidence of ministry success as congregants demonstrating the fruit

of repentance and life change particularly in obedience to the Word, handling challenges and

vicissitudes of life in a productive manner, caring/supportive fellowship/interactions with others,

and taking ownership of and genuine participation in ministry service. Both descriptions

continue to affirm the necessity of the congregant's engagement and commitment to progressive

spiritual growth and development. Additionally, the responses to question 9 are consistent with

the Scripture exhortation as written in 1 John 2:6 for the believer to emulate the way of Christ's

life on earth in the day-to-day journey in this present day.

Subsequently, survey question 10 was the initial inquiry to obtain data on the

participants' perspectives as related to the concept of the Christian community, which is also an

essential element conditional to spiritual growth and development. Accordingly, question 10

requested that the participant define the Christian community.

Figure 11 Survey Question 10: Define the Christian community.

Participants' responses	Defined the Christian community as the body of believers in Jesus Christ in a particular area and who endeavor to unite in providing ministry services to address occurrences of special needs in the community	Defined the Christian community as a group of people in a relationship with Jesus Christ and with each other that share common goals, purposes, and vision while focusing on executing the Great Commission and as people who provide mutual support and are doing life together	Defined the Christian community as the church, the body of believers in Jesus Christ who are governed by the guidelines for living according to the Scripture and who practice the sacraments and unite in serving others relative to natural and spiritual needs

Percent of responses to the question	33%	40%	27%

Notably, fifty percent of the participants defined the Christian community from a broader

perspective comparable to the project's definition, as described in chapter 1, that is, the Christian

community is a group of individuals of like faith and purpose with whom the follower is

interpersonally connected; of these, thirty-three percent defined the Christian community as the

body of believers in Jesus Christ in a particular area and who endeavor to unite in providing

ministry services to address occurrences of special needs in the community. The perspective of

the other twenty-seven percent encompassed the following expectation: The Christian

community functions universally as the church, the body of believers in Jesus Christ who are

governed by the guidelines for living according to the Scripture and who practice the sacraments

and unite in serving others relative to natural and spiritual needs. The remaining forty percent

elucidated a more similar perspective to that of the project's definition of this concept. These

participants defined the Christian community as being a group of people in a relationship with

Jesus Christ and with each other who share common goals, purposes, and vision while focusing

on executing the Great Commission and as a people who provide mutual support and are doing

life together. Each perspective included that the Christian community is a significant variable

related to the overall natural, social, and spiritual well-being of the believer.

In James C. Wilhoit's discussion of spiritual formation, he affirms the significance of

community in that he describes Christian spiritual formation as communal when he declares that

"the Christian life is best lived in community."[28] Furthermore, the Scripture endorses the value of

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[28] James C. Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered: Growing in Christ through Community* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 23.

community, that is the Apostle Paul exhorts the believers, as recorded in Ephesians 5:21 (NIV),[29]

to "submit to one another out of reverence for Christ."

Survey question 11 asked, "How does the Christian community foster spiritual maturity among the members?"

Figure 12 Survey Question 11: How does the Christian community foster spiritual maturity among the members?

Participants' responses	The Christian community fosters spiritual maturity by having Christ in common, pursuing the furtherance of the gospel, fellowship, and modeling a Christlike character and works	The Christian community fosters spiritual maturity by having a missional mindset and thereby being disciples who seek the lost and pursue making other disciples	Described that the Christian community that extends beyond the local church fosters immaturity among the fellowship of believers because of divisions and failure to adhere to and be accountable for handling conflicts and dissensions as instructed by Scripture	The Christian community fosters spiritual maturity by the members' volitional involvement in fellowship, relationship, and engagement in doing life together
Percent of responses to the question	27%	27%	13%	33%

Eighty-seven percent of the participants delineated the observable elements by which the

Christian community fosters spiritual maturity. These elements were, for example, volitional

involvement in fellowship, relationships, and engagement in doing life together; modeling a

Christlike character and works; and being missional. However, thirteen percent of the

participants described that the Christian community that extends beyond the local church actually

fosters immaturity among the fellowship of believers because of divisions and failure to adhere

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[29] Note: NIV as used in this project essay is the abbreviation for the New International Version.

to and be accountable for handling conflicts and dissensions as instructed by Scripture. The

aspects of the Christian community that foster spiritual maturity among the members as

described by the participants are corroborated by Wilhoit. Wilhoit describes the process of

spiritual formation that occurs by the experience of community as being "intentional, communal,

requires engagement, is accomplished by the Holy Spirit, it is for the glory of God and the

service of others, and has as its means and end the imitation of Christ."[30] Further consideration of

the Scripture exhortation according to Ephesians 5:21 would aide in providing a remedy for

division and conflict if community constituents would take of the posture of mutual respect and

deference to each other in submission and collaborate on points of agreement such as the basics

of the gospel message, adherence to the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20), and the New

Commandment (John 13:34).

The rationale for survey question 13, the final inquiry regarding the Christian community

continued the researcher's endeavor to obtain data regarding the participants' perspectives

pertaining to the interaction, influence, and functioning of the Christian community relative to

spiritual growth. This question asked, "Does the Christian community function as a life-giving

organism?" The participants were asked to provide a rationale for the basis of their responses of

yes or *no*.

Figure 13 Survey Question 12: Does the Christian community function as a life-giving organism?
        a. If yes, please describe.
        b. If no, please describe.

Participants' responses	No, the Christian community is limited in its function as a life-giving	Yes, the Christian community functions as a life-giving organism in that people are being saved; additionally, it stimulates positive	It should function as a life-giving organism because Jesus said, I came that you might have life and life more abundantly, and now the

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[30] Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered*, 23.

	organism because of the array of divisions among the believers	change; provides hope; ministers in times of pain, hurt, illness, and loss; and encourages discipleship and spiritual formation	body of Christ has the charge to minister holistically others
Percent of responses to the question	7%	73%	20%

Twenty- seven percent of the participants indicated the shortcomings and lack of effectiveness of the Christian community's function as a life-giving organism. These participants unequivocally disclosed the perspective that functioning as a life-giving organism is consistent with Christ's expectation (John 10:10) of the functioning of the members of the body of Christ who are those charged to be His ambassadors on earth, according to 2 Corinthians 5:20. Notably, the remaining seventy-three percent of the participants responded affirmatively. These participants stated *yes*. The Christian community functions as a life-giving organism in that people are being saved; additionally, it stimulates positive change; provides hope; ministers in times of pain, hurt, illness, and loss; and encourages discipleship and spiritual formation. Nonetheless, collectively, one hundred percent of the respondents corroborated that engagement in a functional Christian community is a contingent and essential element relative to spiritual growth and development. The Scripture teaching, according to Ephesians 4:11-13, reveals the Lord's plan for the operation of the body of Christ in such a manner that spiritual growth and development are fostered and continued until full maturity in Christ is attained. Wilhoit corroborates the concept of healthy Christian community in his writings wherein it is stated, "People cannot be introduced to or incorporated within a repenting, praying, and serving community unless there is one."[31]

 The final survey question, 13, asked the participants, "On an average Sunday, what is the

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[31] Ibid., 186.

estimated worship attendance at your church?"

Figure 14 Survey Question 13: On an average Sunday, what is the estimated worship attendance at your church?

Participants' responses	15–200 worshipers	201–400 worshipers	401–1,999 worshipers	2,000+ worshipers
Percent of responses to the question	60%	13%	20%	7%

The rationale for including the content of survey question 13 was to determine if church size relative to worship attendance would be a significant variable of effect in examining the essential elements and factors regarding spiritual growth by this project. Additionally, the project would determine whether the recommendation in light of the project's premise was relative to church size. The responses of the participants were consistent and varied accordingly, as indicated in each figure, one through thirteen, as summarized. Thus, no distinct perceptions or mindsets were expressed by the participants that were relative to church size.

The aggregate conclusive findings of the applied research approach were affirmative relative to the project's premise. The project findings established that spiritual growth is positively or negatively correlated to the individual's opportunity to ascertain Christian education ministry and the level of the individual's engagement in spiritual growth and development practices. The findings affirmed that Christian education is a ministry embraced by the local church and—in essence—the execution of the mandate and commission given to the Church by Christ to make disciples. The Christian education models, approaches, and/or activities used among the churches represented by the participants were similar in regard to being scripturally based and amenable to the uniqueness of each congregation or practices within the particular denomination.

Overall, the findings on the participants' perception of the concept of spiritual formation were consistent with the project's definition. Based on the participants' responses, the project found that spiritual formation provides a pathway to spiritual maturity and Christlikeness and is not any particular program or curriculum. The research findings were conclusive in regard to the relationship between the elements of Christian education and spiritual formation being significantly related and interdependent. The measurements and indicators for Christlikeness/ spiritual maturity, spiritual formation, and ministry effectiveness toward effecting spiritual growth were corroborated among the summation of the participants' responses. Thus, the researcher anticipated that the project's outcome plan that addresses essential elements to foster spiritual formation and Christlikeness would continue to be applicable to the measurements and indicators of spiritual growth delineated by the project participants. In regard to the functionality of and engagement in the Christian community, whether or not the participant's perspective was that of the community of believers, the primary focus was on the local church, a particular geographic area, or universal, for example, the spiritual health and wellness of Christian community was deemed as a critical factor related to continuous spiritual development. Last, the research findings on what the participants deemed the necessary or essential elements for an individual to develop spiritual maturity or Christlikeness supported the researcher in identifying the eight essential elements presented by this project.

Notably, subsequent to the applied research process of pastoral investigation, the project conducted an analytical research venture that comprised a scholarly investigation of the work of esteemed contributors in the areas of Christian education, spiritual formation, and Christian community. Relevant to the premise of this project, the findings and indicators significant to the essential elements as they pertain to spiritual growth are delineated and examined in chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Scholarly Investigation

Christian Education: An Essential Process

This project's description of Christian education, that is, an essential process that involves

the impartation of foundational Christian doctrine and principles, is consistent with the mandate

of the Great Commission. Particularly, this command as delineated by Jesus is to be executed by

the church universally in order to make other followers of Jesus Christ and teach them about Him,

to believe in Him, and to obey Him (Matt. 28:18-20). Accordingly, Kenneth O. Gangel described

that "in its simplest and purest form, Christian education is communicating God's truth in order to

make disciples."[32] Thus, Gangel supports the premise of this project that a sincere biblical disciple

exhibits the evidence of spiritual growth by hearing, understanding, and obeying the teachings of

Christ that reflect the fruit of life changes and help disciples make other disciples.[33] Subsequently,

the application of the command of Christ indicates that the growth and development of the

believer are concurrently internal, which entails "becoming like Christ in word, thought, and

attitude," and external, which encompasses "becoming like Christ in action."[34] Notably, the

essential process of Christian education as it relates to spiritual growth relative to the discipleship

process was delineated by Eleanor Daniel:

> The purpose of Bible teaching is to bring change into the life of the learner until he has reached maturity in Christ—a lifelong task. This maturity is achieved when a person has a knowledge of God's Word, with understanding, that results in changed behavior: bearing fruit, growing in knowledge, becoming stronger in endurances and patience, and being thankful. [35]

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[32] Robert E. Clark, Lin Johnson, and Allyn K. Sloat, eds., *Christian Education: Foundations for the Future* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 21.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid., 93.

[35] Eleanor Daniel, John W. Wade, and Charles Gresham, *Introduction to Christian Education* (Cincinnati: The Standard Publishing Company, 1993), 93.

Thus, Christian education provides fundamental instructions to believers to foster the impartation of biblical understanding, essential faith, empowerment, and resources to make quality decisions to live, follow, and pursue the way of Jesus Christ in the midst of the present-day diverse public sector.[36] Therefore, an essential objective of Christian education is attending to how believers form an identity and vocation of being followers of the way of Jesus in their perceptions of themselves and being known by others as a follower of the way of Jesus.[37] Subsequently, the task of Christian education entails the employment of a process that encourages and facilitates individually and corporately the spiritual growth of the life of the body of believers, forming it toward Christlikeness, and empowering it as an effective witness and "communicator of power of the gospel."[38]

Approaches to Christian Education

Notably, the approaches to Christian education that Jack L. Seymour delineate corroborate the approaches that this project examined, and they were reflected in the findings of the project's applied research. These approaches to Christian education that address the ultimate outcome of fostering spiritual formation toward Christlikeness include the community–of–faith approach, instructional approach, and missional approach.[39] Specifically, the focus of the community–of–faith approach entails the examination of the "character and dynamics of the congregation as a setting for learning" and determining "how do the various dimensions of a congregation's life interact to teach Christian people."[40] Second, the instructional approach of Christian education focuses on how believers "are taught the content and practices of the faith community."[41] Third,

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[36] Jack L. Seymour, *Teaching the Way of Jesus: Educating Christians for Faithful Living* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 38 and 65.
[37] Ibid., 65.
[38] Ibid., 72.
[39] Ibid., 65.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.

the focus of the missional approach to Christian education addresses how believers learn as they live and exemplify the Christian faith in their world at large.[42] The delineated approaches of Christian education were reflected and demonstrated in Scripture as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, which elucidates numerous accounts of the manner in which the early believers taught and communicated the good news of the gospel to others.[43] The Scripture as recorded in Acts 2:42-47 describes that the early believers as a community of united people continued to persistently devote themselves to the instruction and teaching of the apostles and doing life together as they engaged in ongoing fellowship, sharing meals including the Lord's Supper, and prayers. The Scripture denotes that the engagement of the first-century believers in what is described in this project as being a community of faith and instructional approaches occurred as they assembled daily in the temple and in their homes with a united purpose. The missional aspect of their community spiritual life was effective and evident in that Acts 2:47 declares that their numbers grew daily as God added the individuals being saved.

