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Describing a Pentecostal Spirituality and Eploring these Expressions within a Spiritual Formation Model

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GEORGE FOX EVANGELICAL SEMINARY

DESCRIBING A PENTECOSTAL SPIRITUALITY
AND EXPLORING THESE EXPRESSIONS
WITHIN A SPIRITUAL FORMATION MODEL

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

DMin Dissertation

This is to certify that the DMin Dissertation of

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for the degree of Doctor of Ministry in Leadership and Spiritual Formation.

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The Scripture quotations contained herein are taken from the New International Version, unless otherwise indicated.

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SECTION 1: ABSTRACT

Richard Foster states, “The desperate need today is not for a greater number of intelligent people, or gifted people, but for deep people.”¹ But how do we understand what it means to be a “deep person?” We need a description of what a deep relationship looks like and a model of the spiritual growth process that makes that possible. A spiritual formation model is a tool designed to identify the organic process of growth for the believer in Christ and describe how that believer might tunnel into the depths of maturity by partnering with the Holy Spirit. As a Pentecostal, I have not found a developed and systematic model for personal spiritual formation which adequately addresses a Pentecostal context and integrates both formational and Pentecostal experience.

The lack of such a model represents a serious impediment for Pentecostals. An understanding and identification of the spiritual formation process provides the necessary foundation for recognizing and cooperating with the ongoing maturation process to which the Lord calls each of us. When we fail to understand our relative place in the journey, we can easily misunderstand God’s work in and through us. Leaders can also fail to adequately equip and support the spiritual development of those within their care.

Spiritual formation for the Pentecostal context is significant for a number of reasons including: the size of the movement, the unique style of expression, and the trajectory of its influence.² The potential danger, perceived by some leaders, in

¹ Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), 1.

² David Barrett estimates that over seventy-five percent of all members of the over one thousand, non-white Third World indigenous denominations are composed of person who bear all the phenomenological marks of Pentecostalism. In addition, there are eight hundred explicitly Pentecostal

developing a Pentecostal formation model might be a perceived attempt to confine or limit the role of the Holy Spirit to one's understanding. In the model presented here, however, the Spirit's role is not to be confined, but rather described in order to better cooperate with what God is doing. Both biblical tradition and Church tradition have shown us many areas in which the Holy Spirit consistently produces spiritual growth and maturity in the believer.

Pentecostals require a unique spiritual formation model due to the exceptional nuances of expression in the movement. Therefore, this thesis will also define Pentecostalism in terms of expression in order to differentiate it from other denominational paradigms. Based on my research of these traditions, this paper will focus on the following expressions of Pentecostalism: (1) a life on mission, (2) a spirit-gifted life, (3) a life of holiness, (4) a life at war, (5) a spirit led life, and (6) a life of encounter. With focus on these expressions, it will become clear that spiritual maturity therefore leads to: (1) greater motivation for mission, (2) increased power through spiritual gifts, (3) new depths of holiness, (4) greater understanding in how to combat the enemy, and

denominations, indigenous to non-white races in the Third World. In addition to the millions of members of the original Pentecostal bodies, millions of adherents are part of the Charismatic Renewal movement, or the so-called 'third wavers' who are evangelicals experiencing a renewal of the Spirit but not recognizing it as a separate experience from conversion. ... As of 1988 there were 327 million affiliated church members of which 176 million were Pentecostal, 123 million charismatic, 28 million 'third wave'. The movement grows at a rate of 19 million new members a year or around 54 thousand per day (two-thirds of which are converts/new members). On a worldwide scale, 29 percent are white, 71 percent are non-white... One fourth of all full-time Christian workers in the world are Pentecostal/Charismatic. They are active in eighty percent of the thirty-three hundred large metropolitan areas of the world. They are more harassed, persecuted, suffering, and martyred than perhaps any other Christian tradition in recent history.

"Although it is impressive that this movement has achieved such breadth in so short a time, the dimensions of height and depth are probably the most theologically significant," writes Steven J. Land. Height describes "the dimension of praise, worship, adoration, and prayer to God—this is the most compelling characteristic to most observers and participants. But to this must be added the dimension of depth. This is the reason for the almost century-long sustained growth and breadth of impact. The depth dimension speaks of the 'deep things' of the human heart: the abiding, decisive, directing motives and dispositions which characterize Pentecostals" (2001, 9-11).

(5) increased awareness to the promptings and activity of the Holy Spirit. To date, this research has not found a classical formation model that adequately or directly addresses these foundational Pentecostal expressions. However, many classical models do include disciplines, texts, experiences and insights that, when properly synthesized, can address these expressions and therefore greatly benefit ministry in Pentecostal settings.

The thesis will identify how those expressions are experienced throughout a Stage model that leads progressively from salvation to maturity. The resulting model will give insights that will enable Pentecostal churches and leaders to help guide and grow members toward maturity in a paradigm that is consistent with its philosophy and theology.

INTRODUCTION

The Apostle Paul dreamed of an Ephesian-like Church where Christ might fully dwell in its people's hearts through faith—people so rooted and grounded in love, that they might comprehend the breadth and length and height and depth of the love of Christ and become filled up to the very fullness of God. (cf. Eph 3:17-19)

As beautiful as this image is, what does it mean? What does this look like when a believer experiences such transformation? To understand Paul's vision, we need the identification and understanding of the spiritual formation process which provides the foundation for recognizing and cooperating with the ongoing maturation process to which the Lord calls each of us.

Spiritual formation means different things to different people. For this study we will use the following definition provided by R. Thomas Ashbrook in his workbook, *Discovering Your Spiritual Formation Journey*:

Spiritual formation is the process that takes place in the believer, as the life of the Spirit of God transforms our spirit through deepening intimacy with the Trinity, changing our being from the inside out into the likeness of Jesus Christ. Spiritual formation also involves the believer's intentional response to God in this transformation process. The goal of this process in the believer is the reflection of God's glory in love.¹

A definition of formation, however, is not enough; we need to understand how to cooperate with the Holy Spirit to enable it to happen. For example, understanding what a house looks like and knowing what is required to build it does not produce a house. Even if one knows the tools required, the skills needed, and what materials will be used, that person has not yet built a house. To build a house takes time, work, and planning. The

¹ R. Thomas Ashbrook, *Discovering Your Spiritual Formation Journey*. A Workbook used in Imago Christi's Spiritual Formation Discovery for Leaders, only available to participants. (Centennial, CO: Imago Christi, 2010), 3.

builder of a house begins his project with an end result in mind. So too, the disciple of Christ and his disciples must have an end result in mind. Like the carpenter, we need an understanding of the process of maturity development and how spiritual leaders can help people grow. This paper, therefore, seeks to better understand how a Pentecostal believer grows and matures in faith. Without this understanding, believers can become stuck in immaturity. John of the Cross suggests that without an intentional directive, these believers “remain in an elementary stage of communion.” In the sixteenth century, John of the Cross addressed this very dilemma:

Sometimes they [believers] have no desire to enter this journey; at other times they do not have competent spiritual advisers to guide them. It is sad to see so many souls to whom God gives both aptitude and favor with which to make progress, remaining in an elementary stage of communion with God for lack of will or knowledge, or because there is no one who will lead them in the right path or teach them how to go beyond the beginnings.¹

The writer of Hebrews expressed similar feelings about the lack of informed formational guidance:

In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.²

He charges that his listeners are still infants in Christ. He further posits that with the amount of time they had had following Christ, they should be more mature by now. They “ought to be teachers”...able to “distinguish good from evil.” However, they are not mature. The concerns can legitimately be addressed to Pentecostal churches around the world that have been mandated by God to help believers grow and mature. Without

¹ John Of The Cross and Henry L. Carrigan, *Ascent of Mount Carmel* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2002), 7.

² Hebrews 5:12-14.

maturity these believers lack *motivation for mission, focus for spiritual gifts, intention for a life of holiness, understanding in how to combat the enemy, and receptivity to the promptings of the Holy Spirit*. We need a model of the growth process towards maturity so that the Pentecostal Church can thrive empowered to love and live.

SECTION 2: THE PROBLEMS

Problem One: A Consensus On The Definition Of Pentecostalism

Harvey Cox claimed, “The Pentecostal movement is diverse, volatile, and mercurial...it is highly paradoxical.”¹ One could ask a person in the Northwest part of the United States to define Pentecostalism and get a completely different answer to the same question asked in the Southern part of the United States. Not surprisingly, outside the United States, Pentecostalism takes on a number of different and unique expressions. The primary dilemma is not in building an understanding from Pentecostalism’s theology, although that is certainly a challenge, but in building an understanding from its experience. Pentecostalism by its very nature is an experiential spirituality. The diversity of experiences and the variation of practical doctrine can be somewhat discouraging to the student looking for a consistent pattern of practice.²

The greatest challenge in discovering and potentially building a Pentecostal formation model is first getting foundational understanding on what it means to be Pentecostal. For example, J. Rodman Williams states:

Pentecostals are basically people who have had a certain experience; so they find little use for theology or doctrine that does not recognize and, even more, participate in it. They are convinced that the shape and content of their experience, which they believe to be of the Holy Spirit is essential to the life and thought of the whole church.³

¹ Harvey Gallagher Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-first Century* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Pub., 1995), 184. Quoted in Kenneth J. Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic: Spirit, Scripture, and Community* (Cleveland, TN: CPT, 2009,) 11.

² Dr. A.J. Swoboda, Adjunct Professor at George Fox Evangelical Seminary, pointed out that Pentecostal scholars have hotly debated where Pentecostalism started—wherein many non-Western Pentecostals are quick to claim there were “Pentecostal-like” outbreaks long before Azusa Street. (Personal correspondence, 2013)

³ J. Rodman Williams, *The Pentecostal Reality* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1972), 60.

Obvious, however, is that “a certain experience” does not adequately begin to define the boundaries of what one might call Pentecostal.

Building a working definition based upon the experiences of Pentecostals is dangerous, but it is also necessary. Because of the experiential nature of Pentecostalism, attempts to define Pentecostalism are of necessity based on subjective opinion, and therefore to some degree, suspect to doubts and alternate experiences. Keith Warrington comments along this line: “There are so many Classical Pentecostal, neo-Pentecostal and independent Pentecostal churches that it takes two dictionaries, one which has been revised, and a regular supply of books and articles to try to do justice to exploring them.”¹ Warrington goes on to say, “Increasingly, it is more accurate to identify Pentecostalism in the plural form (Pentecostalisms)² as there is no longer an adequate framework into which all Pentecostals easily fit.”³ However, in order to synthesize a formation model that can be accessed and understood by the vast majority of Pentecostals, a cursory foundation of a working definition of Pentecostalism will be laid.

Therefore, the goal of the attempt to surface a definition here is to provide a framework from which to identify the particular sub-culture of Christianity known as Pentecostals for the purposes of illustrating a spiritual formation model.

For the purposes of this paper, Pentecostalism will be defined by Steven Jack Land in his book *Pentecostal Spirituality* as a movement in which “righteousness,

¹ Keith Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology: A Theology of Encounter* (London: T & T Clark, 2008), 6.

² The need for a “pentecostalisms” in plural form can be seen especially when trying to define the movement in areas such as parts of Africa where most of the movement is non-literate and no written record is being given.

³ *Ibid.*, 12.

holiness, and power of God are correlated with distinctive apocalyptic affections which are the integrating core of Pentecostal spirituality.”⁴

To further understand a Pentecostal spirituality we must first delineate some terms. Alister McGrath defines *spirituality* as, “The quest for a fulfilled and authentic Christian existence, involving the bringing together of the fundamental ideas of Christianity and the whole experience of living on the basis of and within the scope of the Christian faith.”⁵ Spirituality then is the intersection of theology and praxis. R.P. Spittler adds, “Spirituality refers to a cluster of acts and sentiments that are informed by the beliefs and values that characterize a specific religious community.”⁶ The term, *community*, can refer to a local congregation and as well as an entire denomination. In defining Pentecostal spirituality, the term would refer to the largest group. For the purpose of this paper, however, arguments for the model of spiritual formation will also apply to the local congregation. While the broader definition applies to the whole of the Pentecostal movement, the concerns of this dissertation will address the needs of the local congregation.

Problem Two: A Strategic Approach to Pentecostal Formation

In this author’s experience, attempts at formational programs and formational understandings that I have been exposed to have seemed somewhat random and

⁴ Steven J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 23.

⁵ Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Spirituality: An Introduction* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 2.

⁶ R.P. Spittler, “Pentecostal and Charismatic Spirituality,” *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids, MI: Regency Reference Library, 1988), 804-809.

haphazard. From one setting to the next, tools of formation, expectations of formation, and the purpose of formation have at times seemed strategic, yet far from universal. One wonders if this lack of applicability to specific situations interferes with the transferability of what one would think might be life-changing for believers and the church. Dallas Willard, in his essay included in, *Life In The Spirit*, writes:

[Spiritual Formation] is presupposed in the Bible's extensive descriptions of normative behavior. And it shines in the lives of acknowledged 'great ones' in the way of Christ and in the literature spun off by the church through the ages. But all of this appears to the ordinary Christian today like distant galaxies in the night sky: visible, somehow, but inaccessible in the conditions of life as we know them. Hence, you will rarely meet an individual Christian who is seriously engaged in the transformation (spiritual formation) depicted in the Bible and in church history, or who even has a hope for anything like it this side of heaven. And while you might think that Christian organizations would have such transformation as their central focus, that simply turns out not to be true. They are doing something else.⁷

This "something else" is well-intentioned, yet damaging nonetheless. The goal of the Pentecostal's life is to be in an ever-deepening relationship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which is manifested by living a life of "power". This goal is stated in the Pentecostal tradition through abbreviated phrases that include: Spirit-led, Spirit-empowered, filled with the Spirit, Baptized in the Spirit, the power of the Spirit, and so on.⁸ Maturing in faith for the Pentecostal is inextricably linked to the use of power instilled by the Holy Spirit and is determined in the Pentecostal expressions listed above. For the "something else" in Willard's quote (i.e. programs that don't result in transformation) to motivate an ever-deepening relationship with the Holy Spirit, the church or organization must have an understanding about Pentecostal formative practices

⁷ Jeffrey P. Greenman and George Kalantzis, *Life in the Spirit: Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 45.

⁸ Frank Macchia analyzes many of these descriptions of the Spirit-filled experience in his very helpful text, *Baptized in the Spirit*. Macchia, Frank D. *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006)

that must first take place. R.P. Spittler describes Pentecostal's "something worthwhile" this way:

Now approaching their fourth generation, Pentecostals have not yet produced any substantial theological literature. They write tracts and simple studies for purposes of evangelism. Their first scholars have been historians tempted by triumphant apologetic. Expected behaviors like avoidance of gambling or alcoholic beverages might go entirely unwritten. Nonetheless, by a lively oral tradition a newcomer soon learns.⁹

Spittler goes on to remind his readers that the formative practices are more readily "caught than taught." While expected behaviors are worthwhile, they are generally subjective in nature and defined by the current context and culture.

Pentecostals, like those in most other Christian traditions, have borrowed and used formational practices and approaches from other denominations and groups. There is much to be gained and gleaned from an alternate approach, but what Pentecostalism needs is a definition and description of its own approach to spirituality. What will she experience? What can he anticipate? A clear understanding of spiritual formation based on a well-recognized understanding of Pentecostalism may enable formational insights and practices to be designed and applied consistently and authentically.

Understanding Pentecostal Spirituality

A signature trait of Pentecostalism is walking in the power of the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, this ambiguous description leads to an even more ambiguous target. What does it mean to *walk* in the power of the Holy Spirit? One must first define walking? What constitutes power? Then we need to consider the Source and outcome. After a brief survey, this study finds six Pentecostal expressions that most readily define a

⁹ Spittler, 805.

Pentecostal's understanding about what the Holy Spirit's goal is for the believer in relation to "walking in the Holy Spirit's power."

Many outside of Pentecostalism see the difference in worship style and theology, yet question its validity. K. McDonnell suggests, "One of the continuing problems which persons involved in the charismatic-Pentecostal renewal have is to explain their spirituality to those not so involved."¹⁰ Kenneth Archer provides a good overview of the streams that come together in the development of Pentecostalism:

People (predominantly Holiness Christians) were attracted to Pentecostalism because of its seemingly scriptural message and supernatural signs. Pentecostalism was not just a reinterpretation of the "old time religion". Pentecostal celebrative worship services, with tongues, trances, exorcisms, dancing and healings, were transforming activities of commitment to a new movement, rather than simply attempting to preserve the old ways. ... Thus Pentecostalism originated due to the logical coherence of the Five/Four Fold Pentecostal message validated by the supernatural signs amongst the community and in direct opposition to the predominate worldview of modernity. It was the collision of Scripture, signs (Spirit) and societal worldviews that caused and continues to cause the spread of the movement motivated by the passionate desire for an unmediated experiential encounter with Jesus.¹¹

Archer identifies the unique "celebrative worship services", usage of spiritual gifts, and supernatural signs as foundational to Pentecostalism, yet our difficulty remains. Many other authorities on Pentecostalism list other expressions that they feel also define Pentecostalism.

For example, Steven Jack Land states, "The community of the Spirit and Word functions as a worshiping, witnessing, forming, reflective whole; but at the heart of all

¹⁰ K. McDonnell, "The Distinguishing Characteristics of the Charismatic-Pentecostal Spirituality" *One In Christ* 10.2 (1974): 117.

¹¹ Kenneth J. Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic: Spirit, Scripture, and Community* (Cleveland, TN: CPT, 2009), 37.

this is the liturgical life of community.”¹² Pentecostalism has a unique approach to worshiping, witnessing, forming, and reflecting. Worshiping defines its experiential nature. Witnessing defines its approach to mission. Forming is what the Holy Spirit does both internally and externally. Reflecting is the ability to discern what the Holy Spirit is doing and how He partners in that task.

Between the statements of Archer and Land, five of the six expressions we will use to define Pentecostalism have been identified. I have added a sixth: the activity of the enemy.

The danger in defining Pentecostalism to many believers is that in *defining*, one is actually *confining* the Holy Spirit’s work to a list of what He can or cannot do. I am convinced that the typical Pentecostal believer is limited in maturity because a lack of understanding about what the Holy Spirit would like to do within. The greatest way to discern the Holy Spirit’s desire, therefore, is to look at the historical patterns that God has used. The following expressions, therefore, provide the essential patterns that describe the normative experience of Pentecostalism: *the life of encounter, the spirit-led life, the life at war, the life of holiness, the spirit-gifted life, and the life on mission*. Later, while examining the stages of formation, these patterns, or shared universal expressions of Pentecostalism, will be used to describe how each stage is experienced within a Pentecostal context. Let’s look at each of these expressions in turn.

¹² Steven J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 23.

The Life of Encounter

The life of encounter introduces the believer to the sensory and manifesting activity of God. It is this expression that strongly engages the believer's senses. Life is a series of experiences. These experiences can be typical or unique. Each experience builds upon the framework that makes us who we are. James Bryan Smith says it this way:

Narrative is 'the central function...of the human mind.' We turn everything into a story in order to make sense of life. We 'dream in narrative, day-dream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticize, construct, gossip, learn, hate and love by narrative.' In fact, we cannot avoid it. We are storied creatures. Our stories help us navigate our world, to understand right and wrong, and to provide meaning.¹³

These stories describe our encounters with God.

Every believer's theology is based upon a story or experience.¹⁴ This story could be one that they have personally experienced or one that they have heard experienced by another believer. In particular, a Pentecostal embraces the experiential nature of God in relationship with Him. These experiences, though sometimes ordinary, leave extraordinary marks. For example, a believer who has experienced a healing touch from God for herself/himself or one's family or close friend will be influenced for life. This experience marks a transition point upon which a foundation for future growth and understanding is built. A believer who has experienced the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues will view that particular moment as

¹³ James Bryan, Smith, *The Good and Beautiful God: Falling in Love with the God Jesus Knows* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2009), 24-25.

¹⁴ In his book, *God The Spirit*, Michael Welker suggests a "realistic theology" when talking of experiences with God. "A realistic theology is a theology that is related to various structural patterns of experience and that cultivates a sensitivity to the differences of those various patterns. It is precisely in this diverse and complex relation to God's reality and to creaturely reality as intended by God that realistic theology seeks to perform its task" (1994, x).

foundational for Christian living. Keith Warrington elaborates, “Such encounters are not merely viewed as self-authenticating or self-oriented; they are deemed to be valuable as motivational forces, leading to personal transformation as a result of the Spirit’s involvement in their lives.”¹⁵

Many ask, however, “Is this encounter prescriptive or descriptive?” In other words, are such encounters something that God is doing formatively or are they simply commonplace to the life of any believer? Warrington continues, “Rather than view experiencing God as the easier, less authentic and ultimately flawed means of encountering God (when contrasted with a cerebral appreciation of him), it ought to be realized that the former is often the way that God revealed himself in the Bible and can be a powerful transforming influence in the life of a believer.”¹⁶ To be specific, *The Life of Encounter* refers to the Pentecostal believer’s embrace of the experiential nature in one’s relationship with Christ. These encounters may be few, yet foundational. While Pentecostal believers may only occasionally encounter Christ in a supernatural way, these experiences prove incredibly personal and authentic. They are palpable touches of God’s love, which intersect the believer’s senses. Believers will refer to these “God-Moments” for the rest of their lives.¹⁷

¹⁵ Keith Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology: A Theology of Encounter* (London: T & T Clark, 2008), 21.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁷ “God-Moments” is a term that I first heard from Dr. Michael Rakes in class at Southeastern University in 1995. I have used it for years.

The Spirit-Led Life

Wherein the Life of Encounter explores the few, yet foundational God-moments that bring definitional markers to one's spiritual life, the Spirit-Led Life explores the frequent and daily interaction with the Holy Spirit that directs one's life. These interactions regularly go unnoticed to the immature or "baby" believer. However, their identification catapults a Pentecostal into maturity. The goal of the Pentecostal is to live daily in the power of the Holy Spirit in order to be led by God to fully love Him and one's neighbors.

Many believers that utilize the role of a spiritual director do so in order to help identify the ongoing interaction and work of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Eugene Peterson speaks to a spiritual director's role in identifying the activity of the Holy Spirit in a directee's life when he writes, "Spiritual direction is the task of helping a person take seriously what is treated dismissively by the publicity-infatuated and crisis-sated mind, and then to receive this 'mixed, random material of life' as the raw material of high holiness."¹⁸ The mature believer will no longer see moments of the day as haphazard and discursive, but as divinely ordered and permeated by the Holy Spirit. The mature believer receives random moments, life's challenges, or trials as invitations to partnership in the activity of the Holy Spirit. If we are to recognize these invitations, attentiveness to God in prayer becomes an essential part of both encounter and followership.¹⁹

¹⁸ Eugene H. Peterson, *Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1994), 150.

¹⁹ Prayer is a paradox itself. When I speak of prayer I am referring both to "being present with God" and those requests that we make to God on behalf of others or ourselves. In his book *Invitation to Christian Spirituality: An Ecumenical Anthology*, John R. Tyson quotes Karl Barth as having said, "The fact that God yields to human petitions, that he alters his intentions and follows the bent of our prayers, is not a sign of weakness. In his own majesty and in the splendor of his might, he has willed and yet wills it so. He desires to be the God who has been made flesh in Jesus Christ. Therein lies his glory, his

The Life At War

Pentecostals understand that encountering God in practical life situations and following the guidance of the Holy Spirit also means dealing with the same spiritual battle that confronted Jesus—spiritual warfare. If finding a consistent definition for Pentecostalism has proved difficult, finding consistency in the Pentecostal’s belief and practice in the area of spiritual warfare is nearly impossible.

Spiritual warfare, as a term, describes the believer’s interaction with the enemy. Numerous books have been written on this subject with many countering positions about the experience of spiritual warfare. Can we find a common denominator in which most Pentecostals can agree? Scott Moreau distills a most basic working understanding of spiritual warfare to three key components that should gain consensus throughout most of Pentecostalism:

First, the believer is to engage the truth, that is, allow the truths of Scripture regarding God’s character and purposes, the victory of Christ on the cross, the provision of the Spirit, our new position in Christ, and the menacing reality of Satan to become life-governing values. Second, spiritual-warfare disciplines such as prayer, confession, praise, worship, and dedication of resources enable the child of God to ‘strip off’ the old sinful habits and ‘put on’ the new clothes of godliness. Third, the believer should exercise his or her authority in Christ to ‘bind’ Satan, that is, to limit, constrain, and even stop his work in the lives of others.²⁰

In summary, Moreau states that the believer is to engage truth, accept disciplines that lead to godliness, and exercise authority.

omnipotence. He does not then impair himself by yielding to our prayer; on the contrary, it is in so doing that he shows his greatness” (1999, 387).

²⁰ Don N. Howell, “Three Crucial Questions About Spiritual Warfare.” *International Bulletin Of Missionary Research* 23, No. 4 (October 1, 1999): 181.

A plethora of problems and questions arise when one engages a theology of spiritual warfare. The landscape of a spiritual universe—good versus evil, God versus Satan, angels versus demons—can not only be hard to comprehend, but counter-intuitive to a Westerner’s mindset. D.A. Carson, in his review of Gregory Boyd’s book, *God At War*, states, “Boyd asserts that if we find this [spiritual] worldview strange, we should at least recognize that we Westerners are the odd ones out. Many peoples adopt this worldview without difficulty.”²¹ Boyd is right. One of the advantages of the Pentecostal worldview is the general willingness to accept the unseen power and volition of both the Divine and the demonic. It is the attempt to create a biblical theology for this practice that presents the largest problem. Keith Warrington underscores the difficulty: “It is no surprise to discover that there is sometimes fluidity in Pentecostal praxis and thought as they seek to locate a biblical framework that is sufficiently flexible for their spirituality, a spirituality that is, by definition, dynamic since it is pneumatic.” Warrington goes on to quote theologian, Ray Anderson, as saying, “Pentecostals are not unnerved by the search for a theological explanation for a divine act that has been experienced but not understood.”²² Whether with agreed-upon practice or biblical foundations, Pentecostals understand that an essential aspect of their discipleship to Jesus is to engage with Christ in His battle against the devil.

The Life of Holiness

An essential way that Pentecostals understand encounters of God’s leading in spiritual warfare is related to their understanding of God’s desire to lead them into

²¹ Donald A. Carson, “God, the Bible and Spiritual Warfare: A Review Article.” *Journal Of The Evangelical Theological Society* 42, No. 2 (June 1, 1999): 252.

²² Warrington, 23.

holiness. For Pentecostalism, holiness is often seen as an *outward* obedience to make one's *inner* person whole. Unfortunately, holiness cannot work from the outside in. Holiness emerges from one's desire to become more like Christ in every aspect with the understanding that only He can perfect this work. Richard Foster states that cooperating with God perfecting work is the purpose of the spiritual disciplines. "God has given us the disciplines of the spiritual life as a means of receiving this grace. The disciplines allow us to place ourselves before God so that he can transform us. ... A farmer is helpless to grow grain; all he can do is provide the right conditions for the growing of grain."²³ The believer, likewise, is helpless in his attempts at holiness. However, when one makes space, the Holy Spirit fills it.

Holiness can only be fully comprehended within a proper understanding of sin. David Benner explains this important principle as he interprets St. Ignatius by stating:

Ignatius of Loyola suggests that sin is ultimately a refusal to believe that what God wants is my happiness and fulfillment. When I fail to believe this, I am tempted to sin—to take my life into my own hands, assuming that I am in the best position to determine what will lead to my happiness. As I become convinced that God wants nothing more than my fulfillment, surrender to his will is increasingly possible.²⁴

Richard Rohr supports the same thought by saying, "That seems to be the case with many people, and is what we mean by 'sinners.' The word signifies not moral inferiors so much as people who do not know who they are and whose they are, people who have no connection to their inherent dignity and importance."²⁵

²³ Foster, 7.

²⁴ David G. Benner, *Sacred Companions: The Gift of Spiritual Friendship & Direction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), Kindle Electronic Edition: Chapter 1, Location 323.

²⁵ Richard Rohr, *The Naked Now: Learning to See as the Mystics See* (New York: Crossroad Pub., 2009), 29.

When sin becomes a list of things that we cannot do, holiness becomes a list of things that we must do. However, following a list of commandments does not have the ability to bring wholeness. Wholeness is the “abundant life” consisting of *shalom*, and the Kingdom Jesus desires. Ironically, inside of God’s understanding of earthly wholeness is the acceptance that human perfection is “now and not yet.” Richard Rohr clarifies this understanding in his book, *Falling Forward*:

If there is such a thing as human perfection, it seems to emerge precisely from how we handle the imperfection that is everywhere, especially our own. What a clever place for God to hide holiness, so that only the humble and earnest will find it! A ‘perfect’ person ends up being one who can consciously forgive and include imperfection rather than one who thinks he or she is totally above and beyond imperfection. It becomes sort of obvious once you say it out loud. The demand for the perfect is the greatest enemy of the good. Perfection is a mathematical or divine concept, goodness is a beautiful human concept that includes us all.²⁶

One can see that this type of human perfection will take the Holy Spirit years to cultivate in an individual’s life.

The Spirit-Gifted Life

A life that encounters God in experiential ways and is led by the Holy Spirit must also be empowered by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, Pentecostals strongly encourage the use of the spiritual gifts. Indonesian Pastor and author, David Lim discusses these gifts, “Some define the gifts as primarily natural abilities, while others define the gifts as totally supernatural....If the gifts were totally supernatural, then they would be infallible. But God’s Word tells us to evaluate each gift in the light of edification, exhortation, comfort and the Bible itself.”²⁷ Gifts are for the building up of the body. Spiritual gifts

²⁶ Richard Rohr, *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011), xxii.

²⁷ David Lim, *Spiritual Gifts: A Fresh Look* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Pub. House, 1991), 43.

are to be sought after (cf. 1 Cor 12:31); they are to be understood (cf. 1 Cor 12:1), and they are to be used for strengthening, encouraging and comfort (cf. 1 Cor 14:3). But spiritual gifts are used in and through fallible and sinful human beings and therefore need to be discerned.

A close look at 1 Corinthians 12-14 gives a framework for Jesus' desire for the use of spiritual gifts. "There are three terms used to describe the Spirit's gifts. They are *charismata* (1 Cor 12:4), *diakonai* (v. 5), and *energemata* (v. 6). These are not separate categories; rather, each term illuminates the others."²⁸ We read:

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.²⁹

Bert Dominy, former Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary professor, helps us understand the purpose of spiritual gifts in the context of these three Greek terms:

- "Charismata is from the same root as the Greek word for grace (*charis*). The term designates 'that which is bestowed by God's favor, freely and graciously given.' The gracious activity of the Spirit contradicts any attitude of superiority."³⁰ *Charismata* speak to the posture of spiritual gifts. There is nothing that an individual has done to earn or deserve this gift. However, because of Paul's directive to "desire the greater gifts," it would seem that the believer plays a role in God's bestowal at times.

²⁸ Bert Dominy, "Paul and Spiritual Gifts: Reflections on 1 Corinthians 12-14." *Southwestern Journal Of Theology* 26, no. 1 (September 1, 1983): 52.

²⁹ 1 Cor. 12:4-6.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 52.

- “*Diakonai* means ‘services’ or ‘ministries.’ As ‘services,’ spiritual gifts involve responsibility for the edification of others. They are designed for ministry, not for indulgence.”³¹ *Diakonai* speaks to the purpose of spiritual gifts. The gifts are given to encourage, strengthen and comfort the body. At times, however, gifts are also given to admonish and rebuke the body. Admonishments and rebukes are to be considered services or ministries as well.
- “*Energemata* means ‘workings’ or ‘energies’. The thought is that of God’s power in action or ‘ways in which the divine power is applied.’ Thus, a charisma which is given for the purpose of service or ministry can be further described as a manifestation of power.”³² *Energemata* speaks to the practice of spiritual gifts. This answers the question of how Jesus will serve his body.

The Life On Mission

Pentecostals see mission as the natural outcome of a life led and empowered by the Holy Spirit in search for victory over evil and the development of personal Christ-likeness/holiness. The life on mission is the life that pursues the specific and unique call that God has placed upon a person. In his book, *Mansions of the Heart*, Dr. R. Thomas Ashbrook speaks to the subject of two callings. The “first order” of calling refers to Jesus’ call for each person into a personal relationship of love with the triune God. The

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

“second order” of calling refers to Jesus’ invitation to “follow me”. One’s ability to follow and serve Jesus is dependent on the depth of our relationship with him.³³

The first order of calling—to a personal relationship of love with God—as defined by Ashbrook is primary, yet the second order of calling—to follow—flows naturally from this relationship with God. A sign of maturity then is when a believer has moved from working *for* God to working *with* God in intimate fellowship as God’s friend. For the purpose of this study, we see mission as the second order calling. Richard Waldrop, professor at Church of God Theological Seminary, states:

By missionary we understand the idea that God is ‘Self-sent,’ ‘Self-extended’ and ‘Self-revealed’ outwardly through the divine creational activity. In Genesis, we find one of the great principles of missionary existence: the creative desire and ability to open oneself outwardly and take concrete steps to draw near to others with the intention of entering into relationships which seek others’ welfare and salvation.³⁴

Mission is not to be confused with missions. In many Pentecostal circles, the word, missions, refers to the evangelistic practice of individuals outside of their specific cultural context. Missions connotes following the direct implication of Jesus’ words, “Go and make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19). Missions then, would fall under the larger umbrella of mission. Waldrop further explains,

The biblical idea of the image of God, or *imago dei*, in human beings, also has clear missiological implications. Human beings, because they carry the image of God and because they are the creation of God, must be treated with dignity and justice. Therefore, the whole missionary enterprise of the Church has as one of its principal objectives the recognition of the value of human life in all of its dimensions. Because God is the Spirit of Life, the Church must be clear in her prophetic proclamation of the dignity of life and in her prophetic denunciation of

³³ This is a loose quote from: R. Thomas Ashbrook, *Mansions of the Heart: Exploring the Seven Stages of Spiritual Growth* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 30.

³⁴ Richard E. Waldrop, “Pentecostal Perspectives on Holistic Church Mission Today.” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 10, no. 2 (July 1, 2007): 179.

violence, slavery, racism, abortion, addiction, poverty and war, which are all instruments of sin, death and destruction.³⁵

Mission, as Pentecostalism understands the term, involves bringing the eschatological vision of God into the present reality of this broken world. Mission establishes the Kingdom on earth.³⁶ It is no surprise then to find, as Grant McClung states, “Eschatological urgency is at the heart of understanding the missionary fervor of early Pentecostalism.”³⁷

The six expressions that define Pentecostalism will serve as a guide in the understanding of maturity. As we make our way through a formation model these expressions will help to determine what the Holy Spirit is doing and what he intends to do. While these expressions are certainly inadequate to fully understand or describe the mystical operation of the Holy Spirit, they will prove helpful in exploring how the believer can partner with what the Holy Spirit would like to do to accomplish deepening maturity.

³⁵ Ibid., 180.

³⁶ In *The Everlasting Gospel*, William Faupel states, “The belief in the imminent premillennial return of Christ proved to be the primary motivation for evangelization and world mission.” (1996, 21)

³⁷ Grant L. McClung Jr., “Theology and Strategy of Pentecostal Missions.” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 12, no. 1 (January 1, 1988): 2.

SECTION 3: OTHER PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

Introduction

This section will highlight the various attempts, models, and perspectives in several existing formational models, and will address their flaws, misinterpretations and shortcomings when applied to a Pentecostal setting. For this writer, the other proposed solutions do not necessarily miss their intended mark but rather do not address our goal. However, other proposed solutions can be utilized to build a Pentecostal's perspective on the Stages of the spiritual journey. For this purpose, the following authors will be surveyed: R. Thomas Ashbrook, Janet O. Hagberg and Robert A. Guelich, Sondra Higgins Matthaei, Bruce Demarest, and Mark Buchanon.

Bruce Demarest, in *Seasons of the Soul* includes an appendix that highlights many different classical and contemporary spiritual journey paradigms. He writes,

Christian thinkers throughout history have proposed various paradigms or examples of the spiritual journey. . . . Since each journey paradigm often focuses on one facet of the diamond (e.g., love, prayer), it affords a partial representation of the richness and complexity of our growing life in Christ. We gain a more holistic understanding of the soul's journey to maturity by reflecting on several paradigms in their richness and diversity.¹

Many of these diverse and rich paradigms focus on the nature of key elements or facets, such as prayer, or love. For the purpose of this work, rather than reiterate the nature of those facets, the focus will be directed on the perspective of that facet as it is experienced in a Pentecostal life. For example, instead of dwelling on the nature of love in one's spiritual journey, we will explore how a Pentecostal experiences love. In the same way,

¹ Bruce A Demarest, *Seasons of the Soul: Stages of Spiritual Development* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2009), 160.

instead of focusing on the general practice of prayer, this study will focus on how the Pentecostal experiences prayer.

Numerous approaches focus on “facets” of the spiritual journey, but few focus on perspectives. In order to build a journey model that focuses on a specific perspective, a synthesis of models must be researched and included. R. Thomas Ashbrook, in *Mansions of the Heart*, discusses the danger of pursuing a given perspective or viewpoint to the exclusion of others:

The goal we choose as the primary one becomes the lens through which we see and interpret the person of God and our spiritual experience. To make matters worse, traditions tend to emphasize the goals that have been important in their own movement. . . . If we are convinced God is up to one thing in our lives, then we will interpret our experience from this perspective.²

Interpreting the experience from a particular perspective, Pentecostalism, is precisely what this study purposes to do. In order to avoid the pitfalls of a biased lens, yet view the spiritual journey through a specific paradigm, it is helpful to utilize many models. When we synthesize these models in the context of our Pentecostal expressions, a pattern of experience will emerge. First, the models that follow will help to give us a foundational base through which to substantiate a formation model. Second, the models will provide patterns of experience to necessary for our synthesized model.

Dr. R. Thomas Ashbrook

In *Mansions of the Heart*, R. Thomas Ashbrook explores and interprets one of the spiritual journey classics, Teresa of Avila’s *Interior Castle*. Teresa’s model was developed in the sixteenth century, and has long been regarded as “one of the most

² R. Thomas Ashbrook, *Mansions of the Heart: Exploring the Seven Stages of Spiritual Growth* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 20.

celebrated books on mystical theology in existence.”³ Teresa’s interior castle, which represents the heart of the believer, is made up of seven mansions, or clusters of rooms. Each mansion represents a different season of the spiritual journey into deepening intimacy with God and the experience of His love. The rooms within the castle of our heart represent some aspect of our spiritual experience, such as motivation, prayer, etc.

Ashbrook best describes these mansions in the following way: the first room describes the introduction to new life in Christ.⁴ The second room represents the believer’s struggle between the call and values of this world and that of the Kingdom of God. This struggle “is a dark valley for which few new believers are prepared.”⁵ This a season that feels very distant from God. The third mansion is one in which “we jump to a time in our spiritual growth when the struggles and warfare of the second mansion are largely over, and considerable ‘discipleship’ now exemplifies our life.”⁶ The transition from the third to the fourth mansion is one of the largest transitions. It is this transition that Teresa says, “For we now begin to touch the supernatural and this is most difficult to explain.”⁷ Ashbrook describes this as, “God making himself and his love known not only in blessings but in inner feelings and awareness of his presence.”⁸ In the fifth mansion, Ashbrook explains, “As you and I journey in this season of our spiritual growth, we have

³ Teresa, and E. Allison Peers, *Interior Castle*. (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2007), 3.

⁴ Teresa of Avila uses the term “mansion” to delineate the Stages. Teresa uses the Spanish word *apostentos* which is a “rather more pretentious word than the English ‘room’: dwellingplace, abode, apartment.”

⁵ Ashbrook, 71.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 89.

⁷ Teresa and E. Allison Peers, 46.

⁸ Ashbrook, 107.

stumbled headlong into the mystery and wonder of a Love beyond expectations, a relationship with the Creator of the Universe that seems presumptuous to even think about.”⁹ Between the fifth and the sixth rooms Ashbrook describes what John of the Cross called, Dark Night of the Soul. The sixth mansion carries the believer into the ever-deepening love of God and inner experiences of His wonder and grace. Mansion seven describes the deepest levels of union and intimacy with God possible in this world, a relationship of total trust and abandonment to His love.

One can readily see how Ashbrook’s description and interpretation of Teresa’s *Interior Castle* have proved invaluable for understanding Teresa’s work. These descriptions and model will be the primary source for the foundation of the Pentecostal model presented here.

Janet O. Hagberg and Robert A. Guelich

In *The Critical Journey: Stages in the Life of Faith*, Hagberg and Guelich describe their approach in discussing the spiritual formation journey: “We recognize that more academic approaches to the stages of faith have preceded. Many approaches have been based on extensive research....Ours is simply an attempt to provide another guidebook for the reader to use to help identify some of the mileposts on the journey of faith.”¹⁰ Hagberg and Guelich have merged stage theory, a theory focusing on psychological development, and various faith development models. Much of their research in stage

⁹ Ibid., 127.

¹⁰ Janet Hagberg and Robert A. Guelich, *The Critical Journey: Stages in the Life of Faith* (Salem, WI: Sheffield Pub., 2005), ix.

theory comes from James Fowlers' research described in his book, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* in which Fowler claims:

I believe faith is a human universal. We are endowed at birth with nascent capacities for faith. How these capacities are activated and grow depends to a large extent on how we are welcomed into the world and what kinds of environments we grow in. Faith is interactive and social; it requires community, language, ritual and nurture. Faith is also shaped by initiatives from beyond us and other people initiatives of spirit or grace. How these latter initiatives are recognized and imaged, or unperceived and ignored, powerfully affects the shape of faith in our lives.¹¹

Hagberg and Guelich use a stage model, largely based on Teresa of Avila, with a stage inserted between Stages Four and Five called "The Wall" that is not numbered. These stages are described as:

- Stage One: Recognition of God
- Stage Two: Life of Discipleship
- Stage Three: Productive Life
- Stage Four: Journey Inward
- The Wall
- Stage Five: Journey Outward
- Stage Six: Life of Love

The brilliance of Hagberg and Guelich's model is the specificity of the experiences of those they talked to and interviewed. Although not highly academic, their work is highly practical and insightful.

¹¹ James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995), xiii.

Sondra Higgins Matthaedi

Sondra Higgins Matthaedi, in her book, *Making Disciples: Faith Formation in the Wesleyan Tradition*, addresses John Wesley's conviction that a life of holiness is formed and nurtured through growing communion with the Triune God in Christian community. Matthaedi outlines a three-stage model interpreted from John Wesley. She writes, "I began to construct a Wesleyan ecology of faith formation based on my proposal that faith formation in the Wesleyan tradition has three phases: 'invitation to communion,' 'deepening communion,' and 'full communion' with God."¹² Wesley, himself, described the three stages in the following context: "The aim of a Wesleyan ecology of faith formation is to make disciples—to shape Christian identity and Christian vocation so that persons respond to God's prevenient grace and find new meaning for their lives in faithful discipleship."¹³ With Pentecostalism's roots in the Wesleyan tradition, this stage model provides foundational insights for discovering a model that will serve Pentecostals.

Dr. Bruce Demarest

Demarest introduces for us the idea of a cyclical stage model in his book, *Seasons of the Soul*.¹⁴ Where the three models described above have been linear, Demarest describes his model as an upward spiral. "Rarely does spiritual growth advance in a straight line toward heaven; it's more like an upward spiral. The Christian spiritual journey involves starting and stopping, digressions, and sometimes even reversions to

¹² Sondra Higgins Matthaedi, *Making Disciples: Faith Formation in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000), 13.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 170.

¹⁴ Demarest, 13.

previous stages.”¹⁵ Demarest’s model describes three reoccurring stages: “Initial Orientation, Painful Disorientation, and Joyful Reorientation.”¹⁶ The value of Demarest’s model is the extensive research and vast resources from which he pulls. His synthesized footnotes and quotes alone are invaluable for anyone who wishes to identify the experiences of Christians within their journey of growth.

Mark Buchanan

Where Demarest uses a classical model, Mark Buchanan uses a contemporary model with a vivid analogy.¹⁷ Buchanan utilizes the seasons of the earth as analogous to the seasons of the soul. The value in his work is once again a description of the faith journey in terms of a cycle, using a vivid metaphor that is easily memorable and understandable. His seasons are naturally: Winter, Spring, Summer, and Autumn. Winter describes a season wherein God seems distant or hidden from the Christian. Spring celebrates life again. “God’s springtime begins with renewal within you.”¹⁸ Summer is that season when God is most experienced. A believer can “*taste and see* that the Lord is good.”¹⁹ Autumn is a season of harvest during all that was planted in the spring and summer comes to fruition.

Buchanan’s contribution further reminds us that all seasons are ordained by God. For example, Christians tend to view mountains as “good” and valleys as “bad.”

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 15.

¹⁷ I call Demarest’s model classical because he uses OT Scholar, Walter Brueggemann’s model which follows the Psalms. This explanation can be seen on pages 14-15 of Demarest’s book.

¹⁸ Mark Buchanan, *Spiritual Rhythm: Being with Jesus Every Season of Your Soul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 76.

¹⁹ Ps. 34:8 (italics mine).

Mountains are the reward of the Christians' investment in doing the "right things". Valleys are the punishment of God for doing the "wrong things". This analogy can present a danger in some circles of Pentecostalism where the belief prevails that when something good or bad has happened there is a cause and effect principle at work. (We do something wrong and God produces a bad effect.) Buchanan reminds us God is not a "cause and effect" God, rather, Christians go through seasons of growth that are ordained by God which include both the difficulties of this world and the joys of God's blessings.

The Need for a Pentecostal Paradigm

These classical and contemporary models set the framework for both the theory and content of a synthesized Pentecostal formation model. First, they give guidelines and exceptions for utilizing a progressive model. Second, they provide organic yet definable attributes with which to describe the stages. Third, they both explain and point to invaluable descriptions of experiences within each of the stages. Finally, they give credibility to the synthesis in which this treatment will integrate their insights.