Notably, before the early church believers, Jesus, who was a member of the Galilean Jewish community was an example of an individual who experienced the power and effectiveness of the community to provide education in the way of godliness.[44] The Scriptures record that Jesus' engagement in God-instructed practices for His people commenced with His circumcision and blessing as a child of the Abrahamic covenant on the eighth day of His life. [45] Continuously, the accounts of the gospel writings reflect Jesus' adherence to and proclamation of the commands of God, which reflected that the believing community according to Leviticus19:2 had the directives

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[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid., 21.
[44] Ibid., 67.
[45] Ibid.

to pursue and embrace the vocation of teaching and being holy as God is holy.[46] Thus, similar to

how social beings are progressively socialized, learning the folkways and mores of the culture by

their connectedness and participation in community, congregations teach their members the

practices of faith.[47] Notably, the faith community has a formative influence on the lives of the

believers relative to nurturing their faith and the development of "the quality and character of their

spirits" toward Christlikeness.[48] Craig Dykstra attests to the effectiveness of Christian education

in a community, "Spirituality deepens in community rather than in individualistic isolation."[49]

Additionally, Dykstra affirms the essentiality of Christian education through community when he

elucidates, "The beliefs, values, attitudes, stories, rituals, and moral practices of a faith

community are the human forces most powerful in shaping a person's spiritual journey."[50]

In regard to the instructional approach of Christian education, Jesus modeled effectually

how believers can effectively be taught the content and practices of the faith community. Jesus

provided instruction through his healings, exorcisms, mass feedings, aphorisms, and parables.[51]

Notably, through His mode of teaching, Jesus taught people the veracities of their world, obtained

their assent and understanding, and presented problem-posing questions or images to stimulate a

fuller comprehension of God's presence.[52] In His teaching, Jesus encompassed and addressed the

tradition and experiences of the people toward the outcome of directing them to the presence of

God's grace, mandating new life in the midst of the present-day world where the believers were

confronted daily with challenges relative to their faith.[53] Accordingly, in harmony with the

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[46] Ibid., 69.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Craig Dykstra, *Growing in the Life of Faith: Education and Christian Practices*, 2nd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 83.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Seymour, *Teaching the Way of Jesus*, 90.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid., 91.

content and Jesus' mode of instruction, the study approach of Christian education, as defined by Sara P. Little, entails "the process of exploring the church's tradition and self-understanding in such a way that the persons can understand, assess, and therefore respond to the truth of the gospel for themselves."[54] Hence, the study approach fosters spiritual transformation by focusing on reading, studying, and intaking the Bible.[55] Additionally, the focus of the study approach is to subsequently stimulate the understanding of the way of Jesus and to promote and reinforce the believer in progressively living the faith.[56] The researcher expected that the outcome of the study's approach would encompass the complex process of the acquisition of the content of the church's tradition and the development of the ability to make sound judgments on the content, internalize the content, and exemplify its content in daily living.[57] This intense process of learning describes this essence of the outcome of discipleship, which yields a knowing that entails a personal and deep connection between the disciple and the discipler and between the disciple and the Savior, Jesus Christ.[58] The attainment of this type of knowing can produce the demonstration of mercy and living justly, as referenced in Micah 6:8, which is a requirement of God and a witness of the believer's connection and love toward God and others.[59]

Seymour explicates that the goal of the missional approach to Christian education, which embraces the overall concept of service, "is empowering all to true humanity and calling the wider church to partner with God in restoring new creation."[60] Hence, the missional Christian education approach "addresses directly the world in which people find themselves and seeks to

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[54] Jack L. Seymour and Donald E. Miller with Sara P. Little, Charles R. Foster, Allen J. Moore, and Carol A. Wehrheim, *Contemporary Approaches to Christian Education* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1982), 93.

[55] Seymour, *Teaching the Way of Jesus*, 92.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid., 93.

[58] Ibid., 93–94.

[59] Seymour, *Teaching the Way of Jesus*, 93.

[60] Ibid., 117.

enable them to examine and claim what is expected of them."[61] Allen Moore describes the

approach of missional Christian education as prophetic Christian education because its aspiration

for the outcome entails "helping the believer locate themselves in the injustices of a world with a

new awareness and form a new Christian consciousness for themselves."[62] Expectantly, the

development of a new Christian consciousness will demonstrate a cognizance of the global

context of oppression and be a stimulus for Christians in the formation and construction of new,

faithful, life-styles.[63] Thus, Moore argues that the task of Christian education is more expansive

than a call to responsiveness "to the social aspects of the gospel."[64] Subsequently, the task of

Christian education entails fostering congruence in the believer's internal cognizance of self and

the external exhibition of that self in daily living.[65] Notably, an individual's lifestyle is reflective

of the scope of morals and/or values that he/she embraces.[66] The Christian education approach

provides the opportunity for the believer to develop an active awareness of the values that he/she

professes, relative to the choices demonstrated in his/her daily life experiences.[67] The premise of

this project regarding the lack of spiritual growth toward Christlikeness among church members

was corroborated by Moore when he explicated that "almost without exception, persons are

inconsistent as Christians in the way they live."[68] Moore further elucidates that "in fact, many

people who profess to be Christian actually choose values in practice that are secular and self-

serving."[69] This incongruence in the Christian profession and practice was a focus in the work by

Don S. Browning on churches, who advocated that more attention in Christian education should

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[61] Ibid., 119.
[62] Seymour and Miller with et al., *Contemporary Approaches to Christian Education*, 110.
[63] Ibid., 103.
[64] Ibid., 110.
[65] Ibid., 111.
[66] Ibid., 110.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.

be devoted to practical everyday lifestyle development.[70] Thus, the desired outcome of Christian education is the development of a lifestyle that reflects a pattern of beliefs, values, and attitudes that are consistent with the way of Jesus and how He chooses to live his life on earth. Notably, there is a personal dimension to lifestyle practices in that the individual's actions and behavioral choices demonstrate the level of spiritual maturity relative to how he/she faces and approaches the world.[71]

Tenets Regarding Spiritual Formation Relative to Christian Education

The Scripture passages in Matthew 6:9-15 and Luke 11:2-4, commonly referred to as the Lord's Prayer, delineate Jesus' response to the disciples' request to teach them to pray. Seymour explicates that this prayer embodies Jesus' perception of His world, God's presence, and Jesus' aspirations and expectations for His followers.[72] The prayer is observed in both Gospel passages as a discourse that communicates matters of the heart of faith and living, and each component of the prayer exemplifies aspects of the way of Jesus.[73] Particularly, in the expectant outcome of the prayer segment that petitions "Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven," it is recognizable that God-like actions are evident in daily life functioning.[74] Thus, the influence of the operation and manifestation of God's transforming presence on relationships and community empower God's activity and God's kingdom realm to be exemplified on the earth.[75] Subsequently, God's realm on the earth is progressively evident because believers pursue Christian spiritual transformation, which entails the process of restoration into the image of God.[76]

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[70] Ibid., 111; Don S. Browning, *The Moral Context of Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), 13–33.

[71] Seymour and Miller with et al., *Contemporary Approaches to Christian Education*, 111.

[72] Seymour, *Teaching the Way of Jesus*, 145.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid., 146.

[76] Diane J. Chandler, *Christian Spiritual Formation: An Integrated Approach for Personal and Relational*

Hereby, the believer is mobilized toward the fulfillment of the directive stated in Ephesians 5:1 (NIV), "Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children." Accordingly, the Scripture texts in Romans 8:29 and Ephesians 1:5 teach that it is God's will and His good pleasure through a special relationship with Himself for each believer to be conformed to the image of His Son, thereby becoming progressively and increasing more like His Son, Jesus.[77] Thus, the believer's enablement to model and live daily according to godliness and holiness is through "an interactive process by which God the Father fashions the believer into the image of His Son, Jesus, through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit."[78]

Diane J. Chandler explicates that even though God fosters the process of Christian spiritual formation for the followers of Jesus, the believer's cooperation is crucial for spiritual growth to transpire.[79] Notably, this factor as Chandler delineates corroborates the premise of this research project that the believer's degree of engagement in the essential elements of Christian education is relative to his/her development and growth into Christlike maturity. Explicitly, Chandler argues that the process of spiritual transformation that is orchestrated by God and executed through the work and empowerment of the Holy Spirit with the believer is a holistic growth process.[80] Subsequent to the individual personally acknowledging, confessing, and receiving the redemptive work of Jesus (John 1:12; Acts 4:12; Rom. 10:9-10), the restoration process of being conformed to the image of Jesus commences in seven formational dimensions.[81] These seven primary life dimensions as delineated by Chandler are spirit, emotions, relationships, intellect, vocation, physical health, and resource stewardship.[82] Chandler elucidates that these life

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Wholeness (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 17.

[77] *King James Study Bible: King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983), 1746.
[78] Chandler, *Christian Spiritual Formation*, 19.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid., 17.
[82] Ibid.

dimensions are universally shared across cultures and are "those in which the human person is both inherently endowed and capable of exercising autonomy for personal growth and development."[83]

The formation of the spirit is the foundational formation dimension that relates to the believer's faith journey experience.[84] As Chandler delineates, the believer's faith journey encompasses the "grace-based, interactive process of nurture and growth of the human spirit as it is conformed to the image of Jesus by developing the fruit of the spirit and overseen by the Father through the indwelling of Holy Spirit."[85] Notably, in the context of the believing community is where the believer is transformed from the inside out, developing and maintaining intimacy with God through the volitional engagement in Christian spiritual practices and discipline.[86]

Emotional formation is essentially connected to the spiritual dimension and entails the believer ascertaining cognizance, productive articulations, and accurate reflections of past and present feelings as they relate to his/her personal passions, needs, hurts, and/or wounds and those of others.[87] Thus, healthy emotional formation is evident by the exemplification of the fruit of the spirit which mirrors the image and character of Christ and emits emotional liberty.[88]

Hence, relational formation is essential to the spiritual and emotional dimensions in that it influences the transformation process of the believer into the image of Jesus through social interactions and engagement in the life of the church.[89] Additionally, a key component of relational formation entails the believer developing the capacity to discern the voice and actions that emanate from a loving Father and others of the faith community while negotiating conflicts

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[83] Ibid., 107.
[84] Ibid., 22–21.
[85] Ibid., 21 and 82.
[86] Ibid., 21 and 67.
[87] Ibid., 21 and 84.
[88] Ibid., 21.
[89] Ibid.

and breeches in relationship connections.[90] Chandler describes relational formation as the glue of the spiritual formation in Christ because of its presence in relationships inclusive of "observing, interacting with and imitation of others that the believer learns about God."[91] Observantly, the tenets of the relationship dimension as described by the referenced scholars were consistent with the project's definition of discipleship.

As an aggregate component with the three aforementioned delineated dimensions, intellectual formation encompasses the development of the capacity of the mind to discern, muse, and imbue truth that is congruent with the Word of God.[92] The New Testament Scriptures (Matt. 22:37; Mark 12:30) teach and command the believer and say, "And you shall love the Lord your God … with all your mind." Thus, because it is responsive to the command of the Scriptures, intellectual formation entails the development of the mind with the goal of engaging in loving and glorifying God by employing the mind to honor God.[93] Hence, Chandler deliberates that loving God with the mind means developing the believer's intellectual capacity to pursue God's truth for the purposes of advancing God's Kingdom, cultivate godly beliefs, and formulate "a Christ–honoring world view that reflects biblical knowledge, wisdom and understanding."[94]

Subsequently, in view of the dimension of vocation formation, which involves the process of the development of the believer's life purpose and calling, the Scripture declares, as written in Ephesians 2:10 (NIV), "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared and planned in advance for us to do."[95] Thus, in continuous concert with the spiritual, emotional, relational, and intellectual life dimensions with the additional synergy of the dimension of vocational formation, the believer can come into a sagacity of his/her life's purpose

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[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid., 107.
[92] Ibid., 21.
[93] Ibid., 131.
[94] Ibid., 21 and 131.
[95] Ibid., 21 and 151.

according to God's unique design and plan for the believer's life.[96] Notably, Chandler explicates, "work provides a formative context for Christian spiritual formation."[97] Hereby, the believer experiences transformation into the image of Jesus in his/her life calling and purpose through the discernment and "development of God-given giftings, talents, abilities, and skills."[98] Additionally, Chandler expounds, "all vocation is subsumed under a life of earnest discipleship through loving God in service to others."[99] This research project defines discipleship as the ongoing process a believer/disciple engages in to learn how to be His follower.

In regard to discipleship, the Scripture instructs that being a disciple is being an individual who is volitional and engages in the process of discipleship toward becoming like Christ, as the premise of this project argues. Hence, as Jesus delineates, according to the Gospel in Matthew 16:24 (NIV), Mark 8:34 (NIV), and Luke 9:23 (NIV) , the contingency for discipleship is that "whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me." Relative to Chandler's explication of vocation formation, disciple and discipleship in this project refer to an individual (disciple) who has made a decision to be a follower of Jesus Christ and reflect the grace and glory of God in life and work-related contexts (discipleship).[100]

Subsequently, related to the dimension of physical health formation, Paul declares that the believer's physical body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19). Explicitly, Chandler delineates that physical health formation encompasses the care of the physical body toward the outcome of maximizing the believer's effectiveness in fulfilling his/her life purpose.[101] Hence, the development and maintenance of physical health formation is foundational and provides ongoing

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96 Ibid., 21.
97 Ibid., 154.
98 Ibid., 21 and 154–155.
99 Ibid., 162.
100 Ibid., 151–163.
101 Ibid., 21.

sustainability to the overall process of spiritual formation relative to the other six dimensions.[102]

In the Scriptures, as recorded in 2 Timothy 2:2 (NIV), Paul provides the exhortation that believers

are to entreat the body as "instruments for special purposes, made holy, useful to the Master, and

prepared to do any good work." Additionally, Ephesians 2:10 corroborates that the believer is an

instrument, a vessel designed by God and set apart to serve and perform specific work congruent

with His divine plan. Accordingly, the perception of the body as belonging to God and set aside

for God's use indicates that the body is to be embraced as "a sacred place of God's presence."[103]

Therefore, the believer's engagement in volitional actions of taking care of his/her body is an

essential, contingent element toward the outcome of overall faithful spiritual formation.[104] Gary

Thomas corroborates the significance of physical formation and states, "My understanding of my

body as an instrument of service to God is giving me a renewed motivation to take better care of it

in the face of my craving and laziness."[105] Explicitly, Chandler delineates five areas relative to the

development of physical health and wellness formation that are essential contingencies for the

believer to address and pursue maximizing the body's potential as a conduit for God's glory.[106]

These essential areas of physical health and wellness stewardship are (1) nutrition; (2) physical

exercise; (3) sleep; (4) stress, rest, and leisure; and (5) sexual purity.[107] Subsequently, in the

pursuit of Christlikeness, the investment in the development and maintenance of physical health

and wellness formation is foundational to the believer's self-care. The believer is enabled to love

and serve God and others with his/her whole heart, soul, mind, and strength for the manifestation

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[102] Ibid.

[103] Ibid., 185.

[104] Ibid., 184.

[105] Gary Thomas, *Every Body Matters: Strengthening Your Body to Strengthening Your Soul* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 20.

[106] Chandler, *Christian Spiritual Formation*, 181.

[107] Ibid.

of God's glory in daily living and the way of Jesus (Mark 12:30-31).[108]

Last, the seventh dimension of spiritual formation, as Chandler delineates, is "resource formation," which "expresses a confluence with the other six dimensions."[109] Particularly, resource formation encompasses the development, growth, and employment of "wise stewardship of the earth, finances, material possession, and time" in the pursuit of Christlikeness.[110] Notably, having been created in the likeness and image of God, the scriptural creation narrative in the book of Genesis explicates humankind's assignment of resource stewardship and responsibility for God's given creation to superintend and sustain a "God glorying culture."[111] Thus, as God's representative on the earth, the believer's level of engagement in resource stewardship is an indicator of his/her Christlikeness and love relationship with God, according to the commandment as demonstrated in daily living."[112]

The Christian Community: An Essential Environment for Fostering Spiritual Maturity

The New Testament Scripture teaches that the believer in Jesus Christ is a part of the body of Christ. Subsequently, it is the design of the body that the members which are connected grow in relation to rather than apart from the other members.[113] Notably, this project delineated the concept of a Christian community as a group of individuals of like faith and purpose with whom the follower is interpersonally connected. Accordingly, Paul Petit explicates that the body metaphor in Scripture is more than a catchy description of Christianity, that is, "It is Christianity" in accordance with "the manner in which God designed His kingdom program to operate."[114]

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[108] Ibid., 187.
[109] Ibid., 21.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid., 221.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Paul Pettit, ed., *Foundations of Spiritual Formation: A Community Approach to Becoming Like Christ* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2008), 25.
[114] Ibid.