Each of these models proves helpful in our understanding of a Pentecostal paradigm. However, none of them go far enough in integrating spiritual formation with the six expressions that help us understand Pentecostalism. Chapter Three will discuss a model formulated to utilize and synthesize components of the models I have reviewed as well as develop the descriptions to further help us understand the maturation process of the Pentecostal believer.

SECTION 4: THE THESIS

Considerations Regarding A Stage Model

The Pentecostal model will use the basic approach laid out by Teresa of Avila, as interpreted by Thomas Ashbrook, using insights synthesized from the works of Janet Hagberg and Robert Guelich, Sondra Higgins Matthaei, Bruce Demarest, Mark Buchanan and others. Each of these methodologies is beneficial in helping to describe a progressive path of maturity based on patterns of experience which are typical but not prescriptive.

Before proceeding further, one needs to consider the pros and cons of using either a progressive or a cyclical model for the development of spiritual formation stages. One perceived deficiency in using a progressive model as opposed to a cyclical model is that it can tend to cause readers to identify with categories that they have not fully experienced. Teresa solves this by using the concept of a home base.¹ A reader could identify a particular stage as a home base, yet have the freedom to explore the other bases. For instance, if a progressive model is made up of seven stages, as in the case of *The Interior Castle* by Teresa of Avila, a reader might identify primarily with the Fourth Stage of maturity. That reader then recognizes experiences in the Second, Third and even Fifth Stages that he has come to know frequently. The brilliance of Teresa's model is that the reader resides in a home base that he mostly identifies with, yet understands he will potentially "visit" other stages for exploration only to come "home" to the home base again. This leaves room for variety of experiences.²

¹ Teresa and E. Alison Peters. This concept is described throughout the book and first introduced on page 16.

² I make little case for one having to go through the stages in order. This is presumed by the numbering system. Some might think that because they have read and understand the stages that they

The goal of the Pentecostal believer is to be in an ever-deepening relationship with the Trinity that manifests in a Spirit-empowered life, one which gives testimony to the Gospel. Describing the bookends of this life—the beginning and the end—are more often attempted than an exploration of the middle sections. One can easily see how a new believer who has a lack of experiences would operate minimally in spiritual gifts; may not understand how the enemy tempts; would have many areas of improvement in the standards of holiness; might be unaware of her mission; and would be mostly ignorant of the Spirit’s gentle directions and promptings throughout a normal day. Also one could attempt to describe what a believer in full maturity might expect by simply employing the inverse of the above description. However, there is much room between the two descriptions. A stage model can specifically address what the Pentecostal expressions can look like as the believer progresses in faith, not just the bookends.

Potential disadvantages of using a progressive stage model might include the following: first, it might lend to a perception that forces an individual into categories and/or stages that that person has not experienced. Second, progressive models might seem rigid and overly precise. A person might see the description and discount the model because she/he does not fit neatly into a stage. Third, because there are millions of different people with millions of different lives and experiences, one could say that a progressive model would not be able to capture the nuance and uniqueness of each

would be able to somehow sidetrack specific seasons. This is impossible. Richard Foster speaks to shortcutting growth, “We often short-circuit an opportunity for deep knowing by believing every spiritual channel is instantly available to us. But there is simply no way our minds can absorb all there is to know instantly. As much as we want to believe that our minds handle information and ideas like digital processors, both our mind and our morality develop over time. We become more and more like what we think and do.”

See Richard J. Foster and Gayle D. Beebe, *Longing for God: Seven Paths of Christian Devotion* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2009), 243.

individual in a beneficial way. It is true that a model must be organic and loose enough to allow for an individual to identify a believer's home stage yet descriptive and nuanced enough to bring personal benefit and assistance. In order to make a progressive model palpable there are some exceptions and explanations that must first be qualified.

Demarest observes that the stages of faith development “unfold in a spiral sequence where each stage builds on previous ones to form new capacities for faith.”³ Fowler adds, “The Stages are cumulative in that one brings to each new crisis the mixed residue of past solutions.”⁴ As a person moves through the stages of maturity one does not begin a wholly new experience. The stages do not stand-alone, but rather build upon one another in a way that benefits the growth in faith.

Having described some of the difficulties of a progressive formation model, we can also see difficulties with looking at formation cyclically. It can be hard for a believer to gain a sense of growth when descriptions of a given stage reoccur along the journey.

As Bruce Demarest explains:

Just as we develop physically and emotionally from childhood to adolescence, young adulthood, middle age, maturity and old age, Christians grow continuously as they move through the spiritual seasons. However, we also experience cycles in which we move back through earlier spiritual seasons. We revisit past fears and failures, and hopefully relearn important spiritual lessons as we do.⁵

Therefore, using a cyclical model, one can become confused whether changes represent increasing maturity or simply regression to a previous condition.

A common misunderstanding in formation models is that one grows in wisdom strictly based on age and experience. This, however, is not the collective experience of

³ Demarest,,14.

⁴ Fowler, 48.

⁵ Demarest, 13.

Christian history. As Hagberg describes, “You do not necessarily proceed to new stages merely with age or experience, although both are factors.”⁶ In Ashbrook’s opinion, “The vast majority of Christians in America are stuck in Stage Three of a Seven-Stage model, regardless of age.”⁷

While Teresa describes an individual to have a home base and safe space, that person does not simply stay in that stage. “...Because of the pilgrim nature of our spiritual journey, we do not simply progress in a straight line; we explore forward and then return to the safety of an earlier phase. Understanding [all of the stages] can help us recognize both the forward and reverse excursions.”⁸

Finally, as each stage is described there are not as many new experiences described as there are explanations about how a particular experience will be practiced or received as one matures in faith and deepening intimacy with God. Ashbrook reminds the reader, “One of the difficulties in comparing the mansions [aka, stages] is that they tend to differ more in the degree of a given spiritual experience than in introducing completely new experiences.”⁹ In conclusion, stage models help to see a sure path of growth. They are limited in that they can only give patterns of normative experience, yet patterns provide an excellent starting point.

⁶ Hagberg and Guelich, xxx.

⁷ Ashbrook, 104.

⁸ Ibid., 44-45.

⁹ Ibid., 46.

An Overview of the Synthesized Model

The model that will be used in the following pages will be synthesized from Teresa of Avila's *Interior Castle*. Teresa uses a seven-stage model to guide readers through the seasons of maturity. Ashbrook includes John of the Cross's *Dark Night of the Soul* between Teresa's fifth and sixth mansions. Due to the complexity in delineating between Mansions Six and Seven (because of the fractional nuance between the two), and because of the practicality in explaining those nuances to this audience, this writer has chosen to combine Stages Six and Seven into one. Here, then, are the stages of our synthesized Pentecostal model.

Stage One: Awakening. It is in this stage that the believer has made a decision to follow Christ. There is an excitement that follows in attitude and a change in attention. "Some people at this point in the journey clearly and completely experience God first through their senses. They are not given to *thinking* about God as much as they simply experience the presence of God."¹⁰

Stage Two: Wilderness. Surprisingly, God tests our initial commitment very early. Just as Jesus heard his Father's voice, "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased,"¹¹ and was immediately whisked away by the Spirit into the desert,¹² so too God moves us past the early stage of excitement into a season of refinement where we face the difficulty of honoring the values of the Kingdom of God while living in the Kingdom of this world. In this season we also experience heightened temptation from the enemy in an attempt to make us turn back or give up.

¹⁰ Hagberg and Guelich, 37.

¹¹ Matt. 3:16.

¹² Matt. 4:1.

Stage Three: Productivity. Writes Ashbrook, “We now jump to a time in our spiritual growth when the struggles and warfare of the second mansion are largely over, and considerable ‘discipleship’ now exemplifies our life.”¹³ Hagberg further describes this season as the “doing” season.¹⁴ The disciple grows in knowledge and intimacy with God through working with Him. It is in this stage that the believer will spend a fair amount of time, usually many years.

Stage Four: Reorientation. It is in this stage that God begins a seismic shift in one’s focus and motivation from “doing” to “relating” with God. The shift first begins to show up in one’s doubts and second-guessing of many things that were once concrete. “John of the Cross described the soul’s reorientation paradoxically as the darkness of illumination, whereby God gradually drives away the night with the dawning of a fresh revelation of his love.”¹⁵ Focus on serving God, once a light of great joy, now moves into darkness. One might wonder, “Is this all there is?” From this place of disorienting darkness, the pilgrim is able to grasp the new Light into which the Lord invites him or her.

Stage Five: Dark Night is better termed a transitional season, described by John of Cross’s Dark Night of the Soul where God blocks the believer’s awareness of His presence. These moments and sometimes years are “created by God as an essential part of our pilgrimage, occurring in the more mature years of our Christian journey toward a union of love with Him. The Dark Nights, wrongly interpreted, have derailed many a

¹³ Ashbrook, 89.

¹⁴ Hagberg and Guelich, 73.

¹⁵ Demarest, 128.

maturing follower of Jesus.”¹⁶ Hagberg describes this season as The Wall: “This experience for us must manifest God’s love and acceptance of us *in* our humanness. ... Paradox is the key.”¹⁷ It is a time, as Brian McLaren describes, when “there are no solutions, answers or consolations in sight.”¹⁸ God is the One who brings on this opportunity to trust him in new ways, and it can only be God who leads us out.

Stage Six: Union. This is the final stage of earthly maturity. It is in this stage that the believer finally allows the Holy Spirit to remove his/her dependence on the things of the world. This is the earthly culmination of Jesus’s statement, “Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us.”¹⁹ In Union, Christ-likeness develops to the fullest extent possible on this earth. The early church Syrian master of the spiritual life, Makarios the Great, beautifully and poetically describes this union:

When the soul becomes totally radiant
And covered with the ineffable beauty
Of the glory of the light of Christ,
It comes to share in the very life of the divine Spirit
To such perfection that it is changed
Into the very chamber and throne of God.²⁰

Markarios’ chamber is reminiscent of the fullness beautifully described by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians:

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power,
together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and

¹⁶ Ashbrook, 150.

¹⁷ Hagberg and Guelich, 117.

¹⁸ Brian D. McLaren, *Naked Spirituality: A Life with God in 12 Simple Words* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2011), 141.

¹⁹ John 17:21.

²⁰ John Anthony McGuckin, *The Book of Mystical Chapters: Meditations on the Soul's Ascent, from the Desert Fathers and Other Early Christian Contemplatives* (Boston, MA: Shambhala, 2003), 136.

deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.²¹

This is union in its fullest. The Apostle Paul prays that the Ephesians would experience and know what is unknowable.

The following section describes in detail the Six Stage formation model in which each stage will be described in terms of the six Pentecostal expressions. Each includes an explanation of the normative experience of a believer within each of the stages.

Stage One: Awakening

The new life in Christ explodes with excitement and potential. There are numerous fears, struggles, questions, and concerns that seem to be completely overshadowed by the enthusiasm of awakening to God's grace, forgiveness and acceptance. For many Pentecostal believers this decision to follow Christ is made at an altar after responding to a specific salvation invitation. This moment constitutes one of the first memorable "God-Moments" in the believer's life. Many individuals even go so far as to remember the date as their "new birth date," as if walking into a bakery with a heightened sense of smell, a new sense has been discovered. This new sense seems to be alive with the predilection to things of God. The new believer bears witness to the writer of Psalm 34:8 who says, "Taste and see that the Lord is good." In Stage One, God becomes tangible, feel-able, and experiential. God is near, his Word is alive and prayer is

²¹ Ephesians 3:17-21.

second nature. It would seem that the doors of heaven had been flung open and the new believer granted an open invitation.

Awakening: The Life of Encounter

As described above, God is tangible and very real to the new believer's senses. Hagberg describes this time well: "Some people at this stage clearly and completely experience God first through their senses. We are not given to thinking about God. Rather we simply experience the presence of God...we do not experience God's presence primarily in a rational way but in an experiential way, using the various senses."²² In other words, we encounter God. Thoughts and rationale take second-place to feelings and emotions, which seem truer and richer because many of these feelings have never been experienced in this way before. Demarest explains the excitement of the new believer by saying, "Early on in the journey, new believers often experience considerable religious zeal. Nothing seems to matter more than knowing God and following him."²³ The Stage One believer will regularly feed off of the excitement of the initial experience with God at the salvation moment. While a new believer could have another life-altering "God-Moment" in this stage, typically the salvation experience will be the pinnacle encounter. Some other possible milestone encounters might include: a supernatural and immediate end to a long-term addiction, a reconciliation of a relationship, a vocational change, water baptism, and Spirit baptism to name a few. At an emotional level, the believer begins to experience new levels of peace, joy, and freedom from fear resulting in new boldness to follow Jesus.

²² Hagberg and Guelich, 37.

²³ Demarest, 23.

Awakening: The Spirit-Led Life

The desire for God's Word and God's people in this stage is insatiable. New Christians, awakened to the leading of the Spirit will regularly spend every spare second with their Bibles opened in study. They desire to associate with godly people and the opportunity to talk about spiritual things. The awakened believer is taken aback by those who do not feel the same and will even chastise them for not feeling a similar excitement. Church attendance becomes generally high and consistent. This person may well attend any and all church events, there every time the doors are open. "Sweetness and pleasure well up in seasons of prayer as we discover that God hears and answers prayers," says Demarest.²⁴

Our acceptance of this new life "depends both on the progress of our overall maturation and on the way the persons and conditions of our environment greet us and beckon us into interaction."²⁵ It is imperative that one responds to the Spirit's directing toward community. Regularly this Stage One believer will join every small group, every ministry team and every outreach opportunity. The Holy Spirit speaks primarily in this stage through Christian friends and leaders. There is a heightened learning curve about the Christian life. While the Holy Spirit is gently speaking and enlightening, He does the majority of this enlightening through the teaching and insight of other believers. The new believer has not learned to tune one's ears to the Holy Spirit's unique voice.

Awakening: The Spirit-Gifted Life

²⁴ Ibid., 22.

²⁵ Fowler, 120.

Typically the supernatural spiritual gifts are practiced *for* or given *to* the new believer in this stage. For example, instead of the new believer having a word of knowledge to share with another believer in order to encourage that believer, the word of knowledge is given to the new believer from another Christian.²⁶ The Stage One believer is encouraged along in her growth and excitement. This event, the shared word of knowledge, begins a seed of thought to the advantages and possibilities of spiritual maturity. Ashbrook writes, “Although God is trying to reveal himself, in prayer and in daily life, [in Stage One] the new believer has not developed the ability to discern spiritually and can scarcely see his light.”²⁷ Spiritual gifts tend to be personality-based in this stage. Paul lists gifts such as hospitality, mercy, administration, etc.²⁸ The new believer tends to operate in these gifts based out of the personality proclivities that come more naturally. In other words, a person who has been more structured and ordered in his/her life now has the potential to use this personality trait in order to benefit the church body.

Awakening: The Life at War

At this stage, the believer’s mind is the primary area of resistance in which the enemy will operate. The believer has certainly had thoughts impressed upon him by the enemy before this season or stage. However, because of the excitement of new faith, this

²⁶ In *Spiritual Gifts* David Lim describes this gift by saying, “The manifestation of this gift would not be the product of study as such, but God’s special word through the teacher, helping communicate a scriptural truth needed by the church.” He goes on to say, “This gift may be manifested in a more supernatural way as well. God shared his secrets with the prophets (e.g., when it would rain, the enemy’s plans, the secret sins of kings and servants). Sometimes God reveals to a person someone’s sin or special need or His own activity on someone’s behalf. These are facts only God can know” (1991, 73).

²⁷ Ashbrook, 61.

²⁸ Romans 12:8-13.

believer often assumes that she must be doing something wrong and the thoughts are then attributed to self. Ashbrook claims, “Although we have the Holy Spirit’s power to resist, few of us are taught about such warfare. The result is that we may well ascribe all these tempting thoughts to ourselves, and once the evil intentions are recognized we feel shame and guilt. We may just work harder rather than turn to God more deeply.”²⁹

The new believer may falsely assume that these contrary thoughts should not be occurring. “Superstitions fit here too,” write Hagberg and Guelich. “Fear that God will make you ill, if you fail to pray regularly. Or belief that you will have success, if you ‘play the game by God’s rules’ ... Fear of rejection (from low self-esteem) represents the predominant feeling in this [stage].”³⁰ The enemy knows that experience and exuberance from feelings and emotions energize believers in this stage. In turn, the enemy tries to sidetrack them by using contrary feelings such as shame, guilt, frustration, and apathy. This interplay of influence between God’s thoughts and the enemy’s thoughts are just being recognized by the new believer, although, unfortunately, she is usually unaware of the tactic. “Although God has declared us righteous in Christ,” claims Demarest, “we retain our fallen nature, with its egotism and self-love.... Every Christian experiences this contest between old and new natures, but the warfare is particularly intense in those immature in the faith.”³¹ Many times the enemy is satisfied with just planting or sowing the seeds of guilt and shame in this stage. Satan will use them shrewdly over the next several stages in incredibly effective ways.

²⁹ Ashbrook, 63.

³⁰ Hagberg and Guelich, 45.

³¹ Demarest, 23.

Awakening: The Life of Holiness

For the first several stages of the Pentecostal's maturity, holiness may be measured in terms of "do's and don'ts". This believer may often measure her maturity primarily by what she has given up (addictive habits, unwholesome speech) and what she has begun to do (Bible reading, prayer). Demarest describes this point in the journey:

New Christians give up their worst sins and break fewer laws than they once did, but they are still attached to the world. Instead of judging themselves by the Gospel they merely compare themselves with their former selves...Considering the enticements of the world and its fleeting pleasures, young believers, at the beginning of the Christian life, must be intentional about turning from their old ways and whole-heartedly pursuing God.³²

Demarest stresses that while the believer's understanding of holiness may be immature at this stage, holiness must be pursued intensely.

It is worth noting that the Holy Spirit's work in the believer generally moves from external to internal. However, because of the new believer's level of unawareness to the Spirit's work, the external is often all that one sees. The Spirit, however, is working dynamically internally. The new believer should use this awareness of the external work as encouragement of what the Spirit is doing internally. Never before has one felt the level of conviction felt now with her thoughts and actions. Although it may seem to the believer that God is angry at her sinfulness, the conviction signifies that God is at work and a sign that she has drawn closer to loving God.

Awakening: The Life on Mission

In this Awakening expression of Stage One, the life on mission can be one of extremes. Some believers in this early stage feel that they immediately hear a specific call

³² Ibid., 28.

to a particular ministry area. Some do not hear the specifics yet, but feel a sense of duty and power to “change the world.” Writes Demarest, “We are comforted by the fact that God has a purpose for our lives—restoration to Christlikeness that we might be the healing presence of the Savior in the world.”³³ Life on Mission can involve selling everything that the new believer has and heading to Africa, or it can include the disdain for other Christians that sit idly by and do nothing. However, the internal motivation might be based in egotism and self-service. Ashbrook reminds us that, “We are mainly focused on getting God’s help to obtain the worldly pleasures we have not been able to get for ourselves.”³⁴ The “worldly pleasure” in this case may be a sense of purpose or self-worth. The believer may subconsciously ask himself, “How can I remove this feeling of guilt?” or “How can God use *me* to change everyone to be like me?”

³³ Ibid., 22.

³⁴ Ashbrook, 54.

Stage Two: Wilderness

Stage Two relates to what Ashbrook calls a “mysterious wilderness”.³⁵ This stage can be compared to Jesus’ own experience after his baptism. Shortly after Jesus heard His Father miraculously say, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased,”³⁶ Jesus was whisked away into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. Jesus goes from a tangible, feel-able, life-changing experience into a season of intense questioning and testing. Although this experience of internal conflict between the world and God describes the essence of Stage Two, it is not the only time this conflict surfaces. Because the spiritual journey is not a linear path, believers can potentially see this cycle play out many times over the course of their new life. A believer might experience an intense season of encounter and closeness with God only to be whisked away into a temptation, battle, and sometimes, failure. The new believer will most certainly think that it is because he has done something wrong. To the contrary, God allows this heightened struggle because the believer has grown enough to face it. Feelings of distance from God can emerge because the believer becomes ashamed of poor choices or because God does not immediately rush to the rescue or prevent the temptation. It is almost impossible for a new believer to recognize this season as a natural progression in his journey. This cycle between encounter and distance can play out sometimes over the course of years. Teresa encourages the new believer with these words: “You may think that you will be full of determination to resist outward trials if God will only grant you inward favors. His Majesty knows best what is suitable for us. ... All that the beginner in prayer has to do—

³⁵ Ibid., 71.

³⁶ Matt. 3:17.

and you must not forget this, for it is very important—is to labour [sic] and be resolute and prepare himself with all possible diligence to bring his will into conformity with the will of God.”³⁷ God has a plan to strengthen and further the believer’s journey. The believer’s only job is to stand strong and trust in the wisdom of a good God.

Wilderness: The Life of Encounter

The life of encounter is described as those experiences that define the believer and make her who she is. The experiences are few, but monumental.³⁸ Ironically, the life of encounter does not change dramatically from Stage One to Stage Two. While in Stage One the believer may have one to several life-altering and life-transforming experiences, in Stage Two the believer might have one to several as well. The difference is found in the motivation of the Holy Spirit in these experiences. In Stage One the Holy Spirit is rescuing a life from sure destruction, beginning the transformation of long-entrenched habits and attitudes. The catalyst for transformation is often a tangible encounter. In Stage Two, however, the believer is well on the way to a life of love in Christ. The individual experiences apparent neglect of her Bridegroom by allowing her to struggle with what feels like impossible expectations and painful temptations. Many times, in order to encourage her along, the Holy Spirit engages her in a tangible way, nudging her on to further her spirit growth. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit might give her a favor after a fall as Teresa explains:

³⁷ Teresa and E. Allison Peers, 32.

³⁸ In *The Heart of Religion*, Matthew Lee, Margaret Poloma and Stephen Post give stats of spiritual encounters. “Encounters with God’s love are quite common in America. They can be transformative, both for individuals and their communities...Our national survey reveals that eight out of ten Americans claim to have had such experiences, at least on occasion,” (2013, 15).

And such are his mercy and goodness that, even when we are engaged in our worldly pastimes and businesses and pleasures and haggings, when we are falling into sins and rising from them again...in spite of all that, this Lord of ours is so anxious that we should desire Him and strive after His companionship that He calls us ceaselessly, time after time, to approach Him; and this voice of His is so sweet that the poor soul is consumed with grief at being unable to do His bidding immediately; and thus, as I say, it suffers more than if it could not hear Him.³⁹

Even though we may be making wrong choices in Stage Two, God remains faithful to shepherd us through and even limit the intensity of the assaults we can endure.

It would seem that Stages One and Two were cyclical until the believer progresses to Stage Three. That is, the believer encounters seasons of experience and distance regularly. Again, Teresa would describe this differently. According to Teresa, the believer has a home base from which she works. She visits and experiences these other stages. However, her home base is the representative experience of the majority of her experiences with God in that season.

Wilderness: The Spirit-Led Life

The Spirit-Led Life answers the question, “What does the daily Spirit-empowered life look like?” The Life of Encounter asks, “What do God-moments look like?” While the Life of Encounter might look very similar from Stage One to Stage Two, it can be perceived quite differently because of the way the believer experiences the Spirit-Led Life aspect of the Wilderness stage. This season is extremely painful for the new believer. Her questions, doubts, guilt, and frustrations are heightened because of her perception that God is distant because He appears to have withdrawn His protection. Bruce Demarest describes it this way: “While we still experience God’s presence, these

³⁹ Teresa and E. Allison Peers, 29.

situations of crisis and emptiness both test and stress our relationship with God.”⁴⁰ There is a false assumption that God is far away and so his children believe they have done something wrong. This feeling of God’s distance can be heightened by the fact that Stage Two believers have only recently left a season in which everything they did seemed life-giving and ordained by God. Dr. Demarest adds, “The notion that the good life is free from distress and suffering reflects society’s pursuit of comfort and aversion to pain.”⁴¹ This aversion to pain and pursuit of comfort will remain a conflicting theme that may not be healed until late into maturity.

While there is still a Spirit Led Life aspect in Stage Two, the believer is led more by the example of others. The believer is still unaccustomed to hearing and understanding the Spirit’s voice, so she listens to others. Janet Hagberg claims, “We are not confident in ourselves to know what to believe or how to learn about God and know God better. We are dependent on a more advanced person in the faith or a guiding principle or cause to lead us and tell us the way to a fuller life.”⁴² Teresa urges the young believer to be encouraged. The expectation on her is not as high as she feels. She is not as far from God as she supposes. “All that the beginner in prayer has to do—and you must not forget this, for it is very important—is to labour [sic] and be resolute and prepare [herself] with all possible diligence to bring [her] will into conformity with the will of God.”⁴³ The believer is admonished to continue in the faith. She has one role in this season: to persevere.

⁴⁰ Demarest, 43.

⁴¹ Ibid., 41.

⁴² Hagberg and Guelich, 56.

⁴³ Teresa and E. Allison Peers, 32.

Wilderness: The Spirit Gifted Life

In this stage, the believer most certainly experiences spiritual gifts. Quite possibly she is unable to identify the gifts by name or understanding, but she has been edified by the gifts of another believer and possibly even operated in a gift to edify another believer. Although the believer in the “wilderness” may begin to recognize the gifts, because of the nature of this season, her spirit giftedness seems paradoxical. While she does not sense or feel God the majority of the time, she may yet operate periodically in a spiritual gift. This seemingly conflicting experience can be confusing, both to the believer and those around her. Because of her immaturity she feels God’s approval when she operates on His behalf and feels God’s disapproval when she does not. Although God would like to “wean her” from the milk of dependence in this misunderstanding, God nevertheless gives her “touches” to nudge her along without allowing her to get too discouraged.

Wilderness: The Life at War

In Stage Two the believer realizes that there is an enemy who is shrewd, manipulative and deliberate, While in Stage One she was greatly shielded from feeling the full force of his attack. In Stage Two, frustrated by the new levels of temptation in her once typical tangible experience, she comes headlong into battle. Ashbrook describes, “Our progress through the second mansion phase of growth makes us a greater threat to the kingdom of darkness. The enemy has intensified the attacks by trying to deceive us about where to find real happiness, security, and significance. He tries to convince us that true discipleship will cost every pleasure.”⁴⁴ With the feelings of happiness, security, and

⁴⁴ Ashbrook, 81.

significance wavering, this young believer must begin wondering if she is strong enough to follow the Christian life through. This doubt further opens a door to temptation. In this stage, uncertainty in her strength will lead her to question the new commitment to holiness standards that she has made. This doubt will possibly cause her to “look back” to the false pleasures she has given up and wonder if the sacrifices are worth the promised rewards. The enemy is shrewd in offering short-term payoffs. In Jesus’ wilderness temptation, He was simply offered bread as a quick fix to hunger.⁴⁵ In later stages of maturity, doubt in her strength can open a multitude of new doors to grace, acceptance and healing.

The Stage Two believer is also highly susceptible to a false image. The enemy feeds on this as Dr. Demarest explains:

In the first place, [Satan] attacks our minds, aiming to deceive us. He undermines God’s truth and fills our minds with lies, thus weakening our faith. The evil one engenders false images of God, suggesting that God is uncaring toward his children—worse yet—that he is a ruthless tyrant intent on doing us in. False depictions of God distress the soul and impede our relationship with him.⁴⁶

While the enemy is barraging the mind with a false narrative of God, Satan continues the constant attacks through guilt and shame. The intensity only decreases when the believer learns to turn to God more deeply in the transition into the next stage of maturity. In these later stages, guilt and shame backfire as the believer embraces God’s grace. This response is exemplified by the Apostle Paul’s thorn in the flesh when he said, “That is

⁴⁵ Matt. 4:3.

⁴⁶ Demarest, 67.

why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong."⁴⁷

Wilderness: The Life of Holiness

The Wilderness pilgrim experiencing the Life of Holiness asks the question, "What is the Holy Spirit doing inside of me during this season?" Unfortunately in this stage, the young believer is unable to see much, if any, of the Spirit's work. Ironically, this season is incredibly poignant in her maturity. God is at work. Ashbrook elaborates:

God continues to woo us. In times of sickness and trial, God prompts us to come to Him in prayer and responds in ways that, we begin to realize, are beyond coincidence. Teresa says, "...for the Lord often desires that dryness and bad thoughts afflict and pursue us without our being able to get rid of them. Sometimes He even permits these reptiles to bite us so that afterward we may know how to guard ourselves better and that He may prove whether we are greatly grieved by having offended Him."⁴⁸

The reason that one perseveres during this time is because of the wooing of God. One often fails to recognize God's wooing and regularly laments about the amount of work he or she is doing to stay faithful. She is still battling external temptations from the enemy while God strengthens her internally. Instead of asking the question, "How long will this difficult season last?" she asks, "What have I done wrong? Where has God gone and why?" It is imperative in this season that she is consoled by a mature mentor that can help guide her through this time. This mature mentor must be willing to show patience and understanding. Janet Hagberg warns would-be mentors:

It is very seductive at this stage to believe that what is right for us in the faith is what is right for everyone else as well. We often believe that the religious or moral rules by which we live as a faithful disciple should be followed by

⁴⁷ 2 Cor. 12:10.

⁴⁸ Ashbrook, 80.

everyone else. There is a tendency to become legalistic and moralistic, rigid in our understanding of what is right and what is wrong.⁴⁹

Legalistic mentors can actually reinforce the believer's struggle with shame and guilt and delay her progress toward God's grace.

In order to make sense of the changes in her experience with God, she may begin to question her actions. Because she feels that she has done something wrong, she will most likely try to start something new for which she feels God would be pleased. Also, she may try to examine her life in a way to discover those things that do not please God. She will have a hard time understanding how other Christians can be so content in their hypocrisy while she is trying so hard and yet is seemingly ineffective in pleasing God. This is a hard season for young Christians. Ashbrook encourages, "The greatest keys to growth in the second mansion are perseverance and prayer: God is faithful in every circumstance, but we must resist the devil and the world to follow God."⁵⁰ God longs for us to resist the devil and remain faithful to His call to holiness in this season. His grace and patience are immeasurable.

Wilderness: The Life on Mission

The Stage Two believer will try anything to get out of this season of turmoil. Where numerous experiences in Stage One brought life, energy, and vigor, Stage Two's wilderness experiences are more apt to bring discontent and possibly disillusionment. She consistently asks herself, "What have I done wrong? Did I miss God when I thought this is what He wanted me to do?" Sometimes believers try to compensate for this sense of

⁴⁹ Hagberg and Guelich, 62.

⁵⁰ Ashbrook, 82.

failure by changing churches or ministry activities, looking for real meaning. Janet Hagberg shares her experience: “On the spiritual journey we Switchers⁵¹ spend a great deal of time at this stage because we continually change from one group to another. We are not moving on in our journey, but we are moving around, and the movement gives us a sense of progress along the way.”⁵² As we have seen, however, persistence, not switching, opens our hearts to deepening experiences of God’s grace and love that we long for.

The search for meaning with the confirmation of excitement is elusive. This believer might try dozens of ministry opportunities in order to find “the fit” only to be frustrated by the lack of permanent enthusiasm. At best, she finds a hint of instant gratification only to find that it fades quickly. This season feels like a step backwards for many in this season. Where Stage One brought definition and excitement into what God wanted to do through this believer, Stage Two brings confusion, doubts, and discouragement. Once again, perseverance and partnership with mentors are absolute necessities.

Stage Three: Productivity

In Stage Three the believer moves to a season where considerable ‘discipleship’ now exemplifies his life, filled with a multitude of emotions, experiences and relationships. The young believer is not as young anymore and is now filled with a new sense of dedication and commitment. Having persevered through the season of

⁵¹ Switchers is a term that Hagberg and Guelich use to describe those believers that move around from ministry to ministry, church to church in order to produce some sense of movement (2005, 63).

⁵² Hagberg and Guelich, 62.

wilderness and having been proven faithful, he is ready for the trajectory of his seemingly earned faith promotion. Janet Hagberg describes this stage:

Stage Three is best described as the “doing” stage. It is the period of time when we most consciously find ourselves working for God... This usually is a very active phase on the critical journey. It is positive and dynamic, centered on being productive in the area of our faith. It nourishes us because it is so personally rewarding, even when the objective is to help others. In helping or leading, we also are fed, so it operates on goals and achievements, building and creating.⁵³

He is settled in his commitment and ready to discover exactly what God has designed for his mission. It is highly likely that he will spend years, if not decades in this season. In light of this fact, the cyclical model of awakening and wilderness found in Stages One and Two will potentially be repeated and revisited at new levels many times. It is less difficult this time, however, because this believer now understands the progressive nature of God’s work of formation. He is learning that the Christian life involves mountains and valleys. While he may not have completely resolved that valleys are necessary parts of his growth, he has come to understand that they are nevertheless parts of the process.

Initially, this stage looks and feels exciting. There is a sense of arrival. Many people that the believer has looked up to now feel like peers. In fact, inappropriate comparison can become a likely trait. Sometimes the believer may even feel more mature in specific areas by comparing himself to those around him. For many, there will never be any reason to leave Stage Three’s productivity because of the sense of accomplishment.⁵⁴ Dr. Ashbrook warns, “It is worth observing that the third of the seven

⁵³ Ashbrook, 92.

⁵⁴ In John Welch’s interpretation of Teresa’s work he suggests that although the believer will feel comfortable in this stage, problems arise with too lengthy of a stay. “Teresa uncovers signs which indicate that people in these rooms must prepare to move on. The journey of faith has to continue and the life of prayer must deepen and change. To overstay in the third dwelling place may lead to dangerous and difficult times. An anxiety may creep into these model lives. Prayer loses its vitality; a dryness sets in. Fears and

mansions is about as far as most churches go in their teaching about the spiritual life. It's an important phase of our growth, and many of us get stuck here."⁵⁵ It is in this stage that the believer will feel most comfortable, as though he has everything figured out.⁵⁶

Fortunately, however, God has much more in store for us if we are willing.

Productivity: The Life of Encounter

The Life of Encounter is found in the fact that the vast majority of Christians will spend considerable time here and so distinct encounters with God may happen years apart and therefore seem often unrelated. In light of this, experiences of encounter with God are definitively different and unique to each individual depending on their progression within the stage. Within this stage, all believers will have encounters that help to firm up their faith. However, these encounters most often happen in the context of the disciple's service to God, their productivity. This stage is often marked by multiple encounters where God visits and deeply engages in order to illustrate an aspect of His nature and

too-tender sensitivities provoke a sense of losing control in life. These people try to do more of what they had been doing, in the belief that what had worked in the past will work now. But they cannot restore themselves to their former contentment. Teresa's diagnosis is that these apparently model Christians have not really abandoned themselves even though they live well-ordered lives. The signs indicate that they are being asked to let go of this stability, to move out to the third dwelling place and allow the King at the center to draw them ever deeper into the castle. Teresa says that they are being invited to enter into true contemplative prayer" (1982), 18.

⁵⁵ Hagberg and Guelich, 73.

⁵⁶ In M. Scott Peck's *Further Along the Road Less Traveled*, Dr. Peck describes a four-stage model of growth. His Stage two looks very similar to this dissertation's Stage three. He calls it "Formal/Institutional". It is institutional because people in it are dependent upon an institution for their governance/growth. "Another thing that tends to characterize people's religious behavior in this stage is that their vision of God is almost entirely that of an external being. They have very little understanding of that half of God which lives inside each of us—what theologians term immanent—the dwelling divinity within the human spirit. They almost totally think of God as up there, out there. They generally envision God along the masculine model, and while they believer Him to be a loving being, they also ascribe to Him a certain kind of punitive power which He is not afraid to use on appropriate occasions. It is a vision of God as a giant benevolent cop in the sky. And in many ways, this is exactly the kind of God that people in Stage two need" (1993, 123).

character. For example, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Peter, James, John, and Paul all had monumental encounters with God that gave to direction to a specific season of their journeys. Ashbrook adds, “In times of intense prayer, God gives us a few glimpses of Himself and His love, beyond the issue being prayed about in the moment. In stress or recollection, the Lord may give a sense of peace that speaks more of His presence than of the solution to the issue.”⁵⁷ In this stage, many of these encounters happen in times of designated prayer: times of seeking, small group prayer, times at an altar, and times when someone uses a spiritual gift during a church service. The believer will draw from the energy and excitement from these encounters often as inspiration through this Stage.

Productivity: The Spirit-Led Life

The believer’s Spirit-Led Life is still just short of him being able to consistently discern the direction of the Spirit on a regular basis. He looks to personally adhered teachings, past successful practices and a “fresh word” from his pastoral leader to qualify the direction of the Spirit. Ironically, many pastors are making the same mistake resulting in an erratic and ever-changing vision for God’s requirements to the abundant life.

McLaren addresses this:

Our focus now shifts from right versus wrong to effective versus ineffective. To our core dualism we now add a new layer of pragmatism. The world is still divided between good and evil, but now good people are identified less as the correct and more as the effective, less as the ones who get things right and more as the ones who get things done...the greatest sin is being apathetic or ineffective.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Ashbrook, 99.

⁵⁸ McLaren, 83-84.

The believer feels that the Spirit primarily guides them into specific areas work. He is to constantly be *doing*. He must do ministry, do his devotions, do worship, do fellowship, and do relationships. He has been told what is right and what is wrong, so now he is to basically do those things, with little or no personal listening to the Spirit or divergence from leader's expectations. Dr. Ashbrook adds, "We are also tempted to try to serve God by simply getting 'plugged in' to a church program, rather than by following the direct leading of God. Although there is nothing wrong with most church programs, they can become merely religious work. Jesus wants to lead us personally."⁵⁹ When the believer in this stage gets glimpses of God's leading, however, he generally goes about his normal routine. We will see as we discuss The Spirit-Led-Life, the believer will begin to see how the Spirit was nudging and quietly speaking all along. For now, the believer is at work doing all that he knows to do. There are certainly nudges from the Spirit as the Holy Spirit prepares the believer for the next stage. This believer generally operates out of directives from leaders and teachings. However, the Holy Spirit's goal is to move this believer into total dependence upon him.

Productivity: The Spirit-Gifted Life

The area in which the believer will most likely sense the Spirit's unique leading is in the use of spiritual gifts. While his daily routine is "going about the Father's business," there will appear pockets of divergence where he might sense a nuance or nudge in the Spirit's leading that is unique to a specific instance. While his Spirit-Led-Life might seem routine, his Spirit-Gifted Life could be the area of new growth. Hagberg and Guelich state:

⁵⁹ Ashbrook, 100-101.

Because our gifts are unique to each of us, each person can play a different role in the community of faith. Our gifts need to be used. They are given for the common good of the community of faith. . . . For a time, when we are recognizing, organizing, and putting into practice our special gifts, we appear to be relatively self-centered. We have to look at ourselves to discover which gifts or talents we most want to use and to find out how to use them.⁶⁰

Janet Hagberg notes that in gift discovery, the believer can seem “self-centered.” This was Paul’s charge to the Corinthian church in his, 1 Corinthians epistle. The Apostle Paul admonished the young, possibly Stage Three, church that they were one body made up of many parts. He went on to say, “Therefore, my brothers and sisters, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.”⁶¹ Paul’s direction was to be eager to use the gifts but also to remember the purpose. The balance that must be found in a church mostly made up of Stage Three believers is to encourage spiritual gifts while leaving room for experimentation and trial. A culture of teaching, correction and even rebuking must be encouraged to see spiritual gifts thrive.

⁶⁰ Hagberg and Guelich, 74.

⁶¹ 1 Cor. 14:39-40.

Productivity: The Life at War

The enemy's success at tempting in the areas of past struggles for Stage Three has significantly lessened and now Satan must try a more advanced strategy. While he may appear to be very patient and strategic, he has not yet fully let go of former temptations as Teresa reminds us. There is a season of the believer's journey where the old tactics can still prove successful. Teresa warns,

For they are so near the first Mansions that they might easily return to them, since their fortitude is not built upon solid ground like that of souls who are already practiced in suffering. These last are familiar with the storms of the world, and realize how little need there is to fear them or to desire worldly pleasures. If those of whom I am speaking, however, had to suffer great persecutions, they might well return to such pleasures and the devil well knows how to contrive such persecutions in order to do us harm; they might be pressing onward with great zeal, and trying to preserve others from sin, and yet be unable to resist any temptations which came to them.⁶²

While it is in these times of great struggle and persecution that God will do a great work, but unfortunately for the Stage Three believer, these difficulties often feel outside of the will of God. As in all stages, God limits the amount of struggle that He will allow this believer to endure in this stage. He knows that the enemy will take full advantage. In this season of limited struggle, the enemy is forced to try other tactics. "Now, the primary strategy of the enemy is to keep us out of conscious contact with God," warns Ashbrook, "too busy working for God and balancing the demands of daily life."⁶³ It is ironic that in the believer's busyness *for* God, he misses his reason for living: communion *with* God.⁶⁴

⁶² Teresa and E. Allison Peers, 45.

⁶³ Ashbrook, 100.

⁶⁴ In *Further along the Road Less Traveled: The Unending Journey toward Spiritual Growth*, M. Scott Peck defines evil as "militant ignorance" or "militant unconsciousness". It is the work of the enemy to keep the believer from understanding his inner life. What is going on in the interior of the soul? (1993, 26)

Foster writes that “psychiatrist Carl Jung once remarked, ‘Hurry is not *of* the Devil; it *is* the Devil.’”⁶⁵ It is imperative that the believer makes time for God outside of service. Although what the believer does *for* God is central in this stage to growth, this motivation has a short life. The Pentecostal leader will commonly say something to the effect of, “I must have a good relationship with God in order to be a good minister” or “I must have a good relationship with God because many are looking up to me.” These motivations fall flat in the long run. They do not carry with them the power of perseverance and maturity. For example, it is common for the enemy to try to convince the hard working believer that extended time in prayer just isn’t possible considering the demands of service. Knowing this, the enemy will try to give the believer as many sidetracked motivations as he can. If the believer can ever separate his intimate relationship with God and what he supposes God requires of Him, he will be well on his way to a life of love with the Father.

Productivity: The Life of Holiness

Similar to the previous stage, what the believer *perceives* that God is doing in him and what God *is actually doing* can be very different. While the believer’s spiritual growth happens in the context of serving God, doing for Him, the believer can naturally assume that God wants him to do more. The believer assumes greater relationship with God in this stage is associated with words that end in “er”: work harder, pray longer, search deeper. However, Teresa gives some insight into what God is actually doing:

For often it is God’s will that His elect should be conscious of their misery and so He withdraws His help from them a little—and no more than that is needed to

⁶⁵ Foster, 15.

make us recognize our limitations very quickly. They then realize that this is a way of testing them, for they gain a clear perception of their shortcomings, and sometimes they derive more pain from finding that, in spite of themselves, they are still grieving about earthly things, and not very important things either, than from the matter which is troubling them. This, I think, is a great mercy on the part of God, and even though they are at fault they gain a great deal of humility.⁶⁶

As Teresa notes, this testing is very hard for the believer, but it produces patience, perseverance, humility, etc. He generally portrays in public a well-put together image that he believes, compared to his private world, is hypocritical. He lives in a bi-polarity. He lives with a comparison to those around him that puffs himself up, yet realizes the internal struggle of his own soul that brings him back down. This is an extremely hard state to live in because of the duplicitous nature it forces his mind to function between. Again Teresa offers help: "...it would be a great thing for them to have someone to whom they could go, as many people do, so that they might not be following their own will in anything, for it is in this way that we usually do ourselves harm."⁶⁷ Unfortunately, finding help for many is contrary to the image that they would like to portray. This believer desperately needs the grace and forgiveness offered by fellow believers but is unlikely to allow himself that level of vulnerability. God is still at work, however. It is in this stage that many will spend more time than any other stage. God continues transforming, renewing, and primarily, God is changing the inner nature to become more reflective of His own. The Fruit of the Spirit is being cultivated and the works of the flesh are being eradicated. This is hard work.

Productivity: The Life on Mission

⁶⁶ Teresa, and E. Allison Peers, 40-41.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 44.

For most, the church community is the arena in which they will discover and put to the test the missional calling to which they feel God is leading them. Again Teresa brings needed insight, “We are comforted by the fact that God has a purpose for our lives—restoration to Christlikeness that we might be the healing presence of the Savior in the world.”⁶⁸ The believer once again lives in a duplicitous area in which he seeks a noble reason for service. Mission in the local church can fulfill a life-long calling and yet at the same time hide a series of self-absorbed motivations that lead to misplaced affirmation, acceptance, and attention. The tendency to work harder, pray longer, and search deeper can entrench this believer in a dualistic mentality that it is “what I do” that solely causes ministry to happen. This cause and effect outlook will be challenged deeply in the following stages. Having discussed the problems faced in missional activity, we must remember that God uses this expression most powerfully in Stage Three to draw the disciple closer by working alongside Jesus. Within this Productive Stage, God may well use the believer to accomplish great benefit for the Kingdom.

The Productive Stage is filled with great struggles and, often times, great successes. Therefore, one must be careful not to allow this stage to seem wholly negative. This is an exciting time for the believer. God is using him in capacities like never before. There are opportunities for leadership and followership that have never been afforded to him before. Hagberg suggests, “Sometimes we come to this responsible role by the loving prodding of someone else who coaxes us into taking on a leadership or productive role that we might not have felt ready for.”⁶⁹ Ministry and mission are at an all-time high.

⁶⁸ Demarest, 22.

⁶⁹ Hagberg and Guelich, 76.

The believer can see tangible results from his efforts. God is at work, lives are being changed, but one must not forget that pitfalls and distractions abound.

Yet with all that can be learned and accomplished in the productive Stage, believers can, and hopefully will, become bored of ongoing work for God. “Is this all there is?” proves a common question expressed toward the end of Stage Three. Believers who have become convinced that knowledge and success represent true relationship with God can become frustrated that they are not “being fed” by sermons or Bible studies. They often blame their inner boredom on their church or leaders. If we could look within their hearts, however, we would spot the subtle nudgings of the Holy Spirit that invite them to come to know their “Task Master” more intimately. Hopefully, this causes our hard working producer to explore life in Christ further... into the next Stage.