Notably, the Scripture explicates that the terms of discipleship specify that the believer is to take up his/her cross and follow Jesus (Luke 9:23; Mark 8:34). This call is for the believer to neither carry his/her cross nor grow and mature spiritually in isolation.[115] The individual's intentional engagement is the process of spiritual formation by the practice of spiritual disciplines, and the lifestyle of Jesus is essential to foster Christlikeness. Concurrently essential is that the context for spiritual growth and life change transpires within and through intentional engagement with others in "authentic biblical Christian community."[116]

Hence, Petit describes that "all believers should be growing as individual believers in community."[117] Growing in a community entails the believer finding his/her "place of service and participation with in the larger, corporate body, the church."[118] Notably, the Scripture metaphor that depicts the "bride" of Christ encompasses the collection of believers known as "the church" rather than just an isolated individual believer.[119] The essentiality of relationships in a community was corroborated by Gordon Johnson when he explicated that based on the Scripture in Genesis 1:26-31, "God created humans as community and for community."[120] The universal human need for connectedness was unequivocally affirmed by God's declaration in Genesis 2:18, "It is not good for man to be alone."[121] Responsively and affirmatively, Adam proclaimed after God made a suitable companion for him, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh" (Gen. 2:23).[122] Hereby, God created humans with the capacity and need to engage in authentic, nurturing relationships with Himself, the human community, and the total of His creation.[123]

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[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid., 23–24.
[117] Ibid., 22.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Ibid., 23.
[120] Ibid., 75.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Ibid.

Consequently, the desire and drive for engagement in close interpersonal community relationships are basic to the human genetic design, which is God's handiwork.[124] Subsequently, consistent with the genetic design of the human species, the environment of community, wherein the interaction and living life together with compatible, sensitive, supportive comrades who are likewise pursuing the wisdom and lifestyle of Jesus, is essential to healthy spiritual formation toward the outcome of Christlikeness being cultivated.[125] As is evident in the New Testament Scripture accounts of the practices and functioning of Christian community life among the believers who comprised the first-century church, the element of mutual participation is foundational to bring to fruition positive outcomes toward the stimulation of spiritual growth and Christlikeness. Thus, relative to the intensity of each believer's deliberate engagement and participation in a scripturally grounded honoring Christian community, his/her sense of interpersonal connectedness and spiritual growth, first in fellowship with the triune God, and second with other believers, is regulated.[126] The Scripture depicts this paradigm of engagement when the Apostle John elucidates in 1 John 1:3 (NIV), "We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ."[127] Subsequently, the Scripture in 1 John 1:6-7 affirms that sharing in the Christian community is contingent on the believer having a genuine relationship and fellowship with God and obediently forsaking the ways of darkness and progressively practicing the truth, pursuing conformity in lifestyle with the precepts of God.[128] Bill Thrall and Bruce McNicol corroborate that the Christian community is an essential element relative to spiritual growth, because these theologians elucidate that "spiritual formation is rooted in relationship with

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[124] Ibid.
[125] Ibid., 78.
[126] Ibid., 80.
[127] Ibid.
[128] Ibid.

God and one another."[129]

Thus, the effective interactions in relationships within the Christian community provide the believer with the opportunity to experience grace and trust.[130] Hereby, the believer can ascertain the cognizance of and progressive development of his/her identity as a member of the body of Christ.[131] Additionally, through experiencing grace with God and others through the environment of the Christian community, the believer can discern and mature in how to live out the principles of truth that reflect Christ and grow "in trust, love, grace, humility, dignity, and justice."[132] Warren S. Benson corroborates the essentiality of an individual's engagement in the Christian community relative to spiritual formation and explicates that believers "need each other for encouragement, exhortation, and accountability." [133] Benson further argues that "it is through the power of transformational relationships found in the community setting of church that Christians gain strength and discernment to engage in meaningful and significant ministries both within and the Body of Christ and outside."[134] The by-product of the Christian community of grace is that Jesus is exalted as the centerpiece, and the believers are validated as effective witnesses as others are invited to experience and know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.[135]

Explicitly, the Apostle Paul taught in the Scripture in Romans 8:29 that God's supreme, ultimate plan is for the believer to be "conformed to the image of His Son."[136] Subsequently, evangelism as executed by the church/the believers in obedience to the Great Commission is the means by which the human race, each soul, and people of every nation are brought into a

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[129] Andrews, *The Kingdom Life*, 61.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Ibid.
[133] Clark, Johnson, and Sloat, *Christian Education*, 93.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Andrews, *The Kingdom Life*, 67.
[136] Ray Stedman, *Body Life: The Book That Inspired a Return to the Church's Real Meaning and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Discovery House, 1995), 162.

relationship with God (2 Cor. 5:18-20).[137] Thus, the ultimate outcome of evangelization is that each individual through the rebirth (John 3:3, 7; 2 Cor. 5:17) can obtain restoration of the image and likeness of God as mankind was divinely created, but was subsequently marred by sin through the fall of man as recorded in Genesis 3. Hereby, God's overarching goal and process of the believer maturing into Christlikeness can come to fruition.[138] Notably, in the Scripture according to Ephesians 4:15, Paul declares God's will for the believer to "grow up in every way … into Christ."[139] The Scripture text in Ephesians 4:7-13 describes the essentiality and the mechanics of the Christian community functioning and operating as a spiritual life-giving organism. Paul explicates that Christ distributed spiritual gifts to the body of Christ and the church so that each member could be trained and equipped for the work of the ministry, and to foster the development of the full measure of Christlikeness. Additionally, Ephesians 4:16 delineates that the believers grow and are built up in love as each member of the body performs its work and is fitly joined together, compacted and held together by every supporting ligament. Thus, the Scripture again corroborates that spiritual formation (spiritual growth and maturity) is obtained as the believer chooses to be reconciled unto God by a united relationship with Christ, Himself, and to participate in harmonious, life-giving relationships with other believers in the Christian community of grace.[140]

Thus, the scholarly investigation as examined by the researcher affirmed Christian education as an essential process that is foundational to fostering spiritual formation that entails the pursuit of spiritual growth toward Christian maturity. The functions, segments, and interactions of the Christian community operate as a life-giving organism that provides the

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[137] Ibid., 162.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Ibid., 168.
[140] *King James Study Bible*, 1836.

various forums and supports to promote the development and sustainability of Christian life. Notably, the approaches of Christian education examined by the project were found to be scripturally congruent and shared the targeted, desired outcome of the development of a lifestyle among the believers that is reflective and consistent with the way of Jesus. The major tenets expounded regarding spiritual formation toward the outcome of the restoration of the image of God in mankind are deemed as being universal and relevant to all believers who engage in a process of spiritual growth and development. The premise of the project has been corroborated by pastoral and scholarly investigations. Successively, in chapter 4, the researcher articulates a paradigm for ministry application to address the defined problem. The model application encompasses the delineation of the foundational factors relative to spiritual life, the foundational factors relative to God's image in mankind, the understanding of mankind as a triune being, and the exposition of eight essential elements to foster spiritual formation and Christlikeness.

Chapter 4: Application for Ministry

Foundational Factors Relative to Spiritual Life

When the culmination of this dispensation of grace transpires, some individuals may experience the comparable reward of hearing the Lord say to him/her, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant … enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matt. 25:21).[141] However, other individuals may experience the repercussion of hearing the Lord say, "I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity" (Luke 13:27). As the gospel of Christ is proclaimed, which is "the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes," each individual will be afforded the opportunity to become a good, faithful servant unto the Lord (Rom. 1:16; Matt. 24:14 NKJV).[142] Thus, an individual's spiritual life as a follower of Jesus commences when he/she is born again according to Scripture as Jesus explicated in John 3:3-7. Subsequent to the individual's spiritual new birth, which is a work of God, volitionally, he/she can engage in the essential process of Christian education, which entails the lifelong progressive transformation to become a mature, faithful, and effective follower of Christ.[143] This newly converted believer who is in infancy stage or stage one of discipleship may choose to begin his/her discipleship process in a Christian community setting that uses individual one-to-one mentoring/discipling, small group engagement, study groups, spiritual coaching, or other Christian spiritual formation and training settings/forums. Regardless of the forum in which the believer's discipleship process commences, it is recommended for the leader/discipler to assist the individual in examining the foundational factor relative to this new believer's spiritual life by

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[141] Note: Unless otherwise specified, all Scripture quotations and references in this project are from the King James Version; Dave Earley and Rod Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is…: How to Live the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2013), 19.

[142] Note: NKJV is the abbreviation for the New King James Version.

[143] Clark, Johnson, and Sloat, *Christian Education*, 21; Ronald T. Habermas, *The Complete Disciple: A Model for Cultivating God's Image in Us* (Colorado Springs: Cook Communications Ministries, 2003), 13.

affirming or reaffirming his/her salvation experience through a participatory review of the gospel plan of salvation in accordance with Scripture foundational truth. The process of guiding and reviewing the plan of salvation with the believer allows him/her to have the assurance of salvation based on Scripture and begins to equip the individual with the Scripture to share his/her faith with others. Additionally, having the assurance of salvation by faith based on Scripture understanding and revelation helps to equip the believer to stand firm in his/her convictions when the spiritual, emotional, physical, and social vicissitudes and challenges of life surge, and the enemy accuses him/her of "not being saved" and/or "not being a good Christian."

The following delineation of statements, questions, Scripture, prayer, and declarations is a guide to salvation based on the gospel message that can be used with seekers and new converts at stage one of discipleship engagement:

<div align="center">Guide to Salvation</div>

"God wants you to know..."
1. He loves you and has a plan for you![144]

Read what the Bible says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)[145]

Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." (John 10:10)

However, here is the problem:
2. "Mankind is sinful and separated from God."[146]

We have all done, thought, or said bad things that the Bible calls "sin."
Read what the Bible says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3:23)

The result of sin is death, spiritual separation from God.

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[144] Charles E. Lewis, *Possessing the Keys of the Ministries New Member's Book* (Durham: LL&L Printing & Design Company, 2014), 6.

[145] Ibid.

[146] Ibid.

Now read what the Bible says, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 6:23)

The good news is: "Jesus Christ is God's only provision for mankind's sin."[147]

3. God sent His Son, Jesus, to die for your sins!

Jesus died in our place so we could live with Him in eternity.

Read what the Bible says, "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:8)

However, it did not end with Christ's death on the cross. He rose again and still lives!

"Christ died for our sins … He was buried. … He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."[148]

Read what the Bible says, "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." (1 Cor. 15:3-4)

Jesus is the only way to God.

Read what the Bible says, "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." (John 14:6)

We cannot earn salvation; we are saved by God's grace when we have faith in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Read what the Bible says, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Rom. 10:9-10)

Please answer these questions and confess*:*

a.   Do you believe in your heart that Jesus Christ died on the cross for your sins?

b.   Do you believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead?

c.   Would you like to receive God's forgiveness and make the decision today to turn

     from sin and to Christ?

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[147] Ibid., 6.
[148] Ibid.

4. <u>Receive Him into your life right now. THIS MOMENT!</u>

Pray this prayer:

Lord Jesus, come into my life. Forgive me of all my sins. I believe you are the Son of

God and that you died on the cross for me, was buried, and then rose from the dead.

Thank you for loving me enough to die for me. I accept you into my heart and give

myself totally to you. Give me a new heart and a new spirit now. You are now my Savior;

you are now my Lord! "I am saved!" In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Congratulations! You are now a new creature in Christ!

2 Corinthians 5:17 says,
"Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away;
behold, all things are become new."

You have a whole new life with Jesus to look forward to beginning today!

Thus, the new convert can have the assurance or reaffirmed assurance of having a personal and

proper relationship with and to Jesus Christ.[149] Furthermore, the new believer can commence

his/her lifelong spiritual formation journey as a disciple growing into Christlikeness.[150]

Foundational Factors Relative to God's Image in Mankind

The creation narrative is recorded in Genesis chapter 1 and culminated on the sixth day

with God's declaration and work of the creation of man. Affirmatively, the Scripture states, "Then

God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness,' … So God created mankind in his

own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:26-

27 NIV). Additionally, the Scripture explicates in Genesis 2:7 (NIV), "Then the Lord God formed

a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man

became a living being." Thus, in His own similitude, God made mankind to have dominion in and

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[149] Walter A. Hendrichsen. *Disciples Are Made Not Born: Helping Others Grow to Maturity in Christ* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 1998), 59.
    [150] Ibid.

over all the earth realm, true righteousness, spiritual personality, nature, temperament, disposition, behavior character, moral discernment, and holiness as He does.[151] Notably, when God breathed into man the breath of life, this would be when He imparted into man his spiritual life and capacity for eternal life; his mind, thinking faculties, intellect, emotions, will, character, and personality; his ability to speak and walk; and all of the qualities that made mankind like God.[152] Thus, originally, at creation, mankind's nature and orientation were wholly toward God.[153] G.C. Berkouwer corroborates that man was "good, righteous, holy, and capable in all things to will agreeably to the will of God."[154] Therefore, Paul's exhortation in Ephesians 5:1 for the believers to be imitators of God and the declaration in Romans 8:29 that God had predestined those He foreknew to be conformed to the image of His Son are consistent with God's initial plan for mankind to be in the likeness and image of the Godhead. Notably, the work of sanctification that Paul describes in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 is that the God of peace would perform and preserve the believer as blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in his/her whole spirit, soul, and body, which is the state of wholesomeness in which God created mankind.[155] Subsequently, the repercussion of the fall of mankind in Genesis 3 is when God's creation of man in His image and likeness became marred. After the commission of the sin of disobedience, man undergoes a radical change in his nature and is wholly turned away from God.[156] In Genesis 2:17 (NKJV), God warns of the impending consequence of man's willful violation of the prohibition given by God and states, "for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." Notably, the Scriptures teach about three types of death: physical death, which entails the separation of the spirit and

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[151] *King James Study Bible*, 7; G.C. Berkouwer, *Studies in Dogmatics Man: The Image of God* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), 38–39.

[152] Ibid., 7–8; Habermas, *The Complete Disciple*, 26.

[153] Berkouwer, *Studies in Dogmatics Man*, 38.

[154] Ibid.

[155] Habermas, *The Complete Disciple*, 27.

[156] Berkouwer, *Studies in Dogmatics Man*, 38.

soul from the body, spiritual death, which entails the "separation of the individual from God,"
and eternal death or second death, which entails "separation from God forever which is the final
state of the lost person in the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:10, 14).[157] Consequently, man's fall into sin
constituted spiritual death because "man lost his communion" and intimate fellowship with
God.[158] Man's spiritual death as Berkouwer explicates entailed the dying of man's
"understanding that was adorned with a true and saving knowledge of his Creator, and of
spiritual things."[159] Additionally, with the Fall, the state of uprightness of man's heart and will,
the purity of man's affections, and the holiness of the whole man in which mankind was
originally formed and created died out.[160] Thus, a plan and process of salvation, redemption,
restoration, reconciliation, and transformation of man's spiritual life were necessary. The
Scripture, Genesis 3:15, states the loving Father's first prophetic pronouncement of the gospel of
redemption.[161] Thus, an essential foundational factor is for the new convert and/or the young
disciple to understand that God's overarching goal is for him/her to be like Him (Eph. 5:1).
Subsequently, through the continuous engagement of Christian education, the believer can have
the resources and support essential to the pursuit of spiritual maturity as manifested by
progressive Christlikeness in his/her daily walk.

Understanding Mankind as a Triune Being: Spirit, Soul, and Body

The Scripture in I Thessalonians 5:23 describes mankind as tripartite-spirit, soul, and
body.[162] Relative to being created in the image and likeness of God, mankind is a spirit being.

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[157] *King James Study Bible*, 10.
[158] Berkouwer, *Studies in Dogmatics Man*, 38.
[159] Ibid., 39.
[160] Ibid.
[161] *King James Study Bible*, 13–14.
[162] Watchman Nee, *The Spiritual Man*, Vol. 1 (New York: Christian Fellowship Publishers, Inc., 1969), 21; Ray S. Anderson, *On Being Human Essays in Theological Anthropology* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1991), 207–214.

Mankind possesses a soul that encompasses his/her mind, will, and emotions, and mankind lives in a body.[163] How mankind formed a tripart nature was described in the previous section, "Foundational Factors Relative to God's Image in Mankind," namely, the references to Scriptures in Genesis 1:26-27 and Genesis 2:7. The enlightenment of the working knowledge of the differentiation of spirit and soul concurrent with the distinction in their functions is essential to individuals who pursue growth and development in spiritual life and maturity.[164] Subsequently, the ability to discern what is the spirit and spiritual undergirds the believer to walk according to the spirit that is consistent with the way of Jesus.[165]

Diagram one is a functional representation of mankind that employs the three circles to communicate the relationship of mankind's spirit, soul, and body.[166]

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[163] Nee, *The Spiritual Man*, 35–38.
[164] Ibid, 11
[165] Ibid.
[166] Andrew Wommack, *Spirit, Soul and Body Study Guide* (Colorado Springs, CO: Andrew Wommack Ministries, Inc., 2008), 24.
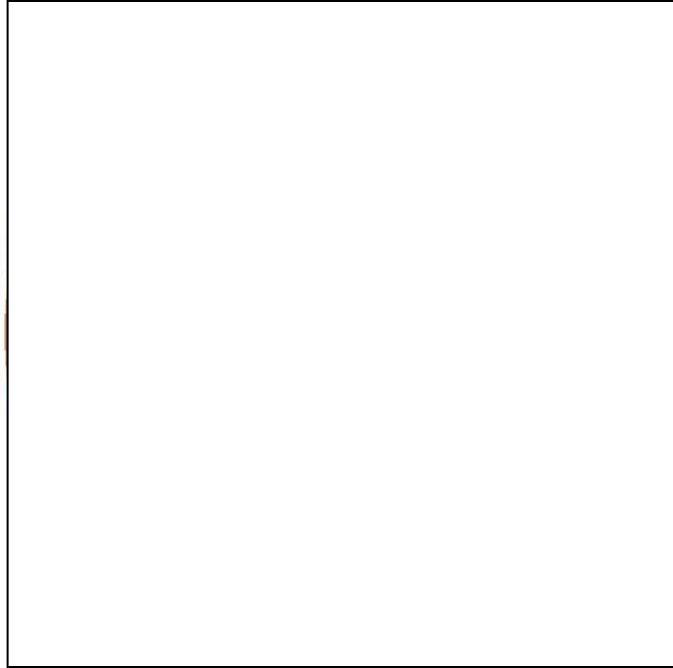
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Diagram one[167]

Replicating the image of a target structure, the outer circle represents mankind's body

and is the house in which he/she lives.[168] Notably, the body is the dimension of mankind that

deals with the outward physical realm; thereby, it can be physically seen and touched and

provides world consciousness.[169] Accordingly, the body holds the five senses: sight, smell,

hearing, taste, and touch.[170] The first inward circle represents the soul, which is the inner

dimension of mankind and comprises his/her mental realm.[171] Thus, being the organ of the

mental realm, the soul is the component of mankind that is the intellect—it reasons and thinks.[172]

Notably, the soul is the real self-life of mankind that reveals his/her personality and is the organ

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[167] New Covenant Grace, Spirit, Soul and Body (Pt1), http://www.newcovenantgrace.com/spirit-soul-and-body-pt1/, accessed October 26, 2019.

[168] Wommack, *Spirit, Soul and Body Study Guide*, 19.

[169] Nee, *The Spiritual Man*, 26; Wommack, *Spirit, Soul and Body Study Guide*, 19.

[170] Lester Sumrall, *Spirit, Soul & Body*: *Bring Wholeness and Joy Into Your Life* (New Kensington: Whitaker House, 1995), 55.

[171] Wommack, *Spirit, Soul and Body Study Guide*, 19.

[172] Nee, *The Spiritual Man*, 35–40.

of self-consciousness.[173] The intricacies of mankind's soul—the mind, will, and emotions—operate in a close relationship with mankind's body.[174] Subsequently, through the soul, the body is directed "what to do, when to do it, and how to do it."[175] The second inner circle is the center, represents mankind's spirit, and is the core of his/her being.[176] Having been created in the likeness of God, mankind was designed to be governed by his spirit. The spirit is the dimension of mankind that deals with the spiritual realm and is deemed as the constituent of God-consciousness.[177] Thus, the spirit is the component or spiritual organ through which mankind communes and creates fellowships with God and is able to perceive and worship God.[178]

Consequently, with the aforementioned fall of mankind, mankind experienced spiritual death and lost the indwelling and communion of the Spirit of God within mankind's spirit. Therefore, now being spiritually dead, mankind is subject to being ruled by the dictates of what emanates from the soulish realm of his/her mind/intellect, will, and emotions. The soul touches the spirit and the body.[179] Watchman Nee elucidates that "the power of the soul is most substantial," and notably, at creation, and until the fall of mankind, the power of the soul was totally under the influence of the spirit, and the strength of the soul emanated from the spirit's strength.[180] However, because of mankind's spiritual death, the whole man was no longer controlled by the influence of the spirit through the soul, which subsequently exercised the spirit's guidance and directives to the body to obey.[181] Thus, in this fallen spiritual state, mankind primarily functions out of and is governed by the soulish realm and believes "what

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[173] Ibid., 26; Sumrall, *Spirit, Soul & Body*, 35.
[174] Sumrall, *Spirit, Soul & Body*, 35.
[175] Ibid.
[176] Wommack, *Spirit, Soul and Body Study Guide*, 19–20.
[177] Nee, *The Spiritual Man*, 26.
[178] Ibid., 26.
[179] Ibid., 27; Wommack, 20.
[180] Nee, *The Spiritual Man*, 27.
[181] Ibid.

he/she thinks and feels is reality."[182] Diagram two represents mankind by employing three circles to illustrate the relationship of mankind's spirit, soul, and body after the fall of mankind and depicts mankind's soul as the most prominent component of the whole being.[183]

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Diagram two [184]

Notably, in mankind's rebellion wherein "living in communion with God" was forfeited, and as recorded in Genesis 3:22-24, mankind was expelled from the Garden of Eden, his God-provided paradise.[185] The consequence of mankind being driven out of the Garden of Eden with a guard set to prevent mankind's reentry indicates the gravity of sin and depth of mankind's fall.[186] Berkouwer elucidates that throughout the Old Testament, God's displeasure with

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[182] Wommack, *Spirit, Soul and Body Study Guide*, 20.
[183] Ibid., 24.
[184] New Covenant Grace, Spirit, Soul and Body (Pt1), http://www.newcovenantgrace.com/spirit-soul-and-body-pt1/; Note original diagram used was modified to show the soul as the most prominent component of mankind's total being after the Fall.
[185] Berkouwer, *Studies in Dogmatics Man*, 142.
[186] Ibid.

mankind's corruption is evident.[187] Additionally, the New Testament affirms the "radicality of

sin" and its negative effects on mankind's whole being.[188] Berkouwer further delineates that

Jesus' preaching "presupposes this undeniable reality of sin," whereas on one occasion, Jesus

describes and addresses His listeners as evil (Matt. 7:11).[189] Thus, when Jesus is questioned

regarding His dining with tax collectors and sinners, Jesus declares, "For I did not come to call

the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Matt. 9:11-13 NKJV).[190] Hence, the commencement

of the fulfillment of God's promise of His divine grace as was declared in Genesis 3:15 was

manifested. The Old Testament progressively unveils the account of how by God's compassion,

a remnant of Israel was preserved from the judgement and wrath of God because of Israel's

continuous rebellion and disobedience to His laws and governance.[191] Similarly, the New

Testament discloses how God's compassion made provisions for the ultimate sacrifice and

atonement for the penalty of mankind's sins to be appeased, as is declared in John 3:16-17. Thus,

Jesus affirms that the relativizing of mankind's alienation from the life of God, which in essence

is the underpinning for his/her being radically sinful and evil, is not an option to reconcile or

escape mankind's lost condition.[192] In the initial verses 1-7 of John chapter 3, Jesus reveals the

remedy for mankind's lost, corrupt condition when He answers Nicodemus' inquiry, "…, Except

a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."… Jesus answers, "Verily, verily, I say

unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of

God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel

not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again" (NIV). Jesus further explicates regarding the

remedy to mankind's lost condition, according to John 3:15 (NKJV), "that whoever believes in

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[187] Ibid.
[188] Ibid.
[189] Ibid.
[190] Ibid.
[191] Ibid.
[192] Ibid.

Him should not perish but have eternal life." Accordingly, per the instructions in Romans 10:9-10 and Ephesians 2:8-9, when with the mouth an individual confesses unto salvation and receives by faith of the grace of God in the Lord Jesus Christ, he/she has all the benefits of the substitutionary death and resurrection of Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV) describes the state of the individual who has received this benefit of new life in Christ, "Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." The Scripture further teaches that this new life is from and is of God, who has reconciled us (mankind) to Himself, making peace with us through Jesus Christ and acquitting mankind of the guilt and penalty of sin (2 Cor. 5:18). Subsequently, being born of the spirit by receiving the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the "power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes," is the provision by which each individual can experience God's original design for mankind to have a personal relationship, walk, and fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:16 NIV; 1 John 1:23). Confirmatively, 1 Peter 1:23 (NKJV) elucidates that mankind is "born again, not of corruptible (perishable) seed, but incorruptible (imperishable) seed through the Word of God which lives and abides."

Notably, in the Scripture in 1 Peter 2:2, Apostle Peter instructs and exhorts all believers in the Christian community of faith to pursue spiritual growth and to have an avid hunger and thirst for the Word of God.[193] Now, being regenerated through the experience of the new birth, the individual is as a newborn baby with the Spirit of God alive in him/her. Thus, as a believer, the individual has come into the first stage of discipleship and can progress to stage two, which entails the process of growing into Christian maturity.[194] Illustration A is a representation of mankind and employs the outline of a human figure to communicate the factor of mankind's

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[193] Michael Rydelink and Michael Vanlaningham, eds., *The Moody Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2014), 1960.
[194] Earley and Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is*, 128–129.

spirit, which is as a baby at the time of his/her spiritual birth of being born again unto salvation.

Illustration A[195]

As the believer chooses to participate and engage in Christian education through a discipleship

process in a Christian community setting, he/she will have the opportunity to benefit from the

spiritual ministry gifts that have been set in the Church, the body of Christ, to promote and foster

continuous spiritual growth and maturity toward Christlikeness (Eph. 4:11-13). Subsequently, as

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[195] This drawing is used by permission from Wilbert J. O'Neal.

the believer progresses in stage two of his/her discipleship process of Christian spiritual formation and training, the spiritual transformation of the believer is being conformed to the image His Son, Jesus Christ, as God predestined will be increasingly more manifested (Rom.8:29).[196] Thus, the believer is progressively growing into being more and more like the Son, Jesus Christ, who said in John 8:29a (NKJV), "for I always do those things that please Him." Jesus affirms that He did not seek to please Himself but to please the Father who sent Him (John 5:30; John 6:38). Additionally, Jesus exalted doing the will of God as being utmost in that He declares in John 4:34 (NKJV), "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work." The Scripture text, Romans 8:14, explicates that individuals led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. Thus, Jesus modeled walking as a blameless son being whole in His spirit, soul (mind/intellect, will, emotions), and body (1 Thess. 5:23).

Illustration B represents mankind and employs the outline of a human figure to communicate the factor of mankind's spirit having progressively developed in maturity toward attaining "the knowledge of the Son of God, toward a perfect man, and toward the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13-14). Thus, spiritual growth and development encompasses growing up into being a steady, stable witnesses of the new life in Christ and not as wavering children (Eph. 4:13-14). The enlargement of the space that represents mankind's spirit reflects the spiritual growth that has transpired subsequent to him/her becoming a disciple of Christ who has engaged in a progressive spiritual transformation and growth process. The illustration depicts mankind's born-again spirit being in control as the locus of influence of mankind's total being, in a similar manner to how Jesus walked and in accordance with God's creation of mankind in His image and likeness.

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[196] Earley and Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is*, 126–129.