Stage Four: Reorientation

Stage Four marks a subtle, but seismic shift in the life of the believer, the inward call to true intimacy. Where once what the believer did and where the believer served seemed to make a huge difference in his relationship with God, this reorientation is deeply disconnected from setting, vocation, and from the give and take, cause and effect nature of the earlier stages. In Stage Four, God begins to introduce a new level of mystery into the believer’s life, mystery that initially can be very uncomfortable.⁷⁰ Jesus persistent

⁷⁰ M. Scott Peck describes his Stage Four person: “Mystical has as its root the word mystery. Mystics are people who love mystery. They love to solve mysteries, and yet at the same time, they know the more they solve, the more mystery they are going to encounter. But they are very comfortable living in a world of mystery whereas people in Stage Two are most uncomfortable when things aren’t cut-and-dried” (1993, 125).

I believe that my Stage Four is the beginning of the acceptance of Peck’s Stage Four. The Pentecostal’s Stage Four is generally brought on by a crisis of faith—not that everything has to be doubted, but theologies and philosophies that were once considered bedrock do not seem to add up the same as they once did.

call to greater intimacy represents a cosmic reorienting from what once mattered, worked, and made sense spiritually. Ashbrook states:

[In Mansion Three] we experienced His love in a variety of ways, mostly through answered prayer, blessings, and deliverance from distress. But as we enter further into and stay longer in the rooms of the fourth mansion dimension of spiritual growth, God makes Himself and His love known not only in blessings but in inner feelings and awareness of His presence.⁷¹

This stage, called “Reorientation” proves similar in nature to the First Stage, Awakening. The First Stage awakens the believer to faith and new life in Christ, and the Fourth Stage Jesus invites us into a new and deeper level of awakening to His love and the intimate relationship He wants for us. The Fourth Stage suggests that many of the things that once mattered in the previous three stages aren’t as important anymore; they pale in comparison to the importance of the relationship between the Lover and the beloved. The nature of the relationship is changing from *seeking approval, success, etc.* to simply *seeking God*.

Many years have passed since our pilgrim became a believer; the first three stages take a long time to work through. Many sojourners never make their way into the latter stages. Teresa suggests, “It seems that, in order to reach these Mansions, one must have lived for a long time in the others.”⁷²

⁷¹ Ashbrook, 107.

⁷² Teresa and E. Allison Peers, 46-47.

Reorientation: The Life of Encounter

Ironically, Teresa begins to talk about deeply inspirational God-Moments in this stage. At the same time, she suggests that the believer is not to pray or strive for them; they are entirely gifts of God. Teresa describes five reasons why the believer is not to strive for Fourth Mansion God-Moments:

- 1) The most essential thing is that we should love God without any motive of self-interest.
- 2) There is some lack of humility in our thinking that in return for our miserable services we can obtain anything so great.
- 3) The true preparation for receiving these gifts is a desire to suffer and to imitate the Lord.
- 4) His Majesty is not obliged to grant them to us...He knows better than we what is good for us and which of us truly love Him.
- 5) It would be laboring in vain (there is nothing the individual can do to obtain it).⁷³

Teresa goes on to suggest that although the believer is not to strive for God-Moments, she will most certainly encounter God in a tangible, feel-able way. Encounters of this type are felt inwardly as well as experienced outwardly.

In this stage of Reorientation, the believer encounters God experientially, but in different ways than before. Earlier, these encounters happened in the context of ministry or struggles with sin. Now, God seems to withhold those encounters to draw us more deeply into worship and prayer where we experience tastes or touches of His presence, forgiveness, and love. This simultaneous withholding at work and blessing at “home” (the prayer closet, worship, and times of heart sharing with others) gradually woos the believer into a new lifestyle and a new intimacy with the Trinity.

⁷³ Teresa and E. Allison Peers, 55-56.

Reorientation: The Spirit-Led Life

As the believer moves deeper toward the heart of God, God continues to fine-tune the experience of His Spirit in the believer's life. The believer begins to hear and expect God's voice in ways that he never has before. The voice of God was always there; but the distractions and busyness of life often drowned it out. While the believer has focused for many years on the tasks at hand, the "tasks" now become opportunities to focus on Jesus. Instead of "How do I do this successfully?" the believer is concerned more with, "How can I please you, Jesus? Help me follow You and participate in what You are doing." The believer, in Stage Four, begins to look within her heart for this discernment, rather to external circumstances, learning to "intuit" the heart of God. Being "Spirit-Led" becomes more a movement of the heart to love God and to live in God's love for the other.

Ashbrook expounds on this loving work of God. "God encourages us to become more open and available to Him by providing a gentle awareness of His loving presence both in formal prayer and in the prayer of daily life."⁷⁴ The "prayer of daily life" is new to the Stage Four believer. Where once prayer was scheduled and routine in nature (maybe daily), now prayer is becoming second nature (a way of life). The believer does not simply call on God when she is in need, but speaks and listens to God all throughout the day. The ongoing conversation becomes second nature.

While prayer takes on more of a "pray without ceasing" dimension (cf. 1 Thes 5:17), our Fourth Stage believer is drawn to set aside extended times of prayer focused on listening and abiding with God. Particularly during these relatively distraction-free prayer times the believer begins to discern the "still small voice of God" (cf. 1Kings 19:12). As

⁷⁴ Ashbrook, 116.

this conversation continues, Ashbrook suggests that, “We experience specific ‘lights’ or insights and realizations, both in times of silence and among the activities of work, family, and so on. God increases our subtle awareness of His presence in every aspect of life, deepening our experience of His love and delight for us.”⁷⁵ Guidance becomes more associated with relationship than mere directions.

Along with the experiences of God’s love and delight, the believer begins to feel nudges of direction. God is divinely ordering the believer’s life in such a way that she makes an impact on those around her. Conversations, meetings, and coincidences do not feel as random or coincidental anymore. The believer notices the subtle agenda of God in each of her relationships. God wants to invite each individual to taste this same love relationship. God uses the believer to communicate this love to others. This marks a substantial change in the nature of how the believer understands and experiences the ways that God communicates. The believer does not feel used like she once might have in the earlier stages, but now begins to feel like a partner with God in His mission.

Reorientation: The Spirit-Gifted Life

Stage Four marks a major transition in the life of the believer in the area of spiritual gifts. In Stage Three the believer discovered and developed the spiritual gifts that she would use to encourage the body and witness to the world. Her primary motivation was the desire to see power manifested to meet particular needs. “How can God show His power? How can God display His power through me?” Stage Four marks a transition in motivation. The believer begins to be motivated much more by participation

⁷⁵ Ashbrook, 117.

with Jesus. She asks, “What does the Lord want in this situation? What is He doing?” The same gifts that were available before are still available but they are not used as mechanically. In the earlier stages the believer used the gift because she could. Now she begins to use the gift because it seems pertinent to the situation, and motivated by God’s guidance. Where once a manifestation of God’s presence through gifts seemed like the only solution, now this believer asks God for insight into timing and appropriateness. She approaches the individual with the question, “God, how do You want to show your love to this person?”

We see Jesus operating in this way in Mark 2:1-12, where Jesus is faced with a dilemma. A paralytic is lowered through the roof where Jesus is preaching. The man’s needs and the man’s wants turned out to be two different things. Jesus tells the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”⁷⁶ It is not obvious in the Scripture that Jesus’ intentions were ever to heal the man. When the teachers of the law begin to question Jesus’ authority to forgive sins He replies, “I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.”⁷⁷ Jesus validates his authority to forgive sins by healing the paralytic. Jesus meets the fundamental need first and then discerns whether a further action is appropriate. The Stage Four believer begins to understand that what an individual thinks he needs and what he truly needs might be two different things, and to follow Jesus as she ministers to the person. As faith, based upon intimacy with the Lord increases, power manifested through the use of spiritual gifts may also increase.

⁷⁶ Mark 2:5

⁷⁷ Mark 2:10

Reorientation: The Life at War

The strategy and tools of the enemy that proved quite successful in the past must also change to attempt to counter the growth experienced in this Stage. As the believer loses her infatuation with affirmation and esteem of others, the enemy must change gears. This believer has begun to desire affection and attention from “His Majesty” more than others (although this attachment takes much longer to be fully broken). Speaking of the old direct temptations to sin, Teresa writes, “Into these Mansions poisonous creatures seldom enter, and, if they do, they prove quite harmless—in fact, they do the soul good.”⁷⁸ Teresa states that the past tactics related to direct temptation do not have the same effect that they once had. In fact, she suggests that the enemy’s attacks do the soul good.⁷⁹ “I think in this state of prayer it is much better for them to enter and make war upon the soul, for, if it had no temptations, the devil might mislead it with regard to the consolations which God gives, and do much more harm than he can when it is being tempted.”⁸⁰ Instead of leading the Stage Four believer into sin, the temptations drive her toward God for strength to resist. As this happens, the believer grows in discernment of spirits, humility, and dependence upon God’s present power.

The enemy’s strategy in this Reorientation toward Jesus is to somehow divert or distract the believer’s attention from Jesus and the nudgings of the Holy Spirit. When one devotes time to prayer, the enemy will attempt to suggest that there is too much work to

⁷⁸ Teresa and E. Allison Peers, 47.

⁷⁹ John Welch states, “The images of the serpents and devils introduce the reader of *The Interior Castle* to the battles within the castle. While the serpents and devils are to be defeated, Teresa admits that it is good to feel the heat of the battle rather than to presumptuously think that all is well with oneself. The intensity of the struggle, she believes, is due to the fact that we do not really know ourselves” (129).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 47.

be done, too many people that need her help; there is no time to just sit around with God. As the believer responds more and more to God's invitations of love, the enemy may attempt to heighten the believer's sense of unworthiness in an effort to make her keep an "appropriate" distance from the Lord. At best, the enemy "attempts to keep us from recognizing God's touches, through busyness and cluttered thoughts."⁸¹

Teresa further believes that in this season of reorientation, the soul is gifted with "favors" [sic] and "consolations" that only draw the believer closer to God's heart. Without the temptation of the enemy, the believer might be misled to believe that it is natural to stay in this constant state of consolation. However, our warfare with sin, death, and the devil are still very real and our ongoing spiritual growth as a warrior of God depends on our continual engagement. She continues, "When a soul is continuously in a condition of this kind [consolation] I do not consider it at all safe, nor do I think it possible for the Spirit of the Lord to remain in a soul continuously in this way during our life of exile."⁸² Teresa indicates that this season, in all of its excitement, is not the final destination or intention of God. He still has much work to do.

Reorientation: The Life of Holiness

This stage begins a noticeable difference in the interaction between the believer and Jesus. For years this interaction was marked by feelings of obligation and duty with glimpses of desire. In this season those motivations are reversed. The believer begins to desire times of intimacy like never before. The feelings of routine and requirement have begun to subside. "Because we have begun to long for closeness to Jesus, we are forced

⁸¹ Ashbrook, 118.

⁸² Ibid.

to make lifestyle changes so that our prayer can become more consistent and scheduled. Our desire for extended times of prayer motivates us to plan, structure, and prioritize life more discerningly.”⁸³ The believer’s desire is reflected in her intention and schedule: she now desires to spend quality time in intimate prayer and in meaningful community with other believers who are discovering this new depth of relationship with the Trinity.

The Holy Spirit is deep at work. In the prior stages, God was primarily doing unnoticeable work in the inner life. Now the believer begins to observe a visible difference in the work of the Holy Spirit. Ashbrook states:

As we experience God’s love more profoundly than before, we gain new insight into how spiritually and emotionally wounded we are and why we have such difficulty loving and being loved freely. . . . Our heart, the center of our being, has been distorted by sin and wounded by life experiences. In this condition, the light of God only made us turn away with feelings of guilt and shame. For this reason, God has to begin the lifelong process of recreating the heart so that we can have the freedom to receive His love fully and return it unconditionally.⁸⁴

Not only is God reorienting the believer’s life, He is recreating the believer’s heart. The believer is becoming more sensitive to the condition of her own heart and to the desires and will of God. She realizes that there is much work to be done in her inner life and all she can offer is time and space.⁸⁵ She finds rest in the fact that his efforts beyond of providing availability prove useless. He is well on his way to what Dallas Willard calls

⁸³ Ashbrook, 116.

⁸⁴ Ashbrook, 117.

⁸⁵ M. Scott Peck speaks to the inner journey as he describes what is going on in the psyche. “Even old atheist Sigmund Freud recognized the relationship between healing and consciousness when he said that the purpose of psychotherapy—healing of the psyche—was to make the unconscious conscious; that is, to increase consciousness. Carl Jung further helped us understand the unconscious, ascribing evil to our refusal to meet our shadow, or that part of our personality that we like to deny, that we like not to think about, not to be conscious of, that we’re continually trying to sweep under the rug of consciousness and keep unconscious. Note that Jung ascribed human evil not to the shadow itself but to the refusal to meet this shadow” (1993, 25).

“easy holiness”.⁸⁶ Her focus is turning inwardly, toward the heart where her relationship with God is growing. She begins to realize that God’s work is addressing inner needs, inner motivations, and inner struggles.⁸⁷ While personal holiness may have been motivated by a desire for effective ministry or to please God, now the believer desperately longs to become like Jesus as an act of love. She senses, in deeper dimensions than ever before, the Lord’s compassion and love for others and yearns to relate to others with that same heart.

Reorientation: The Life on Mission

I have already pointed out the changes the believer feels in motivation for ministry. The inappropriately motivated drive from guilt and duty does not suffice anymore. Now, growth in receiving God’s love awakens new love for one’s neighbor. Focus on what the believer thinks needs to be done is being replaced by seeking the Lord for what He wants to accomplish.

As the believer’s focus turns more toward Jesus, her focus toward mission begins to narrow to what she feels the Lord wants. As she began to discover her gifts in the Third Stage, she said “Yes” to every request of ministry. Now one begins to carefully select what seems to fit the internal leading she discerns from the Lord. The believer even

⁸⁶ McKnight, Scot. “Aprentis at Friends University.” JesusCreed (web log), September 25, 2011. <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/jesuscreed/2011/09/25/aprentis-at-friends-university/>, (accessed December 3, 2012).

⁸⁷ Thomas Merton, in *No Man Is an Island* speaks beautifully to this interior work: “To consider persons and events and situations only in the light of their effect upon myself is to live on the doorstep of hell. Selfishness is doomed to frustration, centered as it is upon a lie. To live exclusively for myself, I must make all things bend themselves to my will as if I were a god. But this is impossible. Is there any more cogent indication of my creaturehood than the insufficiency of my own will? For I cannot make the universe obey me. I cannot make other people conform to my own whims and fancies. I cannot make even my own body obey me. When I give it pleasure, it deceives my expectation and makes me suffer pain. When I give myself what I conceive to be freedom, I deceive myself and find that I am the prisoner of my own blindness and selfishness and insufficiency” (1983, 24).

begins to turn down opportunities that drain her ever-evolving devotional life. She finds that her time in prayer is seemingly disconnected from the affirmation and acclamation that she once felt when “performing” for God. She begins to understand that God has a specific purpose for her life that is uniquely targeted. McGuckin quotes Abba Nistero in an interaction with a monk that demonstrates this subtle change:

One of the monks asked the great teacher Abba Nistero: “What should I do for the best in life?” And the Abba answered: “All works are not equal. The scripture says that Abraham was hospitable, and God was with him; it says that Elias loved quiet, and God was with him; it says that David was humble, and God was with him. So, whatever path you find your soul longs after in the quest for God, do that, and always watch over your heart’s integrity.”⁸⁸

This believer begins to hear her soul long for a particular calling and a specific area of mission that fits her. Her view of others trapped in sin changes as well. While only just beginning to gain true insight into the nature of her own sin, she now experiences the Holy Spirit change her level of patience and tolerance with those trapped in sin. Where once she was impatient and even intolerant for those struggling in sin entanglements, she becomes much more understanding and patient. Land describes what happens: “The passion of Christ for one’s sins becomes, when struggling against those same sins, compassion. The compassion for those bound in sin, enslaved in the passions, is possible only in Christ.”⁸⁹ This believer is becoming aware of her own struggle, which in turn makes her patient with those who struggle around her.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ McGuckin, 15-16.

⁸⁹ Land, 142.

⁹⁰ Land goes on to describe compassion: “Compassion moves one to respond according to the pattern of Christ. Compassion is the reason and the motive for that response in and by the Spirit. Compassion longs for all to know the love of God and for the kingdom to come. Compassion is borne of inner peace with God based on and flowing from the peace made at Calvary. It is the healing of the heart that makes one like God and therefore for others. Compassion is suffering love wounded by the suffering of others who do not know or have rejected Christ” (2010, 143).

Stage Five- Transitional Season: Dark Night

Remember that, in our introduction to the stages, I pointed out that Stage Five is really a transitional season, described by John of the Cross, in which God hides our awareness of His presence and consolations. The Dark Night of the Soul is one of the most confusing, discouraging, and yet beneficial seasons in the life of the believer. It is extremely important to know that this is a season brought about by the Holy Spirit. Land explains that this season is made up of "...extended times where God seems absent and life seems dark.... They are created by God as an essential part of our pilgrimage, occurring in the more mature years of our Christian journey toward a union of love with Him."⁹¹ Without preparation or guidance, the believer will most certainly feel ostracized and abandoned by God. The paradox of the season is that the believer is generally doing everything "right" and yet God seems to remove his favors and consolations.

The term "Dark Night of the Soul" was coined by St. John of the Cross, (Spain, 1542-1591) the sixteenth century mystic who was a contemporary of Teresa of Avila.⁹² In *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, a poem and commentary, "John described two phases of the Dark Night of the Soul, the first, the Dark Night of the Senses, relates to our "sense" (sight, hearing, touch, imagination, taste, smell) and the second to our spiritual nature (intellect, memory, will). "Intellect" includes our emotions and feelings such as comfort, joy, peace, fear, doubt, etc. This Dark Night is caused by God as He gives the believer a heightened awareness of their own sinful nature and the unreliability of the way they

⁹¹ Ashbrook, 149-150.

⁹² John, Of The Cross and Henry L. Carrigan, *Ascent of Mount Carmel* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press), 2002.

perceive the world and God. As God shines light on the believer, it causes his awareness of the presence and grace of God to become obscure. The second Dark Night is known as the Dark Night of the Spirit, and comes later on in the spiritual journey. In the Dark Night of the Spirit, God withholds the awareness of His presence. In this case, the apparent absence of God is not related to awareness of sin or any other factor in the believer, but is designed to help him learn to depend on God in faith alone. Both Dark Nights, however, have in common the seeming disappearance of God's felt presence and consolations. John's two dark nights are not strictly sequential but overlap and interact with one another."⁹³ According to classical literature, this season can be experienced in small tastes over time or in extended painful times that can last years and even a decade or more.

Dark Night: Life of Encounter

People experience Dark Nights in such different ways that a single description rarely describes everyone. For the most part, people feel dry, disconnected and disengaged from the awareness of God's presence. There are no God-moments with which to draw from in this season. In fact, one of the very purposes of this time is to prevent the further reliance upon God-moments. In C.S. Lewis' *Screwtape Letters*, he records a conversation between Wormwood and Screwtape, "The more often [a man] feels without acting, the less he will ever be able to act, and, in the long run, the less he will be able to feel."⁹⁴ The goal of the enemy in this stage of discipleship is to take advantage of the lack of feelings and consolations. The main point here is that

⁹³ Demarest, 87.

⁹⁴ C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (New York: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2000), 68.

“encounters” still happen and with increasing depth and power, but the believer is not aware of them. He must move forward purely in faith. Ironically, it is this exact method that God is employing in these later stages of maturity. God’s intention of course is pure and for the believer’s good. God’s motivation is to take the believer to a deeper level of relationship where the feelings are inconsequential.⁹⁵ Growth comes as the believer learns that God is in fact encountering them and working deeply and trusts God’s goodness beyond what he can discern.

Dark Night: The Spirit-Led Life

Once again, this season is confusing to the believer. The Spirit is continually directing the daily life of the believer, yet the feelings that were once relied upon to confirm his intuitions are absent. The believer was once able to depend upon a specific feeling or unction as a prompt for inserting himself into a person’s life and situation. Now the feeling or unction is gone and he must rely upon years of practice and the confirmation of the end result. This may feel dangerous and scary to him; yet, he must learn to trust that the Lord continues to inform his intuition. Through this process, he will learn to trust his intuition more, knowing that it is “spirit-led,” even if unfelt.

Secondly, the Spirit invites him to embrace this season although he feels no sense of guiding. Evagrius of Pontus, a Christian monk and ascetic from the fourth century, stated, “Do not run away from poverty or sorrows; such things lift our prayer to

⁹⁵ Eugene Peterson, in *Answering God*, describes feelings: “Feelings are the scourge of prayer. To pray by feelings is to be at the mercy of glands and weather and digestion. And there is no mercy in any of them. Feelings lie. Feelings deceive. Feelings seduce. Because they are so emphatically there, and so incontrovertibly interior, it is almost inevitable that we take our feelings seriously as reputable guides to the reality that is deep within us—our hearts before God” (1989, 87).

heaven.”⁹⁶ It is in this season that his prayers for years for closeness and intimacy are being answered. What he has been mostly unaware of is just how hard it is to live in intimacy with the Creator of the Universe. He is filled with brokenness and baggage. This season in which he is very aware of this brokenness and baggage will remove the effects of that brokenness and baggage from his life, but it takes time and perseverance. As the Spirit works and guides, “We become intensely aware of duality, mixed motives, and the inability to live a truly holy life as an expression of love for God.”⁹⁷ This season not only makes him aware of his plight, but also continues the recovery from that very predicament.

Dark Night: The Spirit Gifted Life

The *Dark Night: The Spirit Gifted Life* marks an incredibly unique stage of spiritual gifting for the believer. In Stages Three and Four one began to notice, when using spiritual gifts, a feeling of joy, peace or consolation. This feeling helped to guide him and validate the appropriateness of using his gifts. However, because of the nature of the *Dark Night*, this feeling is largely and possibly completely absent. Where once he was able to discern a validating confirmation, the feelings are gone. Even his discernment to use the gifts can be potentially clouded. He now must trust God and rely on the intuition that God is guiding and working without using the previous consolations.

This season marks a time when God is working through spiritual gifts in an even greater way for His glory. The *Dark Night* undermines a more immature dependence and so builds trust. The believer will regularly ask, “God why aren’t you using some of your

⁹⁶ McGuckin, 35.

⁹⁷ Ashbrook, 161.

power on me? Why can't you allow me to feel what those that I am ministering to are feeling? I'm walking blind here." It is also worth noting that the believer is possibly much more aware of his ulterior motive related to his use of spiritual gifts. As the spotlight has been turned upon his soul, he is well aware of feelings of sinfulness and duplicity. He begins to notice just how much he desires the admiration and praise that comes from being used in spiritual gifts. This can be confusing time for him, and certainly painful. He wants to be used to display God's goodness and love and yet feels the pull of his own self-centered desires.