Illustration B[197]
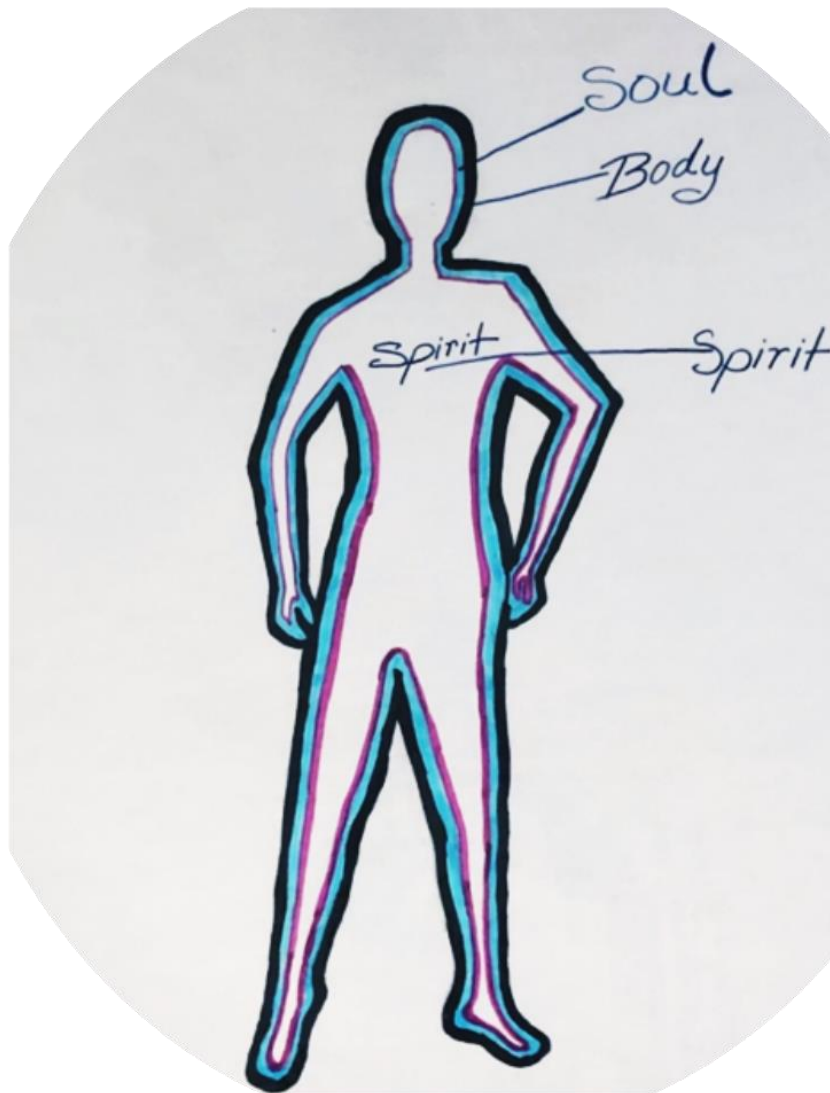
Eight Essential Elements to Foster Spiritual Formation and Christlikeness

Effective Christian education in a church setting should stimulate growth. Whether or not

the believer engages in a discipleship process in a Christian community setting that uses

individual one-to-one mentoring/discipling, small group engagement, study groups, spiritual

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[197] This drawing is used by permission from Wilbert J. O'Neal.

coaching, or other Christian spiritual formation and training settings/forums, there are eight elements essential to spiritual growth. These elements are amenable to being inclusive in the approaches of Christian education and are foundational to the tenets of spiritual formation delineated in this project. The term "disciple" identifies when each believer decides to be as a follower of Jesus Christ. Additionally, the term "disciple" is the base component of Jesus' mandate to the Church, which is to make disciples. As an acrostic, the term "disciple" contains the eight essential elements that this project has determined are essential and foundational to Christian education that fosters spiritual formation and Christlikeness. The paradigm of essential elements of Christian education rendered by this research project is Disciple—**D**edication, **I**ntegrity, **S**tewardship, **C**ompassion, **I**mmersion in the Word, **P**rayer, **L**earning, and **E**xample. The Christian education paradigm of this project comprises training segments designed to stimulate the growth and development of eight elements essential to spiritual formation and exhibiting Christlikeness in the believer's life.

Training Segment 1: Dedication

Bible Passages:

Luke 9:23 (AMP)[198]; Matthew 22:36-37 (NIV); John 4:34 (NKJV); Matthew 26:38-42 (NIV)

Introduction

The examination of the Scripture texts for this element reveals that Jesus explicates that the development of discipleship constitutes spiritual growth toward Christlikeness requires dedication to the level of a total commitment to following Him. By definition, the term dedication is the quality of being committed, loyal, or devoted to a task, purpose, cause, or idea.[199] Additionally,

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[198] Note: AMP as used in this project essay is the abbreviation for the Amplified Bible.
[199] Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. "dedication," accessed January 28, 2020, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dedication.

dedication can be described as the complete devotion and faith in someone or something.[200] Jesus exemplifies this element and attribute of dedication when He declares to the disciples that His completing and accomplishing the work that the Father had sent Him to do was as necessary spiritually as food is necessary physically. Subsequently, in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prays the ultimate prayer of dedication. The final recorded statement of Jesus' second prayer in the Garden is "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done" (Matt. 26:42 NIV). Hereby, Jesus expressed His total submission to finishing the work that the Father had sent Him to do as the sacrificial lamb for mankind's sin.

Expositional Application of the Spiritual Growth Element: Dedication

Per the aforementioned Scripture text and relative to the description of what dedication encompasses, an individual who makes a volitional decision to follow Jesus as His disciple must

1. Deny his/herself, which entails setting aside and forsaking all selfish interests.[201]

2. Take up his/her cross daily, expressing a willingness to endure whatever may come.

3. Follow Jesus, which entails believing in Him, conforming to His example in living, and if need be, suffering or perhaps dying because of his/her faith in Jesus.

4. Obey the commandment that is of "supreme importance and priority," which entails the individual loving the Lord God with his/her whole being—spirit, soul, and body.[202]
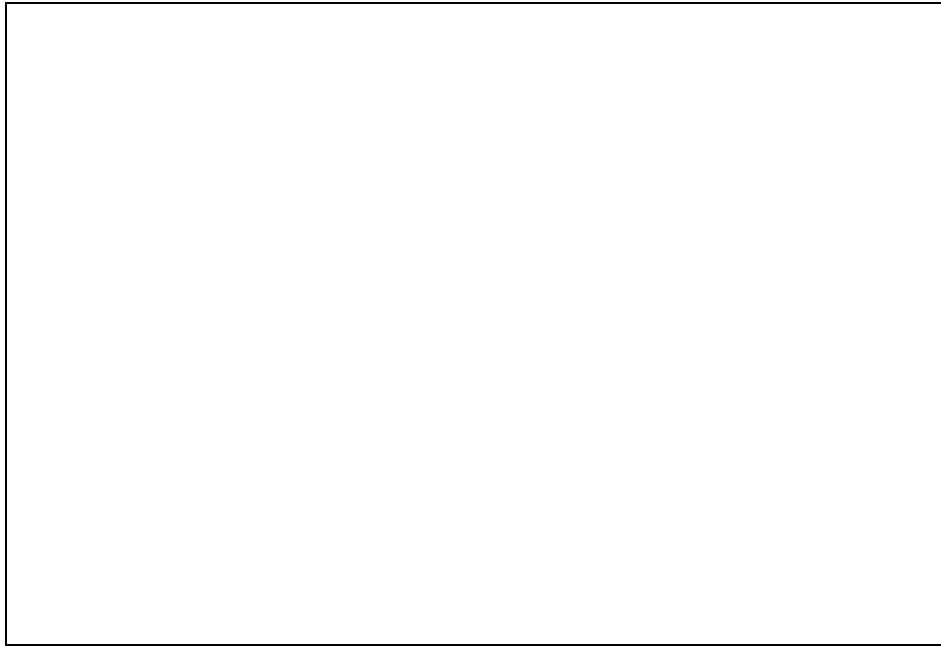
Symbolic Motif of Dedication:[203]

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[200] Ibid.

[201] Earley and Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is*, 86.

[202] *King James Study Bible*, 1467.

[203] Clip art, White OakTree, WestHartford, CT-June17,2013.jpg…2288(w) x 1712(h) pixels | 72 DPI | 2003 KB | JPG, accessed November 14, 2019.

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The oak tree is the selected symbolic comparative motif for the spiritual growth element and Christlike virtue of dedication. The oak tree stands tall and is sturdy. Naturally, oak wood is dependable because of its magnitude of strength, elasticity, and durability.[204] The characteristics that may be observed in the daily lifestyle of a dedicated disciple who is being spiritually formed and growing into the likeness of Christ include dependability, stability, endurance, and perseverance. The functionality and usefulness of the oak tree in the ecosystem in regard to its value to the plant and animal kingdoms are reflective of the qualities of the element of dedication. Thus, the oak tree, which is readily observable in the day-to-day environment, is a symbolic reminder and inspiration to the believer of his/her pursuit of spiritual formation and development of Christlikeness in the area of dedication as a follower of Jesus.

Training Segment 2: Integrity

Bible Passages:

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[204] Encycopedia.com, s.v. "oak," accessed November 14, 2019, https://www.encyclopedia.com/plants-and-animals/plants/plants/oak.

Leviticus 19:11; Matthew 22:16 (NIV); Mark 12:14 (NIV); Psalm 41:12; Proverbs 10:9 (NIV);

Proverbs 11:3 (NKJV)

Introduction

In the synoptic Gospels, Matthew and Mark record Jesus as having been referred to as "a man of

integrity" by a select group of Pharisees and the Herodians. Although their intent was to use

flattery as a means to ensnare and embolden Jesus to speak dishonorably against Rome, the

element of His impeccable integrity was recognized.[205] This delegation of Jesus' opponents notes

and describes that in dealing with others, Jesus is uncompromisingly truthful, honest, and

impartial and that He sincerely teaches and advocates for "the way of God in accordance with the

truth" (Matt. 22:16; Mark 12:14).[206] *The Strongest NIV Exhaustive Concordance* delineates the

meaning of the word integrity as used in the Gospel passages referenced for this element as

genuine, reliable, and trustworthy.[207] Notably, these descriptors are congruent with the character

assessment of Jesus as rendered by His opponents, which were also affirmed by His savvy

response to their attempted plot of ensnarement. The interpretation of the Hebrew word for

integrity as used in the Old Testament is consistent with its meaning and usage in the New

Testament. Particularly, the descriptors given in *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the*

Bible for the Hebrew terms translated as integrity include "completeness, perfect, upright, and

moral innocence."[208] Accordingly, Webster delineates the following definitions for integrity: "(1)

firm adherence to a code of especially moral values; (2) incorruptibility, an unimpaired condition;

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[205] Rydelink and Vanlaningham, *The Moody Bible Commentary*, 1494 and 1539.

[206] Ibid., 1539.

[207] Edward W. Goodrick and John R. Kohlenberger III, *The Strongest NIV Exhaustive Concordance* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 239.

[208] James Strong, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990), 8537.

(3) soundness, the quality or state of being complete or undivided; and (4) completeness."[209]

Thus, in day-to-day living and in responding to life's challenges, integrity is doing what is right because it is right at all times, which encompasses when no earthly person is watching.

Expositional Application of the Spiritual Growth Element: Integrity

Per the Scripture texts referenced above and relative to the description of what integrity encompasses, an individual who makes a volitional decision to follow Jesus as His disciple must

1. In the midst of adversity, being forsaken, and/or and challenged as per the examples of David and Jesus, to maintain uprightness, righteousness, and goodness.

2. In daily living, be uncompromising, and without rationalizing, make choices consistent with the way of God according to the counsel, wisdom, and teaching of the Scriptures.[210]

3. Hereby, electing to live morally blameless and purely, "having nothing to hide" and/or "nothing to fear."[211]

4. Live honestly and refrain from deceitful interactions and any practice of lying, which may include "distortions of the truth in word, exaggeration, actions, attitudes, or silence."[212]

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[209] Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. "integrity," accessed January 28, 2020, https://www.merriam-webster.com//integrity.
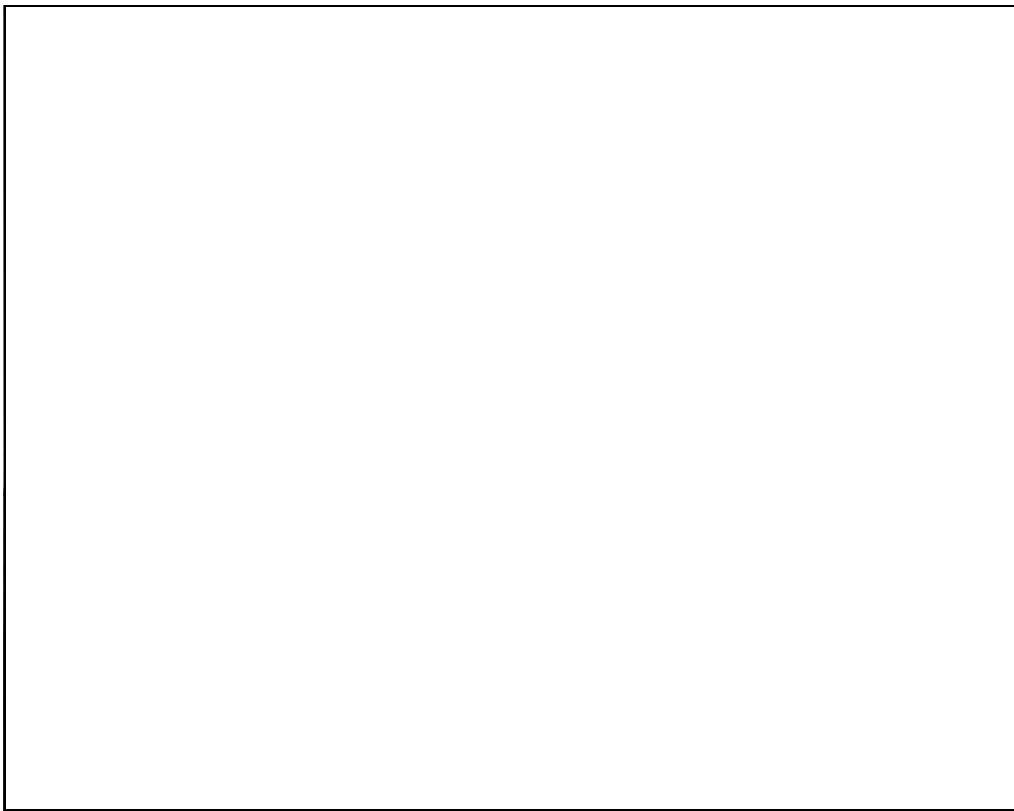
[210] Chuck Broughton, *The Character of a Follower of Jesus Design for Discipleship 4* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2006), 61.

[211] Rydelink and Vanlaningham, *The Moody Bible Commentary*, 912.

[212] Broughton, *The Character of a Follower of Jesus Design for Discipleship 4,* 71.

Symbolic Motif of Integrity:[213]

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The white lily is the selected symbolic comparative motif for the spiritual growth element and

Christlike virtue of integrity. As a flower, the white lily has a broad cultural association with the

qualities of beauty, purity, and modesty.[214] Notably, in "religion and art," the white lily is a

symbol of purity and is commonly employed during the Easter season observance as the

representative flower of the Resurrection.[215] In Scripture, as recorded in the Song of Songs 2:2,

Solomon uses the lily to describe and to extol the beauty of his beloved, compared with his other

daughters, and declares, "As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters." [216]

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[213] Andrea Howland-Myers, "What Is the Meaning of White Lilly?" accessed November 15, 2019, https://www.hunker.com/12350961/what-is-the-meaning-of-white-lilly.
[214] Ibid.
[215] The Columbia Encyclopedia, 6th ed., s.v. "lily," accessed November 29, 2019, *Encyclopedia.com*, https://www.encyclopedia.com/reference/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/lily.
[216] Ibid.; Rydelink and Vanlaningham, *The Moody Bible Commentary*, 993.