Dark Night: The Life at War

At this point in maturity the enemy's primary role is keeping the believer from influencing other believers. Satan does this primarily through attacks of discouragement and lies that accuse God of abandoning the believer. Once he has determined to spend his life with God, this season can only benefit him as he persists in his resolution to love God, trust Him, and serve others. As C.S. Lewis brilliantly illustrates in *The Screwtape Letters*, "Do not be deceived, Wormwood. Our cause is never more in danger than when a human, no longer desiring, but still intending, to do our enemy's will, looks round upon a universe from which every trace of him seems to have vanished, and asks why he has been forsaken, and still obeys."⁹⁸ The enemy is well aware that he has lost him and now purposes to try to limit his influence.

Ashbrook gives an example of how the enemy works. "Our hearts are easily distracted and inattentive to God's presence with us. Taking advantage of this spiritual

⁹⁸ Lewis, 40.

dullness, the devil may even attempt to trick us into believing in false visions and prophecies, in an attempt to fill us with presumption and pride.”⁹⁹ These attempts truly prolong the inevitable. The enemy is trying his last attempts at derailment. These attempts will almost certainly prove futile if the believer has companions on the journey to encourage him and assist him in discernment.

Dark Night: The Life of Holiness

Without a doubt, the Dark Night marks a pivotal season in the holiness of the believer. What the Holy Spirit is doing in the inner life is monumental. The irony is that the senses do not grasp that mammoth work. Ashbrook claims, “A great work is going on in us. True humility is birthed in ways we have never experienced before, and the dangers of spiritual pride are reduced.”¹⁰⁰ The Holy Spirit is surgically removing and repairing the heart. Demarest expands our understanding stating, “In the state of spiritual darkness we see with greater clarity our true selves, our deepest needs and our hidden sins.”¹⁰¹ It is helpful for spiritual mentors to point out to the believer that heightened sensitivity to the one’s own inner darkness is indication of what the Holy Spirit is up to in purifying the intentions of the heart.¹⁰² The awareness of needs and sins can be a great sign of great work, if we let the Lord have his way with us.

This believer becomes well aware of how he has compared himself with others. The Holy Spirit now shifts the focus of comparison to God. Ashbrook quotes John of the

⁹⁹ Ashbrook, 163.

¹⁰⁰ Ashbrook, 161.

¹⁰¹ Demarest, 99.

¹⁰² John of the Cross warns, “Spiritual guides who have no understanding of this experience of the dark night often hinder rather than help seekers on the road to union with the Divine” (2002, 8).

Cross, “Aware of her own dryness and wretchedness, the thought of his being more advanced than others does not even occur in its first movements, as it did before; on the contrary, he realizes that others are better.”¹⁰³ He recognizes inadequacies and deficiencies that he has never noticed before. Because of the lack of consolation he might see this as disappointment from God. It is extremely important, however, that he understands that it is the Holy Spirit at work, strengthening, bringing continued reorientation, and producing maturity. The Dark Nights, then, aim primarily at the holiness of the believer. Life in the Wilderness produces a character of humility, peace, patience, love, and the rest of the fruit of the Spirit. As the season of *wilderness* in Stage Two transitioned him from the beginning of faith into ministry productivity, this season will also transition him into a heightened level of mission.

Dark Night: The Life On Mission

This season is most likely the last stop before the convergence of our ministry. Convergence is that season where life’s experiences, the believer’s personality, the Holy Spirit’s work and call, and the believer’s training and education intersect. It is a revolutionary *Voila!* moment. After this season, the believer will look back and understand the road that preceded this moment like never before.¹⁰⁴

Many times there are external circumstances that make this season even harder.

“In His wisdom God uses life’s painful misfortunes to drain us of self-sufficiency and

¹⁰³ Ashbrook, 161.

¹⁰⁴ Welch writes, “The two main phases of the individuation process correspond to the first and second halves of life. The first half of life is characterized by expansion of the personality and adaptation to the outer world. The second half of life is characterized by a restriction or reduction which signifies an adaptation to the inner life. Schopenhauer said: ‘The first forty years of life furnish the text, while the remaining thirty supply the commentary; without the commentary we are unable to understand aright the true sense and coherence of the text, together with the moral it contains’ (1982, 87).

lead us to trust and depend on him. In the mystery of providence, our difficult trials offer opportunities for healing, transformation and empowerment for service. Pain leads us to seek God and his purpose for our lives with greater intention.”¹⁰⁵ God’s work is to use pain to lead us into seeking God more deeply. Generally, this season of mission is filled with transition. As the believer seeks to make sense of God’s distance, he probably will start and stop several things. In an effort to find the “spark” he searches until finally giving up. God does not want him to find fulfillment in anything but Him. Therefore, as in the Fourth Stage and those following, the believer’s missional focus in the Dark Night will continue to focus and narrow in the desire to love God more fully in loving neighbor. This season lasts as long as this process takes and the believer can stand it.¹⁰⁶

Stage Six: Union

It has been a long journey as our believer begins to fully explore true union with the Trinity. This final stage is marked by deep encounters with God, confidence in the Lord’s active presence, and very little distraction, if any, from the enemy. This final season of maturity sees the believer’s life marked by convergent calling and deep maturity. Certainly God is still wooing and working. However there is a satisfaction in the current state of relationship. The believer can only long for eternity. The earthly relationship is moving toward its fullest earthly potential. “As we experience deep union with God, our will becomes fully occupied with God. We want to understand His intention and follow Him in every circumstance. We have become so completely

¹⁰⁵ Demarest, 70.

¹⁰⁶ Lee, Poloma and Post suggest, “A spiritual transformation rooted in divine love is often intertwined with significant suffering. Both appear important as the individual makes the switch from self-interested goals to a life of serving others”,(2013, 20).

dependent on God that we are no longer attached to created things.”¹⁰⁷ This only makes the believer’s relationships that much stronger. A new appreciation for God’s creation develops because of the deep realization that God has made everything and everyone as a gift of love.

Difficulties can come from others not understanding the believer. She has reached a place where she is certain of her mission and love for God. She does not waste time outside of things that further mission and love. Sometimes people perceive her being *too good* for them which can create a new loneliness for our pilgrim. Furthermore, believers in this season have learned to ignore physical ailments. “Instead of complaining the way we used to we now see them as a way to share the ‘sufferings of Christ.’”¹⁰⁸ The enemy has lost his influence and soon, all attachments will have been released. His can nag with frustration that can only temporarily distract at best. Generally it is used to give God even further glory. The enemy knows this and rarely tries anymore. He can only stop her influence; he has no way of sidetracking her relationship anymore.¹⁰⁹ It is important to remember that each of these Stages mark seasons of growth, not goals or milestones. Union also describes a season of our journey, not its attainment. True or complete union can only be experienced in the new heaven and earth.

Union: The Life of Encounter

¹⁰⁷ Ashbrook, 178.

¹⁰⁸ Ashbrook, 180.

¹⁰⁹ John Welch highlights a beautiful Teresian image that there is not enough room to develop here however I would like to mention. “In *The Interior Castle* the appealing image of the butterfly is used by Teresa to picture the effects of union with God. The fifth dwelling place represents this beginning union which then intensifies and deepens in the experiences of the last two dwelling places...The butterfly eventually ‘dies’ in the last dwelling place as the image of Christ strongly emerges” (137).

I have used the *Life of Encounter* to refer to those pivotal moments over the course of years in the life of the believer that mark her forever. Also, I have used *The Spirit-Led Life* to refer to the daily interaction with the Holy Spirit and His leadings. However, in Union, these categories are less distinct than ever.¹¹⁰ The intensity of what would have been experienced in the earlier stages as God-moments have now become somewhat regular. In daily prayer the believer has the potential of regularly interacting with God in a tangible, “feel-able” way. Ashbrook explains:

The contemplation of God alone—has become the very nature of our prayer life. In this wonderful “silence” we may experience ecstasy, rapture, locutions, transport, and flight of the spirit.

- *Ecstasy* is an experience of intense joy.
- *Rapture* has been used historically for the experience of being so absorbed in the wonder of God that we are unaware of our surroundings.
- *Locutions* are experiences of hearing audible words from God.
- *Transport* refers to the sense of being somewhere else and experiencing that reality; it can be either a visionary experience or a physical one.
- *Flight of the spirit* refers to experiences of heavenly places, as the apostles Paul and John describe (cf. Col. 2:12; Rev. 4:1).¹¹¹

These tangible interactions with God mark a stark change in the relationship with God. In Stage Three, when one of these experiences might have happened, the believer would have spent incredible amounts of time explaining and telling others of the event. It would have been a badge of maturity that she would have worn proudly. Now, she is less likely to share it with anyone. She does not feel the need for others to understand or approve.

¹¹⁰ I borrow the term “union” from Pseudo Dionysius. Richard Foster describes, “In *The Celestial Hierarchy* Pseudo Dionysius defines each category of ascent. It is here that Dionysius uses the term ‘hierarchy’ (he actually created the word) and explains the three levels that have guided us through the ages. Purgation, illumination and union: these are the steps that lead us back to God. If we traverse these three levels, we will reach the ultimate end of our human destiny,” (2009, 241).

¹¹¹ Ashbrook, 181.

She also knows that others may view it wrongly—perceiving it as bragging or creating admiration.

In this season, the believer “encounters” God through abiding and union, sharing a depth of love from and for God that permeates her whole life. She is confronted in new ways, through revelations and the mystery of God and begins to understand the nature of the Trinity. Eventually these encounters do not produce the same kind or almost disabling ecstasy that they once did. Mystery and confidence in God is becoming a way of life.

Union: The Spirit-Led Life

To restate, this expression identifies those daily interactions with the Holy Spirit which guide the believer to follow God’s leading. Demarest describes how the Spirit leads as Union deepens in this Stage: “United with the Savior, disciples think with the mind of Christ, form intentions consistent with the will of Christ, feel with the emotions of Christ and conduct themselves following the example of Christ.... God raises Christians above the world system to live in unbroken awareness of His presence.”¹¹² This believer lives in *unbroken awareness* of the leadings of the Holy Spirit as an inner intuition rather than the sense of some external leading. This interaction becomes second nature. As she grows in the fullness of Christ, she is not sure where her will ends and where the will of the Father begins. She is truly becoming one with Christ.

Because of the Dark Night experiences of the past, “Contemplation has deepened to the point that God is able to communicate beyond the limits of the senses and of language.”¹¹³ There is a new language of communication between the believer and the

¹¹² Demarest, 132.

¹¹³ Ashbrook, 180.

Holy Spirit. Because the believer is so close, what she desires tends to be what the Holy Spirit desires. What she thinks tends to be what the Holy Spirit thinks. It is nearing impossible to see where the Holy Spirit ends and the believer begins. This new language, often called silence, is the language of the soul—the internal intuition that now comes naturally. Her default response, once self-focused, is now infused with the Holy Spirit’s intentions and desires.

Union: The Spirit Gifted Life

Stage Six marks a continuation of what God has been doing in Stage Four and Five. The consolations have returned, but this believer no longer needs them to operate. The *Dark Night* has proved beneficial in weaning her off of her need for a validating confirmation. The believer is now more patient and more reticent to use the gifts prematurely. She is more humble in her approach. Even though God now operates in power, she realizes that the power of God has the potential to short-circuit the growth of the person. In 2 Corinthians 12:8 the Apostle Paul pleaded with God three times to remove his “thorn in the flesh”. Three times he was told, “My grace is sufficient.” The Stage Six believer has partnered with God through union and understands that God’s greatest work in an individual is not always healing or a fresh word of direction, but deepening freedom to live in the fullness of God’s love. The believer might gain a sense when ministering that while the Lord might want to heal an individual, there may be a lot of work that needs to happen first—in the heart.

The Stage Six believer has learned to look at individuals more holistically. A person is not just a body that needs to be healed, but a person that needs to be healed. Sharing a word of knowledge or wisdom, or a display of miraculous power or healing

might not be congruent with what God is allowing this person to go through. The believer is confident in God's goodness and understands that just as parental discipline is beneficial to a child, so too is God's patience to display His power. The believer is truly partnering with God.

Use of spiritual gifts in Stages One, Two and Three may look very different externally in an individual and yet operate very similarly internally. The reverse is true for Stages Four, Five, and Six. For example, a Stage One or Two believer very rarely operates in a spiritual gift. A Stage Three believer has discovered and developed those gifts. Externally, the gifting changes drastically. However, what has happened to that individual internally is small. Her motivation is largely to display God's power and unfortunately sometimes to garner recognition. In Stages Four, Five and Six, the changes reverse. For instance, the gift being used looks externally the same when administered for a Stage Four believer as it does for a Stage Six believer. Her internal person is what is changing. Her motivation for use, her understanding of when to use the gift, and her need for validation is changing. Having said this, we need to also recognize that the Stage Six believer is able to cooperate with God in use of the spiritual gifts in very powerful ways. Intercession no longer needs words and ministry may not even need physical presence. Discerning of spirits is being perfected and the enemy is easily spotted. The exercise of God's power is limited more to the person being ministered to, to her willingness to let God have his way, to her readiness to live in new health, and her fear that the radical work of God might have unwanted consequences.

Union: The Life at War

The enemy is a liar. Jesus calls Satan the father of lies. At some point a liar even begins to believe her own lies. The devil is no different. He is convinced that his tactics still have a chance. Ashbrooks says, “The devil does not abandon his schemes against us in the seventh mansion. However, the ongoing temptation, accusations, and lies are automatically repulsed and resisted.”¹¹⁴ Even Jesus was met with the enemy’s harassing enticements, in the wilderness and in Gethsemane. His response was a strong, “Get away from me Satan.”¹¹⁵ While the enemy’s temptations prove meaningless, they still nag. They are a constant reminder to the believer that this is not her final resting place.

God protects the deepest areas of the believer’s soul. It is in this place that she has found solitude and safety. Teresa says, “His Majesty reveals himself to the soul and brings it to himself in that place where, in my opinion, the devil will not dare enter, nor will the Lord allow him to enter.”¹¹⁶ This area has become the throne of God. It is this relational area that the enemy “dare not enter”. As stated earlier, the enemy has no way of sidetracking the believer anymore. Teresa is quick to point out, however, that the believer must always be vigilant, as she is never beyond falling. Teresa maintains that if the most glorious angel could be deceived and fall from the grace of God, then we can never become complacent.

Warfare, however, involves more than the devil’s direct assaults; sin and death still inflict the world we live in. The Stage Six believer finds herself more grieved than

¹¹⁴ Ashbrook, 207.

¹¹⁵ Matt 4:10.

¹¹⁶ Ashbrook, 207.

ever with the injustice, pain, and suffering of the world and particularly with those around her. But, rather than launch into crusades as she once did, the believer now intercedes in silent warfare prayer for the needs of those around her and looks for opportunities to minister to the needs of others as the Lord leads.

Union: The Life of Holiness

At this stage, God has finally gotten to the *heart* of the matter; and it was always the heart that the Lover pursued in His beloved.¹¹⁷ External temptations have long since subsided and God has been at work internally recreating the *imago dei* distorted by sin. God has filled the believer's incessant need for affirmation and acceptance through the love of the One. She thinks before she speaks and acts. Her motives, that were once consistently questioned, are now assumed pure. Janet Hagberg describes this heart.

We have little ambition for being well known, rich, successful, noteworthy, goal-oriented, or "spiritual". We are like vessels into which God pours his Spirit, constantly overflowing. We are Spirit-filled but in a quiet, unassuming way. So pervasive is the presence of the Spirit in our lives that we may not even be particularly conscious of doing something of the Spirit. We are oblivious to the Spirit because we are accustomed to God moving very naturally through our lives, unexpectedly and surely. Consequently, we are genuinely humble and able to talk of our lives and purposes in very simple terms.¹¹⁸

As only God can, he has brought the believer from simple lostness through the awareness of being complexly broken into the simplicity of saving love. Demarest describes this work, "Through the grace of [union] the deep roots of bitterness, feelings of inferiority or superiority, areas of mistrust and painful memories are graced with new healing.

¹¹⁷ In *Ascent of Mt Carmel*, John of the Cross beautifully describes this ongoing work of purification. The Holy Spirit has been at work all along. "God's work in cleansing and purifying the soul is a greater work than creating the soul from nothing" (2002, 24).

¹¹⁸ Hagberg and Guelich, 153-154.

Destructive works of the flesh yield to the life-giving fruit of the Spirit.”¹¹⁹ Not only is the believer externally holy, she is internally whole.

C.S. Lewis creatively describes the process that is happening from the enemy’s perspective. “When he [God] talks of their losing their selves, he means only abandoning the clamour of self-will; once they have done that, he really gives them back all their personality, and boasts (I am afraid, sincerely) that when they are wholly his they will be more themselves than ever.”¹²⁰ This believer has genuinely changed. Paul describes his transformation: “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”¹²¹

Union: The Life on Mission

The believer’s mission has now been merged with the mission of God. This final stage of union is revolutionary for Christian service. Convergence has happened. The believer looks back over her life and sees detail after detail, trial after trial, and circumstance after circumstance with great clarity. Those things that did not make sense at the time now have eternal value. God gives her this perspective because she no longer has reason to abuse it. She lives for the glory of God. Her desire is not to work *for* God, or even to work *with* God, but to work *in* God. They have become partners in establishing the kingdom. Brennan Manning expresses it this way, “The deepest desire of our hearts is for union with God. From the first moment of our existence our most powerful yearning

¹¹⁹ Demarest, 134-135.

¹²⁰ Lewis, 65.

¹²¹ Galatians 2:20

is to fulfill the original purpose of our lives—‘to see Him more clearly, love Him more dearly, follow Him more nearly.’”¹²²

She now operates Spirit-led in a Spirit ordained calling with Spirit re-patterned motives. She is kingdom minded in every sense of the word. Demarest leaves us with this statement, “No one has to twist the arm of spiritually reoriented saints to get them to journey outward in selfless service to others. We who have been healed and re-patterned serve with fresh purpose so that others might enter the circle of blessing.”¹²³ This believer will operate on mission until the day she dies, and quite possibly, beyond.

¹²² Brennan Manning, *Abba's Child: The Cry of the Heart for Intimate Belonging* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002), 38.

¹²³ Demarest, 143.

Conclusion

Through six stages of maturity we have seen the intention of our Lord. God has been constantly leading and guiding the believer through trial and struggle with patience and loving care. The Apostle Paul declared to the Philippian church, "...being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."¹²⁴ The Holy Spirit has completed His work. This lifetime of excitement and struggle has led to the moment where the believer has found convergence. This believer's life is now lived in a loving relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit manifested in power.

The writer has made the case for a pathway of maturity for the Pentecostal believer. Without a roadmap, the Pentecostal believer grows randomly at best. She is forced to decipher on her own the objective of the Spirit. Using the six Pentecostal expressions, a framework has been laid in which to view the Spirit's work. These six expressions viewed inside of a six-stage progressive model provide the structure for understanding the Spirit's work. With a structure, we are able to better cooperate with what God is doing. There is much work to do beyond this model; a model is only the beginning. Pentecostal leaders around the world have the opportunity to take this ancient-yet contemporary model and use it to formulate teams of disciplers and spiritual directors who can guide believers into their full potential as sons and daughters of God. This tool provides a systematic way to understand the Holy Spirit's work in Pentecostal believers. As we partner with the Holy Spirit, God will make his purposes ever clearer. Those

¹²⁴ Phil. 1:6.

purposes are to move the believer into an ever-deepening relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, which manifests in a life of loving power.

SECTION 5: ARTIFACT DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this dissertation is twofold: one, to describe Pentecostalism in such a way that Pentecostal leaders have the ability to discern the Holy Spirit's intentions in spiritual growth; and two, to provide a formation model for Pentecostal leaders that provides the framework from which they draw patterns and normative practices that Pentecostals experience in their maturation. This model will give leaders the capability to determine where a believer is in her faith journey and provide the tools necessary to encourage her on in her growth. Where is the believer in her journey and how can I as a spiritual leader direct her in partnering with what the Holy Spirit is doing to further her growth?

The following non-fiction book will be targeted to both pastors and church leaders to help them answer these vital questions. The first portion of the book will describe spiritual formation and the need for focused and strategic discipleship in the church. The second portion of the book will describe Pentecostalism as a spiritual paradigm. Those who have chosen the path of Pentecostalism will be able to identify with the six expressions that are universal to Pentecostals. Finally, the last and largest portion of the book will outline and describe the Six-Stage model of formation. Within the chapters that describe the experience of each stage, I will also include instructions and advice on how to direct believers that are in each stage. Questions, key thoughts, and how-tos will be provided. It is the goal of this book to provide the groundwork for future instruction and direction tools that will further the growth of churches by furthering the growth of its members.

SECTION 6: ARTIFACT SPECIFICATION

A Book Proposal For

SUPERNATURAL FORMATION
Exploring a Pentecostal's Journey to Maturity

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BOOK PROPOSAL OVERVIEW

SUPERNATURAL FORMATION

Exploring a Pentecostal's Journey to Maturity

Jeremy Sims

I. THE CONTENT

A. Premise

Most Pentecostal believers struggle with growth and maturity because they do not know what maturity is supposed to look like. As a result, they haphazardly and randomly journey in their faith with the hope that they will one day simply *be* mature. The purpose of this book is to give Pentecostal believers a roadmap to maturity. It describes a formation model based several classical and contemporary models specifically designed for a Pentecostal paradigm.

B. Unique Selling Proposition

If consumers in the target market purchase and read *Supernatural Formation*, then they will:

- Be able to identify where they are in their journey.
- Be able to understand what the Holy Spirit is trying to do to help them advance on this journey.
- Be able to help others to identify and advance in their journeys.

Because the book will:

- Provide a description of what Pentecostalism looks like through six universal expressions.
- Describe a model of formation unique to Pentecostal believers.
- Give examples to spiritual directors and leaders of what to look for, what to ask and what to suggest for growth.

C. Overview

The manuscript will be divided into three distinct parts:

1. Part I. Approaching The Approach. This section will give an overview of spiritual formation and explain why we need a unique Pentecostal approach to formation.
2. Part II. Describing Pentecostalism. This section will describe Pentecostalism by defining six unique expressions found in this spiritual paradigm. These six expressions are widely accepted practices within a movement that has over 330 million adherents.
3. Part III. The Model. The final and largest section will describe a Six-Stage progressive model largely based on Teresa of Avila's *Interior Castle*. This model will be described by identifying what the six Pentecostal expressions look like within each stage.

A complete chapter-by-chapter synopsis is attached, giving a more detailed overview of the manuscript.

D. The Manuscript

1. Manuscript Status: Three chapters are completed (all are attached to this proposal as sample chapters).
2. The manuscript will include various tables and charts, designed to graphically communicate important information in an easy-to-understand format. It will also include questions for discussion at the end of each chapter so the book can be used in a small group study.
3. Anticipated length: 40,000 words.
4. Anticipated manuscript completion date: Approximately 3 months after receiving a commitment from a publisher.

II. The Market

A. Characteristics

The audience for this book will be Pentecostal leaders and parishioners, a movement that has over 330 million adherents, who wish to grow in their unique spiritual approach.