Additionally, in the Scripture, Jesus affirms the exceptional natural beauty of the lily in the excerpt of His discourse in Matthew 6:28-29.[217] Particularly, in Roman Catholicism, the white lily is "strongly associated with the purity of the Virgin Mary."[218] Moreover, the white lily is "commonly referred to as the Madonna Lily."[219] Thus, the white lily, which has general cultural associations in the day-to-day environment, is a symbolic reminder and inspiration to the believer of his/her pursuit of spiritual formation and development of Christlikeness in the area of integrity as a follower of Jesus.

Training Segment 3: Stewardship

Bible Passages:

Genesis 2:15; Psalm 24:1; Luke 16:1-13; Matthew 25:14-27; Luke 19:11-23; I Corinthians 12:12, 18; I Corinthians 4:1-2 (NLT)[220]; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19; I Corinthians 6:20

Introduction

Stewardship as defined by Merriam-Webster is "the conducting, supervising, or managing of something; especially the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care."[221] The Learner's Dictionary concisely describes stewardship as "the activity or job of protecting and being responsible for something."[222] In accordance with the scholarly explication of the term, Charles Bugg distinctly defined Christian stewardship as "utilizing and managing all resources God provides for the glory of God and the betterment of His creation."[223] Generally, Christendom stewardship has primarily been associated with the oversight and management of

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[217] The Columbia Encyclopedia, "lily."

[218] Ibid.

[219] Ibid.

[220] Note: NLT is the abbreviation for New Living Translation.

[221] Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. "stewardship," accessed December 1, 2019, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/stewardship.

[222] Learner's Dictionary, s.v. "stewardship," accessed December 1, 2019, http://www.learnersdictionary.com/definition/stewardship.

[223] Ibid.

money and finances.[224] However, the Scripture provides enlightenment that as a disciple of Jesus

Christ, responsible stewardship encompasses accountability to God for each aspect of his/her

life.[225] The Scripture elucidates that Jesus, the chief disciple, whom the believer is following and

is pursuing while growing into His likeness as our High Priest can sympathize with the believer's

weaknesses because He was "in all points tempted" as each individual is but "yet without sin"

(Heb. 4:15 NKJV). Jesus affirms in John 8:29b (NIV), "for I always do what pleases Him." Thus,

Jesus demonstrates stalwart stewardship in the areas of life that each believer has been given the

responsibility to manage and govern, including areas of spiritual life, relationships, ministry work,

vocation, gifts/talents, time management, money, total health and wellness, care for the physical

body, physical/temporal goods, resources, and assets.[226] Jesus expresses to the Father that he has

demonstrated faithful stewardship in the ultimate task of keeping those whom the Father had

given unto Him who would become the Apostles through which the ministry of the execution of

the Great Commission would be commenced and would establish the Church after Jesus'

ascension from the earth (Matt. 10:1-3; John 17:12).

Expositional Application of the Spiritual Growth Element: Stewardship

Per the Scripture texts referenced above and relative to the description of what stewardship

encompasses, an individual who makes a volitional decision to follow Jesus as His disciple must

1. Embrace and responsibly function guided by the enlightenment that God's original plan
   and directive design was for mankind to be the manager and keeper of all of the resources
   that God placed in the earth to yield provision for him/her and all creation.

2. Embrace and responsibly function guided by the enlightenment that God is sovereign,

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[224] Ibid.

[225] Chuck Broughton, *Growing in Discipleship Design for Discipleship 6* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2006), 25.

[226] Ibid.

which means that mankind is not the owner of him/herself but has been granted the privilege to use, manage, partake, enjoy, and benefit from all resources and goods available to mankind in this earth and world.

3. As a member of the body of Christ maximize the set function and work given to him/her by God as it pleases Him.

4. By the power of the Holy Spirit, be an effective witness of Christ and manager of the gospel in executing the mandate of disseminating the Word of God to the world so that all can be reconciled to God by experiencing the new birth.

Symbolic Motif of Stewardship: [227]

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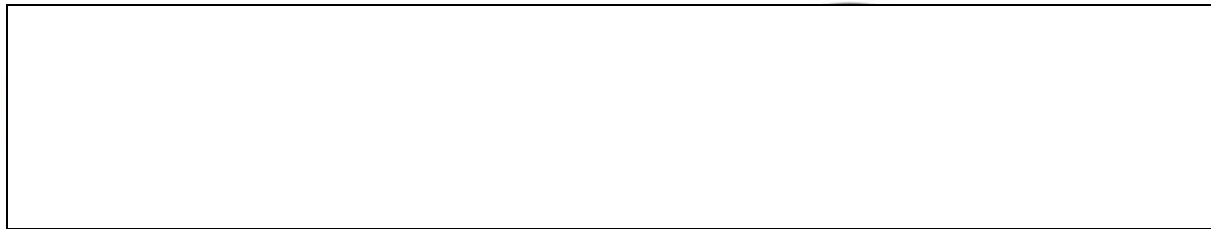
The coins are the selected symbolic motif for the spiritual growth element and Christlike virtue of stewardship. Money, as aforementioned, has a strong association with stewardship among the constituents of the Christian community. Moreover, in the parables referenced among the related texts for this element, Jesus uses money as a component in these teachings. Specifically, Jesus explicates that the extent of faithfulness in handling and managing wealth is an indicator of an individual's love and commitment to living and walking as a servant of God. Additionally, Paul expounds in I Timothy 6:10 (NKJV) that "for the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness." Hence, having balance, accountability, and control in the management of money and wealth is foundational to the

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[227] Clip art, physical-Whydo coins insomeounresdisplay…848(w) x 185 (h) pixels 172 | DPI | 260 KB | PNG, accessed December 1, 2019.

spiritual growth and development of faithful stewardship in all areas of the believer's life. Thus,

the coins represent all the aspects of money that are used, handled, and readily observable in the

day-to-day environment and serve as a symbolic reminder and inspiration to the believer of

his/her pursuit of spiritual formation and development of Christlikeness in the area of stewardship

as a follower of Jesus.

Training Segment 4: Compassion

Bible Passages:

Matthew 7:12; Matthew 22:39 (NIV); Matthew 18:21-33; Matthew 20:30-34;

Mark 1:41; Mark 8:2-9; Luke 7:12-13; Luke 15:20; 1 Peter 3:8; 1 John 3:17

Introduction

The descriptors given in *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* for the Hebrew

and Greek terms translated as "compassion" include "love, show mercy, spare, pity, mutually

commiserative, feel sympathy, and to be touched with the feeling of."[228] Specifically, in regard to

New Testament Greek terms translated as compassion, W. E. Vines delineates the following

meanings: "to have pity, a feeling of distress through the ills of others; to be moved as to one's

inwards, to be moved with compassion, to yearn with compassion; to suffer with another, to be

affected similarly; to have mercy, to show kindness, by beneficence, or assistance."[229]

 The definition of compassion explicated by Merriam-Webster and the aforementioned

biblical scholars is unequivocally congruent. Webster's definition explicitly describes what is

observed in the Scripture, which entails "sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together

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[228] Strong, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, 7355, 2560, 7349, 4697, 4835, 2550, and 7356.

[229] W.E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, and William White, *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of W.E. Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1985), 116.

with a desire to alleviate it."[230] The demonstrations of compassion by God, Jesus, and others

were, as Webster additionally states, "compassion implies pity coupled with an urgent desire to

aid or to spare."[231]

Although compassion is a prominent virtue exemplified and observed in Old Testament

Scripture, the focus of this project entails New Testament Scripture passages because the subject

of the project entails fostering the examination and emulation of the way of Jesus. Notably,

accounts of Jesus' compassion in Scripture include "for the multitude (Matt. 9:36; 14:14; 15:32),

the unfortunate (Matt. 20:34), the leper (Mark 1:41), and the bereaved (Luke 7:13)."[232]

Expositional Application of the Spiritual Growth Element: Compassion

Per the Scripture texts referenced above and relative to the description of what compassion

encompasses, an individual who makes a volitional decision to follow Jesus as His disciple must

1. In interacting, engaging, and/or responding to another and/or others, consistently be
   guided, governed, and influenced by what is universally known as the Golden Rule: "Do
   unto others as you would have them do unto you."

2. Consistently have and demonstrate feelings of care and concern for another individual to
   the degree of being able to show genuine empathy, seek to give aide, and help relieve the
   individual's suffering, need, and/or lack.

3. Maintain being loving, humble, forgiving, and merciful when interacting, engaging, and/or
   responding to another who is being or has been subject to evil, insulting, and/or overall
   impious influences or conduct.

4. Live as a vessel that the Lord can freely use as a conduit to bring blessings that pertain to

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[230] Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. "compassion," accessed December 6, 2019, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/compassion.

[231] Ibid.

[232] Frank C. Thompson, "Compassion," Thompson Chain Reference (1908), accessed December 6, 2019, https://www.studylight.org/concordances/tcr/c/compassion.html.

life and godliness to another and/or others.

Symbolic Motif of Compassion:[233]

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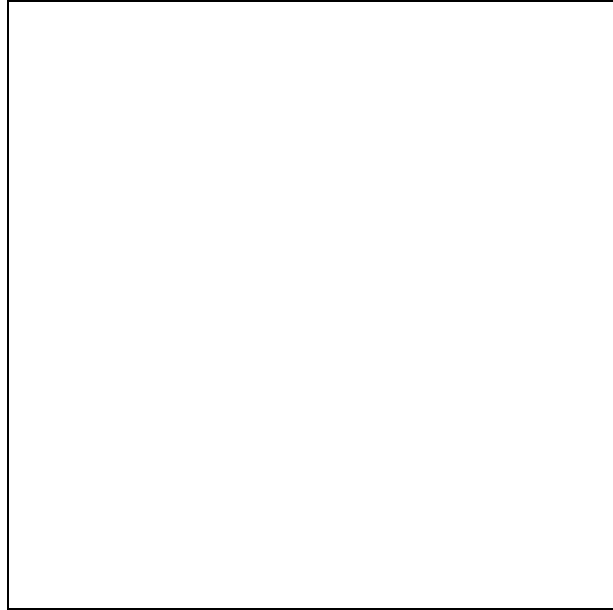
Hands are the selected symbolic motif for the spiritual growth element and Christlike virtue of compassion. The distinguishing factor of the exhibition of compassion is that having the feeling of sympathy, being mutually commiserative, and/or being touched with the feeling of another become a stimulus to take action to provide aid and/or relieve from distress."[234] Jesus is moved by compassion in each scriptural account and responds by initiating the use of self in a manner to relieve suffering or to fulfill the need of another and/or others. Thus, hands that are readily observable and available in day-to-day living are a symbolic reminder and inspiration to the believer of his/her pursuit of spiritual formation and development of Christlikeness in the area of compassion as a follower of Jesus.

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[233] Clip art, group-of-hands300 (w) x 299 (h) pixels| 72 DP 12 KB |JPG, accessed December 6, 2019.

[234] Strong, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, 7355, 2560, 7349, 4697, 4835, 2550, and 7356.

Training Segment 5: Immersion in the Word

Bible Passages:

Joshua 1:8 (NLT); Psalm 119:8, 9, 11, 128; Proverbs 7:3; Romans 12:2; Isaiah 55:8-9 (NCV)[235]

Introduction

Immersion in the Word is an analogy for the state of an individual being completely submerged in water during a baptism.[236] Related synonyms for the term immersion include "absorption, attention, concentration, engrossment, and enthrallment."[237] Each of these synonyms can serve as a comparable descriptive term as an indicator of the intensity of this element, such as absorption, attention, concentration, engrossment, or enthrallment in the Word. Thus, the concept of immersion in the Word is the essence of what constitutes the process of and the act of the spiritual discipline of meditation as illuminated in Scripture. The descriptors given in *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* for the Hebrew and Greek terms translated as meditate include "to murmur, to ponder, imagine, mutter, speak, study, talk, utter, converse with oneself aloud, declare, muse, to take care of, and to resolve in mind."[238] *The Strongest NIV Exhaustive Concordance* delineates the following additional meanings for the terms translated as meditate: "the act of thoughtful deliberation with the implication of speaking to oneself, tell, think, and deep in thought to consider, and think on."[239] Notably, the definition of the term meditate in Merriam-Webster includes "to engage in contemplation or reflection; to focus one's thoughts on, reflect on or ponder over; and to plan or project in the mind" and is in accordance with the aforementioned biblical explication.[240] Another term that is relevant to define and describe the meaning, process,

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[235] Note: NCV as used in this project essay is the abbreviation for the New Century Version.
[236] Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. "immersion," accessed December 8, 2019, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/immersion.
[237] Ibid.
[238] Strong, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, 7878, 1897, and 3191.
[239] Goodrick and Kohlenberger, *The Strongest NIV Exhaustive Concordance*, 2047 and 8488.
[240] Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. "meditate," accessed December 8, 2019, https://www.merriam-

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and action of immersion in the Word or to meditate in the Word is imbue. According to Merriam-Webster, imbue means "to permeate or influence" and "implies the introduction of a quality that fills and permeates the whole being."[241] Further examination of the synonyms for imbue, which include "infuse, suffuse, ingrain, inoculate, and leaven," affirm the concept and action or process of introducing "one thing into another to affect it throughout."[242] Hence, the goal of spiritual growth is immersion in the Word or to meditate in the Word, in which imbuing the Word is practiced to the degree that it affects and influences mankind's total being—spirit, soul, and body toward Christlikeness. In Luke 4:1-13, Jesus modeled the advantage of being immersed in the Word, that is, by responding in accordance with the truth of the Word that Jesus resisted each of the temptations that Satan brought to Him. Additionally, Jesus attests that His thoughts were that of the Father's when He declares to the disciples that the words and teachings that He delivered were not His own but His Father's, who had sent Him (John 14:10, 24). Thus, because the individual is progressively transformed by the renewing of his/her mind by meditation, subsequently, he/she will be able to think thoughts and act in ways that are increasingly more consistent with the thoughts and way of God, which is indicative of growing into Christlikeness.

Expositional Application of the Spiritual Growth Element: Immersion in the Word

Per the Scripture texts referenced for the element and relative to the description of what immersion in the Word encompasses, an individual who makes a volitional decision to follow Jesus as His disciple must meditate on the Word as instructed in the Scripture. Using the term "meditate" as an acronym, the steps of meditation for a disciple to execute to become immersed in the Word are as follows:

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webster.com/dictionary/meditate.

[241] Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. "imbue," accessed December 8, 2019, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/imbue.

[242] Ibid.

M= Mutter the Word. Repeatedly, speak the Word in low tones to one's self (Josh.1:8 AMP; Ps. 1:1-2 NKJV; Ps. 119:148).

E= Examine the Word. Write the Word out, study it, survey it, and check out the meaning of each Word in the Scripture passage (Ps. 119:30; 105; 2 Tim. 2:15).

D= Decide to follow the Word. Determine to obey the Word, to do it (Ps. 119:105; I Tim. 4:15-16).

I= Imagine the Word visually. Create a visual image. See yourself having it, possessing it, it becoming a reality (Ps. 119:23; Eph. 3:20).

T= Think on the Word repeatedly (Phil. 4:8; Ps. 119:78).

A= Affirm the Word by studying the Scripture (2 Tim. 2:15).

T= Talk the Word aloud to one's self (Ps. 77:12; 119:15).

E= Exclaim the Word with excitement and expectancy (Ps. 119:111; Luke 1:46-47).

Symbolic Motif of Immersion in the Word:[243]

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The Holy Bible is the selected symbolic motif for the spiritual growth element and Christlike

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[243] Christian Truth Center, accessed December 6, 2019, https://www.christiantruthcenter.com/the-bible-is-not-the-word/.

virtue of immersion in the Word. The Holy Bible is the book of books and comprises of both the

Old and New Testaments. It contains the inspired inerrant Word of God, which is known as the

sacred Scriptures that formulate the constitution and all that pertains to the Christian faith. Thus,

the Bible as an essential element of the Christian faith is readily observable, available in day-to-

day living, and is a symbolic reminder and inspiration to the believer of his/her pursuit of spiritual

formation and development of Christlikeness in the area of immersion in the Word.

Training Segment 6: Prayer

Bible Passages:

Matthew 6:5-13; 7:7; 14:23; Mark 1:35; 6:46; 14:36; Luke 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28; Luke 11:1-4

Introduction

In Christendom, prayer is generally defined as talking to or communicating with God. As William

Mounce explicates, congruent to the Hebrew and Greek words from its translation to English, the

term prayer is a noun.[244] Accordingly, the term prayer corresponds to the Hebrew and Greek

words translated as the term pray, which is a verb.[245] Prayer may entail engaging in "prayer as a

regular habit or as a single act."[246] Through the redemptive work of Jesus, mankind has been

reconciled to God and has been restored with the ability and access to have regular communion

and fellowship with God, such as the Scripture indicates that Adam did before the Fall. The

believer's quality and development of spiritual life is relative to the quality of his/her engagement

in prayer. As the quality and frequency of communication are key foundational factors for

establishing and building natural relationships, so it is with mankind and God. Consequently, an

individual's degree of intimacy with God is predicated upon his/her level of engagement with

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[244] William D. Mounce, ed., *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 532.
[245] Ibid.
[246] Ibid.

God through the act of prayer. Subsequently, to experience spiritual formation and to grow into

Christlikeness, the believer must progressively develop the spiritual discipline of prayer.[247]

Accordingly, Dave Earley argues that "prayer must be prioritized and practiced to achieve

maximum impact."[248] The Scripture for this element affirm through the recorded instructions as

spoken by Jesus in the Gospels and as recorded in the Epistles that it is an unequivocal

expectation of God and reiterated by Jesus that prayer is to be a continuous lifestyle component of

the believer's walk as a Christian disciple who has a personal relationship with the Lord.[249]

Notably, individuals generally, naturally, and continuously engage in conversation and/or

communication with others by using the four types of sentence structures: declarative, imperative,

interrogative, and/or exclamatory. Comparatively, believers generally, naturally, and continuously

engage in conversation and/or communication with God that uses prayer structures such as

adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and/or supplication.[250] Jesus' lifestyle manner of His prayer

relationship with the Father was conspicuous. Jesus models and exhibits that his personal,

consistent interaction with God, His Father, is an indispensable contingency to the effectiveness

of His public ministry.[251] In Scripture, Jesus engages in and exhibits prayer as a consistent

practice and often as a single act.

Expositional Application of the Spiritual Growth Element: Prayer

Per the Scripture texts referenced for this element and relative to the description of what prayer

encompasses, an individual who makes a volitional decision to follow Jesus as His disciple must

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[247] Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1991), 66 and 69.

[248] Dave Earley, *Prayer: The Timeless Secret of High-Impact Leaders* (Chattanooga: Living Ink Books, 2008), x.

[249] Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 67.

[250] Earley, *Prayer*, 129–130.

[251] Mark Jones, *The Prayers of Jesus: Listening to and Learning from Our Savior* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2019), 46.

1. Devote his/herself to prayer and make it a daily priority (Col. 4:2 NIV).[252]

2. Pray without ceasing, which is indicative of a continuous relationship and interaction with the Father (Eph. 6:18; 1 Thess. 5:17).[253]

3. Use the granted privilege to approach God's throne of grace with confidence so that he/she may receive mercy and find grace to help in his/her time of need (Heb.4:16 NIV).

4. Recognize and celebrate positive emotions and experiences by praying prayers of adoration and/or thanksgiving (Luke 1:46-49).

5. Recognize, control, and manage negative emotions and experiences by using prayers of supplication, intercession, and thanksgiving. The action steps to help the believer to be disciplined in regulating his/her emotions are explained by this acronym: P-R-A-Y.

   P – a. Pause, which means to stop what you are doing (Jas. 1:19 NIV)

   b. Petition—talk to the Lord, tell Him all about it (Phil. 4:6 AMP)

   R – a. Reposition yourself, which might entail

   b. Removing yourself from the situation

   c. Reviewing the situation to determine who, what, how, and so forth (1 Cor. 10:13 NIV)

   A – a. Assess and analyze based on the factors determined in your review of the situation

   b. Agree with the Word as it pertains to the situation

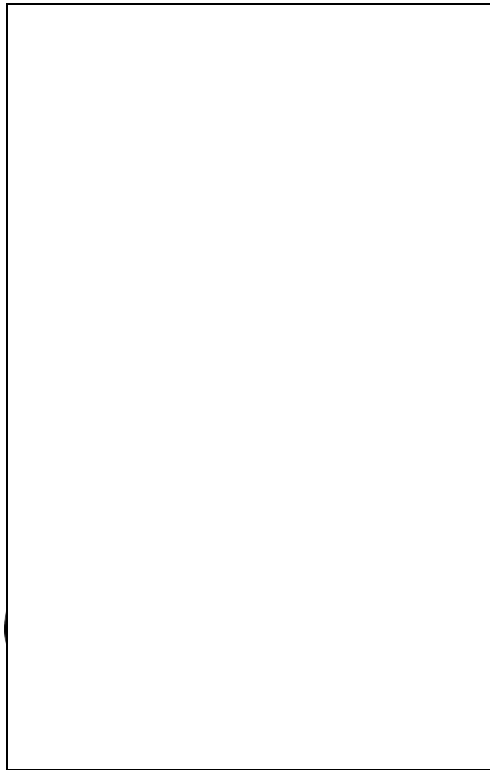   c. Act on the Word (John 8:29 AMP; John 14:15 NIV; Isa. 1:19 NIV)

   Y – a. Yield to the power of the Holy Spirit to allow Him to produce the fruit of His character in you (John 16:13 NIV; 2 Cor. 6:6 NIV).

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[252] Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 67.
[253] Ibid.

Symbolic Motif of Prayer:[254]

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The ear is the selected symbolic motif for the spiritual growth element and Christlike virtue of

prayer. Universally and characteristically, the ear is the organ of hearing. Thus, because the ears

are used for hearing and listening in communication among and with other individuals, God

affirms that He also is attentive with His ears in communication directed to Him from the believer

through his/her prayers (Jas. 5:4 NIV; 1 Pet. 3:12 NIV). The Message Bible translation of Psalm

34:15 corroborates the factor of God's attentiveness to the prayers rendered by the righteous and

describes them as God's friends by stating, "God keeps an eye on His friends; His ears pick up

every moan and groan." This Message Bible translation also affirms that God hears the audible

and inaudible prayers of the believer as he/she strives with every effort to be unceasing and

persistent in prayer by continually maintaining an attitude of prayer that is not always audible.

[254] Clip art, EarListenHearFreevectorgrahiconPixabay 384 (w) x 640 (h) pixels | 72 DPI | 66 KB | PNG, accessed December 11, 2019.

Thus, the ear, which is readily observable and used in the day-to-day living, is a symbolic reminder and inspiration to the believer of his/her pursuit of spiritual formation and development of Christlikeness in the area of prayer as a follower of Jesus.

Training Segment 7: Learning

Bible Passages:

Luke 2:52 (NIV); Matthew 7:28-29 (MSG)[255]; 2 Timothy 3:7 (NIV); Colossians 1:6-7 (NIV)

Introduction

The definition of learning in Merriam-Webster includes "the act or experience of one that learns; knowledge or skill acquired by instruction or study; and/or modification of a behavioral tendency by experience."[256] Strong explicates that the Hebrew term translated as learning means "something received mentally, instruction whether on the part of a teacher or hearer."[257] The *Strongest NIV Exhaustive Concordance*, also based on the root Hebrew and Greek terms translated, describes learning as "wisdom, skill, learning that can refer to skill in life, ability, wise advice, be instructed, and learn to get into the habit of being."[258] Notably, William Mounce corroborates and enhances the exposition of the New Testament term for learning as it relates to spiritual growth and development. Mounce affirms that "learning is an important aspect of discipleship" when he explicates that the word "disciple" is derived from the Greek verb for learning.[259] Thus, Mounce elucidates that "learning in the New Testament frequently focuses on the gospel and the teachings of the apostles."[260] Additionally, learning as it pertains to maturing and developing as a disciple of Christ encompasses the exposure, acquisition, comprehension,

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[255] Note: MSG as used in this project essay is the abbreviation for The Message.
[256] Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. "learning," accessed January 1, 2020, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/learning.
[257] Strong, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, 3948.
[258] Goodrick and Kohlenberger, *The Strongest NIV Exhaustive Concordance*, 2683 and 3443.
[259] Mounce, *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words*, 397.
[260] Ibid.

obedience to, and execution of truths that have been learned.[261]

Expositional Application of the Spiritual Growth Element: Learning

Per the Scripture texts referenced above and relative to the description of what learning

encompasses, an individual who makes a volitional decision to follow Jesus as His disciple must

1. Engage in a process to receive instruction in the Word of God (Isa. 54:13 NIV;

John 6:45 NIV).

2. Pursue the comprehension and discernment of truth (Pro. 1:2-6; 4:5-7 NIV; 2

    Tim.2:15).

3. Progressively become a doer of the Word and not a hearer only (Jas. 1:22; 1 John 2:17;

    Rev. 22:14 NKJV).

4. Be diligent to present him/herself as a vessel of honor, approved by God, as an

    effective witness and ambassador for Christ in the ministry of reconciliation (2 Tim.

    2:15; 19-2 11; 2 Cor. 5:18, 20; Acts 1:8 NIV).

Symbolic Motif of Learning:[262]

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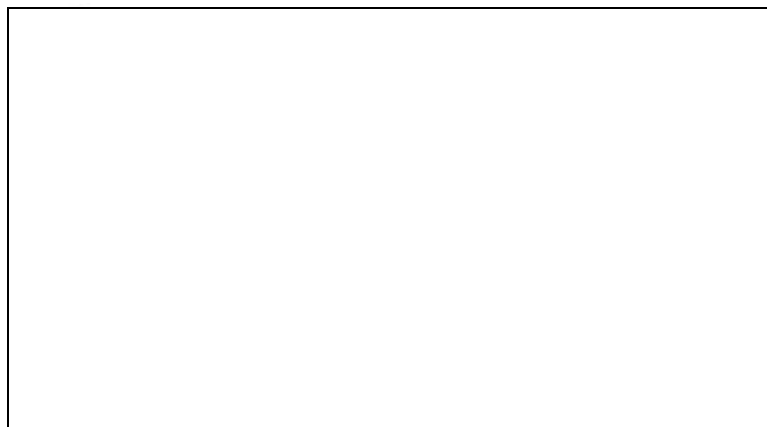
[261] Ibid.

[262] Clip art, ChristianBooks | Flickr-PhotoSharing! 639 (w) x 428 (h) pixels |72 DPI | 87 KB | JPG, accessed December 11, 2019.

Books pertaining to Christian topics are the selected symbolic motif for the spiritual growth element and Christlike virtue of learning. In addition to the Bible, Christian-related books and other visual or audio materials are common components of personal, small group, and/or corporate devotional time, study, teaching, training, or mentoring in spiritual growth and development endeavors. Thus, Christian-related books and materials, which are readily observable and available in the day-to-day living environment, are a symbolic reminder and inspiration to the believer of his/her pursuit of spiritual formation and development of Christlikeness in the area of learning as a follower of Jesus.

Training Segment 8: Example

Bible Passages:

Eph. 5:1-2 (NIV); John 13:14-15; John 13:34 (NIV); 2 Thess. 3:9 (NKJV); 2 Thess. 3:9 (NIV); 1 Thess. 1:7 (NKJV); 1 Pet. 5:3 (NIV); Titus 2:7 (NIV)

Introduction

The definition of the term example in Merriam-Webster is "one that serves as a pattern to be imitated; someone or something set before one for guidance or imitation."[263] The Greek terms according to Strong that are translated as example include the following definitions: "exhibit for imitation; pattern; form; a model for imitation; and copy for imitation."[264] The *Strongest NIV Exhaustive Concordance* and Mounce corroborate the aforementioned definitions because these sources define the Greek terms translated as example as a "pattern, example, model, use as a model, imitate, follow example, and a pattern of behavior to be emulated."[265] Because mankind was restored through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ in His relationship as a son of God who

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[263] Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. "example," accessed January 5, 2020, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/example#synonym-discussion.

[264] Strong, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, 5262, 5179, and 5261.

[265] Mounce, *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words*, 226; Goodrick and Kohlenberger, *The Strongest NIV Exhaustive Concordance*, 5682, 3629, 5213, 3628, 5596, and 5681.

was created in His image, mankind has the directive to copy and follow God's example, as a dearly loved child imitates his/her father (Eph. 5:1). Additionally, the Scripture admonishes the believer to "walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved" all mankind and gave Himself for each one (Eph. 5:2). Jesus affirms that He was providing an example of humility and servanthood that should be emulated by His disciples when He engaged in washing the feet of His disciples (John 13:14-15). Also in this segment of teaching and demonstration is that Jesus presented the disciples with the new commandment, which set the foundation for becoming examples of the way of Jesus, he expounded, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another" (John 13:34).

Expositional Application of the Spiritual Growth Element: Example

Per the Scripture texts referenced for this element and relative to the description of what example encompasses, an individual who makes a volitional decision to follow Jesus as His disciple must offer his/herself to live as an example, providing a pattern and being a concrete model to demonstrate how God wants His sons and daughters to live (Phil. 3:17 NIV).[266] In accordance with the instructions delineated by the Apostle Paul to young Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:12, the disciple of Christ should to an example for other believers in the following:

1. Speech

2. Conduct

3. Love

4. Faith

5. Purity

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[266] Mounce, *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words*, 226.