B. Motivations

The audience for this book is made up of Pentecostal leaders and educators who are frustrated by the discursive and random attempts at discipleship in their churches, mission locations, and institutions. It is also made up of parishioners who can't seem to find a discernable understanding of what they are expected to do and who they are expected to become.

C. Affinity Groups:

1. Assemblies of God US Districts- There are 60 districts in the US with over 3.5 million adherents
2. Subscribers of *Enrichment* magazine
3. Subscribers of *Discipleship Journal*
4. Pentecostal University educators
5. Local Pentecostal churches and leaders
6. Pentecostal missionaries around the world.

D. Competition

There are several books that describe formation through a model; however, none specifically targets a Pentecostal community.

1. *The Critical Journey*- This book by Janet Hagberg and Robert Guelich was written in 1989 and reprinted in 1995 and 2005. It has a target audience of evangelical believers.
2. *Mansions of the Heart*- This book by R. Thomas Ashbrook was written in 2009. It is the author's commentary and interpretation of St. Teresa of Avila's *Interior Castle*. Its target is evangelical, however, with St. Teresa as its primary source, it seems to be more widely accepted in Catholic circles.
3. *Spiritual Rhythm*- This book was released in 2010 by Mark Buchanan. It is based on a cyclical model not a progressive model like *Supernatural Formation*.

III. The Author

A. Background

Jeremy D. Sims has a B.A. in Youth Ministry from Southeastern University (1998) and an M.A. in Pastoral Leadership from the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary (2004). He is currently finishing a D.Min in Leadership and Spiritual Formation from George Fox Evangelical Seminary (2013). Jeremy serves as the youth and music minister of a large church in the Birmingham, AL area.

B. Previous Writing

Jeremy has self-published two books and one music CD. His books are titled *The Prayer Experiment* and *The Bible Experiment*. Each book leads high-school age young people into discovering the exciting worlds of prayer and the Bible. Jeremy's music CD was recorded in Nashville and released in 2012 with exciting reviews.

C. Personal Marketing

Jeremy Sims is willing and able to travel as needed to promote the book.

CHAPTER BY CHAPTER SYNOPSIS

Chapter One: Approaching The Approach

Chapter One introduces the author and the philosophy of spiritual formation. This chapter also lays the foundation for what a formation model has the potential to do.

Chapter Two: Spirit-Filled Power...and then what?

Chapter Two describes the six expression of Pentecostalism: The Life of Encounter, The Spirit-Led Life, The Spirit Gifted Life, The Life at War, The Life of Holiness, and The Life on Mission. These expressions will be used to describe what a Pentecostal believer can anticipate in each stage of growth.

Chapter Three: Awakening- A New Start

The new life in Christ explodes with excitement and potential. There are numerous fears, struggles, questions and concerns that seem to be completely overshadowed by the enthusiasm of awakening to God's grace, forgiveness and acceptance.

Chapter Four: Wilderness- Where Did Everybody Go?

Surprisingly, God tests our initial commitment very early. Just as Jesus heard his Father's voice, "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased" and was immediately whisked away by the Spirit into the desert, so too God moves us past the early Stage of excitement into a season of refinement where we face the difficulty of honoring the values of the Kingdom of God while living in the Kingdom of this world. In this season we also experience heightened temptation from the enemy in an attempt to make us turn back or give up.

Chapter Five: Productivity- Just Put Your Head Down And Work

We now jump to a time in our spiritual growth when the struggles and warfare of the second mansion are largely over, and considerable 'discipleship' now exemplifies our life. This season is described as the "doing" season. It is in this Stage that the believer will spend a fair amount of time.

Chapter Six: Reorientation- Oh, That Is What This Is About

It is in this Stage that God begins a seismic shift in our focus and motivation from doing to relationship with God. It first begins to show up in our doubts and second-guessing of many things that were once concrete. Focus on serving God, once a light of great joy, now moves into darkness (Is this all there is?). From this

place of disorienting darkness, we are able to grasp the new Light into which the Lord invites us.

Chapter Seven: Dark Night- I Am Doing This Because I Love You?

The dark night of the soul is one of the most confusing, discouraging and beneficial seasons in the life of the believer. It is extremely important to know that this is a season brought about by the Holy Spirit. This season is made up of “Extended times where God seems absent and life seems dark...they are created by God as an essential part of our pilgrimage, occurring in the more mature years of our Christian journey toward a union of love with Him.”

Chapter Eight: Union- “That They Will Be One”

This is the final stage of earthly maturity. It is this stage that the believer has allowed the Holy Spirit to remove our dependence on the things of the world. This is the earthly culmination of Jesus’s statement, “Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us.” In Union, Christ-likeness develops to the fullest extent possible on this earth.

Chapter Nine: They Were Always There

This final chapter wraps up the book. Here the author describes the obligations and responsibilities that were always there for Pentecostal Leaders. It is in this chapter that I talk about the need for leaders to begin to prepare and write discipleship curriculum and material that takes into account the Pentecostal’s formation journey.

SECTION 7: POSTSCRIPT

Richard Rohr states in *The Naked Now*, “The core task of all good spirituality is to teach us to ‘cooperate’ with what God already wants to do and has already begun to do.”¹ It was always my assertion that the greatest reason that many in the faith do not grow is because they do not know what they are supposed to grow into. Second, they do not know what God “has already begun to do.” Over thousands of years, we find well-documented patterns and experiences for us to use as a guide to what God “wants to do.”

Pentecostals have exciting stories stretching from the Old Testament to Azusa Street and beyond. We draw from wells of experience. For example, we read about Elijah lying prostrate across a dead boy; mouth-to-mouth, stomach-to-stomach and feet-to-feet. His cells align with the Spirit’s power and he breathes the boy back to life. We draw from wells of testimonies of Spirit-led lives that were wholly directed by the Holy Spirit. There are hundreds of stories of the power of a life completely endued with the Spirit’s power and operating by His gifts. From several thousand years we can draw from hundreds of spiritual men and women who have resisted the devil’s greatest attacks. Finally, we see men and women who have accepted their unique callings and ventured into the Spirit’s purposes around the globe. Because of the uniqueness of a Pentecostal spirituality it is imperative that we discover and describe its pathway to maturity.

I pray that *Supernatural Formation* provides a roadmap to leaders and laypersons around the world. I hope that it will spur Pentecostal believers to move forward in their journeys. I long for them to discover the unique spirituality that is available to them. I

¹ Richard Rohr, *The Naked Now: Learning to See as the Mystics See* (New York: Crossroad Pub., 2009), 23.

pray that their leaders will be encouraged by understanding all stages as God ordained for every believer; that these leaders will learn how to partner with the Holy Spirit in guiding believers through each stage and into maturity. The Holy Spirit is at work, has always been at work and will always be at work. The greatest travesty of the American church, and the global church for that matter, is in misunderstanding what that work looks like in the heart of the believer. I pray that this book gives vocabulary and resources for those who are searching. For those who are in seasons of distance and dryness, I pray that they see God's ordained goodness in spite of what they experience. May this paper, this book, and this man glorify God in all that He desires to do.

APPENDIX A: ARTIFACT

Supernatural Formation

By:

Jeremy Sims

CHAPTER ONE
APPROACHING THE APPROACH

I stumbled into spiritual direction. Now if you are like me I suppose that I should define the term because several years ago I had never heard of it. But then that would suspend the drama.

It would seem that we stumble into most of the more significant moments of our lives: a divine moment, a serendipitous meeting, a suspiciously providential coincidence. A couple of years ago, I tripped and fell right into grace. I had been reading about some of the ancient Christian practices that led to growth in the Church when I found the name, Ignatius of Loyola. With sincere apologies to my Catholic brothers and sisters, I had never heard of him. I spent a short amount of time reading about his philosophy of spirituality and his *Spiritual Exercises* when I decided that I would dive right in. I ordered a few books on Ignatian spirituality including one titled, *Sacred Listening*, by James Wakefield. In the first few pages of the book, he suggested having a “listener” to help navigate the exercises of scriptural prayer. I called the only friend that might have had any exposure to Ignatius and he agreed to be my “listener.” As I got started I could tell that God was directing me inwardly to a place I hadn’t visited before. Just as I was starting to hit a rhythm with the daily prayer exercises, my “listener’s” life circumstances changed drastically and he was unable to help me any longer. I knew that God was directing me inward, but I needed some help. So I did what I’ve always done; I wrote the author.

My wife thinks I’m a little dramatic, but when I am really passionate about something, I go as far as I can to get help or answers. Most of the time, that means going

to the top. When I moved to Jackson, TN and they didn't have a Krispy Kreme, I wrote the corporate offices. When Frito Lay stopped selling my favorite chip, I emailed them and told them my opinion about the oversight. When I was in college and poor, I wrote Nintendo and asked, as a longtime, loyal customer, if they would donate to me and my roommates the brand new Nintendo 64. They declined. I kept writing.

So when I got stuck with Ignatius, since my first listener had become unavailable, I wrote to Dr. Wakefield. Unlike Krispy Kreme, Frito Lay and Nintendo, Dr. Wakefield responded...and was incredibly helpful—so helpful that he connected me with one of the people he had consulted throughout the writing of his book, Dr. Tom Ashbrook. Within days I was on the phone telling Dr. Ashbrook my story. He immediately understood my dilemma and told me that he would “poll his spiritual community” (another term that I had never heard) to see if anyone was willing to help. A week later I was in contact with a South African who lived in Massachusetts asking him to be my “listener”. He had guided several people through the exercises and graciously accepted my request. Did I mention that we stumble into most of the more significant moments of our lives?

For the next year, my “listener” journeyed with me into corners and crevices of my inner man that had never seen light. I found myself simultaneously at awe with the grace of Jesus at work and on the other hand mortified by the reality of the darkness that was buried in my soul. I'm slowly learning that this divine paradox doesn't ever change. Like Isaiah said when faced with merely the train of Yahweh's robe, “Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips.” Without the recognition of the darkness, an angel can never bring fire from the altar to cleanse our lips.

The pain and confusion were regularly hard for me to understand. One day I would be crying over the most genuine of Jesus's promises to me and the next I would be indifferent to one of the most simple commands. I needed someone to help me understand what was going on. What was Jesus up to in my interior? What was I fighting against? What was the enemy's strategy in these months? Sometimes I could not even tell if what I was hearing was from Jesus or the enemy. And this is what my "listener" did for me: he became a translator for my emotions which are the language of the soul. He became a navigator for my journey as one who had gone before. In cooperation with the Holy Spirit, he became my spiritual director, helping me interpret my interactions with God as I listened for His voice in the Scriptures and in my heart

Spiritual direction is simply the ability to discern the activity of the Holy Spirit within another and the skill to know how to partner with what He wants to do. Jesus was the Apostle Paul's first spiritual director when He said to Paul (then Saul) on the road to Damascus, "Saul, can't you see that you're trying to undo what God is trying to do?" Spiritual Directors do that. They step into our lives and help us see God in the everyday details and circumstances of life through the lens of Scripture. Eugene Peterson says, "Spiritual Direction is the task of helping a person take seriously what is treated dismissively by the publicity-infatuated and crisis-sated mind, and then to receive this 'mixed, random material of life' as the raw material for high holiness."¹ Spiritual Direction is invaluable. Even the most attune Christian has cavernous blind spots that he/she needs help identifying. In fact, I can't see how we ever achieve what God dreams for us without the help of a spiritual director. And if I could say so boldly, we do not.

¹ Eugene H. Peterson, *Working the Angles: the Shape of Pastoral Integrity* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1987), 150.

Now for the presumptuous, audacious reveal. My desire is that this book becomes a backwards spiritual director for you (I'll explain that later). Don't get me wrong; a book will never be a substitute for a Spirit-led person. However, there are dozens of approaches to spirituality and dozens more interpretations to those approaches. If I've learned anything about spiritual formation over the years it's that formation isn't centralized in the content of what we teach, communicate, or learn. Formation, spiritual growth, is centralized in the individual. "Jesus facilitated spiritual formation in his disciples by introducing them to life situations and then helping them debrief their experiences."² This is not, simply, another book of content. It is a book that helps the reader identify what the Holy Spirit has already been doing. I would like this book to provide an approach to spirituality that seems to me to be missing. But first, a word about approaches.

Big Words, Simple Words

In my first year of Bible School I took a class called Biblical Hermeneutics. (As we often do in Christianity, we make simple concepts seem complex by the size of the words we use to name them.) Hermeneutics basically means the *filter or guide you bring to an interpretation*. A hermeneutic is your set of lenses through which you view the world. If you have ever worn a set of tinted sunglasses you saw the world in shades of yellow, pink or blue. That colored lens is your hermeneutic and because of it the trees, sky, animals, and people had a shade of that particular color. We all have lenses through which we view our world. Our set of lens or hermeneutic is made up of our personality, experiences, relationships, and philosophy of life. For example, one of the most basic

² Reggie McNeal, *The Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 85.

descriptions we regularly use to define or understand a person is to say that person views the world as either “half-full” or “half-empty”. One’s optimistic or pessimistic outlook is part of his or her world hermeneutic. We have a hermeneutic for everything that we do and experience. It constantly evolves without us even noticing.

Likewise we all have a hermeneutic which defines our approach to Christ and the relationship we share with Him. There are dozens of good, authentic approaches to Christian spirituality. Kenneth Boa, a scholar of Biblical and practical approaches to spiritual formation warns,

Anyone who studies the four Gospels should be suspicious of an approach that reduces the nuances of the spiritual life into a single formula or method. The Gospels are not biographies, but highly selective thematic portraits that reveal different aspects of Christ’s life that should stand in dynamic tension with one another. The synergism of this tensioned interplay resists neat categorization, and so it is with the dynamics of a Spirit-led journey with Christ.³

Whether we realize it or not, you and I approach Christianity differently. The brilliance of God is that He designed us with nuances and unique character traits that attract us to certain approaches while rejecting others. He hides and longs to be found in all of them. In a perfect world, denominations would be designed to offer pathways of growth through these different approaches. Unfortunately, instead of recognizing each of the denominational strengths and what they lend to Christianity, they tend to function as good ol’ boy clubs, cliques, and places of theological snobbery. Instead of embracing the genius of God in creating a diversity of people that share His image, we play games determining “who is in and who is out”.

I could take the next one hundred pages and define several different approaches to life in Christ and you could take an assessment to see which one best fits you. However,

³ Kenneth Boa, *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 20.

what I would rather do is describe, in as much detail as I can, one particular approach that is shared by millions of believers around the world. This hermeneutic is as varied as there are Crayola crayons. It rarely looks the same from one person to the next, but we all share the same label—I would like to describe a *Pentecostal* approach to Christian spirituality. It is very important that you understand what comes next. You may be reading/hearing certain terms for the first time so I want to be clear. *When an approach* (this is a hermeneutic or lens or grid in which we view Christianity) *designs a pathway of maturity, we call this a formation model.*

Building a formation model could be compared to building a house. If I am building a house I must first settle on a style. Typically the style is a personal preference. Do you like Modern, Victorian, Colonial, etc.? The reason so many couples have horror stories about building houses together is that they can't agree on style because, in style, there is no such thing as right or wrong. No matter how many times I told my wife, while building our home, "Can't you see that this way is so much better?!" she didn't always agree. The style is the approach to building. Once that has been determined, you can have blueprints drawn. The blueprints are the *formation model*. This tube of sketches will be the guide for completing the home.

Spiritual formation—our design for becoming mature in Christ, like building a home, needs a blueprint. I am convinced that many Christians do not grow up in Christ, or on our best days grow accidentally or haphazardly, because we do not have a model of maturity. Without a GPS or map I would never get to where I am going. Throughout the history of our Pentecostal faith tradition we have been empowered and sent in power and passion, but without a map. Many of us have lost our way, becoming frustrated or

exhausted, missing the work of the Holy Spirit, without ever finding where God wants to lead.

My goal for this book, this backwards spiritual director, is to describe what it looks like for a Pentecostal believer to grow in Christ. I would like to describe different stages of growth and what that believer will look like as he/she progresses. I have some good news and some even better news.

Luckily for us, over the last two thousand years dozens of formation models have been built. Great men and women under the inspiration of the Spirit have brought clarity and direction to followers of Christ. These models describe the maturation process of a believer. Where they come up short for our purposes is that there isn't a specific model that describes a unique map (*formation model*) for Pentecostal believers (*approach*). Each of the models I have studied has components of Pentecostal growth, but they don't address what I will describe later as the Pentecostal Expressions. My goal is to synthesize what they say into one specific model.

Bird Cages

Two years ago, I actually set out to design/discover a Pentecostal formation model. As I got started, I realized I would have to ask questions that were even more foundational to my faith. The first question I had to ask was, "What does it mean to be Pentecostal?" Defining Pentecostalism is scary. What I found when I asked friends, pastors, teachers, professors, and even administrators of Pentecostal Bible Institutions was that we had a subjective, ambiguous definition of Pentecostalism at best. I heard things like, "To be Pentecostal is to be Spirit-led" or, "To be Pentecostal is to be filled with the Spirit's power." Others stated, "Pentecostal is an expression of a worship and/or

lifestyle.” I agreed with all of these answers but still wondered, “What does that mean?” What does it look like when someone is Spirit-led? What does it look like when someone is endued with the Spirit’s power? Surely we could do better than, “You just know it.” As I asked these questions I began to get the sense that many great men and women of God were unwilling to define the work of the Spirit because in doing so it could limit *what the Holy Spirit might want to do*. I think we have come to believe that by describing the work of the Spirit in categories we would presume to try to systematize this Person of the Trinity into functioning within our boxes. We would build a birdcage for the Holy Spirit.

The last thing that I want to do is try to cage the Holy Spirit. Rather, I want to show the patterns that we have seen throughout history in order to give us a hermeneutic in which to understand what the Spirit is up to and what He wants to do in and through us. I don’t want to cage the dove, but rather understand how to partner with what God wants to do, so we can soar together into God’s purposes. Richard Rohr says, “Unless you can chart both movement and direction, you have no way to name maturity and immaturity.”⁴

As you will see, I will leave broad borders that are fluid and organic. The truth is that when we don’t look for the patterns of God’s spiritual work, we limit His work in us. Too often we end up fighting against what He is doing. The Apostle Paul, probably the most educated of all of our New Testament writers, fought against God’s work for years. By not seeking to understand what God is up to we simply build a different kind of birdcage. The model we will use is a pattern; not a mold. Rohr reminds us, “Spiritually

⁴ Richard Rohr, *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011), 7.

speaking there are no dead-ends.”⁵ God is up to something. The closest thing to a dead-end that you and I will ever experience is in not understanding what God is doing. This book is my attempt to provide a framework in order to recognize God’s work in your life. However, as I have come to understand, God will never reveal all of His cards. If He does we don’t need Him anymore. So this book cannot define and translate every life experience. What it can do is give some broad strokes of the way that God seems to have worked throughout history. History is a pretty good indicator of the future. To my friends that are asking God for a “new thing”, you will not find that here, just the opposite in fact. It might be a new way of understanding the work of God, but it will not be discovering anything new that God is doing.

⁵ Ibid., 43.

CHAPTER TWO

SPIRIT FILLED POWER...AND THEN WHAT?

Expressions

I have three beautiful children. This past summer my father-in-law asked each one of them what they wanted to be when they grew up. The conversation went something like this:

Paw-Paw: I think that you three are incredible and that you are going to do incredible things with your life. What would you like to be when you grow up?

Addyson (8 yr old daughter): I want to be a teacher, a missionary and a chef. During the school year I would like to work at a school and teach little children around the world.

Then during the summer vacation, I want to cook for them really good food.

Paw-Paw: That's awesome Addy, I bet you will be the best teacher-missionary-chef ever!

What about you Carsyn, what would you like to be?

Carsyn (7 yr old daughter): I want to be a veterinarian. I love puppies.

Paw-Paw: I love that Car Car, I can really tell that you love animals. I think that that will be perfect. What about you Brayden, what would you like to be?

Brayden (4 yr old son): I want to be Captain America

Paw-Paw: Wow! You want to be a super-hero?

Brayden: Yep. My daddy is going to be Hulk.

Carsyn: Paw-Paw, I want to do something else too. I want to own a pet store and give puppies to people who will love them like I do.

Brayden: I want a puppy from your puppy store Carsyn.

Carsyn: I won't sell you one. You won't take care of it.

Brayden: Fine then, I'll take my Captain America shield and throw it at you and kill you.

Then I'll get a puppy.

I was worried about my son when he was just a baby that he would grow up playing with Barbies and pink stuffed animals because of his two older sisters. I think he's doing ok. As I heard each of my kids talking about what they wanted to do when they grow up, each one of them exposed nuanced intricacies of their personalities.

Addyson is my oldest. She is passionate about life, relationships and Justin Bieber. She doesn't miss opportunities, she creates them! Carsyn is my tender heart. She is

compassionate, gentle and patient. Brayden is all boy. He loves drums, tents, dirt and super heroes. Each of them expressed their personalities with the ways that they

described their futures. The career choice was an expression of who they are as a person.

Webster says that an expression is "something that manifests, embodies, or symbolizes something else".

In my search for defining Pentecostalism I have discovered what I will describe as six Pentecostal Expressions. This will build the structure. They are not perfect or rigid.

God's work does not fit neatly into categories, however, the categories help us to understand a little better.

First, a word of caution about the Pentecostal Expressions: the Pentecostal branch of the Church does not own the real estate on these expressions. In fact, all of us, regardless of spiritual approach, will resonate with some if not all of these. You can decide for yourself what expressions you have embraced. Some of the expressions will

leave you with several questions. This is a good and necessary part of your quest to understand what God is up to in your life.

The Life of Encounter

“Narrative is ‘the central function...of the human mind.’ We turn everything into a story in order to make sense of life,” says James Bryan Smith, author of *The Good and Beautiful God*. “We ‘dream in narrative, day-dream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticize, construct, gossip, learn, hate and love by narrative.’ In fact, we cannot avoid it. We are storied creatures. Our stories help us navigate our world, to understand right and wrong, and to provide meaning.”⁶ From the time that God walked with Adam in the cool of the day to wrestling with Jacob, from the incarnation to God’s intersection with Saul on the road to Damascus, God has regularly inserted Himself into the lives of humans. These insertions build the narrative of our lives.

The Life of Encounter is an expression, which speaks to the experiential part of God. At incredibly supernatural moments in our lives God allows us to tangibly and palpably experience him. We call these “God-moments”.⁷ God-moments shape us and define for us who God is and what God is about. I have several of these moments in my life that were utterly transforming. Think about your own life. What moments has God supernaturally inserted Himself and challenged or changed you? Has He challenged a belief system or simply challenged the way that you felt about Him? Has He changed

⁶ James Bryan. Smith, *The Good and Beautiful God: Falling in Love with the God Jesus Knows* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2009), 24-25.

⁷ I had a professor in college, Dr. Mike Rakes, who coined this phrase. Many of my colleagues use it to this day.

your behavior toward Him or others by speaking directly to your heart? These are experiential moments that shape us. They are foundational to faith.