Symbolic Motif of Example:[267]

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Footsteps are the selected symbolic motif for the spiritual growth element and Christlike virtue of

example. The Amplified Bible translation of the Scripture text in 1 Peter 2:21 reiterates that as a

believer, he/she has been called for the purpose of following in the footsteps of Jesus who is a

concrete example of how to please the Father in all that he/she does. Thus, the believer's footsteps

and pattern of life, which are readily observable in his/her day-to-day living environment, are a

symbolic reminder and inspiration to the believer of his/her pursuit of spiritual formation and

development of Christlikeness in the area of being an example for others to follow.

Notably, the paradigm for ministry application provided by this research project is

pragmatic and adaptable to a broad range of church and/or Christian communities relative to their

distinctive culture and character. Furthermore, the paradigm conveys the simplicity and

complexities of the gospel and kingdom principles in such a manner that fosters the perception,

comprehension, and operationalization of the essential factors and elements that pertain to the

pursuit of spiritual formation and Christlikeness.

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[267] Clip art, Converging Footsteps: MyFatherandStepmother|Flicker…640 (w) x 512 (h) pixels | 72 DPI | 48 KB | JPG, accessed January 6, 2020.

Conclusion

The Christian ministry field, which is the overall subject of this thesis project, is Christian education in a church setting. The objective of the project is to address the problem as stated by the researcher, that is, "without the provision and engagement in the essential elements of Christian education, believers can attend church for an entire life span and never grow into Christlike maturity." The project views Christian education as a process that should stimulate spiritual growth as it encompasses the impartation of foundational Christian doctrine and principles. Hence, this research project provides a paradigm that can be used in the environments of church congregations and in the array of communities of believers' forums to foster the demonstration of Christlikeness by individual maturation toward spiritual formation. Notably, in addition to Christian education, the key terms and concepts used in the project include Christlikeness, disciple, discipleship, spiritual formation, and Christian community. Notably, Christlikeness is used synonymously in reference to Christian maturity. The project renders Christlikeness as the state of being that encompasses imitating and exhibiting behavioral and verbal actions or responses that are consistent with what Jesus would do if He were (you) the individual in that situation. The terms disciple and discipleship in this project refer to an individual (disciple) who has decided to be a follower of Jesus Christ and is engaged in an ongoing process (discipleship) to learn how to be His follower. This project defines spiritual formation as the process of spiritual change that the follower of Jesus Christ undergoes toward the outcome of progressively becoming like Jesus. The concept of spiritual formation is highly associated with the term transformation and is often used interchangeably. Last, the project defines the concept of Christian community as a group of persons of like faith and purpose with whom the disciple/follower is interpersonally connected. Working knowledge of the concepts as

defined by these key terms is essential to a process of effective ministry that stimulates spiritual

growth in a church setting. Hence, the objectives of the applied research approach encompassed

investigating the associated ramifications of the declared premise of the project and indicators of

effectiveness of presently used Christian education models, activities, and/or practices and

obtaining a baseline of the research project participants' understanding and engagement with the

key concepts as it relates to Christian education.

Subsequently, the sequence of the topics in chapter 2, "Pastoral Investigation," is the

description of the applied research approach, the description and scope of the study sample, and

the delineation of the survey content, findings, and indicators. Notably, one hundred percent of

the study sample, comprising pastors who have served in a pastoral role in their present church for

at least five years, indicated that Christian education is an essential process that involves teaching

and training in Christian doctrine and principles based on the Scriptures and is necessary for

ascertaining spiritual life, growth, and maturation. The findings on the information about which

Christian education models, approaches, and/or activities are currently used in the churches to

foster spiritual maturity indicated that seventy-three percent of the participants employed an

approach to Christian education described as a traditional model. The remaining twenty-seven

percent of the participant responses identified the use of a traditional model with an additional

component for the provision of the opportunities for engagement in relational small groups as an

essential Christian education ministry approach toward fostering progressive spiritual

development toward maturity. Collectively, all participants affirmed that providing consistent

opportunities for the believer to engage in select Christian education ministry experiences and

activities is essential for fostering progressive spiritual development toward maturity, which

supports the project's intended purpose to recommend enhancements for the Christian education

models used. In regard to the concept of Christlikeness, the participants' descriptions of what is Christlikeness were congruent to the project's definition of this term, and the survey responses affirmed that it is synonymous with Christian maturity. In response to a subsequent question on the status of the relationship between spiritual formation and Christlikeness, one hundred percent of the participants affirmed a perception of there being a direct, contingent relationship between spiritual formation and Christlikeness and that spiritual formation is a journey of transformation into an image that is Christlike. The participants' responses to the survey that prompted an explication of what is necessary or what are the essential elements necessary for a person to develop spiritual maturity or Christlikeness supported the premise of the project. The aggregate responses to this inquiry indicate that the volitional action and consistent willful engagement of the congregant or believer in spiritual practices and/or activities are necessary for progressive spiritual growth. Additionally, the elements delineated by the participants as being the necessary or essential elements for ascertaining spiritual maturity or Christlikeness supported the researcher in determining the indicators of what is deemed by this project as essential elements to foster spiritual formation. In regard to expounding on the definition and the functionality of Christian community engagement in fostering spiritual maturity in the believers/congregants, the participants' responses were varied and were indicative of focused ministry needs and enhancements. The aggregate survey content, findings, and indicators of the applied research are affirmative relative to the project's premise.

Successively, chapter 3, "Scholarly Investigation," contains the project's analytical research findings and indicators of relevant factors in the context of the premise of this project. The analytical research entailed the examination of the work of esteemed contributors in the areas of Christian education, spiritual formation, and Christian community. The topics

expounded on in this chapter include: affirming Christian education as essential relative to spiritual growth; the delineation of three recognized approaches to Christian education; explication of the tenets of spiritual formation relative to Christian education; and the Christian community as an essential environment for fostering spiritual maturity. The initial findings affirmed the project's working definition and description of the concept of Christian education. The sources reviewed and cited corroborated that the execution of effective Christian education is congruent with the mandate of the Great Commission. The research findings concurred that it is through the forum of Christian education that discipleship occurs, wherein through this ongoing process, the individual learns how to be a follower of Jesus Christ. Hereby, the Christian education process is essential to the growth and development of the individual who matures toward Christlikeness and demonstrates spiritual growth as evidenced by him/her becoming a disciple who makes other disciples. The Christian education models examined by the project include the community–of–faith approach, instructional approach, and missional approach. The research findings indicate consistency with each approach as delineated by the review of Scripture. Additionally, the models examined were reflected in the Christian education approaches, models, and activities described as being employed by the research survey participants in their church settings. Notably, despite the distinctions in the Christian education approaches examined, the objective outcome of each approach is to nurture the development of the believer's lifestyle that reflects a pattern of beliefs, values, and attitudes that is consistent with the way of Jesus and how He lived on earth. Subsequently, the findings of the research corroborated that it is through the process of spiritual formation that the believer undergoes the transformation that results in the restoration of the image of God in mankind. Thus, through the believer's engagement with Christian education and submission to the Holy Spirit, he/she is

empowered to progressively become increasingly more Christlike. The tenets of Christian spiritual formation examined include seven dimensions of life transculturally relevant to mankind in maximizing his/her life stage development as social beings. The seven primary life areas examined, which are basic to the holistic process of spiritual transformation as it relates to the total dimensions of mankind, are spirit, emotions, relationships, intellect, vocation, physical health, and resource stewardship. Indisputably, although the individual believer's intentional engagement in the process of spiritual formation is key to spiritual maturation, the research findings affirm that concurrent engagement in the Christian community is vital to foster Christlikeness. As the Scripture uses the metaphor of the followers of Christ being a many-membered body, the research corroborated that the authentic environment and interconnectedness of the relationships of the Christian community function as a spiritual life-giving organism.

This fourth chapter of the project contains the paradigm design provided by the project to be used as a tool in the ministry area of Christian education to foster spiritual maturity. This chapter, "Application for Ministry," explicates the foundational factors relative to spiritual life; the foundational factors relative to God's image in mankind; the understanding of mankind as a triune being of spirit, soul, and body; and eight essential elements to foster spiritual formation and Christlikeness. The components of the paradigm of the application for ministry provided by the project encompasses the theological foundations that the literature review indicated as relevant to this project's topic. This spectrum of theological elements includes biblical authority, the necessity of conversion, the redemptive work of Christ, and personal piety. Thus, initially, the project model provides guidance and assistance to the believer so that they can have assurance based on Scripture of the new birth and eternal life, which is the gift of God to be received by faith in the work of salvation accomplished by His Son, Jesus Christ. The model includes an

explanation of biblical factors regarding God's overarching plan for mankind to reflect His image and likeness as in accordance with His creative plan. Successively, the model explains the repercussion of the fall of mankind as recorded in Genesis 3 and the necessity of the work that Paul describes in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, that is the God of peace would preserve the believer as blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, in his/her whole spirit, soul, and body. The project provides assistance to the believer in ascertaining enlightenment of a working knowledge of the differentiation of spirit and soul concurrent with the distinction in their functions, which is expedient to the believer who pursues growth and development in spiritual life and maturity. Notably, the project model affirms that an individual who has become regenerated through the experience of the new birth and makes a sincere decision to be a follower/disciple of Jesus, now as a believer, has come into the first stage of discipleship. Subsequently, the believer can progress to stage two of his/her discipleship walk, which entails growing into Christian maturity. The project determined that regardless of the believer's choice to engage in a discipleship process in a Christian community setting that uses individual one-to-one mentoring/discipling, small group engagement, study group, spiritual coaching, or other Christian spiritual formation and training settings/forums, there are eight elements essential to spiritual growth. Conclusively, these elements are amenable to being integrated into the approaches of Christian education and are foundational to the tenets of spiritual formation delineated in this project. Used as an acrostic, the term "disciple" contains the eight essential elements that this project determined are essential and foundational to Christian education that fosters spiritual formation and Christlikeness. The paradigm of essential elements of Christian education rendered by this research project is Disciple–**D**edication, **I**ntegrity, **S**tewardship, **C**ompassion, **I**mmersion in the Word, **P**rayer, **L**earning, and **E**xample. The Christian education paradigm of this project comprises eight training

segments that elucidate pertinent Bible passages for the element, an introduction of the element, expositional application of the spiritual growth element, and the presentation of a symbolic motif of the element. Conclusively, the project has provided a pragmatic model design that offers a paradigm of eight essential elements that can be operationalized in the church and/or the Christian community, which operates as a life-giving organism to stimulate the growth and development of spiritual formation and Christlikeness in the believer's life.

Henceforth, further research can assess and develop pragmatic ministry-enhancement application tools in regard to the person, work, and ministry of the Holy Spirit. Jesus declares to the disciples in John 14:26 (AMP), "But the Helper (Comforter, Advocate, Intercessor— Counselor, Strengthener, Standby), the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in My name [in My place, to represent Me and act on My behalf], He will teach you all things. And He will help you remember everything that I have told you." Therefore, as the disciples had intimately walked with Jesus during His ministry on earth in this present day, the disciples of Jesus have the privilege to build intimacy with the Holy Spirit whom the Father sent in Jesus' place.

In closing, considering this thesis project and the Scripture text in Romans 8:29, which provides the enlightenment that God's overarching goal for the followers of Christ is to become like Him, the researcher is reminded of Jesus' declaration in Luke 22:27 (NIV), "For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves." Hereby, Jesus taught and modeled that the essence of greatness and His true, basic nature is that of a servant who renders His life for the sake of others. Thus, as a believer in the pursuit of Christlikeness and becoming spiritually formed into His greatest image as servant, the researcher offers this prayer:

<h1 align="center">"A Servant's Prayer"</h1>

Father, I am your servant and my prayer is

S– Sanctify me
>Sanctify me and cleanse me with the washing of your word and give to me the Spirit of wisdom and revelation of Jesus Christ.
>*Eph. 5:26 | Eph. 1:17*

E– *to* Esteem others
>Help me to esteem others as better than myself and to do all things with humbleness of mind and without pride and selfishness.
>*Phil. 2:3 | Matt. 22:39*

R– *to be a* Righteous, Ready, Responsive Representative
>Fill me with the fruit of righteousness walking as His representative ready and responsive to obey His commands.
>*Col. 1:10 | 2 Cor.5:20 | John 4:34 | John 8:29*

V– *to be* Vigilant
>To be vigilant, sober minded and cautious at all times because my enemy, the devil, roars like a lion seeking to seize and to devour me and giving thanks to God who always leads me into triumph in Christ Jesus.
>*1 Pet. 5:7 | 1 Pet. 2:14 | 2 Cor. 2:14 | Jer. 29:11*

A– *to* Attend His Word
>To pay attention to God's word and to listen closely to what He says.
>*Prov. 4:20 | Heb. 2:1 | Isa. 1:19*

N– not my will
>Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.
>*Luke 22:42 | John 14:15 | Jas. 1:12 | Matt. 24:13*

T– *to be* Transformed
>To be transformed by the renewing of my mind so that I can prove what is the good, acceptable and perfect will of God and be a light in the world and to function as salt in the earth.
>*Rom.12:2 | Matt. 5:13-14 | Phil. 2:5 | Eph. 4:23*

Now, Father, I thank you for these virtues being manifested in my life. In Jesus' name, I pray…

<div align="right">Amen</div>

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Interview Questions

Research Project Topic

Christian Education: Essential Elements to Foster Spiritual Formation and Christlikeness

1. What is your definition of Christian education?

   a. Please describe the model of Christian education used and/or Christian education ministry activities conducted in your church.

2. What is spiritual formation?

3. What is Christlikeness?

4. Is there a relationship between spiritual formation and Christlikeness?

   a. If yes, please describe what it is?

   b. If no, please describe why not?

5. How do you measure or determine Christlikeness?

6. What is the measure or evidence of spiritual formation?

7. What is necessary or what are the essential elements necessary for a person to develop spiritual maturity or Christlikeness?

8. How does your ministry develop spiritual maturity among the members?

9. What is the evidence that you look for to determine the success of your ministry in developing spiritual maturity or Christlikeness?

10. Define the Christian community?

11. How does the Christian community foster spiritual maturity among the members?

12. Does the Christian community function as a life-giving organism?

   a. If yes, please describe.

   b. If no, please describe.

13. On an average Sunday, what is the estimated worship attendance at your church? (Please

check)

_____ 15–200 worshipers

_____ 201–400 worshipers

_____ 401–1,999 worshipers

_____ 2,000+ worshipers

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

May 22, 2018

Alice T. O'Neal
IRB Approval 3288.052218: Christian Education: Eight Essential Elements to Foster Spiritual Formation and Christlikeness

Dear Alice T. O'Neal,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

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