It was a few years ago that I had a radical conversion (not salvation, but possibly equally as impacting) experience during my first communion in a Roman Catholic Church on a personal retreat. As I stood in line waiting to partake (which, by the way, was extremely difficult for me for two reasons: one, I don't drink alcohol and two, I was afraid that my different theology on communion would somehow frustrate the priest and people with whom I was sharing); while standing in line waiting anxiously for my turn, I stared at the vivid, terrible, life-size image of Jesus hanging helplessly on the cross. It was as if I heard Him say, "Stop placing people in categories; I am not dying for categories. I gave my life for people." Taking communion that day changed my life. For years I had separated the Body of Christ into categories that God is unwilling to delineate: Baptist and Methodist, Pentecostal and Catholic, Calvinist and Free-Will, Liberal and Conservative. If Jesus' life does anything, it shows us that religiously defined classifications of people mean nothing to God. This is now part of my new narrative.

Our experiences look different as we grow. Generally speaking, the younger that we are in Christ, experiences precede discipline. As we mature, discipline precedes experience. We will see this pattern as we dig into the process of growth with our formation model.

The Spirit-Led Life

This second expression of the Pentecostal life, The Spirit-led life, is hardest for me to write about because it feels the most sensational. I believe that the supernatural is best received naturally, or in other words, we are led by the Spirit in our everyday,

ordinary lives into extraordinary, relational opportunities. I grew up around people who would pray about what value meal to order at Burger King. There are people in my tribe that consider a good parking space at Wal-Mart as a sign from God of their blessed life. Sometimes, being led by the Spirit sounds a bit whacky. But, I think that Jesus was completely led by the Spirit, as was Paul. One moment, we see Jesus ministering to a community, and then seemingly abruptly, he decides that it is time to move on. Paul talks about wanting to come to several of the churches to which he ministers, yet he waits on the Spirit's release.

Our lives don't have to be as random and discursive as they seem, rather they can be ordered by the Spirit. We Pentecostals embrace the fact that the Spirit is continually directing, talking and encouraging. He is constantly revealing the heart and plans of Jesus. Again, Eugene Peterson states that we are to "...take seriously what is treated dismissively by the publicity-infatuated and crisis-sated mind, and then to receive this 'mixed, random material of life' as the raw material for high holiness."⁸

In order to capture this thought, I wanted to create a new word that would describe it. The word is *inDOition*. The word means the ability to intuit what the Spirit is already up to and then do something to partner with Him. For our purposes, *inDOition* will replace the word, evangelism. Evangelism seems like I have to must up the energy to create something or make something happen. *InDOition* simply means that I jump in on what the Holy Spirit is already up to. Evangelism seems like I am to lead someone to salvation. *InDOition* means I am partnering with the Holy Spirit to lead someone toward Jesus. This is the expression of the Spirit-led life. *InDOition* doesn't just pertain to

⁸ Eugene H. Peterson, *Working the Angles: the Shape of Pastoral Integrity* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1987), 150.

evangelism, but to the ordered, Spirit-led life. What is the Holy Spirit already doing and how can I participate in that plan?

The Life at War

Pentecostal believers understand that there is no neutral ground in following Christ. We have an enemy that desires to keep us from not only a love relationship with Christ but also from a greater life found in walking out the *way* of Christ. This enemy wreaks havoc and wars against those who choose to make Jesus Lord. Unfortunately, modern entertainment has had more influence over our doctrine of spiritual warfare than the Bible. The fact that it is called “warfare” scares many people off as well. Several years ago I read the famous book written by C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* and decided if one wasn’t interested in dissecting and exegeting the Bible maybe he/she could start there. Somehow C.S. Lewis was able to tap into the strategy of the enemy by fictitiously recounting an ongoing conversation between two demons. Likewise, some of my experiences seem sensational when written out, and yet nothing I have experienced is nearly as radical as that what is written of Jesus.

I hope this isn’t heretical, but I believe many people avoid thinking about this reality of spiritual life because the Bible doesn’t *seem* to do a great job at communicating the intricacies and components of spiritual warfare. There are numerous scriptures that seem to contradict others. From the “talking snake” in the garden, Saul’s conjuring of Samuel, the sons of Sceva, Jesus’ encounter with Satan, to Paul’s teachings, etc., one is hard-pressed to form a layman’s theology about battles taking place in the spiritual realm. It’s messy and complicated especially for concrete thinkers of the Western world. So many avoid it all together. What seems to be universal in Pentecostal’s thought is this:

We are at war. What I would like to do in this book is not only help discern what the Spirit is up to, but also consider what the enemy wants to do to challenge that work. Oddly, sometimes the greatest indicator of what the Spirit is doing is found in identifying what the enemy is doing to counteract the divine work. Where the resistance is, the Spirit is up to something.

The Spirit-Gifted Life

Pentecostals, for better or for worse, strongly encourage the use of the charismatic gifts found in 1 Corinthians 12:7-11. David Lim says, “Some define the gifts as primarily natural abilities, while others define the gifts as totally supernatural... If the gifts were totally supernatural, then they would be infallible. But God’s Word tells us to evaluate each gift in the light of edification, exhortation, comfort and the Bible itself.”⁹ Gifts are for the building up of the body.

I find that Christ’s followers have reservations about gifts being used in this capacity because their belief is that such gifts are completely supernatural; they are waiting on a divine moment or sign from God. I have seen gifts used appropriately and inappropriately. The responsibility is given to the community to determine when something is appropriate or not, as they should be because gifts themselves are communal when put to proper use. Also, many Christians have operated in these gifts regularly without the knowledge of what they were doing. Giving spiritually-discerned guidance, having a dream of enlightenment into a specific situation, praying for healing, and seeing a miracle are several examples of the Spirit’s work. Pentecostals encourage and are encouraged in their use of spiritual gifts.

⁹ David Lim, *Spiritual Gifts: a Fresh Look* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Pub. House, 1991).

I went to Southeastern University to study for ministry back in the nineties. It was an exciting time in my life. My freshman year marked some foundational moments for my life that would change and/or strengthen some of the things that I believed. One Sunday afternoon, my roommate and I had come back from church and were going to continue in our deeply religious tradition of taking a nap. Over the last several weeks I had discovered a cyst type growth under one of my arms. It hadn't bothered me at all and I just thought it was something meaningless. This particular day, it hit me very differently. Just as I was about to climb into the top bunk, a sense of panic and fear gripped me. Within seconds I had played out the entire scenario of my cancer ridden final days and death. My family would question the mission that God had called me to for years as it would seem pointless. My brain was racing and my heart was pounding. I looked at my roommate and explained what was going on in my head and asked him to pray for me. Without hesitation, he obliged and said a simple prayer with a simple tone. I climbed up into my bunk and entered a deep sleep.

A few hours later I awoke. I had slept away the insignificant time between lunch and dinner and was hungry. I went to dinner with several friends and thought nothing of the earlier incident. Finally, after coming home and beginning to settle in for the evening I remembered all of the panic before my nap. I smiled and thanked God for calming my nerves and allowing me to rest in the assurance of His plan. It was a miracle. And then it hit me, what if there was more to that moment than a peaceful nap? I didn't want to "test" God and I was still young enough to believe that I could frustrate God by expecting something more from Him. I didn't want God to think of me as ungrateful, but I had to check. Timidly, I lifted my arm to look and feel underneath. I continually reassured

myself that God had already done a miracle in allowing me to sleep so peacefully. And then I felt it...nothing that is. I quickly looked and then looked under my other arm in case I had misplaced my cyst. It was gone, completely gone. In my rest, God had done what I hadn't asked- completely removed the cyst altogether. I didn't ask to be healed, only to live with the cyst in peace. God answered His own prayer.

Pentecostal believers embrace the supernatural manifestation of the power of God. I am certain that other denominations and individuals accept this reality as well, but Pentecostal believers across the board accept the potential and possibility of this reality. As we progress through the model, we will see how God uses the charismatic gifts in the lives of Pentecostal believers.

The Life of Holiness

An essential way that Pentecostals understand God's encounters of leading in spiritual warfare is related to their understanding of God's desire to lead them into holiness. In Pentecostalism, holiness is often seen as an *outward* obedience to make one's *inner* person whole. Unfortunately, holiness cannot work from the outside in. Holiness emerges from one's desire to become more like Christ in every aspect with the understanding that only He can perfect this work. Richard Foster states that this is the purpose of the spiritual disciplines. "God has given us the Disciplines of the spiritual life as a means of receiving this grace. The Disciplines allow us to place ourselves before God so that he can transform us... .A farmer is helpless to grow grain; all he can do is provide the right conditions for the growing of grain."¹⁰ The believer, likewise, is

¹⁰ Foster, 7.

helpless in his attempts at holiness. However, when he makes space, the Holy Spirit fills it.

Holiness can only be fully comprehended with a proper understanding of sin.

David Benner interprets St. Ignatius by stating:

Ignatius of Loyola suggests that sin is ultimately a refusal to believe that what God wants is my happiness and fulfillment. When I fail to believe this, I am tempted to sin--to take my life into my own hands, assuming that I am in the best position to determine what will lead to my happiness. As I become convinced that God wants nothing more than my fulfillment, surrender to his will is increasingly possible.¹¹

Richard Rohr supports the same thought by saying, “That seems to be the case with many people, and is what we mean by ‘sinners.’ The word signifies not moral inferiors so much as people who do not know who they are and whose they are, people who have no connection to their inherent dignity and importance.”¹²

When sin becomes a list of things that we cannot do, holiness becomes a list of things that we must do. However, following a list of commandments does not have the ability to bring wholeness. Wholeness is the “abundant life” consisting of *shalom*, and the Kingdom Jesus desires. Ironically, inside of God’s understanding of earthly wholeness is the acceptance that human perfection is “now and not yet.” Richard Rohr clarifies this in his book, *Falling Forward*:

If there is such a thing as human perfection, it seems to emerge precisely from how we handle the imperfection that is everywhere, especially our own. What a clever place for God to hide holiness, so that only the humble and earnest will find it! A “perfect” person ends up being one who can consciously forgive and include imperfection rather than one who thinks he or she is totally above and

¹¹ David G. Benner, *Sacred Companions: The Gift of Spiritual Friendship & Direction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), Kindle Electronic Edition: Chapter 1, Location 323.

¹² Richard Rohr, *The Naked Now: Learning to See as the Mystics See* (New York: Crossroad Pub., 2009), 29.

beyond imperfection. It becomes sort of obvious once you say it out loud. The demand for the perfect is the greatest enemy of the good. Perfection is a mathematical or divine concept, goodness is a beautiful human concept that includes us all.¹³

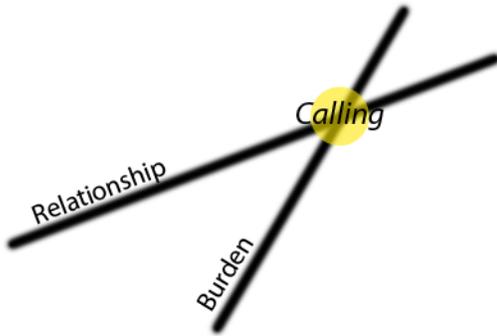
We will see that this type of human perfection will take the Holy Spirit years to cultivate in an individual's life.

Holiness, then, will be defined less by the Ten Commandments and more by the Beatitudes. The goal of holiness is not to follow the rules more closely, but to follow Christ more intentionally. As we progress in maturity, our love deepens and as holiness grows, an awareness of self and its limitations grows as well.

The Life on Mission

You and I were created for one reason: to have a relationship with Jesus. The more we grow in that relationship, the more that we see that His ways and intentions for our world are not occurring. Because of our growing attachment to Jesus and His ways, our hearts will be burdened for the world around us. It is lost and disordered by trying to function under a system contrary to the design for which it was created. Its mode of operation does not fit its default setting. This causes all kinds of confusion. Our mission comes from an intersection of our relationship with Christ and our burden for a particular part of His creation that isn't aligned with His ways. This is our calling.

¹³ Richard Rohr, *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011), xxii.



In R. Thomas Ashbrook's book, *Mansions of the Heart*, Dr. Ashbrook says that he finds it useful to distinguish two levels of God's call to relationship.

First-Order Calling: In the first-order calling, Jesus calls us into a personal relationship of love with God. He invites us into a relationship that will enable us to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind" (cf. Matt 22:37).

Second-Order Calling: Jesus then calls us to "follow me" (cf. Matt 4:19). Our ability to follow and serve Jesus is dependent on the depth of our relationship with Him.¹⁴

I have found that there can be no other motivation for the first-order calling except the love of God. I love Him because He first loved me. Where we go wrong is when we allow the second-order calling to be the primary motivation of the first-order calling. How many times have you said something like this? "I need to get my relationship with God right so that I can be the minister that He has called me to be." "I need to pray more because I need to be a good father/mother." "I won't be able to do all that God has called me to do if I don't have a great relationship with Him."

¹⁴ R. Thomas Ashbrook, *Mansions of the Heart: Exploring the Seven Stages of Spiritual Growth* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 30.

All of those statements are founded on the subversive assumption that the second-order calling has the power to ignite and sustain the first-order calling. It does not! It will always run out of steam. Look at your prayer life. How often have you been determined to love God and build your relationship with Him based on a second-order motivation? *Mission does not have the power to sustain Intimacy. Intimacy has the power to sustain mission.* Mission flows naturally out of your love relationship with God, not vice versa. If mission had the power to sustain relationship, then God would simply be a task-master who uses those He has to accomplish “greater” goals. You are the greater goal!

We will see God work this reality into our understanding as we make our way through the model. To pattern one’s life off of the proper structure of first and second order callings is a deep level of maturity. Impacting mission comes from deep maturity.

From two-thousand years of men and women describing their growth we can get a basic pattern of maturity. For instance, the first stage of growth all of us start at is conversion. We all share this in common and so share many of the same experiences inside of this stage as well. Over the next several chapters I will develop a model for this process of growth as seen throughout the ages. Once I have described the stages of growth, I will show what each of the six Pentecostal Expressions look like in that stage. This will help bring clarity about where we are in the growth process. The only reason this matters is that we will then be able to see what the Holy Spirit is trying to do to help us grow in our relationship with Jesus. We can then partner with Him. This is going to be exciting!

CHAPTER THREE

AWAKENING- A NEW START

The new life in Christ explodes with excitement and potential. There are numerous fears, struggles, questions and concerns that seem to be completely overshadowed by the enthusiasm of awakening to God's grace, forgiveness and acceptance. For so many Pentecostal believers this decision to follow Christ is made at an altar after responding to a specific salvation request. This moment constitutes one of the first memorable "God-Moments" in the believer's life. Many individuals even go so far as to remember the date as the "new birth date". As if walking into a bakery with a heightened sense of smell, a new sense has been discovered. This sixth sense seems to be alive with the predilection to things of God. The new believer bears witness to the writer of Psalm 34:8 who says, "Taste and see that the Lord is good." In this stage, God is tangible, feel-able and experiential. He is near, His Word is alive and prayer is second nature. It would seem that the doors of heaven were open and the new believer had an open invitation.

Awakening: The Life of Encounter

As described above, God is tangible and very real to the new believer's senses. Hagberg describes this time well: "Some people at this stage clearly and completely experience God first through their senses. We are not given to thinking about God. Rather we simply experience the presence of God...we do not experience God's presence primarily in a rational way but in an experiential way, using the various senses."¹⁵ In

¹⁵ Hagberg and Guelich, 37.

other words, we encounter God. Thoughts and rationale take second-place to feelings and emotions, which seem truer and richer because many of these feelings have never been experienced in this way before. Demarest explains the excitement of the new believer by saying, “Early on in the journey, new believers often experience considerable religious zeal. Nothing seems to matter more than knowing God and following him.”¹⁶ The Stage One believer will regularly feed off of the excitement of the initial experience with God at the salvation moment. While a new believer could have another life-altering “God-Moment” in this stage, typically the salvation experience will be the pinnacle encounter. Some other possible milestone encounters might include: a supernatural and immediate end to a long-term addiction, a reconciliation of a relationship, a vocational change, water baptism, and Spirit baptism to name a few. At an emotional level, the believer begins to experience new levels of peace, joy, and freedom from fear resulting in new boldness to follow Jesus.

Awakening: The Spirit-Led Life

The desire for God’s Word and God’s people in this stage is insatiable. New Christians, awakened to the leading of the Spirit will regularly spend every spare second with their Bibles opened in study. They desire to associate with godly people and the opportunity to talk about spiritual things. The awakened believer is taken aback by those who do not feel the same and will even chastise them for not feeling a similar excitement. Church attendance becomes generally high and consistent. This person may well attend any and all church events, there every time the doors are open. “Sweetness and pleasure

¹⁶ Demarest, 23.

well up in seasons of prayer as we discover that God hears and answers prayers,” says Demarest.¹⁷

Our acceptance of this new life “depends both on the progress of our overall maturation and on the way the persons and conditions of our environment greet us and beckon us into interaction.”¹⁸ It is imperative that one responds to the Spirit’s directing toward community. Regularly this Stage One believer will join every small group, every ministry team and every outreach opportunity. The Holy Spirit speaks primarily in this stage through Christian friends and leaders. There is a heightened learning curve about the Christian life. While the Holy Spirit is gently speaking and enlightening, He does the majority of this enlightening through the teaching and insight of other believers. The new believer has not learned to tune one’s ears to the Holy Spirit’s unique voice.

Awakening: The Spirit-Gifted Life

Typically the supernatural spiritual gifts are practiced *for* or given *to* the new believer in this stage. For example, instead of the new believer having a word of knowledge to share with another believer in order to encourage that believer, the word of knowledge is given to the new believer from another Christian.¹⁹ The Stage One believer is encouraged along in her growth and excitement. This event, the shared word of

¹⁷ Ibid., 22.

¹⁸ Fowler, 120.

¹⁹ In *Spiritual Gifts* David Lim describes this gift by saying, “The manifestation of this gift would not be the product of study as such, but God’s special word through the teacher, helping communicate a scriptural truth needed by the church.” He goes on to say, “This gift may be manifested in a more supernatural way as well. God shared his secrets with the prophets (e.g., when it would rain, the enemy’s plans, the secret sins of kings and servants). Sometimes God reveals to a person someone’s sin or special need or His own activity on someone’s behalf. These are facts only God can know” (1991, 73).

knowledge, begins a seed of thought to the advantages and possibilities of spiritual maturity. Ashbrook writes, “Although God is trying to reveal himself, in prayer and in daily life, [in Stage One] the new believer has not developed the ability to discern spiritually and can scarcely see his light.”²⁰ Spiritual gifts tend to be personality-based in this stage. Paul lists gifts such as hospitality, mercy, administration, etc.²¹ The new believer tends to operate in these gifts based out of the personality proclivities that come more naturally. In other words, a person who has been more structured and ordered in his/her life now has the potential to use this personality trait in order to benefit the church body.

Awakening: The Life at War

At this stage, the believer’s mind is the primary area of resistance in which the enemy will operate. The believer has certainly had thoughts impressed upon him by the enemy before this season or stage. However, because of the excitement of new faith, this believer often assumes that she must be doing something wrong and the thoughts are then attributed to self. Ashbrook claims, “Although we have the Holy Spirit’s power to resist, few of us are taught about such warfare. The result is that we may well ascribe all these tempting thoughts to ourselves, and once the evil intentions are recognized we feel shame and guilt. We may just work harder rather than turn to God more deeply.”²²

The new believer may falsely assume that these contrary thoughts should not be occurring. “Superstitions fit here too,” write Hagberg and Guelich. “Fear that God will

²⁰ Ashbrook, 61.

²¹ Rom. 12:8-13.

²² Ashbrook, 63.

make you ill, if you fail to pray regularly. Or belief that you will have success, if you ‘play the game by God’s rules’ ... Fear of rejection (from low self-esteem) represents the predominant feeling in this [stage].”²³ The enemy knows that experience and exuberance from feelings and emotions energize believers in this stage. In turn, the enemy tries to sidetrack them by using contrary feelings such as shame, guilt, frustration, and apathy. The new believer is just beginning to recognize this interplay of influence between God’s thoughts and the enemy’s thoughts, although, unfortunately, she is usually unaware of the tactic. “Although God has declared us righteous in Christ,” claims Demarest, “we retain our fallen nature, with its egotism and self-love.... Every Christian experiences this contest between old and new natures, but the warfare is particularly intense in those immature in the faith.”²⁴ Many times the enemy is satisfied with just planting or sewing the seeds of guilt and shame in this stage. Satan will use them shrewdly over the next several stages in incredibly affective ways.

Awakening: The Life of Holiness

For the first several stages of the Pentecostal’s maturity, holiness may be measured in terms of “do’s and don’ts”. This believer may often measure her maturity primarily by what she has given up (addictive habits, unwholesome speech) and what she has begun to do (Bible reading, prayer). Demarest describes this point in the journey:

New Christians give up their worst sins and break fewer laws than they once did, but they are still attached to the world. Instead of judging themselves by the Gospel they merely compare themselves with their former selves... Considering the enticements of the world and its fleeting pleasures, young believers, at the

²³ Hagberg and Guelich, 45.

²⁴ Demarest, 23.

beginning of the Christian life, must be intentional about turning from their old ways and whole-heartedly pursuing God.²⁵

Demarest stresses that while the believer's understanding of holiness may be immature at this stage, holiness must be pursued intensely.

It is worth noting that the Holy Spirit's work in the believer generally moves from external to internal. However, because of the new believer's level of unawareness to the Spirit's work, the external is often all that one sees. The Spirit, however, is working dynamically internally. The new believer should use this awareness of the external work as encouragement of what the Spirit is doing internally. Never before has one felt the level of conviction felt now with his or her thoughts and actions. Although it may seem to the believer that God is angry at her sinfulness, the conviction signifies that God is at work and a sign that she has drawn closer to loving God.

Awakening: The Life on Mission

In this Awakening expression of Stage One, the life on mission can be one of extremes. Some believers in this early stage feel that they immediately hear a specific call to a particular ministry area. Some do not hear the specifics yet, but feel a sense of duty and power to "change the world." Writes Demarest, "We are comforted by the fact that God has a purpose for our lives—restoration to Christlikeness that we might be the healing presence of the Savior in the world."²⁶ Life on Mission can involve selling everything that the new believer has and heading to Africa, or it can include the disdain for other Christians that sit idly by and do nothing. However, the internal motivation

²⁵ Ibid., 28.

²⁶ Ibid., 22.

might be based in egotism and self-service. Ashbrook reminds us that, “We are mainly focused on getting God’s help to obtain the worldly pleasures we have not been able to get for ourselves.”²⁷ The “worldly pleasure,” in this case may be a sense of purpose or self-worth. The believer may subconsciously ask himself, “How can I remove this feeling of guilt?” or “How can God use *me* to change everyone to be like me?”

Conclusion

Everyone has such a unique experience in salvation. I was six years old and at a church campout for boys when I gave my heart to Christ. My father was a twenty-something alcoholic. We all bring different lives and experiences into salvation, but we all start in Stage one. Excitement, exhilaration, and energy mark the youngest to the oldest. This excitement, however, is soon met with what most will consider a mistake on their part. As the exhilaration wanes, questions mount, “What did I do wrong?” This question propels this believer into the next natural stage in the evolution of growth-Wilderness.

²⁷ Ashbrook, 54.

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